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Ethnicity and social class in Mesoamerica

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ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CLASS IN MESOAMERICA

- by -

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts

University of Durham

January 1983

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART ONE

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a theoretical discussion of ethnicity and social class in Mesoamerica, which seemed both necessary and desirable because of the uncertainty prevailing on the subject. Its overall aim is to clarify the present state of theory on ethnicity, class and their articulation. In order to accomplish this I analyse and compare contrasting social anthropological tendencies. First, those which interpret the social characteristics of the region by emphasising ethnicity (culturally interpreted) at the local level and while disregarding the structural framework of the class at the wider level; second, those which in contrast, stress the rôle of the wider class structure while neglecting ethnic relationships at the local level; and third, those which combine both dimensions, interpreting local ethnic phenomena within the framework of class. The main advantages and disadvantages of these approaches are discussed in order to determine which of them offers the most satisfactory view of the importance and articulation of ethnicity and class in Mesoamerica, a subject which is fundamental to a proper understanding of the current social and political instability of the region.

The thesis is in three parts. The first provides the historical antecedents of the central theme. Here I describe the concept of Mesoamerica and give an account of prehispanic social development, criticising some of the theories which try to explain the basic social features of ancient Mesoamerican societies. The analysis then focuses on the changes brought about by Spanish rule, on the emergence of ethnic groups and on the ethnic and class characteristics of popular reaction against Spanish domination. The subsequent Independence period is discussed and the principal

socioeconomic and political changes accompanying capitalist
expansion are documented. Special attention is paid to the class
and ethnic character of popular responses to the new social order
in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Following the historical background, the other two parts
analyse theories dealing with the relationship between ethnicity
and class. Part Two examines two 'simple' and antagonistic inter-
pretations, the "ethnic/cultural/local-level" and the "class/struc-
tural/wider-level" approaches. Part Three is devoted to more com-
plex perspectives which attempt to combine both approaches. This
has resulted in two different models: that which postulates, and
that which opposes, the correspondence of ethnic and socioeconomic
boundaries. Through the critical analysis developed in Parts Two
and Three and synthesised in the general conclusions, I suggest
how a more adequate theoretical approach to this complex subject
might be formulated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the process of this study I have incurred both personal and intellectual debts. My stay in England and this resulting work were made possible by the financial support from several institutions and persons; first San Carlos University of Guatemala through the Faculty of Dentistry and through the Rector (1978-1980) who granted me financial help during his short period of office. I must also acknowledge my gratitude to my brother Luis Hugo Solares who made the return journey possible for me and my family. The University of Durham gave me a Visiting Research Fellowship and one year's fees. Partial maintenance expenses for nine months were provided by the Ford Foundation through the good offices of Dr. David Winder.

Academically I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Professor Norman Long. Far beyond this, I owe a profound personal, family and human debt to Norman and Ann Long, whose unreserved support and solidarity in every sense has far exceeded anything I can express here.

My gratitude is also due to the persons who, by the sacrifice of their spare time, kindly made language corrections and valuable suggestions on sections of this work: Dr. Dorothy Middleton, Margaret Louise Sheffer, John McGuiness and Dr. Janet Townsend; to Dr. Peter Sluglett, whose help was essential, especially during the last stages of this work, my acknowledgement for his painstaking proof-reading and correction of the final draft of the whole manu-script, and for his warm friendship and support during difficult personal circumstances, my deepest thanks. All of them gave us what we will always consider the deepest token of fraternal sympathy.

To my Latin American and British fellows of the Department

of Anthropology in Durham, my feeling of obligation for their friendship and intellectual incentive. I should also like to express my appreciation to Ann Mitchell who completed the final typing of this thesis.

It is usual to acknowledge the support of one's spouse, and I gladly do so. However, no statement of my gratitude to my wife can adequately express how much I owe her, and my children.
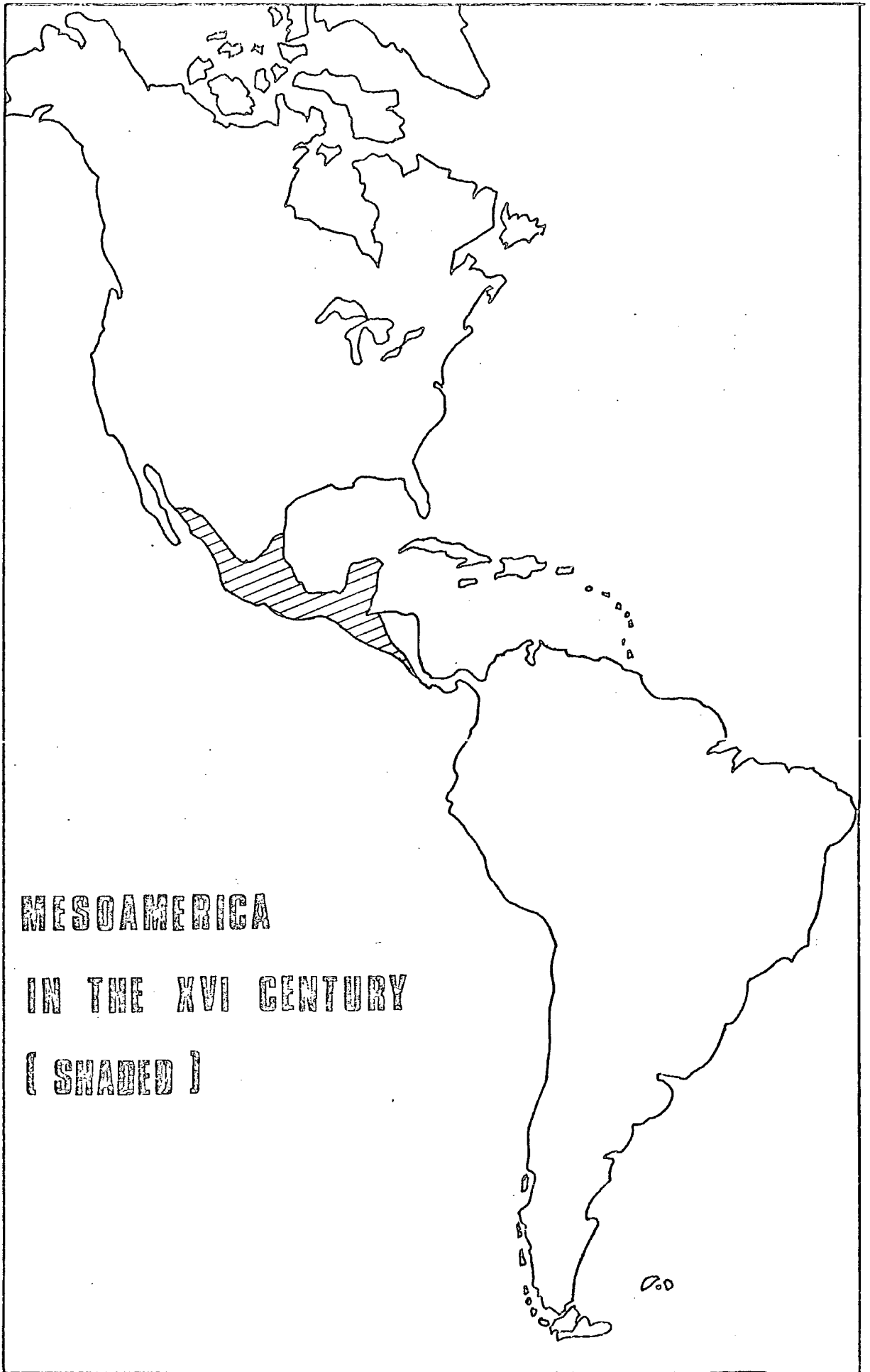
MESOAMERICA

IN THE XVI CENTURY

(SHADED)

MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS OF MESOAMERICA

ZACATEC

HUASTEC

TARASCAN

TOTONAC

NAHUATL

ZAPOTEC

Mexico

TZELTAL-
TZOTZIL

KEKCHI

IXIL   CHORTI

QUICHE

KAKCHIKEL

Belice

Honduras

Guatemala

El Salvador

Nicaragua
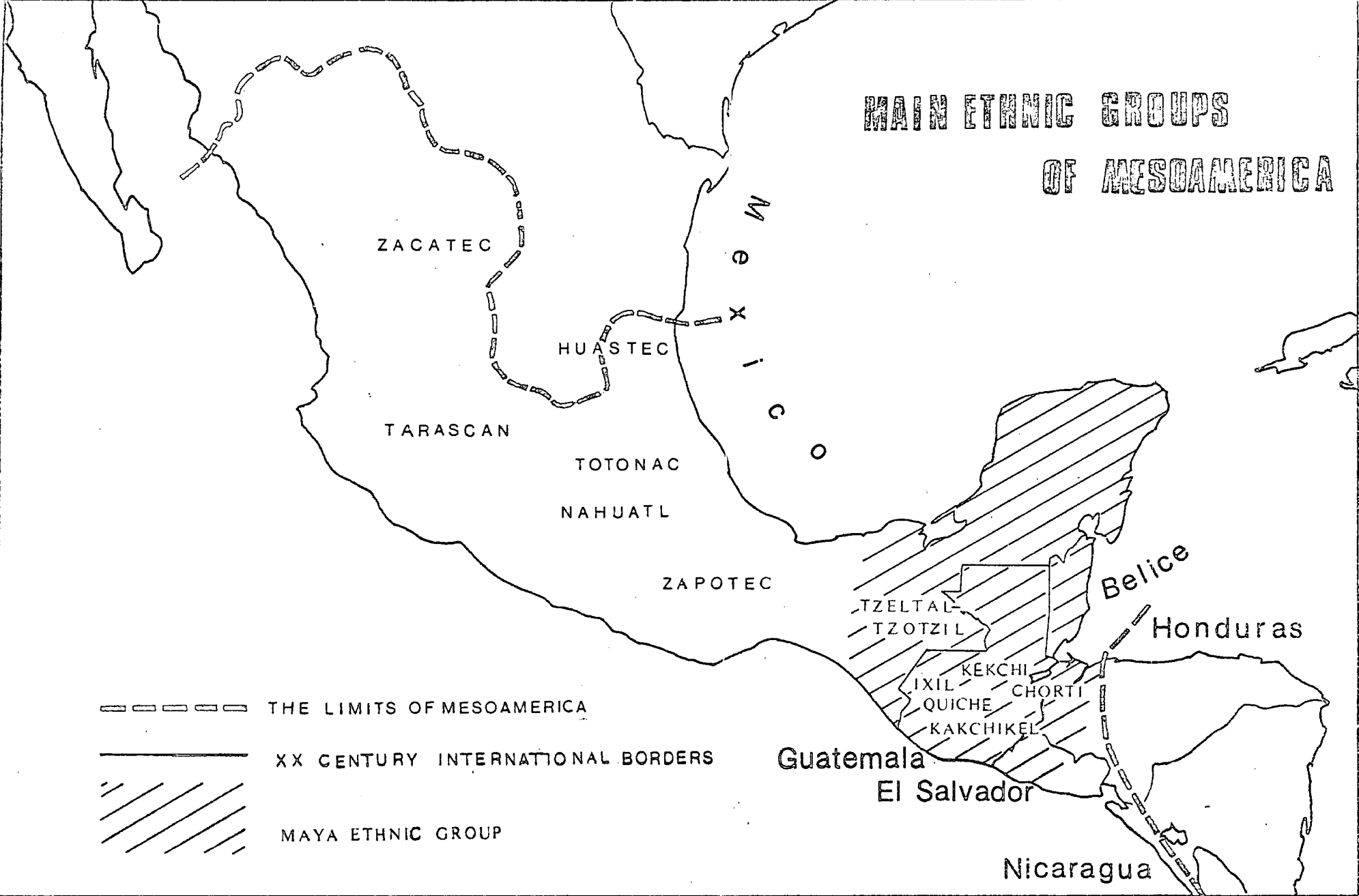
THE LIMITS OF MESOAMERICA

XX CENTURY INTERNATIONAL BORDERS

MAYA ETHNIC GROUP

INTRODUCTION

Beyond the high ridge of the Cuchumatan Sierra in Western
Guatemala, where the northern slope falls towards the hot basin
of waters which flow into the Atlantic, is the home of . the Ixil,
one of the most remote Indian ethnic groups of Mesoamerica. Their
main towns, Chajul, Nebaj and Cotzal, mark out Ixil territory.
Like all Indians in the region, this group has known both ethnic
discrimination and relentless economic exploitation. Nearly
twenty years ago an anthropological study foresaw a hopeless
future for them: it predicted that they would either be forced
to retreat, in an impotent withdrawal, to the roughest areas of
the steep highlands in pursuit of the only land that remained open
to them, or, by giving up their ancient values and identity, to
undergo an inexorable assimilation into the dominant non-Indian
culture (Colby and van den Berghe). Eighteen years later, the
President's brother, the powerful and feared Chief of the General
Staff of the Guatemalan Army, admitted to the official press in
January 1982:

> "The Army has intensified the fighting in the 'Ixil
> triangle' made up of the towns of Nebaj, Chajul and
> Cotzal.....We are going filled with fervour to combat
> the insurgents who have done so much harm to Guate-
> mala. It is necessary to point out that we will avenge
> the blood shed by our officers and soldiers according
> to the rules of combat by which war is governed. We
> will persecute the subversives tirelessly........" [1]

Neither this anthropological opinion nor the military communiqué
are isolated facts. Both form a part of a strikingly changing succes-
sion of events. What happened to bring about such a radical change?

This work is concerned with that question.

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[1] Prensa Libre. Guatemala, January 22, 1982.

This study was stimulated by a vital concern and interest
in the contemporary popular risings which are now setting Central
America aflame; its theoretical concerns emerge from the desire
to understand the process of the class struggle in its armed stage
wherein a vigorous ethnic expression is involved. The work was
originally intended to focus on class and ethnic consciousness in
the present stage of the popular struggle in Guatemala. This
would allow an appraisal of how ethnic participation provides a
particular physiognomy to the local class struggle. With this
project in mind, many questions arose: it appeared to be important
to determine whether the Indians' desperate reaction owes its
loyalty to ethnic allegiances or to class consciousness. Is
ethnicity overruled by class consciousness, or, conversely, is
class consciousness suffocated by ethnic alliances, or are both
class and ethnic allegiance mixed together in a combined form of
class struggle? If so, are we facing a complex form of class
struggle ethnically moulded by non-class elements?

This concern goes beyond simple theoretical interests.
Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala have been the scene of large-
scale massacres and popular resistance in recent years. This fact
compels the author to deal with a deep human problem, as well as
to try and construct an accurate theoretical underpinning. In
the last few years, Central America has evolved into the most
politically troubled area in the American continent. The armed
revolutionary movements in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala
cannot be seen as separate autonomous phenomena but as related
crises within a common historical stream. The understanding of
any of these events presupposes an understanding of the regional

context of what was once a single country and an area which
is still   linked together by common bonds. However, while in
the Nicaraguan and Salvadorean cases such an understanding is
almost entirely concerned with a basically class approach, in
the Guatemalan case the social class framework has to be under-
stood with another overlapping element; that of ethnicity. As
social and political instability increases in Central America
and the Guatemalan Indians are more and more involved, the dis-
parities between the countries of the isthmus become increasingly
sharp. In recent years Indian massacres in Guatemala have become
more systematic and Indian groupings have been linking themselves
in popular organizations like labour unions, peasant leagues
and the guerrilla movements. On the other hand, in the last few
months the Army, perceiving the potential strength of ethnic ties,
has handled that latent problem by restricting the use of Indian
troops, who make up the bulk of the soldiers. In order to carry
out repression in the Indian areas the Army attempts to stir up
hatred against the Indians among the non-Indian soldiers who are
sent to these areas. As far as I can ascertain this complication
does not appear to occur in El Salvador where the struggle seems
to be developing along clear class lines with little or no ethnic
ingredient. Although some ethnic participation was mentioned in
the Nicaraguan insurrection, this appears to have been largely
peripheral to the fundamental structure of events.[1] Therefore,
analyses applied to the successful insurrection in Nicaragua or
to the present struggle in El Salvador may not be applicable to

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[1] This comment refers to the central part of Nicaragua and not
to the peripheral Atlantic Coastal zone where the Miskito
ethnic group which was not previously involved in the insurr-
ectional process, has recently come into the news.

Guatemala, because her ethnic constitution provides her social
and political process with a particularity absent in the class
struggles of the other Central American nations.

Therefore although Guatemala, as a former part of the
Colonial Central American domain and of the XIX Century Central
American Federation (dissolved 140 years ago) shares a lot of
historical, political and social features with the other countries
of the isthmus, it can be distinguished from them by specific
aspects of its social structure which it partly shares with
Mexico. These two countries, formerly the most important nuclei
of the ancient entity now called Mesoamerica, share characteris-
tics absent in other parts of Central America. In other words,
in its historical, political and social perspective Guatemala
must be considered for certain purposes as part of Central America
and for other purposes, as part of Mesoamerica. Consequently,
with Guatemala being a sort of hinge between two historical forma-
tions which are both tangibly different but in close contact, it
was considered useful to study not only the national case, Guate-
mala, but also the regional one, Mesoamerica. For the purposes of
this study, the term Mesoamerica (which will be defined in Chapter
I) will refer only to certain parts of Guatemala and Mexico
(mainly Chiapas).

The principal characteristics which shape both Guatemalan
and Mexican social class structures primarily concern ethnic
heterogeneity. At present, few countries of the former Spanish
American domain retain a strong Indian character. For although
there are many Indian populations spread throughout the American
continent, they are in most cases small groups confined to peri-

pheral regions. Conversely, there are few countries in which
Indians constitute a very significant part of the whole population
and/or make ethnicity a fact relevant either to the social struc-
ture or the national economic system. The Eighth Congress of the
Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, which took place in Mexico
in November 1980, gave the percentages for the indigenous popula-
tions of those countries with the largest number of Indians:

	% of Indian population
Mexico	12.0
Ecuador	33.9
Peru	36.8
Bolivia	59.2
Guatemala	59.7

Source: Latin American Weekly Report, 28th November, 1980.

It is quite clear therefore that in Mesoamerica one can hardly
ignore ethnicity even though its significance may be disputed.
People living in such a context continuously speak of it and many
of their relationships and attitudes are ruled and expressed in
these terms. The ethnic component in groups for popular defence,
in guerrilla movements, in the devices for exploitation used by
landowners and in the repressive strategies of the Army, is a
conspicuous fact. I share the opinion that ethnicity may not be
a determining factor in the social reality of Guatemala and Meso-
america, but in contrast to the rest of Central America the ethnic
factor in Guatemala is certainly dominant. It is present either
directly or indirectly in almost any social situation, and explains
my own interest in studying the real significance of the rebellion

of ethnic groups which have traditionally been considered
as unlikely to be affected by or attracted to insurrections
of this kind.

In short, this study intends to examine the political
dimensions of the problem, the significance of ethnic and class
consciousness in the struggle for political control. However,
the attitudes of people engaged in such struggles are the
ultimate expression, the final consequence of previous conditions.
Hence this approach requires a preliminary survey; it must
begin with an analysis of the given socio-economic and politi-
cal conditions, the basic phenomena pertaining to the social
structure which, like an underlying platform, constitute the
material substratum upon which political confrontation takes place.
Before studying ethnic and class allegiances and confrontations
it is clearly necessary to begin with an analysis of what ethnic
groups and classes are and how they are articulated.

The political expression of class struggle, in the form of
armed rebellion against exploitation is a result of ideological
formation or class consciousness and both spring from structural
or class foundations. The incorporation of ethnic groups into
the class struggle, a fact which is clearly visible in the
political epi-phenomenon, may reflect the overlapping of class
consciousness with ethnic consciousness at the ideological level.
If so, such an ideological mélange would echo a corresponding
underlying structural complexity: the enmeshing of the economic
category of class with ethnic elements. These superimpositions,
which exist at all levels can confuse the profile of this particular
class struggle unless we can find a coherent theory of the articu-

lation of both aspects: the socio-economic and the ethnic.

Consequently, our first task is to provide some clarification of the present state of theory, so as to achieve a coherent picture of how ethnicity, class and their articulation are best to be understood in Mesoamerica. Such a review of significant social trends shows clearly that any coherent theory is still far off. In fact it is extremely difficult to obtain a coherent picture of the relations between ethnicity and class because of the existence of a wide variety of analytically different approaches. The Indian population has long been an object of anthropological study by Europeans, North Americans and local scholars, and ethnic aspects have featured as the anthropological topic par excellence. Nevertheless, it would appear that the larger the number of studies, the less agreement there is on the criteria to be used as a framework for analysis.

Traditional social anthropological approaches in Mesoamerica refer to ethnicity as a matter of culture and identify ethnic groups according to their dress, language, religious rituals, food habits, agricultural tools and so on. This has proved to be a defective and inappropriate approach because it does not reach beyond the simple descriptive level and these superficial characteristics are awarded the status of primary factors. Such features may be useful for certain ethnographic purposes, as indices or reflections of deeper relationships; otherwise, considered on their own in isolation from causative factors and distinct from primary social relationships, these traits make no sense. When Indians or other ethnic groups are defined by their costumes or by any other cultural traits, an inverted formula

results: a person does not constitute an Indian because he wears a particular dress: he wears such a dress because he is an Indian. The latter of course implies a whole chain of relations.

Traditional cultural anthropology has to some extent been eroded by current criticisms from within the discipline and from other social sciences but, as far as Mesoamerica is concerned, no uniform theoretical perspective has yet been evolved. As a youthful reaction against culturalist tendencies, new influences in anthropology, especially Marxism, have come to affect the concept of ethnicity; however, some Marxists have resorted to the device of ignoring ethnicity or assimilating it entirely into the category of class. Hence reactions against culturalism may produce totally polarized responses and their results, far from resolving the long-standing ethnic debate, only serve to confuse it even more.

This thesis then attempts, by an analysis of selected anthropological materials, to find out what type of coincidence there is between ethnic groups and classes in Mesoamerica, and indeed whether such a coincidence exists; or, if the opposite is the case, what is the nature of the difference? Broadly speaking, is there any correspondence between class and ethnicity? From an initial examination of selected interpretations specific questions can be put forward to guide the enquiry. In Mesoamerica, can a social class be ascribed to an ethnic group? If so, is ethnicity an irrelevant concept? Or is ethnic division a secondary contradiction overlapping the primary one of class?

In order to pursue these issues, I intend to compare and

evaluate a number of different anthropological theories that have predominated over the past few decades. Whether or not a uniform analytical framework can be reached is the main theme of this work, particularly in the chapters relating to ethnicity and social structure. Throughout the comparative discussion, the selected theoretical formulations will be criticised in the light of new approaches and new situations. It is often difficult to distinguish from outside whether approaches which interpret ethnicity are inconsistent with present realities because they are inadequate in themselves or because the social reality has qualitatively changed over time. Thus it is important to bear in mind that not only have anthropological theories changed but the attitudes of ethnic groups and their reactions towards dominant social norms have also changed. That is why this work provides an analysis of the internal logic of each theory and of each author.

The substantive problem, the articulation of ethnicity with class structure, is the theme of the latter chapters of this study. In order to undertake a comparative analysis, authors are classified according to the weight they give to class and ethnicity. First we have those authors who explicitly or implicitly identify and describe ethnic groups as categories that are cognitively self-sufficient, and leave aside the wider context of the nation. Secondly, we find authors who explain ethnicity in relation to the wider frame of social relationships, and do not consider it as a self explanatory condition. Two sub-tendencies are considered here: first, ethnic groups are interpreted as coinciding with particular social classes and secondly, ethnic groups and social classes are viewed as different but overlapping categories.

The historical background, which is set out in Chapter I, concentrates on topics pertinent to the central theme of the work, namely how specific forms of exploitation produced the colonial social system and resulted in the emergence of ethnic groups as defined by the colonial system. Specific attention is given to popular rebellions; and an analysis of selected examples attempts to suggest some of the historical reasons for the current armed struggle.

PART ONE

CHAPTER I   HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Prehispanic Mesoamerica

a) The concept of Mesoamerica

The term Mesoamerica, created in 1941, originally defined
the prehispanic societies inhabiting Central and Southern Mexico,
Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Western Honduras and the Pacific
basin of Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica as far as the Nicoya
Gulf. These societies were identified as a distinct cultural
family "...whose inhabitants...were united by a common history
which set them apart as a unit from other tribes of the Continent..."
(Kirchhoff: 21). In spite of notable regional differences between
the various linguistic-ethnic groups, there were a number of strik-
ing resemblances between them in their writing, astronomy, mathe-
matics, agriculture, architecture and many other cultural areas to
be summarised later.

For several decades scholars had faced the problem of giving
this cultural family a consistent geographic nomenclature. Some
Americanists used to refer to "Central American" cultures, but in
doing so they were including Central American regions such as
Panama or most of Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras which did not
share the same common culture. On the other hand, Mexico was
implicitly excluded, at least in conventional geographical terms.
Others used to refer to "Mexico and Central America" but a similar
problem arose here, since neither all of Central America nor all of
Mexico exhibited this cultural "family likeness". Other American-
ists preferred to allude simply to "Mexico" but this was even more
inaccurate; on the one hand, by incorporating regions of Mexico

which were quite different cultural entities; and, on the other hand, by excluding those Central American regions like Guatemala which did form a part of the wider cultural family. Kirchhoff gives more details of the problem when he alludes to earlier classifications of American cultures. One of these made the distinction between "North" and "South" America, divided by the San Juan river running between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Another classification distinguished Mexico and Central America from the Northern cultures of South America; the former (called by some Americanists from the United States and other countries, "Middle America") extended from Mexico to Panama, sometimes including the Caribbean islands, sometimes excluding them.[1]

Many problems, Kirchhoff continues, arose from this classification: on the one hand, many Central American cultures in Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, for example Miskito, Jicaque, etc., were much closer to the South American Chibcha culture; on the other hand, there were South American cultures like Inca, Fuegian or Carib which were completely different from all the ones mentioned. Actually, these Americanists did not regard Middle America (i.e. Mexico and Central America) as a cultural unit; their classification was simply based upon geographical boundaries. According to Kirchhoff, another type of classification based on the forms of production[2] brought additional problems: by accepting economic distinctions as a basis for classification a further cultural overlap between the groups resulted (Kirchhoff: 17-19).

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[1] For example, Sol Tax, defines Middle America as the region comprised between Rio Grande (US-Mexican border) down to Panama (Viking Fund, Chapter 14: 283).

[2] 1) Food gatherers, hunters and fishermen of North America.
2) Inferior cultivators of North America. 3) Superior cultivators of 'High Cultures'. 4) Inferior cultivators of South America.
5) Food gatherers and hunters of South America.

In order to solve these problems, Paul Kirchhoff and the International Committee for the Study of Cultural Distribution in America designed a comprehensive classification from which great super-areas were defined.[1] Mesoamerica was originally defined according to its cultural characteristics "at the time of the Conquest" (Kirchhoff: 19) - that is largely for archaeological purposes. In spite of its originally archaeological context and because of its conceptual usefulness, the concept of Mesoamerica has been extended to contemporary societies by social anthropologists.

Kirchhoff and the Committee defined Mesoamerica according to three criteria: 1) Its own sociocultural characteristics, absent in other American regions 2) Features shared with other regions 3) Features present in other regions and absent in Mesoamerica. According to the first criterion, Mesoamerica was characterised by certain distinctive features which were typically or exclusively Mesoamerican: in terms of writing it was characterised by hieroglyphics; the use of symbols for numerals and the relative value of these according to their position; historical annals; maps and folding books. The measurement of time was distinctive and exclusive as well, as they used calendars of 18 months each consisting of 20 days, plus 5 additional days; in addition there was a simultaneous calendar or cycle of 260 days consisting of a combination of 20 signs and 13 numerals; and finally, a cycle of 52 years formed by the combination of the two previous calendars.

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[1] 1) Mesoamerica. 2) Southern part of North America. 3) Chibcha.
4) Andes. 5) Amazonia, including Antilles.

The type of agriculture and economy was characterised, inter alia, by specialised markets for the sale of goods; the use of the digging-stick or "coa"; the cultivation of cacao, and the grinding of corn after it had been softened with lime or ashes.

Among other distinctive aspects of this cultural family was the use of fibre for clothing and paper, the extensive and ritual use of rubber and paper, certain forms of human sacrifice, and many more items. As for architecture, typical features were the construction of step pyramids, and ball courts with rings.

These features, which only account for a limited set of the whole Mesoamerican inventory, were absent from other regions and clearly identify a distinctive cultural family. In addition, quite a number of cultural traits correspond to Kirchhoff's second and third criteria, namely those common to Mesoamerica and other American super-areas[1] and those which never were present in Mesoamerica.[2]

b) Social and Political Systems

Although much of the earliest prehistory in Mesoamerica is unknown, studies have indicated a progressive social process starting with a remote hunter-gathering period leading to the complex societies found by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. The long path along which Mesoamerican societies shifted from the simplest to more complex organisational forms has been divided into consecutive stages by archaeologists. A commonly used

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[1] Pertaining to technology and economics, among many others were found markets, ceramics and metallurgy. Concerning social organisation: clans of the calpulli-ayllu type. Concerning agriculture: cultivation of corn, beans, sweet potato, cotton, chile, avocado and pineapple.

[2] Among many others: matrilineal clans; cultivation of coca and palm trees.

chronological systematization includes the following periods:
1) The early hunting stage, from an unknown date to about 7200
B.C., 2) The archaic age, which is characterised by the shift
to agriculture, dating from 7200 to 2500 B.C., 3) The formative
period of transition from pre-State to State systems, from 2500
B.C. to 300 A.D., 4) The Classical period, from 300 to 900,
characterised by the finest developments in arts and science;
5) The post-classical period, also called "Militarist", from 900
to the Spanish Conquest. Needless to say, this periodization is
not universally accepted and many other chronologies have been
put forward.

Unfortunately, there is still much obscurity surrounding
the socio-political and economic systems in Mesoamerica, and this
is particularly evident for certain periods and areas. For
example, the documentation on the Maya Classical period in the
Guatemalan Lowlands is much scarcer than that existing for post-
Classical societies in the Highlands of Central Mexico. It would
clearly be desirable to know more about Maya society, but unfort-
unately the historical materials for a comparison between the Mayas
and the society of Central Mexico are somewhat inadequate. The
main reasons for this limitation are that less data have survived
and   historical reconstruction has been almost impossible,
especially with regard to the pre-post-Classical period; the
Spaniards did not find enough records relating to earlier times.
Oral traditions were severely condemned on religious grounds,
written testimonies were destroyed, and the keys to the hiero-
glyphic writing were lost with the exception of those relating to
astronomy and mathematics. Some fashionable attempts to overcome
this gap in documentary evidence involve a "hydraulic-geographical"

determinism, based on the idea that different types of water usage and distribution inexorably lead to corresponding variations in social systems. Many recent studies, for example those of Sanders and Price and Palerm, have to be interpreted in terms of this questionable perspective. Some are concerned with the verification of the geographical determinism underlying Wittfogel's hydraulic theory, as well as principles drawn from cultural ecology and evolutionism (Sanders and Price: xiv-xv passim). Following those ideas, they try to demonstrate that geographical and ecological factors have a "clearly causal relationship..." to social development. (Sanders and Price: 7). Correspondingly, they always assume a more advanced society in the highlands because of evidence of irrigated agriculture, and a less advanced social system in the lowlands because of the use of slash and burn techniques (roza). Nonetheless, the fact is that neither social effects nor agricultural methods have been concretely proved to be related in such causal terms.

As far as population is concerned, the supporters of geographical determinism assume a density of 200 persons per km^2 for the Teotihuacan Valley in the Central Highlands of Mexico and a very low concentration in the tropical lowlands (only 5 to 30 persons per km^2), where there were non-urban "vigorous civilizations" (Ibid: 77). Great centres like Tikal in the Guatemalan lowlands, the biggest Maya focal point, are not considered true cities but "sacred places", massive collections of ceremonial buildings surrounded by a rural population of only about 10,000 people, maintained by a small religious group and only becoming crowded during festivities. Wolf, who accepts this idea, considers that centres like Teotihuacan in the Mexican highlands

constitute "true cities" (Wolf, 1972: 78). Nevertheless, the
lack of data on the Mayan social system (as opposed to the far
more extensive information about their scientific thought and
artistic achievements) has hampered all scholars, regardless of
their theoretical position. Therefore it is not yet completely
clear if the Mexican highlands were socially more complex than
the Mayan lowlands, which in Sanders' and Price's words, were
only slightly differentiated, at least in the early Classical
period (Sanders and Price: 142-144).[1] Also we do not know yet
if Mayan society was a simply structured theocratic system as
Wolf, Sanders and Price and several other Mayanists have tried
to prove, or whether it constituted a complex class structure,
as Coe affirms (Coe: 168-172). Did the Mayas lack an urban system,
as Sanders and Price think or, on the contrary, did their huge
centres constitute true cities as Palerm and others hold? The
former authors postulate that the roza in the tropical lowlands
implied low population densities, underdeveloped market systems,
the absence of true cities apart from scattered rural hamlets or
huge ceremonial centres, and the absence of great macro-states
and empires. On the other hand, they affirm that in the arid
highlands the development of irrigation permitted higher popula-
tion densities, more developed market systems, more complex
social stratification, true cities and great macro-states and
empires (Sanders and Price: 10). Accordingly, it is said that
a big Classic centre like Teotihuacan, "Unlike the Classic Maya
centres...was fully urban..[and represented]...the first cyclical-
conquest macro-state in Mesoamerica..." (Sanders and Price: 30-31).

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[1] They support the hypothesis that a more complex pattern of strati-
fication was prevented from evolving though the maintenance of a
fiesta-cargo system which, being very similar to the present-day
institution, would have impeded the accumulation of capital and
power among the dominated lowlander groups.

That is why (taking into account various archaeological features
in Kaminal Juya in the Guatemalan central highlands and in other
places) a wide "Pan-Mesoamerican" expansion of Teotihuacan is
generally proposed (Sanders and Price: 203; Wolf, 1972: 94-95).

From an opposite standpoint, Palerm maintains that the notion
that the Mayan centres had an exclusively ceremonial character is
simply a contradictory argument which does not accord in any way
with their complex socio-political system, and it is a theoretical
weakness to attribute a non-urban character to Mayan civilization,
since "either the urban or the ceremonial character of Maya centres
is still an unresolved question" (Palerm and Wolf: 191). On the
other hand, as an exclusive roza agricultural system could not have
provided a sufficient base for urban societies, it is suggested
that other agricultural patterns existed which could support truly
urban Mayan concentrations (Palerm and Wolf: 191-192).

This proposition becomes more and more viable as the archaeo-
logical evidence accumulates. A recent collection of studies of
intensive agricultural systems in prehispanic America reveals that
the use of terraces for cultivation was widely spread here and
there in the tropical Mesoamerican lowlands, to such an extent
that "nowadays it has been recognised that the Mayas made use of
diverse forms of intensive cultivation..." (Denevan: 614). There
are numerous vestiges of prehispanic terraces widely spread in
"Arizona, New Mexico, the whole of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and
Honduras", a fact already present in the early Mayan Classical
period (Denevan: 623). Turner mentions "complex terrace systems
in the Maya lowlands", concluding that "the Maya had verified the
existence of agricultural techniques effective to sustain a highly

productive and long term agriculture in their tropical zones"
(Turner: 659, 665). New demographic evidence shows a high Maya
population density, by far exceeding the most optimistic density
levels assumed for the _roza_ system, and   the assumption that
roza was the only agricultural technique used by the Maya must
now be seriously questioned, especially as the existence of
ancient systems of intensive agriculture in the Maya and other
tropical American areas has now been proved (Healy, van Waarden,
Anderson: 773-796). These authors also allude to consistent later
evidence of well-developed hydraulic engineering among the Mayas,
including large water reservoirs, complex drainage networks and
terraces irrigated by rainwater drained from the mountains (_Ibid_:
784). In contrast to Sanders and Price, these researchers do not
consider that the _roza_ system resulted in low population density;
rather, they consider that the use of a greater number of more
sophisticated agricultural techniques was a necessary consequence
of the growth in the Maya population, which was already under way
during the late Pre-Classical period (_Ibid_: 791).

From the above discussion, one may conclude that seemingly
reasonable theories, like the hydraulic model, which try to
deduce a sociostructural picture from simplistic agricultural
factors in Mesoamerica are inconclusive. Such theoretical con-
structions may be challenged for their implicit geographical,
ecological or technological determinism. Apart from this weakness
these interpretations are also questionable on archaeological
grounds since the reliable information also provides data which
contradicts the hydraulic theory; from the moment that the exist-
ence of complex agricultural systems among the lowland Maya societ-
ies was documented, the whole theory was further undermined.

Hence there is much obscurity surrounding the real nature
of the prehispanic social structure of Mesoamerican societies,
especially in the Maya case. Nevertheless, there is general
agreement about the main lines of social development underlying
the historical periodization already alluded to at the beginning
of this section. According to this periodization covering the
pre-archaic to the post-Classical period, the corresponding forms
of social organisation evolved from bands and tribes to States
and incipient empires. According to one commonly accepted view,
the Formative period was the one in which the articulation of pre-
State and State systems could have taken place. If so, this was
the epoch when a ruling class emerged out of the previous kin-
based tribal system, which led to a stratified society with
central judicial institutions, a professional warrior elite
and the establishment of a systematic tribute and taxation system.
The emergence of a socially stratified class-based society out of
small-scale 'simple' communities, possibly in the Middle Formative
period (c.1500 B.C. - 600 B.C.) may have been marked by the replace-
ment of subsistence by extensive agriculture, and by an increase in
the number and size of urban centres. This early development has
been located by several anthropologists in the tropical lowlands
extending from Veracruz and the isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico
up to the Pacific Coast of Guatemala, an area in which the differ-
entiation between a peasantry and a ruling urban priestly class
occurred (Sanders and Price: 27). In approximately the same way,
others postulate that the egalitarian primitive agricultural
community became stratified about 900 B.C. and the subsistence
production system was replaced by one of surplus profit. More
elaborate burial finds show that a priestly class was emerging as

the dominant stratum (Wolf, 1972: 74-75).

Between 750 and 900 A.D. the Classical establishment collapsed. From the great Maya centres to Central Mexico and Northern Mesoamerica there are signs of destruction or dereliction. This impressive collapse has been well documented but scarcely explained especially as far as the Maya case is concerned. Between these dates most of the Mesoamerican metropolitan concentrations disintegrated and, in the Maya case, most of the centres were abandoned for ever. No conclusive explanation for this exists, although many hypotheses have been put forward. Popular rebellions and a general decline in productivity have been suggested as causes (Eric Wolf, 1972: Chapter VI). Wolf supports a class struggle hypothesis: popular insurrections destroyed the priestly ruling class in the spread of rebellion from the peripheral to the central zones (Wolf, 1972: 103-105). Our imperfect knowledge of what happened and what resulted contrasts with the much more fully documented consecutive Post-Classical period insofar as Mexico is concerned: there are more surviving Indian testimonies, more Spanish chronicles and more extensive and systematic archaeological research. With the fall of Teotihuacan as well as Mayan and other Mesoamerican Classic centres, a new military system spread over the area. This new Post-Classical period was characterised by military expansion, war, intensive agriculture and tributary appropriation of surplus (Op.cit.: 110-111). By the sixteenth century a highly stratified society had developed throughout Central Mexico. Two types of system are postulated: first, a simple social division between a ruling landowning nobility, profiting from the production and distribution of goods through markets and taxation, and a dominated peasantry

providing not only agricultural products but also crafts,
construction labour and an army (Sanders and Price: 11-12).
Secondly, a more elaborate pattern of social differentiation;
for example, it is said that Central Mexico had defined strata
of professional warriors, merchants, and craftsmen between the
nobility and the peasantry, with the lowest classes of serfs
and slaves (both temporary and permanent) forming the bottom
of the social pyramid (Sanders and Price: 12; 152-153). At
this juncture it is important to mention a Mexican social
institution, the calpulli. For some anthropologists, the
calpullis constituted true clans, although for those who think
in terms of social class structures, the calpullis were not clans.
Others adopt the idea of a combined form of clan and class (Wolf,
1972: 125). Nevertheless it is commonly accepted that the
calpulli was a military, religious and economic unit: the land
was owned by the calpulli, not by the individual, and the tribute
was paid by it as a unit. However, as the nobility's power grad-
ually increased, the chiefs were progressively deprived of their
juridical prerogatives and were subjected to the royal commissary
(Wolf, 1972: 130). Sanders and Price characterise this period as
being one of "large imperialist states, intensive development of
urbanism, and widespread trading networks", the main strongholds
being firstly the Toltec Tula and afterwards the Aztec Tenochtitlan
(Sanders and Price: 32). Compared with Teotihuacan, Tenochtitlan
is described as a more secular state in which religious and politi-
cal functions were separate, in contrast to Teotihuacan (Sanders
and Price: 170). Tenochtitlan has been regarded as the most mili-
tarist state in Mesoamerica, using war as a constant method of
intimidation and subjection (Wolf, 1972: 121), and being perhaps

the largest macro-state in Mesoamerica (Sanders and Price:
207-208). Wolf argues that the Mexican or Aztec "empire" was
not a permanently instituted administrative conglomerate. The
Aztecs, like bands devoted to pillage:

> "...preferred the quick incursion to permanent
> occupation and invasion to collect tributes
> to permanent administration. In this way, the
> traditional institutions of the subjected pop-
> ulations remained untouched....."

> (Wolf, 1972: 136-137)

Thus the Spaniards witnessed a military competition between
states and imperialist macro-states (based on conquest and tribute)
which were engaged in a process of consolidation. The Spanish took
advantage of these circumstances to the benefit of their own emerg-
ing empire.

2. The Spanish Colony

a) The main features of the Spanish system of exploitation

The Spanish régime appropriated the land, the sub-soil and
the human labour. Nothing in the previous social structures
remained untouched. Wherever highly developed societies existed,
the relations of production were profoundly altered. The indigenous
societies in Central Mexico were re-arranged for the exploitation
of agricultural resources and of the vast mineral deposits.
Accordingly, powerful enterprises profited from mining and planta-
tions. In Guatemala, where deposits of gold and silver were
negligible, agriculture played the principal rôle. The main enter-
prises were wheat and sugar plantations, many of which were in the
hands of religious orders. The cultivation of indigo as a luxury

product spread from Guatemala to many other parts of Mesoamerica.

The Indians were allowed to continue to produce cheaper crops although some Indians profited from expensive products and became rich themselves. In the beginning it was Spanish policy to give some of the prehispanic Indian ruling class the same status as the Spanish encomenderos. These privileged Indians collected tribute and personal services, and developed enterprises by exploiting the Indian peasantry and supporting the Spanish system. This policy was an attempt to divide the Indians along class lines, and was only one of several divisive measures which the Spaniards used to consolidate their rule. In almost every field of social life, the Spaniards had a deliberate policy of establishing, re-inforcing or maintaining a fragmented population. At the same time as imposing a single political and economic system upon separate states or embryonic kingdoms, the Spaniards took advant-age of the prehispanic separation of the Indian populations, and reinforced it by superimposing the old Spanish institution of municipios (local administrative units). The introduction of the municipio began with the early phenomenon of reducciones de indios (Indian concentrations) resulting in the growth of pueblos de indios or Indian towns. These were apparently set up to protect the Indians from attacks carried out by the first conquistadores-encomenderos and later also by mestizos and black slaves running away from Spanish persecution. In fact the pueblo de indios served to facilitate the collection of the tribute. Local linguistic differences[1] were also intensified by imposing one or more distinc-tive costumes on each town, which also facilitated economic, politi-

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[1] More than 200 Mayan dialects are spoken within the area that now forms the state of Guatemala.

cal and military control.

By compelling the Indians to abandon their traditional pattern of distribution in scattered villages and hamlets and forcing them to come together in new 'concentrations' or European-like centres, the Spaniards implanted their European sense of state, expressed in explicitly juridical terms. They maintained that the Indians, as "human beings", had to live in a "policía" or a "república". Policía, república, city and state eventually came to signify a single entity (Mörner, 1970: 18). Even though this programme of urban concentration had been under way since the early sixteenth century, it had not been fully adopted by 1530. It was actually implemented in Guatemala during the famous debate between Las Casas and Marroquín, Bishop of Guatemala (Mörner, 1970: 43-44). The Indian concentration is seen as the economic and ethnic antithesis of the hacienda. Joined together for tributary and military control, these urban clusters were populated by Indians who were at the same time poor peasants. Their land was communally held, but although collectively owned, was only partly worked for communal benefit. The rest was not privately owned either, but registered in a kind of family usufruct (Mörner, 1970: 49). In New Spain (México) this land, which surrounded the community, was designated as 500 varas (Mörner, 1970: 168), namely 420 m^2. A distribution of about eleven km^2 per community is also mentioned (Wolf, 1972: 192). Although this figure was eventually modified, it gives an idea of how miserable a portion of land was left to the Indians.

Each community was considered as an economic unit, and the Indian authorities had the duty of collecting and paying the

community tribute, and of saving part, which was used for communal funds (_cajas de comunidad_). The economic base was the communal land, which was not transferable without approval from the Crown. Compulsory religious festivities periodically used up both individual and communal surplus in rituals. This ideological device was a mechanism which reduced all the people to the same level of economic deprivation, a fact so conspicuous that some writers have even argued that the Indian community was a community without social classes.

By previously mentioning the Indian community as the economic and ethnic antithesis of the _hacienda_ the other principal element in the Spanish American system has been brought into discussion. An extensive debate has developed about the origins of the _hacienda_, although the primary lines are obvious: cattle breeding, which was introduced by the Spaniards, spread very rapidly throughout the Indian communities. The Indians were permitted to keep sheep, goats, pigs and poultry, but the Spaniards kept the breeding of cattle on a large scale for themselves. As far as the debate concerning the origin of the _hacienda_ is concerned, Mörner mentions two different possibilities in his compact review of the matter: did intense native depopulation cause an economic crisis and the beginning of the system by an increase in the demand for _hacienda_ products which enabled the _haciendas_ to raise their prices, or did a fall in prices stimulate the birth of self-sufficient economic units, (the _haciendas_), which did not need to respond to demand and thus produced below their real capacity (Mörner, 1975: 20-23)? This author also states that it is not yet known whether the _hacienda_ phenomenon began to become widespread in Latin America in the seventeenth century. He mentions studies proving that they

existed in Mexico, where the first latifundia coincided with
a severe demographic and economic depression during the late
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Mörner, 1975: 15). Wolf
supports this by saying that the hacienda system came into
being in the seventeenth century as a result of an economic
depression. He maintains that an economically troubled Spanish
State changed the previous system of ownership, encomienda.
Formerly, the encomenderos profited from the crops produced by
Indian peasants but they did not have permanent rights over the
land. But now, according to the new system, the owners had un-
restricted and absolute rights to the land. The labour force
was provided by the peones, naborías or gañanes, the peasants
allowed to live on the hacienda, usually paid in kind and trapped
by debts in advance. The landowner paid the Indian tribute to
the State. Thus, over the private ownership system and the
peonage, "...the Colonos raised their new economic structure,
the main support for the new social order" (Wolf, 1972: 182).
Wolf reinforces his argument by saying that as a result of
economic depression, the hacienda was established to satisfy a
limited demand. The process of production was limited, as was
the volume of production and the use of the land. The landowners
only worked a part of the hacienda using old fashioned techniques.
The increasing expansion and greediness for land was not for the
purpose of increasing production but to deprive the Indians of
their most important means of production and to force them to
become dependent on work on the hacienda (Wolf, 1972: 183-184).
Mörner holds the same opinion: the hacienda system implied a
very low utilization of land, technology and capital, and product-
ivity depended on the amount of labour and workers. The profit

guaranteed a very high standard of living for the landowner
(Mörner, 1975: 35).

There are other non-economic factors surrounding the
origins of the hacienda. It has been suggested that the
hacendados appropriated increasing amounts of land in order to
build an economic and prestige base to enable them to become
part of a new aristocracy to which they made entry by buying
titles of nobility. At the same time the land-greedy hacendados
thereby eliminated rivals and acquired total control over whole
areas (Mörner, 1975: 24-25). This exploitation was not exclusive-
ly secular as the religious orders had extensive properties and
rivalled the encomenderos. Perhaps the most powerful religious
enterprise was that of the Jesuit order, expelled in the eighteenth
century from all the Spanish domains.

Several authors put forward the idea that the hacienda was
derived from the encomienda, although others tend to argue the
contrary. Studies on Chile, Mexico and Guatemala indicate, accord-
ing to Mörner, that a close relationship existed between the
former encomienda and the subsequent hacienda. In such cases the
encomenderos usually appropriated Indian lands included within
the boundaries of their encomiendas. Also, the previous possession
of an encomienda made the tenure of land easy, and the working
systems were basically the same in both types of estate. However,
if this theory can be defended for some specific regions, the
situation may have differed in other areas. The original encomienda
depended on the existence of a local Indian population, whereas
the later hacienda depended on the dissolution of this Indian
population and their transformation into a rural proletariat
(Mörner, 1975: 18-20).

In addition to the discussion on the origins of the
hacienda system there has also been a very wide ranging debate
on the true nature of the hacienda. Many authors maintain that
it was a feudal institution while others support the idea that,
unlike the feudal encomienda, it was a capitalist enterprise.
Others prefer to typify both encomienda and hacienda as mixed
entities, the encomienda as a precapitalist institution modified
by capitalist features and the hacienda as a capitalist enter-
prise modified by precapitalist feudal characteristics. Wolf
expresses the idea of a half feudal and half capitalist hacienda
that "...exhibited the characteristics of both systems as well
as their inherent contradictions" (Wolf, 1972: 183). For others,
like Mörner, the debate is still far from being solved (Mörner,
1975: 44).

Forced labour was one of the fundamental economic bases of
the Spanish colony. Mines, plantations and obrajes (textile
manufacturing centres) all worked with the forced labour of
Indians and slaves. However, slavery was gradually restricted
and ultimately abolished owing to the Crown's interest in getting
rid of an emerging powerful group which might challenge the Crown
itself. As a result the Indian was given the legal status of
King's vassal, in theory equivalent to the Spaniards themselves,
but actually to prevent the Indians being appropriated by anybody,
at least without the previous permission of the king. In fact,
the private owners of slaves and encomiendas came to be so power-
ful that they constituted a dangerous threat to the Government's
interest during the first three decades of the sixteenth century.
Consequently the central power abolished slavery in 1530 and later
the encomienda. In both cases, the religious orders were the main

advisors, supporters and agents of the Crown.

A similar phenomenon is apparent in the transformation of the original _repartimiento_ and _encomienda_ system in the sixteenth century. The _encomendero_ had full personal rights over the land, received the tribute directly from "his" Indians and decided on the type of work to be carried out at his own caprice. The Crown, fearing the possibility that it might help to reproduce in America the feudal powers which it had weakened successfully in Spain, retained absolute rights over the land for itself. The _encomendero_ was left as a simple collector and sender of tribute, and the _encomienda_ was restricted to the life of the _encomendero_ and his son; after the latter's death, according to the New Law of 1542-1543, everything returned to the Crown. Therefore, although the _encomienda_ was not entirely dissolved, the Government at least was able to exert some sort of control over the _encomenderos_, depriving them of their former absolute power over the Indians. The action against the personal services which the Indians used to be com-pelled to render to the _encomenderos_ was more successful; from 1549 onwards these services progressively disappeared in New Spain and Peru, and the Indians no longer paid tribute as personal services to the _encomendero_ (Mörner, 1970: 81, 162).

However, exploitation went on in a fundamentally similar manner, despite the reforms the Spanish were instituting throughout the period. After the fall of the _encomienda_, the scene is the same: once stripped of their land, the Indians came to depend on the _hacienda_, where they had to work once again under a system of virtually forced labour. Increasing debts to the landowner shackled the _peones_ permanently to the _hacienda_. Rural workers were divided

into those who worked the uncultivated areas and those who
worked the areas for commercially lucrative crops (the baldillos
and the acasillados in Mexico). The peonage process grew rapidly
from 1540 and by the very end of the seventeenth century the Vice-
royalty of New Spain was already controlled by a new aristocracy
of rich landowners (Wolf, 1972: 184-185; 189).

Later on, the Spanish administration changed the form of
recruitment: a system of rationing of Indian labour, or raciona-
miento directly controlled by the State, was established during
the second half of the sixteenth century in New Spain and Peru.
This meant that forced labour was regulated through a type of
labour exchange, bolsa de trabajo, in terms of time, the distance
to the work place and the amount of workers provided per community.
The encomenderos had to apply for the Indian labour they required
to the Government authorities, going to the labour exchange which
provided them with the wage earning workers (Mörner, 1970: 162-163;
Wolf, 1972: 170). However the repartimiento and the state con-
trolled labour exchange did not satisfy the growing demands of the
new hacendados. Mörner informs us that in about 1632 the hacendados
of Central Mexico had to contract more and more Indian volunteers,
the gañanes or naborías. The Crown favoured the emergence of free
wage-earning Indian workers, making sure however, that these
Indians paid tribute in their respective communities. Thus a
new agrarian structure was consolidated with the hacienda as its
fundamental base (Mörner, 1970: 266-267).

So far, we have dealt with the main classes during this
period. There were, of course, other groupings which, although
less significant to the present description, did prevent a simplis-

tic interpretation of the articulation between ethnicity and
class structure in the Colony. They will be briefly described:
first, it is important to note that the Indians themselves were
divided economically, basically following the ancient prehispanic
lines. The Spaniards supported the ancient Indian class division
while significantly reducing the power of the former ruling class.
This fact tended to bring about political disunity within the
dominated ethnic group. Also, like the differentiated Indian
group, the Spaniards did not constitute an economically homogene-
ous dominant group either. Soon after the Conquest, more and more
Spaniards were marginalized by a small privileged minority which
kept the means of production in its own hands. In about the
middle of the sixteenth century, "several thousands" of Spanish
and mixed "wanderers" already existed in New Spain and Guatemala.[1]
In Peru their proportion was also very high, perhaps a quarter or
a half of the whole Spanish population (Mörner 1970: 75). Wolf
estimates the "wanderers" of Mexico forty years after the Conquest
as "four thousand Spaniards without any apparent means of subsis-
tence" (Wolf, 1972: 182). As far as the non-Spanish groupings
are concerned, the tribute was compulsory for Indians as well as
free blacks and mulattos. To some extent the mestizos were excepted,
if not by legal concessions, at least in practice (Mörner, 1970:
164-165).

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[1] These constituted a growing body of unemployed, outcasts and drop-
outs, generally Spaniards who could not participate in repartimien-
tos (of land and Indians), encomiendas or any of the other economic
resources already monopolized by a minority of powerful colonizers.
In addition, there were new waves of Spanish migrants and an in-
creasing contingent of mestizos, all of whom had no land or Indians
and experienced immense difficulties in finding paid work, since
the economic structure was primarily based on the semi-feudal
exploitation of the quasi-serf Indians. All these groups, described
by the Spanish authorities as vagabonds, vagrants, idlers and
rovers, in debt and with no means of subsistence to provide them-
selves with even basic essentials, wandered about in gangs, steal-
ing whatever they could (Mörner, 1970: 75-80; Martínez, 1979: 287-
300; Wolf, 1972: 182).

b) The caste system

Spanish rule was based upon the class divisions which derived directly from the phenomena of exploitation. But the caste system might have not been directly related to such phenomena. In the very early days of the Colony, two groups confronted each other: Spaniards and Indians. Nevertheless, a new group, neither Indian nor Spanish, grew up quickly, consisting of the descendants of Indians, African slaves (either liberated or fugitives), the descendants of mixed Indians, Africans and Europeans "who could not settle either in the Indian communities or in the Spanish districts" As time passed there were also impoverished descendants of Spaniards (Wolf, 1972: 204). In 1650, this growing mestizo group numbered about 130,000, compared with 1,270,000 Indians and 120,000 Whites in New Spain. A hundred years later, the mestizo groupings, juridically called 'castes', had multiplied seventeen times (2,270,000 people) while the Indians who numbered 5,200,000 had multiplied only four times (Wolf, 1972: 206).

When miscegenation was already a conspicuous phenomenon, the Spanish juridical order established a colonial structure which ranked the Spanish group at the top and the Indian at the bottom. Between them was located the mestizo group, lower than the Spaniards but higher than the Indians; these people, the result of miscegenation between Spaniards and Indians and other combinations, made up the so-called castas. Identified in terms of colour, gente de color quebrado, the castes acted as a sort of common denominator by heaping together all those who were neither Spanish nor Indian. Therefore, caste was a judicial classification and a constraint for some groups of people who were thus racially labelled. So,

the fundamental points were, first, a formal racist distinction
and appellation, and secondly, a juridical endorsement of that
distinction. Although the Indians were not a caste in formal
terms, their insertion into a caste system made them actually
play the role of a caste. The colonial category of caste is
important for the general colonial context of ethnic discrimina-
tion and division.

The mestizo group was divided and classified into many castes
vertically dispersed in the hierarchy, ordered according to a
strict racist criterion. No other facts were invoked, even
though cultural, occupational and economic differences were also
present. At the top were those with "half Spanish blood" while
at the bottom were those who had only "traces or nothing of
Spanish blood", as the Spanish used to describe them. Some of
the categories included in this caste scale were the mestizo,
that is to say the combination of Spanish with Indian; lower
than mestizo was the combination of Spanish with mestizo, called
castizo; even lower was the so-called "jumping back" or salto
atrás, referring to the miscegenation of mestizo with castizo;
the mulato group was formed by the combination of Spanish and
blacks, while in a very low position was placed the zambo, the
combination of black with Indian; anybody having one black and
three non-black grandparents was called cuarterón, that is, "a
quarter".

These racist criteria were soon confirmed and established as
a natural law. Situated over the Indians and below the Spaniards,
the castes were also juridically constrained within a set area of
duties (Martínez, 1979: 269), although these did not include the

sort of formal or preconceived taxes and obligations that the
exploited Indians were compelled to provide. Because their rise
in the socio-juridical structure was entirely fortuitous, there
were no previous roles ascribed for the castes. Consequently,
individuals arose "who were neither serfs nor lords" (Martínez,
1979: 266-267). The mestizos were excluded from the rights of
the groups from which they originated, and especially denied the
rights granted to Spaniards. For example, the mestizos could not
be caciques (headmen), could not have Indians in encomienda, were
not allowed to work as court clerks or escribanos, notaries or
soldiers (Mörner, 1970: 176). Wolf considers that the castes were
discriminated socially rather than racially; thus if a mestizo,
i.e. a member of a caste, acquired a wealthy position such a person
could obtain from the authorities a new structural position and
could be transformed legally into a "White" according to the
Spanish formula "Que se tenga por blanco" (Wolf, 1972: 207).
Legal constraints banned caste members from certain guilds: some
of these were reserved for one caste only, while others were open
to several castes and a few constituted free unions (Samayoa:
Chapter XIX). Therefore, both guilds and castes were directly
related institutions. The mulatos, zambos and free blacks bore
the same burden as the Indians, namely tribute and forced labour,
but they were denied some of the exemptions given to the Indians.
Thus the social scale seems to have been as follows: Spaniards,
Indians, castes and slaves. In fact it functioned differently:
Spaniards, mestizos, Africans and the immense mass of oppressed
Indians at the bottom (Mörner, 1970: 172).

c) The Making of Ethnic Groups

When observing the mechanisms used by the colonizers to divide and rule the oppressed mass of the population it is clear that categories like Indians, mestizos and ladinos[1] were a device for consolidating the conquest. However it is necessary to differentiate such categories in Spanish terms in order to avoid confusing our attempts to interpret the present situation. During the early period of Spanish rule ethnic identities were deliberately created in terms of domination. The so-called "Indian" was conceived, defined, labelled, classified and placed within the colonial power structure. Indians were used as an instrument of production and articulated into the social structure, in contrast to the extermination carried out in most of Central America. Although economic relations were the basic factors, two secondary means of articulation were also imposed: the one fortuituous, biological miscegenation or mestizaje and the other deliberate, ideological indoctrination or ladinización. The mestizos, who were the consequences of the former, tended to be separated from the Indians. The early ladinos, consciously selected to act as link agents between the dominant Spaniards and the dominated Indians, were then reabsorbed into their communities. Thus mestizos and ladinos played clearly discernible roles in the early process, each playing out different kinds of discrimination. The mestizo was incidental, the ladino was instrumental, the mestizo was inseminated, the ladino was designed. Of course, there were also 'unselected' ladinos; since the foundation of the

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[1] Indian groups encouraged to adopt Spanish cultural characteristics and thus thought likely to serve the interests of the Crown.

early Colony, and because of the disintegration of Indian institutions many Indians separated themselves from their communities, and transferred themselves socioculturally to the Spanish milieu as marginal, discriminated groups without any regular social location.

It may be put forward that this was a general feature of the Spanish colonization of Latin America, even though in many places the labels are now differently applied. It is also possible as well that as Spanish rule was consolidated, the ladino instrument may have lost its original character and acquired another one; it may have become uncontrolled rather than planned. Although both mestizaje and ladinización continued, the label ladino may at some moment have been progressively abandoned in some areas (e.g. Peru, Mexico, etc.) leaving the term mestizo prevailing. Its broad use today may conceal its presence in former times, but the examination of ancient documents proves its broad use in earlier periods.

Karen Spalding discusses the manner in which the Spaniards in Peru maintained the boundary between themselves and the Indians, with the overlapping mestizo presence in between. How could the Spaniards maintain such a deep differentiation over generations and generations of miscegenation? (Spalding: 147-193). Here it is possible to return to the earlier argument. The conquerors made use of the mechanism of defining Indians by means of the caste system, that is not only biologically but also culturally and juridically. In other words, the Spaniards applied the range of the term mestizaje to generations and generations of miscegenation. At the same time the Spaniards applied a scale

of cultural diversification, classifying the various possibili-
ties in the cultural (non-biological) ladino-Indian contradiction.
There is evidence that in colonial Peru the term "Ladino" (now
abandoned) was used with a sense corresponding to that in Guate-
mala and Chiapas,[1] together with associated juridical caste hier-
archy. Spalding bases her argument mainly on those Spanish ideo-
logical devices which pivoted on the biological axis, while the
biological facade was only one of the many ways which the Spaniards
used to reproduce exploitation. Accordingly, it would be reason-
able to make the hypothetical assumption that Spaniards did not
in fact confuse a biological order (miscegenation, mestizaje) with
a sociocultural one (ladinización). So, two main ideological
schemes and nomenclatures could be used: one racial (related to
classification of miscegenation, namely Indians, mestizos and
Whites) and the other cultural (related to classification for
acculturation, namely Indians, ladinos and Spaniards). Hence to
assume some confusion in the Spanish terminology is to lose sight
of the Spanish resources for maintaining their privileges. While
the first scheme expressed by the racial caste label has endured
in the Andean region the second one referring to the term ladino
has persisted in Guatemala (the Mexican State of Chiapas, formerly
part of Guatemala, retains the same term).

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[1] Ladinos, as accultured and Spanish-speaking Indians, appear in
documents concerning Colombia, Mexico and Peru (Mörner, 1970:
123-124). The same is observed in Wachtel's analysis of the
work of the accultured Peruvian Indian Guamán Poma de Ayala,
who used to refer himself as a "Ladino Indian" (Wachtel: part 4).

d) The Indian Response to Colonization

In the seventeenth century the Indians were living in the most appalling conditions. There were many popular revolts with the rebellion of the tzotzil-tzeltales in Chiapas being perhaps the most important in Mesoamerica. At this stage these Indian populations had reached a disastrous crisis, which was both economic and demographic, due to relentless Spanish exploitation and to diseases which devastated vulnerable populations. Whole towns remained completely empty or were reduced to a very few families. Nevertheless the tribute to Spain was not reduced to take account of the depopulation and the Indian population had to pay exactly the same as they had done when they were ten times more numerous. In order to evade over-taxation the survivors of a plague had to escape from their community.

In 1712 a general tzotzil-tzeltal insurrection flared up, directed against Spanish oppression but at the same time strengthened by Spanish religious values. In fact, such messianic uprisings had the Virgin as their oracle, banner and captain. Priests, landowners and public officials were killed or expelled and whole towns had to be evacuated. The crushing Spanish response was not easy but was effective and cruel. Aware of the economic seeds of the insurrection, the Spanish Government ordered some changes, seeking to open a safety valve and to prevent new revolts. Accordingly it was decided among other things to re-examine the system of tribute and ecclesiastical taxation and to end the compulsory purchase to which Indians were formerly subjected. The repartimiento was suppressed and attempts were made to grant more power to the Indian authorities in the towns (Favre: 40).

Wasthe insurrection a class or an ethnic rebellion? In
a public debate carried out in the University of San Carlos of
Guatemala (Martínez and Carmack, 1978), the historian Severo
Martínez held to the former whereas the anthropologist Robert
M. Carmack maintained the latter. This can be quoted as illus-
trative of the opposing positions assumed on the matter. Differ-
ent authors consider that the Indian rebellions during the Colony
were not ethnic struggles, that is, they were not struggles of
Indians against non-Indians, or nativistic movements, but true
manifestations of class struggle. According to Severo Martínez
the Indians did not reinforce their cultural solidarity. Con-
versely, they were separated and divided in accordance with their
respective positions in the socioeconomic structure. During the
Colony, their constant rebellions reveal elements of class dis-
satisfaction. An Indian nobility can be observed exploiting the
Indian commoners and, concomitantly there were popular rebellions
against the abuses committed by the nobility. All of them were
of course equally inheritors of the prehispanic culture but they
were also situated and separated in distinct social classes. The
Indians did not develop an ethnic struggle since they did not
fight in defence of their cultural institutions; they simply
rebelled against unbearable exploitation. Once the rebellion's
aims had been achieved, the revolt ceased because, despite its
class origin, no consciousness of the social structure in which
the rebels had been placed had yet been achieved. In other words,
the Indian rebellions had little capacity to undermine the social
structure imposed by the Spaniards since this would require a
degree of consciousness that had not yet been reached. Thus,
Martínez estimates that on the one hand the Indians fought on

economic rather than cultural-ethnic grounds; on the other
hand, although they fought for economic reasons, they lacked
the consciousness required for a united class movement.
Martínez uses the tzetzal-tzoltil rebellion in Chiapas in 1712
as the most important Colonial example of Indian reaction in
Mesoamerica, when twenty-two Indian towns rose attempting to
establish a new Indian kingdom. Many Spaniards, churchmen as
well as ladinos, were killed or expelled and for five months the
Indians took almost total charge of the region. Although ladinos
of all ages and rank were killed, Favre implies that there was
a considerable degree of correspondence between ladino-hood and
land ownership or armed defence of this privilege (cf. p.52 and
54). The Indians structured their independent kingdom by attacking
the Church because they perceived that the Church was the real
apparatus of control. Having stormed the Church, they got rid of
the Spanish priests, and replaced them by Indians. Their first
decree was that the Catholic religion should remain intact and
that no religious heresies would be tolerated. Martínez con-
siders that since the Indians took power by means of and with
the aid of the ideology of their oppressors, they were doomed to
failure from the very beginning. The important point to note
here is that at that moment the tzotzil-tzeltales were not defend-
ing their native culture, and furthermore that they were not
defending themselves with that culture but by appropriating the
Colonial ruling ideology and apparatus. The symbol of the move-
ment was the "Virgen del Rosario" and its orders supposedly
emanated from a young Indian women metaphysically linked with the
Virgin although, as was discovered later, the orders in fact came
from the true Indian leaders. Consequently, Martínez continues,

the interesting thing is that they rebelled within the frame-
work of the Catholic Church and attempted to seize power and re-
constitute it in terms of the Church. Once ecclesiastical power
had been seized, action concentrated on the economic sphere. In
Favre's words, "at the same time that the ladinos' religious and
and political monopoly was broken, ladino control of economic
exchanges was also broken" (Favre: 317). After social control
had been taken, the Indians proceeded to the insurrectional
stage, seeking to overturn the social relationships. Martínez
and Favre agree in arguing that the Indian rebels sought to re-struc
ture , the Colonial system, that is, not to destroy it but to
retain it in order to use it for their own benefit (Favre: 320).
Two final remarks: first, the rebellion seems to have been a
class rebellion, and secondly, the Indians were already imbued
with Colonialism and had become politically detached from their
prehispanic past. Hence, the Indian struggles were not aimed at
the recovery of their ancient culture but at getting rid of ex-
ploitation (Martínez and Carmack: 4-6).

Other authors support a different hypothesis. Carmack
considers that the Colonial rebellions implied not only economic
but also cultural-ethnic differences, since they also sought to
recover the old prehispanic values. He asserts that the rebellions
in Guatemala occurred when Spanish rule attempted to break up the
community, an institution which was imbued with many prehispanic
features. Much later, when nineteenth century liberal reformers
attempted to destroy the Indian culture, more rebellions resulted.
According to this theory, the tzotzil-tzeltal rebels not only
sought to destroy Colonial economic exploitation but also to
restore the old prehispanic values. It is said that the Indians

made use of many prehispanic symbols like human sacrifice. Finally, Carmack says that it is not surprising the Indians used the Church for their own purposes because the prehispanic system was also theological (Martínez and Carmack: 6).

3. Mexico and Guatemala in the Nineteenth Century

a) Capitalist Expansion and Exploitation

It is generally agreed that some of the colonial institutions endured from the time of the Independence movement until well into the nineteenth century, although readapted to fit the new dependent capitalism. During the first half of the nineteenth century the most important agricultural institutions in Mexico were with those of the Colony: hacienda, community and rancho. According to Bellingeri and Gil, the hacienda was something more than a simple productive unit: it was a complex socioeconomic unit, essentially mercantile, based upon private ownership, with a regular nucleus of resident workers supplemented by groups of contracted seasonal workers. The rancho is defined as a productive unit, either dependent or independent from the hacienda, and usually smaller than the latter. The rancho had no resident labourers but was worked by the owner's (or tenant's) family and by seasonal workers (Bellingeri and Gil: 100). The community, as it was defined in colonial times, constituted the lands exploited by Indian families but owned collectively. Other subsidiary forms of land exploitation were precarious forms of tenure to some extent associated with the hacienda: arrendatarios, medieros and aparceros. All these agricultural forms were united by the common factor of obsolete colonial techniques, only occasionally interspersed with innovations (Bellingeri and Gil: 99-101). Between 1821 and 1880

this social structure was extended over an enormous agricultural sector, mainly engaged in subsistence activities. Its counterpart was the small hacendado sector commercializing its products beyond its own local area. As for mining activities, silver was the most important, despite severe crises in its exploitation, and industry was largely limited to textiles. Owing to poor internal market conditions, production was very limited for most of the nineteenth century. The fragmentation of the internal market was a structural concomitant of the consolidation of strong regional oligarchies, which were opposed not only to agricultural but also to industrial workers. The agricultural sector maintained its colonial configuration, attached to the hacienda and consisting of the serf-like acasillado peons, a greater number of seasonal workers, and tenants of precarious stability (González: 235-237). A very small salary was paid to the acasillados peons and in addition part of it was not given to the worker himself but deposited to his permanent account in the hacienda shop. The payment also included a corn ration and the concession to live in the hacienda, and to exploit a portion of it, that is the "opportunity" to work a minifundium without taxes. Thus exploitation was not primarily based on wages. On the other hand, the hacienda received from its tenants - rent in the form of production, work or money, or all three. Only seasonal and occasional workers received their payment in effective wages (Bellingeri and Gil: 103). In the Southern Indian communities indebtedness gradually broke up the strong communal cohesion which operated, restricting the supply of labour to the haciendas (Bellingeri and Gil: 112). During the first half of this century, the virtual absence of "liberated" rural workers and the predominance of forms of serf bondage was a common feature of many American countries. Mining was almost the only sector in Mexico which pro-

vided "liberated" workers for a patrón (Bellingeri and Gil: 111).

At the time of Independence, the haciendas had had to share territory with the Indian communities which were now granted some legal rights (legal status, autonomous administration, etc.) and allowed to retain some land. There were about 5000 haciendas in Mexico and more than 4500 Indian communities with the result that, as in other Spanish colonies in America, the country was polarized between large estates and fragmented communities, both being differentiated components of the same structural dichotomy. They constituted "units...which were economically linked..but socially and politically opposed to one another" (Wolf, 1969: 4, 5). Despite the fact that the colonial haciendas were linked together in a common economic framework, they "...soon became separate social worlds underwriting the social standing and aspirations of their owners" (Wolf, 1969: 4). Speaking in political terms, this author says that:

> "Seen from the perspective of the larger social
> order, each hacienda constituted a state within
> the State; each Indian community represented a
> small 'republic of Indians' among other 'republics
> of Indians'." (Wolf, 1969: 5)

In contradistinction to the situation of the hacienda, the peasant community was engaged mainly in subsistence agriculture, although workers supplemented this activity with occasional contracts. The severe crisis in mining and in commerce, as well as the structural problems of agriculture, resulted in the existence of enormous numbers of unemployed which, like any desclasado (outcast) group, took to pillage and begging (González: 237-238).

The situation in Guatemala was rather different. At first, in contrast to Mexico, the Central American Federation (the

political-administrative unit during the Colony and the first twenty years of the independence period) revealed itself as a nation in deepest economic chaos. Lacking important mining resources, the Capitancy of Guatemala was never a region vital to the Spanish economy. Its production was centred upon grana (cochineal), indigo, cane, cacao and other minor products. Hence, Central America entered the nineteenth century with a very weak economy, unable to compete in the international market, and its leading social groups were not dependent on essential productive activities. Only three years after Independence there was a very early attempt at liberal modernization, headed by a new group pressing for the redistribution of latifundia, which were all in the hands of the Church. In accordance with the new policies, a large quantity of former realengas and un-cultivated lands was transferred into private ownership. The early suppression of ecclesiastical lands and goods also affected Church interests, while also serving to block the immense political influence of the Church. The long civil war and anarchy which followed resulted in the return of quasi-colonial conservative forces which abolished all the liberal innovations and went back to a system of colonial type. The aristocracy, the Church and their respective latifundia were restored. During this period, before 1871, the economic base consisted of larger cattle lati-fundia, although they were largely unproductive. The main crops were indigo, produced on large haciendas by means of Indian forced labour, and cochineal which was generally produced on small prop-erties, with small capital and family labour. Such a precarious and conservative economy underwent a disastrous decline when artificial dyes were invented in the middle of the nineteenth

century. All these conditions together with the liberal precedent some forty years before, established conditions which were to be propitious for a reversal of the economic and political structures, and a second liberal movement was emerging under the triumphant Liberal Reform in Mexico.

In fact, since the first half of the nineteenth century, an increasingly powerful commercial bourgeoisie had been growing up in Mexico. Emerging alongside the process known as the Liberal Reformation, this group would eventually become the most important sector of the Mexican ruling class. After 1854, the struggle for economic and political control developed into a qualitatively distinct process. The social structure, so far virtually untransformed, now passed to a different and dynamic stage. By taking control over industrial, commercial, financial, agricultural and mining activities, the commercial bourgeoisie quickly appropriated large amounts of capital and thus came to exert political control over the indebted State. The Liberal Reformation was thus in no sense a popular action.

This new group attacked the traditional system of land tenure at three points, the Indian communities, the Church and the uncultivated lands. The purpose of this aggressiveness towards the land was the "liberation" of the peasants, who were generally working only for subsistence, for the labour market. The Church was deprived of its riches in terms of land, deprived of its colonial privileges and separated from the State, although not destroyed.

> "During the Reformation the Church lost its
> representation as an institution, in the active
> dominant classes, although its traditional in-
> doctrinating role could not be counteracted.
> As time progressed, the Church was able to recover

> the freedom it sought to continue its
> customary indoctrination and to regain
> its capacity to enrich itself."

> (González: 241)

The process of Reformation was enhanced by the suppression
of both Church and Indian lands, and in this way, it is suggested,
Mexico shifted from the old colonial formation to a capitalist
mode of production. "It was in the agricultural sector where the
particularities and limitations of such a deep change were most
evident", with an expansion of the _hacienda_ economy "to the detri-
ment of small units and with the generalization of peonage rela-
tionships" (Bellingeri and Gil: 114). Considering the Church
possessions at that time not as important as they had been in
the period before the eighteenth century,[1] Bellingeri and Gil
hold that the most decisive achievement of the Reformation was
to destroy the economy of the Indian communities. By confiscating
the communal lands and incorporating them into the _hacienda_
economy, the direct producers were massively exappropriated from
their means of production. Thus, mainly from the 1860's the
Reformation caused "the quick extinction of the economy of the
Indian communities liberating land and, above all, the labour
incorporated in it" (Bellingeri and Gil: 116).

In Guatemala, most of the programme of the Liberal Reforma-
tion was devoted to replacing earlier crops by coffee, because
of the great demand and high prices to be obtained on the inter-
national market. As mentioned previously the return to conserva-
tive systems after the first liberal attempt had been possible

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[1] The Jesuit Order was expelled from the Spanish domains in 1767
and its large land holdings were confiscated by the Spanish
Government.

because the economic structure had been precariously based on indigo and _añil_ production. Now however, coffee production demanded new forms of agrarian structure, in particular a new type of landowner, with the result that a different social and political system came into being. The Liberal process was deeper and more acute in Guatemala and in El Salvador than in the other Central American countries. The Guatemalan Liberal programme has been depicted as "a development model of a staple crop-exporting society ruled by a coffee producing bourgeoisie with a definite oligarchical formation." (Torres, 1973: 63).

The Governmental measures were drastic: the complete under-mining of the obsolete colonial Central American aristocracy resident in Guatemala; the private appropriation of large un-cultivated or _realenga_ lands; the full appropriation of Church estates, and the seizure of communal Indian lands. All these measures aimed at making coffee production a fundamental con-dition for progress.

Having obtained land and raw materials the new landowning class faced yet another problem: securing a labour force. By reviving ancient colonial devices forced labour was imposed on the Indians under the pretext of fines. In this way the Indians were deprived of their land, and thus, having no land to work they were consequently typified as lazy. Laws against laziness were promulgated and offenders were punished with compulsory work in the coffee _haciendas_. Serf-like relationships were thus built into the new capitalist scheme. At the same time another segment of the peasantry, also deprived of their land, were allowed to work and to live on the _haciendas_; these _colono_ day labourers

represented another non-capitalist type of exploitation inasmuch as their wages were paid partly in money and partly in kind. With the introduction of this system, the formerly "patriarchal attitude" of the Spanish and criollo landowners to their workers disappeared and gave way to menial relationships which were pervaded by an atmosphere of unbelievable cruelty (Torres, 1973: 81).

Land concentration continued rapidly and simultaneously German coffee producers appeared on the scene to profit from the new national policies. Up to then Guatemala had had international trade mostly with England and Germany, but from the beginning of the twentieth century there was a massive increase in banana cultivation, and the country tended more and more to be linked with the United States.

> "Investment in bananas, exclusively by North American capital, was not possible until the beginning of the present century when financial resources and industrial techniques made the business profitable, mainly due to the introduction of refrigerated transport, railway construction and faster sea navigation. Fifty years earlier, when coffee cultivation began, these circumstances did not exist. Moreover, banana cultivation began during the state of transition from free capitalist competition to monopoly domination in the metropolitan countries, when two or three developed countries ....came to master the world market...."

> (Torres, 1973: 90-91)

Thus the change of crops meant that nearly every decision affecting the country was made outside it. Every stage of production, internal or international transport and commercialization was virtually controlled by foreign enterprises, which determined land tenure and productive relationships, means of communication and infrastructural installations. The economic and political concession was total and absolute, without restriction, and all

vestiges of state sovereignty were given up.

In this context, the seeds of rebellion once again took root in Mexico with the most violent results in Yucatan and Chiapas. In the latter area the liberals introduced a special policy. After 1844 the law preventing any cession of uncultivated lands was modified on behalf of the latifundia, and Indian communal lands were the first to be seized, on the ground that fallowing periods, which were necessary for agriculture, had made the land legally derelict. In 1856 the tzotzil-tzeltales protested to the Government over the spoliation of their lands, but the Government did not recognise the validity of Indian ownership titles and awarded the lands to the powerful latifundists of San Cristobal, the State capital (Favre: 58). Between 1856 and 1875 the Government also nationalized the Church latifundia, which comprised 30% of potentially productive land in Chiapas (Favre: 55). The landowners of the Chiapan Highlands usually preferred to hire "their" Indian workers to the coastal plantations instead of using them on their own latifundia, which is why they now "devoted themselves to breeding Indians where they had previously raised sheep or livestock" (Favre: 67).

b) The Indian Rebellions

Between 1820 and 1880 rural guerrilla movements and urban rebellions proliferated in Mexico. The most numerous were the peasant risings, normally characterised in ethnic terms, which were encouraged by the suppression of Indian communal properties and by relentless exploitation. The Indian peasant masses who had no clear class consciousness and had been subdued by colonial

indoctrination for 400 years, rebelled under religious banners without any rational identification of the economic root of their problems (González: 245). Since they did not identify their interests as a particular class, their reaction fell under the control of messianic management from Church elements. In this context, the "caste war", as the violent and extensive uprising of Maya Indians of Yucatan has been called,[1] established "a theocratic regime". A Maya "State" supported by intense religious worship, came to be constituted (González: 248). Thus the class struggle against exploitation and the spoliation of communal land by increasingly expanding henequén plantations, acquired "the character of a true ethnic war in which the extermination of the large landowner 'race' was the main incentive" (González: 246-247). Similarly strong manifestations of ethnic affiliation led, not only in Yucatan but in other rebellions, to a "complete rejection of the State. The peasants did not identify at all with 'Mexico' or the 'nation' as categories" (González: 249).

In Chiapas, the Indians reacted in about 1860 by renewing some of their traditional structures and by consolidating themselves on religious bases, as in Yucatan. As in the 1712 rebellion, this insurrection spread with violence but was brutally overwhelmed. Here we may compare two of the main uprisings in Mexico, which occurred in another Maya region: the colonial rising in 1712 and this latter one in 1869, both of which brought the whole system to a major point of crisis. According to Favre both exhibited:

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[1] Between 1847 and 1853 but not completely extinguished until 1901.

> "...at first, the aspect of a religious
> reformation. This implies the progressive
> re-adaption of internal and external relation-
> ships. This re-adaption finally resulted in
> a radical challenge to the colonial system
> leading to armed conflict, insurrection in the
> strict sense. The religious roots of the in-
> surrection and its specific ideological con-
> tent explain the 'fanaticism' of the insurr-
> ectionists as well as the breadth and duration
> of their movement, commonly seen as a 'caste
> war'..."
>
> (Favre: 288)

Nevertheless, this anthropologist argues that neither of the two

insurrections were actually an ethnic or "caste" war, since their

true character was socioeconomic. There was no solid Indian

participation, and there were also examples of inter-ethnic

alliances. In 1712 and 1869 internal Indian rivalries between

factions, clans and families did not permit a common insurrectional

attitude. Such rivalries illustrate "the absence of any Indian

collective consciousness, as characteristic in the Tzotzil-

Tzeltales as in the other colonized populations of Mesoamerica"

(Favre: 324, 325). Thus it was not possible either in the eight-

eenth or nineteenth centuries to integrate all the Indians in the

struggle. What is more, since the very beginning the Chamulas in

1712 and the Zinacantecs in 1869 were on the side of the ladinos.

That is why these were not strictly ethnic wars and it is, in

Favre's judgement, an error to give either of these struggles an

ethnic character or describe them as caste or race wars as has

been alleged. "These insurrections only had an ethnic content

for the ladinos who, led by fear, repressed all the Indians with-

out any discrimination between loyal and rebel Indians" (Favre:

323).

The same author considers that neither the 1712 nor the

1869 rebellions pretended to restore the old religion of the

prehispanic Mayas, since they never took an anti-Catholic stance. Although several Catholic priests were killed, they died, not because they were priests, but because they were ladino combatants who incidentally were priests, and they fell as soldiers, not as religious victims. The Indian rebels tried to smash the religious monopoly held by the ladinos because they interpreted their social and economic exploitation as being caused by their religious inferiority. They attempted to seize the religious power sources so as to turn them against the ladino power holders. So, with the Catholic religion in their hands, the Indians aimed to free themselves socioeconomically (Favre: 314-315). As time progressed there was an increasing involvement in both insurrections of Indians working on the plantations whose only choice was between fighting and going back to conditions of serfdom. In 1869, most of the fighters deserted to the ladino side when disaster overtook them. Instead of the thousands of proselytes, only eight hundred remained with the defeated leader, mostly plantations and rancho serfs for whom the only alternative would have been to suffer dreadful reprisals (Favre: 299, 301). In fact, after the defeat their exploitation knew no bounds.

Unable to escape or to find free lands, the Indian peasants remained fatally trapped in the latifundia and shackled to it by the traditional debt system. If an indebted worker died, his obligations were transferred to his descendants or his collateral kinsmen, "in such a way that one single indebted individual could lead all his family or his lineage into serfdom" (Favre: 62-65). As in Guatemala, these peones were forced to work in the coastal plantations under corrupt contracts, suffering the worst conditions

both during the journey and the work season in the plantation.

The assault on Indian lands in Chiapas multiplied. In 1878 the Government abolished the institution of collective lands and sold them at public auctions, once more on behalf of the latifundists of San Cristobal. All the dispossessed Indians were automatically attached to the _hacienda_ under conditions of serfdom (Favre: 59, 63). Between 1875 and 1908 coffee plantations penetrated, mostly German enterprises which were no longer able to expand further in Guatemala by that time.[1] At the same time the Government decided to grant vast areas of the Usumacinta basin to North American, English and Spanish timber enterprises (Favre: 55-57).

4. Popular Movements in the Twentieth Century

a) The Mexican Civil War

The voracious expansion of capitalism during the Liberal Reformation in Mexico came to a high point in the final period of the liberal process at the end of the nineteenth century. Rapid economic development was seen to be inexorably linked to the cession of Mexican resources to foreign enterprises. Simultaneously, the relentless exploitation of the peasants and workers, the seizure of their land and the official corruption established by the Mexican bourgeoisie extended the rifts in an already shaky structure. Under the rule of Porfirio Díaz who succeeded the Liberal leader Juárez, the immense social problems remained

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[1] German agricultural and finance companies were facing increasing competition in Guatemala and sought other possible areas for expansion in Chiapas.

beneath the surface as unresolved as before. The dictatorship combined economic, ideological and political repression, and a strong ideological current within the central power apparatus worked towards the dissolution of Indian ethnicity, which was accused of being the main obstacle to progress. Accordingly, a massive injection of "White foreigners" was seen as a "healthy" antithesis. To further this policy, 32 million hectares had been surveyed about the end of the nineteenth century, and in 1894 twenty-nine companies had managed to obtain possession of over one fifth of the country (Wolf, 1969: 16). Of course, this was achieved at the expense of the small cultivators who were completely deprived of their land. At the same time and as far as the agrarian bourgeoisie was concerned, in 1910 there were more than 8,000 haciendas, averaging 3,000 hectares, although there were some haciendas over 100,000 hectares (Wolf, 1969: 16-17). Once collective land ownership was juridically abolished, the elimination of the Indian communities was a 'fait accompli'. The picture was always the same: the Indians, having the "freedom" to alienate their lands by their individual will, found themselves forced to sell the lands in order to survive. This huge peasant mass remained "free" to be hired under the hard conditions already described or to increase the unemployed mass. Immense numbers of villages became swallowed up in the expanding haciendas; the villagers not only lost their land but also their freedom to organise themselves. Nevertheless, many other units survived as independent entities without any land, thus becoming targets for increased repression by the dictatorship.

Such factors, together with the infiltration of ideological tendencies like anarchism, came together to cause the outbreak of a

rising. The rebellion began as a peasant insurrection in November 1910, so spontaneously that it had no particular command structure nor any organised programme. Morelos, the insurrectional focus, was a densely populated region with a high proportion of Indians clustering around socially cohesive communities which had lost their land and were utilized by sugar haciendas as a reserve for their work force. However, these communities had already achieved a high degree of consciousness of their community interests and had shown vigorous resistance to dependence on the haciendas. The rebellion, led by the ranchero Zapata, himself independent of the communal land, began with a religious motif.

> "The Zapatistas carried the image of the Virgin
> of Guadalupe on their battle flags and on their
> broad-brimmed hats, thus validating their demands
> for a return to an old agrarian order with symbols
> which also promised a return to a more pristine
> supernatural state."
>   (Wolf, 1969: 29)

This fraction of the Mexican Revolution began with intrinsic problems which subsequently were to bring about the collapse of the rebellion. It had its origins in the local problems of a locally oriented peasantry, which had a considerable reserve of independent resources. The peasants had links with some urban intellectual rebels sharing an anarchico-syndicalist tendency, but the rebellion had its base in the villages. The advantages and drawbacks of the movement have been considered to rest on the fact that "it was primarily based on the peasantry, and fought for peasant ends" (Wolf, 1969: 31). The Morelian rebels claimed land and once it was seized, any other social claim, like the rights of industrial workers or the recovery of national resources in foreign hands, was neglected. Thus they did not extend their

activities to regions outside their local area. The narrowness
of their purposes and of the zone of action "limited their appeal
to other Mexicans who did not share the same background and were
not caught up in the same circumstances" (Wolf, 1969: 32).

Another revolutionary focal point was located in the
Northern Chihuahua. This area was characterized by a strong
industrial and commercial dominant class, great mobility of the
work force for estates, mines and railroads, a growing middle
urban group made up of merchants and rancheros, an almost com-
plete monopoly of land while 95.5% of families had no individual
title to land, and lastly, a substantial cattle herding population.
In contrast with the other insurrectional centre, which was based
on sedentary Indian peasants, this was based on miners, rancheros,
cowboys and even smugglers, all of whom not only demonstrated a
wide range of operations and mobility but also a high capacity
to acquire weapons (Wolf, 1969: 32-35). Thus they had no interest
in developing a coherent land reform programme for the lands which
were falling under their control. This was due to the cattle herd-
ing sector's indifference to tenurial reforms, since fragmentation
would not benefit the ranch lands. Furthermore the prevailing
state of latifundia meant that they had a large stock of cattle
available to sell to the United States in return for weapons.
However, perhaps the most important factor was the formation of
an army from the new bourgeoisie. That is why this northern
insurrection encouraged the emergence of an elite interested in
land; it was a movement which had no interest in or awareness of
these profound and social demands.

So both movements attempted to destroy the existing status

quo but were completely separate and uncoordinated and hence unable to seek viable and coherent formulas to produce a new social order (Wolf, 1969: 36-37). There was also an ambiguous new Constitutionalist Movement comprising both moderate and radical wings, oscillating between timid reformism and the vital overthrow of the establishment. By assuming a centrist way between the positions of Zapata and Villa, this movement made ideological claims for a nationalist restructuring of the nation and was able to control strategic areas. Both Zapata and Villa were eventually defeated and killed, and the Central Government began a reformist programme: the abolition of peonage, free movement of labour, dominating the trade unions for the benefit of the Government. Agrarian reform had to wait for nearly fifteen years when ejidos were granted to the communities. The vigorous effort towards industrialization led to rapid economic development, enriching a progressively powerful elite and making deeper the abyss between the new bourgeoisie and the workers and peasants for whom the benefit has still not come.

A conspicuous fact was the Government's development of a sophisticated international image of freedom and progress, while what actually happened was considerable economic and political expansion through the region on behalf of the powerful dominant class. Unresolved structural problems still persist, and several regions, particularly Chiapas, have once again been the scene of peasant unrest and governmental suppression. Meanwhile, in Guatemala, what is now an open struggle involving significant Indian participation has brought new elements to the history of the region.

b)   The Insurgence in Guatemala

Some time ago, the Mexican historian Jiménez Moreno stated
that the process of change in Guatemala had always been late
compared with Mexico.   In Mexico, the encomienda had been replaced
by the repartimiento around 1600, in Guatemala in 1720;   the
abolition of communal lands had began in Mexico in 1859 and was
reinforced in 1867, whereas it did not happen in Guatemala until
1877 (Viking Fund: Chapter 12).   The strength of Moreno's claim
is reinforced when the Mexican Revolution is seen in its regional
and chronological context.   Its singularity, characterized by
Beals as one "unique to Mexico and absent through Latin America",
with its strong emergent nationalist and mestizo ideology affect-
ing the state's policy towards Indians (Beals: 229), has no equiva-
lent in early twentieth century Guatemala.   However, when changes
occurred in Guatemala in 1944 the assumed a-synchronic similarity
of the historical pattern in both countries can no longer be
argued.   This time the Guatemalan character of popular insurgence
and, in a sort of counterpoint, the Government's policy towards
social demands, formed a unique experience in the recent history
of Latin America.

When the dictator Ubico's régime was overthrown in 1944,
seventy-five years of Liberal dictatorship collapsed[1].   The
rebel movement, multiform in its origins, expressed popular weari-
ness and discontent with a long-established, obsolete and inflexible
form of rule.   The semi-feudal character of rural relationships
dominated by an old-fashioned coffee-growing export-import oli-

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[1] The paragraphs which follow, although based on well known facts,
owe much to works of Aguilera, Albizúrez, Bran, Instituto de
Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, Selser, and Torres (1977).

garchy was in conflict with the emerging industrial bourgeoisie. The poverty of the working masses, who had the potential to form an internal market, was enhanced by a severe socioeconomic crisis. The American Companies' dominance of the best lands, the electrical power system, communications and the few ports, as well as the weak financial state of the country, were unquestionable facts. All these, along with the increasing demands from a poor but growing urban petty bourgeoisie, led to a widespread political crisis, which was fostered by international opposition to fascism, since proclamations against fascism exalted the principles of freedom and democracy. The dictator, whose policies indicated his support for some aspects of Germany's National Socialism, was compelled by the Government of the United States to take proceedings against the vast German properties, mainly coffee plantations, and a big US military base was established. Taking advantage of both local and international conditions, the revolutionary movement sprung up among groups of dissimilar socioeconomic origins and ideological orientations. Hence neither the civic struggle nor the armed movement maintained a clear or united ideological stance, although their main common aim was to get rid of the suffocating dictatorship.

If the participation of the bulk of the working and peasant masses is observed, it can be said that the 1944 Revolution came to the people but not from the people. The citizens were provided with dignity and human rights, civil liberties, the democratic organisation of public institutions, freedom for political parties to function, secret ballots, social security and the provision of education. These and more measures came from the top in only five months. After the first free elections in the whole of Guatemalan

history, additional laws were promulgated: a labour code,
a municipal code, regulations for social security and cooperatives.
Thus, the transformation began with superstructural changes. The
next Government of this democratic period, headed by Colonel
Arbenz, launched an economic programme attempting to end the
country's absolute dependence on the United States: the con-
struction of means of communication and transport opening to the
Atlantic Ocean, until then in the hands of US railway companies;
the construction of a national port on the Atlantic coast, until
then a monopoly of the US banana enterprise United Fruit Company;
the construction of a national electric energy plant to speed
industrial development, until then a monopoly of the US enter-
prise Electric Bond and Share Company; and above all, the launch-
ing of an Agrarian Reform exclusively affecting extensive un-
cultivated lands; the largest landowner was the United Fruit
Company which had no more than 15% of its over 550,000 acres
under cultivation (Jonas: 49).

However, the system of private ownership as well as the rest
of the means of production remained untouched. The progressive
government of Arbenz attempted to eradicate the obsolete quasi-
feudal relationships of the countryside and tried to develop a
modern capitalist system with a profoundly and genuinely national-
ist character. In its international relationships the regime was
characterized by a strong anti-imperialist face. In a larger
perspective, such an international character can be seen as a
prelude for the future Cuban revolution. However, as far as
internal   relationships were concerned, the Guatemalan
nationalist regime constantly expressed its desire to get rid of
obsolete pre-capitalist conditions and to develop modern capitalist

relations, perhaps assuming this to be a necessary step in any future advance to socialism. In fact, Arbenz's régime only attempted to put into practice measures of reform long recommended by the United Nations Organisation. Among these measures, urgent for national development and inherent in national sovereighnty, the Agrarian Reform only benefitted some 10,000 peasants in the seventeen months following its promulgation. The landowners, headed by the US United Fruit Company, refused to concede even waste land.

The United Fruit Company, the US Department of State, the CIA, the Guatemalan agrarian bourgeoisie and elite sections of the National Army, concerted the action leading to the collapse of the nationalist regime. By using the characteristic ideological messages of fanatical McCarthyite anti-communism in the context of the Cold War, the Eisenhower administration, which controlled the aforementioned institutions, launched a huge international campaign against the Guatemalan "communist menace", culminating in the invasion of some 300 people, US mercenaries included, from neighbouring Honduras in June 1954. The National Army carried out a coup against the Government and within a few days everything was over and a dictatorship was re-established.

This event is described by Torres, who quotes material concerning the CIA intervention, as the first opportunity for the CIA and the US Government to set up counter-revolutionary processes in Latin America (Torres, 1977: 32). It is important to note, however, that despite accusations of "communism", Arbenz's régime did not obtain significant support from the Socialist bloc.

Both international and internal factors led to the collapse of this democratic nationalist attempt. The present study is particularly concerned with the latter factors, among which the weakness of the working class organisations is particularly important. Susanne Jonas has written that

> "Their unions were dominated by a petty-bourgeois leadership....The dominant political parties were not working-class parties. Class consciousness increased through the process of organising; but given the near absence of worker organisation prior to 1944, ten years were insufficient to permit the development of a popular and working-class structure strong enough to withstand the unified attack by the Guatemalan Right and the United States."

(Jonas: 54)

Since then, the losses sustained by the labour movement, the return of national resources to trans-national enterprises, extended repression, in short, the return to the old order, brought about a new wave of repression and counter-measures which have resulted in considerable bloodshed. However, the brief decade of democracy left its traces: the experience gained in popular organisation, and the politicisation of the working class and peasantry, including the Indian communities. Between 1946 and 1954, Trade Unions quickly gained adherents; many Trade Unions were organised, including a powerful federated peasant organisation which came to include 1700 organisations and more than 200,000 affiliates. The Indian communities underwent an "opening" process into the national political atmosphere. The ethnic problem requires an extended analysis but the relevant data are unfortunately not available. Severo Martínez interprets the transformation of the Indians during the democratic decade as follows: previously characterized as a colonial serf category and subdued by quasi-

feudal exploitation, Indians did not begin to be transformed
in depth until the 1944 Revolution, because until then important
features of their socioeconomic situation had remained constant.
He holds that the Indian-serf category endured after the Colony
because the socioeconomic conditions of the pueblos de indios
endured preserving them as "Indians"; there were no changes
profound enough to modify this. After Independence, he maintains,
tribute disappeared although both forced labour and pueblos de
indios remained; the Liberal Reformation disturbed the structure
of these pueblos de indios by abolishing the communal lands of
the colonial towns, but the Indian category remained as long as
the forced labourer or serf category persisted. Nevertheless,
the 1944 Revolution abolished what had been the key in the forma-
tion and maintenance of the Indian ethnic category, that is,
forced labour, the basis of colonial exploitation. As a result
of the abortive Revolution the Indian was transformed in a signi
ficant number of cases from a forced labourer into a proletarian.
The 1954 counter-Revolution could not re-establish forced labour,
even though some of the cultural characteristics of the former
colonial serfs have persisted (Martínez and Carmack: 1).

Counter-revolutionary methods and opposition to them have
resulted in the ruthless massacre of hundreds of people, but since
1954 anti-Government forces have become more coherent and their
resistance more organised. This process was expressed by an
author saying that

> "There is an obvious quantitative difference
> between the frightened peasants who ran to hide
> from the assassin gangs of Castillo Armas in
> the second half of 1954 and the nearly 80,000
> peasants, who paralysed the country's agro
> export economy in February-March 1980 by a
> vigorous and extraordinary strike."

(Bran: 15)

After the first wave of terrorism following the overthrow of
Arbenz's Government, the opposition began to take root among
the decimated Trade Unions and in the University, although
the weak organisation, subject to intense opposition, did not
have a crucial effect on the imposed regime.

The Labour Code, the Agrarian Reform Law and the Trade
Unions were abolished in 1954, all classified as "communist"
dangers. Not one of the former political parties was able to
survive, except the Communists who were relentlessly persecuted,
although operating in secrecy. In 1960, because of the Govern-
ment's involvement in Kennedy's planned invasion of Cuba and the
use of Guatemala as a launching base, sectors of the National
Army attempted an unsuccessful mutiny, which was in fact the
origin of the first guerrilla movement. In 1961 the "13 November
Rebel Movement" was founded which began operations in the north
eastern areas and eventually split into two separate guerrilla
movements. The Communist Party had proclaimed armed struggle
as necessary since 1960 and, accordingly, an early but unsuccess-
ful attempt was unleashed. In 1962 it attempted to coordinate
the diverse rebel military groups and in the same year, the first
important popular movement since Arbenz was overthrown, took place.
Working class organisations, which had not yet recovered from the
massacres of 1954, could not take the initiative to provide the
necessary leadership. Student and petty-bourgeois sectors
played an important role in the general strike and for more than
two months the Government (that is to say, the Army) was unable
to bring the situation under control. Since then the Army has
wielded the real power, whether formally or informally, either by
exercising control or by seizing Government directly. It has

become the "fundamental mainstay of the State apparatus and an indispensable piece of the structure of power" (IIPS: 425).

The rebel armed movement, split into two by 1964, was not numerous and was supported and sustained mainly by the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie, the students and rural non-Indian smallholders of Eastern Guatemala. The urban working class, the rural proletariat and the Indians were in the minority since the development of parallel social organisations had been obstructed. The following years were a period of ebb tide, and from 1966 to 1968 the guerrillas began to be defeated. The strategy of Governmental oppression was extended and intensified. As many as twenty-three clandestine terrorist gangs, made up of State corps, gangs of right wing parties and private gangs of landowners, have been recorded, and the bloody terrorist tactics employed in Indonesia and Vietnam became a feature in Guatemala. When the terror decreased in 1968 it had decimated the guerrillas, the Communist Party, Trade Unions, progressive groups from the petty-bourgeoisie and thousands of innocent victims (Aguilera: 11). Other sectors became gradually involved in the problem: Church groups working mainly among Indians became sympathetic towards the working masses and gave them tacit support and consequently faced repression from the Church hierarchy made up by the conservative successors of the fanatical right wing archbishop who had played an important subsidiary role in the 1954 counter-revolution. Some progressive priests and nuns assumed overt rebel attitudes. In 1969 a strong group of priests began to pronounce on national social problems, clashing with the established ecclesiastical hierarchy and with the Government. The Confederation of Guatemalan Diocesan Priests was founded under

principles closely related to "Liberation Theology". In
1970 the guerrillas continued their activities, but the Govern-
ment (now formally in military hands again) had regained more
control, and terrorism spread again. Around 1973 popular re-
action shifted towards a revitalization of organisation and of
organic relationships among the diverse sectors, and away from
fighting. Strikes and massive demonstrations proliferated and
activities from both sides became intensified: an attempt at
unity among Trade Unions failed in 1973 (a prior attempt had
also failed in 1968). Between that year and 1978 there was an
accelerated development of popular organisation. New Trade
Unions sprung up, now including the banking system and organisa-
tions of State labourers. Peasant Unity (CUC) was established,
linking for the first time ethnically diverse groups. Organisa-
tions of slum dwellers were also founded. The Rebel Armed Forces
and the Communist Party now reassumed their activities, and
Christian movements identified with popular demands were also
present, joining together both Catholic and Protestant creeds.
A new confederation of religious groups was founded and since
1974, the National Episcopacy has taken   positions clearly
congruent with popular demands. Of course repression increased
and in 1974 more assassination gangs emerged; these gangs now
published lists of condemned persons and Governmental connivance
was obvious. The following year, new guerrilla groups emerged
with a broad base and a wider capacity for spatial displacement.
Nowadays, the guerrillas operate in the densely populated Indian
regions where selective massacres have been common; even people
seeking to organise cooperatives have been suppressed. In Janu-
ary 1976, Indian peasants in the backward region of Alta Verapaz

were massacred; this is an area where the confiscation of
Indian lands has taken place on an enormous scale, and the
perpetrators are large landowners, high ranking military
officers and powerful transnationals exploiting nickel and oil
in the region. On the occasion of the deadly 1976 earthquake,
over 28,000 were killed, more than 75,000 wounded and more than
1 million homeless, severely affecting both Indian and Ladino
population; popular demands for assistance in the form of
better conditions of living increased and the repression spread
by the murder or kidnapping of Trade Union leaders, and even
peasants and slum dwellers who were in many cases not known to
be politically involved. Even lawyers defending the most ele-
mentary rights have been killed openly, as the case of the
country's most outstanding labour lawyer, who was killed in
broad daylight in 1977 showed. After 1976 the elimination of
the Coca-Cola Trade Union's leaders became routine. The long
expected unity of the various Trade Unions was at last estab-
lished in 1976, including most of the labour organisations from
both private enterprise and the public sector. The repression
increased and the united Trade Unions (CNUD) attempted to organise
effective opposition but conflicts and incidents of the murder
of their leaders grew. As the rape of Indian lands continued,
the Indian populations affected acquired more and more political
consciousness and the level of their reaction rose, which made
the Indians the main target of the Government's oppression.
Massacres of Indian peasants were denounced by their wives from
the Ixil region of Cotzal in 1977; many more similar denounce-
ments came from the vast Indian regions. In the same year, for
the first time, miners marched 350 kilometres to the capital in-

flaming popular feelings. Between 1976 and 1977 oppressed
peasants burned whole cane plantations, thus beginning the
process of undermining capitalist power. Well organised
opposition and political fervour spread among the workers of
the Southern Coastal plantations. One very important fact was
the progressive neutralization of the secular ethnic division
among peasants. The Peasant Federation was reorganised, break-
ing links with the Latin American Christian Democracy branch.
The Union of South-Western workers, which comprised both ethnic
groups and other regional unions were organised in the same year.
In 1978 strikes spread, particularly the one by State employees,
and the torture and assassination of leaders proliferated.
Massive clandestine cemeteries were also discovered, even in the
houses of well-known landowners in the capital. In May 1978 the
largest massacre occurred in the Indian region of Panzos: more
than one hundred people, including children and women, who were
peacefully protesting against the confiscation of their lands,
were massacred and the Army encircled the whole region for several
days taking retribution against the survivors. The Red Cross, the
University and the national and international press were denied
entry during the whole period. In that year the terror increased
on a frantic scale; moderate "centrist" groups were virtually
annihilated. Thirty-three paramilitary and irregular gangs of
killers were recorded between 1963 and 1978 (Aguilera: 25). The
Peasant Unity Committee was established at that time, strongly
based in the Indian areas, linking the demands and aspirations of
both peasants and workers.

The general lack of faith in the appearance of institutional
order, which was in fact nothing but a masquerade, is reflected in

falling turnout of voters in the General Elections, as
numbered in the following table:

1958	66.8%
1966	56.3%
1970	53.8%
1974	42.0%
1978	36.5%

In 1980 the Union of Plantation Workers was able, as a
result of a vigorous strike, to paralyse the main exports of
the country until the Government and the landowners had to give
in to popular demands. However, the assassination of Trade Union
leaders has been so frequent that since 1978 the Unions have been
forced to work in absolute secrecy. As well as the working class,
other targets have been the National University (which has virtu-
ally collapsed not by intervention but by murder) and those priests
and nuns who have supported popular aspirations. One example of
the confrontation of Indian peasants with the Government during
that period was the widely publicized killing of Ixil Indians
and diplomats in the Spanish Embassy. One remarkable phenomenon
that has emerged from the social struggle is the political stance
that the formerly humble Indians have now acquired precisely
because of the relentless repression to which they have been sub-
jected.

Since 1979, four guerrilla organisations have not only
spread over nearly half of the national territory but more
importantly within the most densely populated zones of the
country and those which are basic to the national economy. Both
Indian and non-Indian populations live permanently in this battle-
field. Several guerrilla organisations have substantial support

from Indians who provide significant contingents of combatants.
Up until 1981 by no means all the Indians were incorporated into
such movements nor were the guerrillas basically Indian, although
the same can be said of the non-Indian population. Due to the
long-standing interest that the Indians have attracted from
social scientists, folklorists and other scholars, non-Indian
participation tends to have been put into the background. Indians
have been a favourite subject for international agencies, but here
we should stress that in dealing with Indians and non-Indians we
are not dealing with only one ethnic group, but with a system.
The participation of non-Indian contingents in the various differ-
ent forms of popular organisation will be a vital factor for the
transformation of Guatemalan society.

To judge from the pronouncements of the respective organisa-
tions, namely Trade Unions, peasant federations or guerrilla move-
ments, it does seem as if working cooperation is overriding ethnic
divisions. However it is necessary to point out that no absolute
assessment can still be done from outside and it is impossible to
be absolutely clear about this at the moment.

The situation described may seem unique when comparison with
other Mesoamerican areas is made, but when the comparison is made
with the rest of the Central American context, especially with
El Salvador and Nicaragua, the whole process acquires full histori-
cal meaning since the former Spanish provinces of Central America
still share a fundamentally common historical pattern. That is
why it was said that the current political process in Guatemala
can be seen almost as a hinge between both contexts: Central and
Meso America. This is also the reason why this account of the

recent history of Guatemala has been based on such a dramatic catalogue of events; better than a theoretical interpretation, the description of the remarkable inflexibility of backward systems, like the Guatemalan, provides some elements for an explanation of the regional differences between Guatemala and Mexico. The main difference is that in Guatemala there is a widespread armed struggle against the status quo, with an important ethnic component, which is a factor peculiar to this part of Latin America.

PART TWO

SIMPLE MODELS OF SOCIOECONOMIC AND ETHNIC DIFFERENTIATION

CHAPTER II   CULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL APPROACHES

1. Theoretical Remarks

There is an enormous qualitative difference between the passive, picturesque and "closed" Indian communities, as they were described by anthropologists as recently as twenty years ago and photographed by crowds of tourists, and the rebel Indians struggling beside ladinos as mentioned in the preceding chapter. However the challenge is not only in the countryside; the increasingly massive incorporation of Indians into the process of armed class struggle in Guatemala also constitutes a challenge to social analysis. Such an analysis demands a reassessment of the sociological and anthropological tendencies so far broadly handled in the area, in order to elaborate an interpretation of the interrelationship of socioeconomic and ethnic categories, and coherent with the heterogeneity of the current process. Otherwise, structural, ideological and political analysis can be inaccurate.[1] As the heterogeneity of the social structure is echoed in the ideological and political spheres, it is obviously necessary to begin by analysing how ethnicity, class and their articulation have been understood in Mesoamerica.

In order to find some rationale in the present state of theory, works from a variety of different tendencies have been selected, grouped in distinguishable categories and analysed comparatively.

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[1] Inaccuracy surrounds such questions as: does the present rebellion involve class consciousness, ethnic affiliation or a combination of both? Is it a product of rapid social changes or has it had the same expression for a long time but been wrongly interpreted in traditional studies?

Certain questions were posed as guidelines: whether social classes can be equated with corresponding ethnic groups; whether ethnicity prevails over economic differences, as traditional views seem to postulate; or whether between these antagonistic positions, ethnic differences can be interpreted as constituting a real but secondary division overlapping the primary class contradiction. It was difficult to obtain a coherent picture of these theories due to the numerous and divergent lines of thought which tended to blur the profile of the problem. My critical analysis in approaching these works took into consideration their internal logic, the changes which have occurred in the different tendencies, in the self-identification and interrelationship of classes and ethnic groups, and new evidence provided by recent events in the area.

The different authors follow diverse theories about class and ethnicity. As for economic differentiation, Marx and Weber were the main sources used. For example, Mitchell and Smith speak of systems of strata divided by ranks of income and life style; here a Weberian influence is noticeable. Others refer to contrasting groups in the social structure resulting from their relationship with the means of production; in this case (e.g. Cabarrús, Testimonio and my own arguments) a Marxist approach has been utilized. As the concept of ethnicity is affected by each of these theories and results in different interpretations, a brief abstract of the Weberian and Marxist approaches is useful.

In contrast to Marx's postulates, Weber's theory stresses three autonomous and equally important fields of action (economy, prestige and politics) expressed in the categories of class, status and party (Weber, 1963). Class, referring to economic production,

and status, relating to the social esteem of prestige manifested in life style, are independent categories usually in opposition (rich and poor people can share the same status assuming a social parity which does not exist economically, yet a common life style is expected). When statuses coexist with ethnic differences, this transforms them into an unequally stratified system of super-ordination and subordination. Class and status are equally important sources of power which, in its turn, is the source of "class situation" (i.e. equality in material goods and non-material way of life) and determines the "market situation", i.e. a conjuncture where the former achieves its realization. As a product of the personal will, power highlights the individual role. Class, status, power and individual action are self-explicable and autonomous units in themselves. Power, class situation and market situation (not qualitative categories but gradations in a sequence of ranks) originate from the pursuit of economic goals or from status aspirations. This means that subjective values and objective material conditions share the same level of importance. Hence, class and status are equally important.

In the opposing Marxist view, values, life style, prestige, ideology and politics constitute a secondary level of analysis derived from the way people obtain their material means of existence. Power is the product of the situation in the structure of productive activities. The social structure to which the individual role is subordinated expresses the mode whereby differentiated groups of people obtain their material conditions of existence. The historical transition from one mode of production to another, explained by the dialectical interplay of productive forces and relations of production, is the result of changes in the form, not in the nature,

of social labour: "It is not what is made but how, and by what instruments of labour, that distinguishes different economic epochs" (Marx: 286). Social classes (antagonistic and qualitatively differentiated agents in this dialectical process) are basically represented by those who control the means of production and appropriate the work of those who, deprived of such control, are forced to give up their work as well as the resulting profit. Hence, classes antagonise according to their respective relations to the means of production, their role in the social organisation of work and their acquisition and use of social wealth. Antagonistic inter-class relationships tend to be resolved through class struggle. Ethnicity can be interpreted in terms of "social formation" (the "incarnate" reality of a social dynamic in a specific moment of its historical course) whereby the general pattern of a "mode of production" is entangled by interspersed social categories engendered in different modes of production and historical moments, now articulated into the dominant mode of production. According to this, ethnic differences in Mesoamerica can be seen as a colonial system, extended to the present but re-arranged in the new capitalist mode of production, giving it a pecular physiognomy.

These theoretical influences are one of two aspects which it is necessary to clarify for the subsequent analysis. The other aspect refers to the differentiation of approaches into two contrasting positions which I call "structural" and "cultural". It is necessary to warn that my use of "cultural" must not be identified with "culturalism". My use of "structural" must not be equated with "structuralism" or "structural/functionalism" either; by way of example, I will call "cultural" some studies which conventionally could be classified as "structural/functionalist "

since they treat communities as closed systems of interrelated
social institutions, and stress the causal priority of normative
and value elements. My use of "structural" refers to "historical/
structural" approaches, since the wider framework will be largely
considered in the economic and political sense.

I shall use the term "structural" to characterize any inter-
pretation of social behaviour that refers actions to the wider
social framework or structure of institutions that determine or
shape those actions. The structural framework is stressed. The
diverse social facts are distinguished and arranged into distinct
hierarchies, the most important being socioeconomic phenomena of
differentiation (either in terms of strata or classes), which form
the basis of the "structural" explanation of social situations. A
fundamental factor of this explanation is the diachronic perspec-
tive. Conversely, local peculiarities and ethnicity are left
aside or relatively neglected. For the classificatory needs of
the following sections, even contradictory theories like Marx's
and Weber's are to be considered examples of this line of analysis
since both participate in the aforementioned "structural" aspects:
both share a fundamental interest in sorting out, analysing and
explaining a number of singular facts by articulating and bringing
them into relation with the wider context of society as a whole on
the national or international dimension. As the idea of the "whole"
prevails, any "region" in space or in analytical terms is always
referred to the whole in which that particular area is immersed.

In contrast to the "structural" approach, I refer to the
"cultural" tendency, using this term broadly to identify any social
interpretation which stresses the integrity of local/cultural

systems. The focus is restricted to single regions or even towns, the interpretation does not tend to go beyond such specifically bounded areas, and the wider dimension of the structural framework is left aside or pushed into the background. Ethnicity is enhanced; more specifically, these approaches emphasize the cultural aspects of ethnicity. The social factors described are not as specifically arranged into hierarchies as in the "structural" approaches. Every field of social life is considered to be of a similar level of descriptive importance, from material aspects of rituals to the most vital conditions of subsistence. Descriptive treatment outweighs explanation, which tends to be based mainly on cultural determinants of behaviour. Contrasting with the importance that "structural" tendencies give to the historical process, "cultural" approaches usually tend to give synchronic descriptions of the social phenomena they deal with, very often disregarding the historical antecedents of the social facts they relate.

Both cultural and structural approaches are characterised here as simple or reductionist models for the interpretation of the ethnic-class relationship. It is important to stress that these models are not necessarily simple or reductionist as a whole but only in their handling of the articulation between class and ethnicity. In fact, ethnicity is made the overriding factor by stressing the local system and cultural particularities, as in the cultural approach, or conversely the categories of socioeconomic differentiation annul ethnicity, as in the case of the structural approach. Both models will be examined in the following chapter. Since the ethnic factor virtually disappears in the structural model, the next chapter concentrates largely on the cultural approach.

2. <u>The Cultural Approach</u>

In 1930 Ruth Bunzel began a two-year period of fieldwork in Guatemala, but it was not until twenty years later that the material was published in a classic monograph which can be qualified as a typical example of the "cultural" tendency already described. The central features of this kind of approach are expressed by the author by describing her work as "...an exploratory study of the town of Chichicastenango in the Department of Quiché in the Western Highlands of Guatemala" (Bunzel: v).

Two characteristics are visible. In the first place, the author attempts to study all aspects of a single community, leaving aside the wider national context and the interrelationships between both dimensions. It does not aim to study general conceptual problems but to explore a single community, although it is only fair to point out that the author's original plan was to look into a wider region in which this particular town is situated (Bunzel: vii). The second characteristic, which emerges from a study of the whole work, is the then customary method of considering only one of the groups present in the ethnic system, the Indian, disregarding the other one, the <u>ladino</u>, as well as their mutual relationship. Although some mention of this relationship is made in several parts of the text, the <u>ladinos</u> are in fact hardly mentioned, despite their constituting a significant and important local "minority": even though they only number approximately 75 families as against 25,000 Indian individuals (Bunzel: 12), they constitute the ethnic antithesis of the Indians and make the latter meaningful.

Both characteristics, which form the backbone of Bunzel's methodology, illustrate typical anthropological perspectives current

in that period, such as the assumption that systems at all
levels of analysis are separate and closed entities. First,
the community is treated as an entity almost dismembered from
the wider context of the nation, as a sort of social island,
and secondly, Indians and ladinos, alienated from each other, as
if they constituted two segregated worlds. In the light of these
comments it would appear virtually impossible to use Bunzel's
material for the analysis of both ethnic groups in their socio-
economic interaction. However, her ethnographic data give some
evidence of economic differences both between ethnic groups and
inside the Indian group.

When land and land tenure are described in Chapter I, which
is devoted entirely to economic life, the material deals exclusively
with attitudes towards land, religious values concerning land and
the rules of inheritance (Bunzel: 16-25). Only Indians in the
town of Chichicastenango are considered; ladinos and relations
external to the town are absent. Trade, one of the most important
economic aspects, is analysed in a similar way (Bunzel: 67-76):
it is seen as an "Indian institution" and no interrelationships
between Indian and ladinos are discussed. As far as labour is
concerned, the total description relates to habits and attitudes
towards labour, but only among Indians, and only in the specific
community (Bunzel: 30-34). In "Agriculture" (Bunzel: 48-59),
customs, rituals, beliefs and relations to the soil are profusely
described. However, some data showing economic opposition appears
but it does not form the backbone of Bunzel's monograph nor even a
conspicuous element: it appears almost as an "accessory" to the
cultural description.

When dealing with customs and beliefs about agriculture, the author mentions the division between workers and landowners, without attempting any correlation between economic and ethnic categories:

> "The man who has much land, or who engages in other occupations, hires labourers for all large agricultural jobs, especially planting and harvest".
>
> "Therefore, when a man needs help he must hire it. There are two ways of hiring help, by the day or by the job."

(Bunzel: 53)

At this point a specific reference to capitalist/pre-capitalist exploitation is made in the comment that labourers were paid the equivalent of US $0.17 (plus meals) a day in 1932. When payment was made by the job, it varied from US $1.00 to $1.50 according to the type of work. Obviously, the labourers had to be people who possessed only their labour power, ready and eager to be contracted in any possible way. Therefore,

> "Labourers are drawn from the ranks of the dis-inherited - those who have little or no land by inheritance, and no trade, and those who have voluntarily left the parental roof and forfeited their heritage. For such there are the alternatives of seeking work among their neighbours, or going to work in the plantations."

(Bunzel: 53-54)

An important omission is evident, either in class or in ethnic terms: then as now, Indians have to leave their gradually diminishing holdings and contract themselves as rural wage labourers. Where to? To their "neighbours", perhaps enriched Indians or perhaps well-off ladinos, both of whom own land in the Highlands. Or more clearly, to the big plantations in the South Coast run by ladino landowners. In the light of recent data and of new methological approaches, it becomes clear that there is economic differentiation not only between Indians and ladinos, but also within

each ethnic group.

As far as socioeconomic divisions among Indians are concerned, evidence is provided of "Economic Attitudes" by saying that,

> "The great source of economic anxiety is the
> land problem....More than an instrument of
> production, it is also the necessary instrument
> of prestige and power."
>
> (Bunzel: 89)

This statement recalls a Weberian line of thought. Value ties to land are seen as important as economic relationships, since an Indian deprived of land becomes an individual alienated from his society, his family and himself: such an individual has to render his work to his father; he does not count as a responsible member of his local society, he has no control over his acts and, what is more, he cannot "call his soul his own" (Bunzel: 89). Therefore, the need for land is a compulsive demand which goes far beyond simple material needs: land is, above all, the primary condition for personal responsibility; a man with no land is still a sort of social child. Land is the basis for "ethnic" citizenship and for the tie between man and the supernatural. Thus subjective phenomena are given the same level of importance as objective conditions of subsistence. Here the "Cultural" approach is also pervaded with a Weberian style of interpretation.

On the material level, it is suggested that there is an ethnic distinction between exploiters and exploited, the former being ladinos and rich Germans, while the latter are Indians. The key factor for exploitation is debt (Brunzel: 90). The author develops the analysis by abstracting the community of Chichicastenango from the wider national context, although she also examines the relationships between the community as a source of labour and the coastal

plantations, which are the "external" recipients of this labour.
"External" is a metaphorical expression, inasmuch as for the
community members "The plantation impinges constantly upon their
lives" (Bunzel: 9). "Slave-catchers", as she calls the agents
of the plantations, are maintained in every important centre in
the Highlands; the agent (obligador) constantly seeks out Indians
in financial trouble and "sympathetically" lends them some money,
which has in fact been provided beforehand by the landowner. From
that moment, usually under the influence of drink, the Indian is in
debt and has to pay for it by working for the plantation for extens-
ive periods. The agent has obtained his salary plus a bonus for
each of the captured men. Already trapped, they are sent "on foot
to Panajachel on Lake Atitlan, thence by steamer across the Lake
to San Lucas or Atitlan, and from there down the valleys to the
plantations. Their wives generally go with them" (Bunzel: 10).
Once there, the workers were paid, as quoted earlier, the equivalent
of US 17 cents (or even less during the 1932 depression of the coffee
market) plus a daily ration of corn. The workers have to buy their
daily staples from the plantation shop and are pushed by means of
liberal credit to buy superfluous articles, mainly alcoholic drinks
which constitute the only safety valve for their oppressive lives.
The circle is completed with the

> "so called fortnightly payoff, which generally
> consists in making notations in the labourer's
> account book, because he is almost sure to be in
> debt to the plantation. Or if his indebtedness
> is less than his wages, he is paid his wages and
> the debt stands. If he is fortunate enough to
> escape malaria and dysentery...he is sent back to
> his mountains - in debt. So effectual are the
> familiar devices of colonial exploitation,
> alcoholism, easy credit, debt indenture, and
> liability for debts to the third generation, that
> once caught in the system, escape is difficult."

(Bunzel: 10-11)

This economic dominance is echoed at the level of local power in which there were no Indian alcaldes. The ladinos occupied these posts and, by claiming ancient laws, could require unpaid forced labour from the Indians who had to accept it "voluntarily" in order to evade compulsory military service (Bunzel: 171-173).

However, ethnicity is also regarded as overlapping with socio-economic cleavages since material differences inside the Indian group are indicated. Mention is made of the disparities in wealth between diverse Indian strata; only the rich Indians can rise in the political hierarchy of the community but, due to old communal values including the cofradía system, no symbols of wealth are displayed and rich as well as poor Indians exhibit a common life style. Land ownership and other material means do not constitute a sufficient factor for status and local power, because "wealth" also implies professional capacities and skills (Bunzel: 90), another example of a Weberian focus. Future conflict is forecast, either at the level of the family (because inheritance rules supporting a joint family economy do not work, "since joint families do not function harmoniously") or at the regional level since if the system of land tenures continues, it "will result automatically in greater and greater disparity in the distribution of land, with a corresponding increase in anxiety and hostility" (Bunzel: 89-90).

This first example is clearly representative of the "cultural" trend. The study is limited to a single community and the structural factors from the wider national dimension (which could decide the character of the interpretation at the local level) are not taken into consideration. Of course, I am not postulating a doctrinaire approach, advocating an exclusively national study without giving proper attention to the regional perspective. It is well

known that research into local societies provides accurate informa-
tion useful for feeding, enriching and testing the authenticity of
general theoretical models; without these convergent focuses, a
general model would be unable to answer and explain the dynamics
of concrete problems. What I am trying to imply is that a local
study should be interpreted in the light and in the context of the
nation as a whole, a context which necessarily provides the possibil-
ity of giving explanations to facts which would otherwise remain
essentially unconnected. That is what happens to the Indians of
Chichicastenango in Bunzel's study, who are identified only accord-
ing to their cultural features. However, Indians cannot be under-
stood on their own. Indians only have sense and identity when dis-
tinguished from their ethnic antithesis in the social system which
makes them Indians: their antithesis is the ladino. Ethnicity is
first and above all inter-ethnic relationships. In this case, such
relations are necessarily established between the two polarised
entities of the antithetical system. Therefore, ladino-Indian
relationships should first be analysed in order to give an adequate
description of any of the contrasting ethnic groups on its own.
Secondly, both Indians and ladinos may reflect, when locally
related, a certain image at the town milieu, but quite a different
one when examined in connection with the wider context of the
country: a ladino shopkeeper who becomes an alcalde in Chichi-
castenango is not the same as a ladino landowner running a coastal
plantation. Despite both being ladinos who establish a certain
type of interaction when dealing with Indians, in fact they con-
stitute profoundly different entities, because of their different
positions in the structural framework of the nation as a whole,
because of their different class situation.

In Bunzel's work, Indians are not equated as a whole with a homogeneous class, stratum or economic grouping. By being isolated from their local ethnic antithesis, a truncated image results. The economic forces which uproot Indians from their land, throwing them into the ranks of the proletarians, are suggested as "external" events, but this is a distorted picture. Instead of being external, these forces actually constitute a primary internal contradiction of Guatemalan society as a whole, in which Chichicastenango is just an ingredient. But this is precisely one of the weaknesses of this kind of approach: its restriction to minute localized cultural description, neglecting any explanation of basic phenomena of which cultural features are nothing more than subsidiary expressions. When subjective factors, values and customs become essential, the real meaning of ethnic differences and social inequalities remains blurred.

Two other studies, both of Mexico, will be analysed. The first was carried out in the Central Highlands (Friedlander, 1975). Although the research was done in a single town (Hueyapan), the author states implicitly that her intention is to link the local focus with economic relationships in the wider context. Before commencing the analysis, it is necessary to state that Friedlander's work will disclose arguments opposing the cultural approach. The reason why it has not been incorporated into the structural tendency will be given after the following description.

A first characteristic of Friedlander's interpretation is that the cultural approach, as a way of throwing light on ethnicity, is openly rejected. When, according to the text, the people of Hueyapan identify themselves as Indians, Friedlander states that this identification does not depend on their culture. Why, then,

do Hueyapans exhibit cultural expressions which are regarded as Indian and why do they identify themselves as Indians? This is due, the author holds, to an officially programmed ideology which, formulated during the Mexican Revolution and continually articulated since then, involves an alleged multi-ethnic equality upon which a supposedly "fair" nationhood is constructed. As a result of this indoctrination, the villagers "play Indian" for their guests although as mestizos, they would "enjoy the socioeconomic advantages of a higher status" (Friedlander: 183).

This sentence expresses a second feature of Friedlander's study. Since culture is not a key factor in the identification and understanding of the Indians, and since Indian-ness is not a matter of culture, what is the Indian ethnic group? Indian-ness primarily means a lower economic position in the system of national stratification inasmuch as "since early colonial times the villagers have served as a source of cheap labour for the upper classes" (Friedlander: xv). Therefore, 'traditional' culturalism is replaced by a different formula: Indian culture is not the factor which identifies the Indian populations; Indian culture is nothing more than a result of the lower economic position of the Indians, and what is more, Indian culture is not a genuine expression of the people involved but an ideological construct elaborated by the State. This explanation of ethnicity exclusive as a phenomenon of economic exploitation, is reaffirmed over and over again in the whole work by saying for example that

> "I suggest that the Hueyapeños' so called Indian
> identity relates more precisely to their low socio-
> economic position in the national stratification
> system than it does to their culture."

> (Friedlander: xv)

or when it is stated that

> "...for the villagers the significance of their
> Indian-ness could be expressed better by listing
> what they lacked than by pointing to what they
> had. To be Indian, in other words, signified
> primarily that you were poor."
>
> (Friedlander: 75).

A third characteristic noticeable in the work is a logical consequence of the previous one. If the concept of Indian-ness actually refers to the Indians' lower economic position in the national framework, then the complementary higher economic group is simultaneously the polarized ethnic group. In fact, the whole argument suggests that all mestizos, namely the non-Indian group, are placed in a privileged economic situation. Hence the basic formula is that the significant difference between Indians and mestizos is their unequal socioeconomic positions rather than any distinguishable cultural characteristics.

As warned at the beginning, it would appear anomalous to include Friedlander's approach in this section since all her statements precisely point away from the highly suspect procedures of cultural analysis: the national structure of economic exploitation is proclaimed as the only factor to describe and explain ethnicity. Why, then, has Friedlander been included in this section and not in the structural approach? Because there is in fact a wide discrepancy between what the author declares and what she actually does, between her phraseology and her methodology. This paradox can be perceived in the following contrasts: in spite of her rejection of culturalist procedures, complete chapters are devoted to minute cultural descriptions, such as 'Customs identified as Indian', 'Religion in Hueyapan' and many other sections of the work dealing with detailed descriptions of events

in people's everyday lives. In short, culture is the basic
determinant of her approach to ethnicity,[1] and no single chapter
or section is specifically devoted to local level economic relation-
ships. Apart from   constant but general statements about the
economic deprivation of the Indians, no socioeconomic terms, cate-
gories, concepts, theoretical framework or relationships are
actually defined; the result is that the necessary working con-
cept of socioeconomic differentiation (either in terms of class,
stratum, etc.) is clearly needed.

A second discrepancy lies in the fact that although the wider
structural framework is implicitly alluded to, it is actually
merged into the background. The macro-level analysis of the
national structure of socioeconomic relationships and its link
with the ethnic system of the country is taken for granted. As a
result, the town and its socioeconomic-ethnic relationships are
isolated and separated from the whole. These factors lead to
socioeconomic oversimplification, suggesting a total correlation
between ethnic and socioeconomic groups, explicitly at the local
level and implicitly at the national one. In contrast to Bunzel
who describes economic differentiation among the Indians, in
Friedlander's picture Hueyapan ultimately is made to appear as a
social island in which all the mestizos exploit all the Indians.
With regard to the local level, but especially on the national one,
obvious questions arise: can all the mestizos be equated with the
privileged socioeconomic group?[2] If Friedlander's extreme stand-
point assumes that no social distinction apart from socioeconomic

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[1] Further arguments on the proper or improper use of culture will be
discussed in the general comments on the Cultural Approach, on
pages 100-101.

[2] This controversial and disputed question, for both Mexico and
for Guatemala, will be discussed at more extent in the chapters
III and V.

inequality distinguishes ethnic groups from each other, what is the use of talking about 'Indians' and 'mestizos' and of ethnic differences between them?

To sum up briefly: 1) Friedlander explicitly rejects a cultural framework while not only actually utilising it but in fact not using any other approach; 2) her explicit rejection of 'extreme culturalism' leads her to proclaim the opposite extreme, and 3) these factors combine to make her miss the complex articulation between ethnic and socioeconomic differentiation. Thus a coherent theory for this articulation is obviously needed. Without such a theory, the structural, ideological and political analysis will result in inverted interpretations. Here, as in Bunzel's work, the ethnic-socioeconomic relationship would acquire quite another content, both at local and wider contexts, if the relationships between the two levels could be given the proper importance.

The second work to be analysed was carried out in Chiapas, Mexico (Siverts, 1970), and appears consistently organised around an ecological approach following Barth's scheme of ethnic boundaries and their persistence. According to this framework, Siverts aims to explain the maintenance of ethnicity and the endurance of ethnic boundaries.

Two premises guide his interpretation of ethnicity. Firstly, and in contrast to Friedlander's view, ethnicity is seen as a matter of culture; ethnic differences between Indians and ladinos in Chiapas constitute primarily cultural differences. Secondly, both the culturally distinguished ethnic groups are economically interdependent. Regarding the first point, people of Chiapas

differentiate between Indians and ladinos primarily on linguistic grounds: ladinos are identified as those who speak Spanish as their principal instrument of communication, whereas Indians are those who speak some Mayan language as their mother tongue. Only after that linguistic distinction are secondary cultural traits perceived as factors of ethnic difference: ladinos are those who exhibit a Spanish-derived life style, while Indians are those "who dress and behave as Indians" (Siverts: 103).

From this standpoint Siverts comes to analyse phenomena of ethnic persistence and change. Despite the long-standing pressure that has been exerted for centuries in order to integrate the Indians into national economic and political life, assimilation has been minimal and ethnicity tenaciously persists (Siverts: 101, 105). The ethnic boundaries remain intact, not by the transmission of identical languages but because of "...the constancy of a set of idioms communicating minimal contrast between segments of the population" (Siverts: 105). Siverts' main concern is to seek the reasons for which ethnic boundaries are maintained. Therefore, he does not lay stress on ethnic changes but on circumstances which seem to discourage changes of ethnic identity (Siverts: 101). These circumstances are economic.

This fact constitutes the second premise of his analysis: the Highlands of Chiapas constitute a "typical plural or poly-ethnic society" in which economic interdependence between economically specialized ethnic segments leads to the maintenance and reinforcement of ethnic identities.[1] Why and how? Because, Siverts holds, this ethnic constancy is possible since the Indians constantly face

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[1] His notion of plural societies is constructed according to Furnivall's concept (Siverts: 101-105).

dilemmas relating to the availability of work and capital, to which the Indians have a restricted and stereotyped repertory of responses. Culture, one of these possible responses, tends to be affirmed and perpetuated. By being a matter of culture, ethnicity is therefore enhanced and preserved.

The economic interdependence between both ethnic groups results from the fact that Indians and _ladinos_ are rivals and contenders for land, but while the Indians provide agricultural products and consume industrial artifacts, the _ladinos_ produce and consume quite the reverse (Siverts: 106). Direct economic contact occurs in the focal regional centre, nucleus of the geographical area, which is inhabited and controlled by the _ladinos_. At the same time this is the market place for the Indians who go there to sell their surplus, either directly to the consumers or more often, to the _ladino_ intermediaries. This urban nucleus is San Cristóbal Las Casas; by constituting the heart of a big hinterland, it is also the most important centre of economic redistribution for the whole area. Siverts argues that by their control of the city the _ladinos_ master the labour market, the distribution of goods and services, the whole regional authority and bureaucracy, the educational system and, therefore, the instruments for the absolute control of communications, information and coercive power in the region: telephones, telegraph, Police and Army (Siverts: 108-109). Consequently, the _ladinos_ are situated at one of the poles, the dominant one, of the regional system.

The Indians occupy the opposite pole. Their subordinated position gives them two basic alternatives of action. The first one involves a "change of identity" thus relinquishing their family

and way of life. Therefore, renouncing ethnic identity also implies having to abandon territory and the social reality on which their life is based: land. This attitude often constitutes a desperate way out when everything else appears to have failed (Siverts: 111-113). In contrast, the opposite alternative presupposes the maintenance of the ethnic boundaries by retaining their Indian identity. As the greatest difference between Indians and _ladinos_ is, according to Siverts, language and customs, a growing number of Indians are crossing the linguistic barrier and learning Spanish and other skills in order to obtain access to the public resources so far controlled by _ladinos_. This group is emerging as an Indian elite whose members do not want to be identified with the _ladinos_; in order to be recognised as Indians by their own people, they use their newly acquired experience on behalf of the whole Indian group acting as interpreters and intermediaries between Indians and _ladinos_ (Siverts: 114-116), an important communal service since the Indians, unskilled in Spanish and administrative transactions and procedures, are constantly at a disadvantage when dealing with _ladinos_ in the _ladino_ centre (Siverts: 107). In doing so, they also obtain a higher status and economic profit. In contrast to the Lapps in northern Norway (who develop a double life and identity) the Indians of the Chiapan Highlands are always Indians, whether at home or at the _ladino_ milieu. Indianhood is, consequently, "the very basis for interaction" (Siverts: 116).

The following comments deal with the two main dimensions of Siverts' approach: the way in which ethnicity and socioeconomic differentiation are analysed, and the scope of his interpretation. With regard to the first, it can be observed that, as in Fried-

lander's analysis, ethnic relations between Indians and non-
Indians or _ladinos_ are interpreted in the light of economic
differences, although ethnicity has not been merged into socio-
economic categories. While Friedlander considers both ethnic and
socioeconomic categories as interchangeable concepts, Siverts
thinks of them as different although coincident phenomena. How-
ever, when ethnicity is defined as a cultural category and cultural
traits are used as key elements for the identification of ethnic
groups, certain conceptual problems arise. For example, if ethnic-
ity is a matter of culture, how can the Indian elite change cul-
turally towards a _ladino_ image while simultaneously retaining its
Indian identity? On the contrary, how can ordinary Indians identify
the elite as members of their own ethnic group when this elite owes
its character precisely to the fact that it has changed its cul-
ture? Additional logical problems emerge when holding, for
example, that Indians are those who dress and behave as Indians,
because a circular reasoning is produced since the definition
refers to the concept itself which needs to be precisely defined.
Furthermore, the definition of _ladinos_ as people who exhibit a
Spanish life style is a simplistic although commonplace fallacy.
There is nothing that can be called a Spanish style as opposed to
an Indian style as a whole; if such a differentiation had a mean-
ing in the early Spanish Colony, it is obvious that more than four
hundred years of social and cultural interaction has made it too
imprecise to be taken as the parameter of ethnic identity. As for
the government's unsuccessful efforts to try to integrate the
Indians into national economic and political life, it is difficult
to conceive of the existence of a social group still separated from
the nation in a country like Mexico, where the capitalist process

has pervaded every region and every social grouping. Although
in some cultural perspectives a few isolated Indian groupings
may seem to be either not or only weakly assimilated into the
national context, a comprehensive social interpretation leads one
to perceive their integration into the wider sphere of the nation.[1]
Economic domination implies, of course, that a political rule
comes into being to make such economic exploitation feasible.
Political domination involves a complex network of ideological
and cultural factors, so that the dominated population comes to
accept or is forced to accept its situation. In the case under
discussion, the native culture (like the "intruder") has undergone
alteration since the beginning of the Spanish régime and, although
a number of original cultural aspects have been retained, the
cultural set as a whole is no longer a native one. Many institu-
tions, either Indian or ladino, have been interlaced, resulting
in new institutional forms, no matter how much they seem 'pure'
Indian or Spanish practices; for example, Indian elements have
become intertwined in the Catholic Church and Spanish styles have
become part of Indian costumes (cf. Indian insurrections during
the Spanish Colony, Chapter I, 2). Consequently, it is difficult
to discern the cultural purity of Indian stock, and inaccurate
to assume successful Indian resistance to assimilation.

It is important to identify the kinds of relationship which
give the Indians a feeling of independent identity and those which
tend to assimilate them into the national system. In relation to
the latter, it can be maintained that the relations of economic
production shackle them to the nation; but in the context of

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[1] A few exceptions can still be mentioned, for example, the Lacandones,
tiny Maya groupings scattered in the remote jungle of Southern
Mexico and until recently, Northern Guatemala.

their political attitude they may be seen superficially as not integrated only by denying that rebel defiance occurs within the national system. Such a challenge would be impossible if they were not assimilated into the wider context. The study of the whole phenomenon requires the analysis of economic, ideological and political relationships; in that perspective, ultimate cultural traits have only a limited usefulness if they are taken as the fundamental factor. In fact, culture is a deficient criterion for identifying and explaining ethnicity and the re-affirmation of a feeling of Indianhood. Indians gain nothing substantive simply by emphasizing cultural characteristics on their own, whether this attitude is encouraged by the necessity of obtaining an income, resolved through activities which depend on stressing an Indian image, like activities for tourism, or is related to attempts for social vindication. The sublimation of Indian characteristics in Mesoamerica has been interlaced with ideological agitation linked to political movements aimed at pro-viding a state of social equality for the discriminated Indians. Here cultural traits mean symbols which have been deliberately enhanced when political movements need to re-create and stress ethnicity. Thus the explanation of ethnic expression has in political, ideological and economic causes; historically examined under such a perspective, overt cultural traits are nothing more than superficial, terminal and imprecise symbols.

Another aspect to be discussed, namely the way in which ethnicity and economic differentiation are analysed, is related to the second dimension of Siverts' approach: his scope of inter-pretation. The work deals with a specific area in the Chiapan Highlands, with no extrapolation to the wider framework. Within

the local boundaries, the ladinos are described as the industrial
segment, inhabiting and ruling the regional urban nucleus with
absolute control over all economic, civic, administrative and
military power. The Indians, as the opposite agricultural com-
plement, are confined to the ladinos' hinterland without any access
to power. The region and its inhabitants are described in such a
way as to appear like two separate entities competing for the same
natural resources. The relationships established between the two
contenders in such a biosystem also seem organic because in fact,
ladinos and Indians are characterised as competitors for the land.
This viewpoint may be related to a certain form of cultural ecology,
a tendency centred upon two fundamental concepts, environment and
cultural adaptation. When Siverts attempts to get an insight into
the way in which Indian cultures endure and transform, the reinforce-
ment of Indianhood is suggested as a form of adaptation to adverse
social and environmental conditions. As Kaplan and Manners main-
tain, (Kaplan/Manners, 1972) when environment and adaptation trans-
cend descriptive limits and are used as explanatory tools, circular
reasoning or tautological problems arise.

Siverts' work deals with the interaction of two different
ethnic groups culturally defined. By characterising ethnicity as
a matter of cultural difference, the region is described as a
stage on which two cultures interact, and the nature of the Indian
reaffirmation is described in its cultural aspects and explained as
a consequence of competition between Indians and ladinos for the
environment (resources and power). However, this environment is,
in its turn, the product of ethnic cultural difference: the agri-
cultural environment is the result of Indian labour whereas the
industrial urban environment is due to ladino activities. In other

words, culture is implied as a product of the adaptation to resources, and resources are suggested as a consequence of the ethnic-cultural division of labour. Here the weakness is the explanation of culture (in its role of ethnic reinforcement) in environmental terms which, at the same time, are perceived as products of culture. Culture and environment appear as tauto-logical arguments locked in a vicious circle.

As a result of this regional approach, the *ladino* group is depicted as a homogeneous and powerful unit with control over the means of production and political power. The emerging Indian elite, Siverts argues, is reinforcing its Indian identity as a means of neutralizing *ladino* ethnic dominance. Although he argues that this Indian elite also obtains social and economic advantages with regard to other Indians, the central idea still emphasizes the cohesion of Indians as opposed to *ladinos*. It is necessary to state that the cultural definition of ethnicity relegates into the background an apparently secondary fact, namely the economic advantage of the Indian elite at the expense of the common Indians. A logical question now arises: is the Indian elite reinforcing its ethnicity by ethnicity itself or as a means of elevating itself into a higher class situation? If so, far from being "the real base for interaction", ethnicity would be appreciated simply as a resource utilized for the control of the primary interest of class. This theoretical possibility would imply an important cleavage in this ethnic segment, particularly if it is borne in mind that the whole argument applies to a differentiated minority of Indians. The opinion and reaction of the ordinary Indians, deprived of economic welfare and education, towards their fortunate fellows is not analysed with the required rigour. In the light of the same

economic perspective, the assumed homogeneity of the _ladino_ group could also be debatable. It is unlikely that all the _ladinos_ can participate in controlling the means of production and administrative and military power since such functions are the privilege of selected minorities. Although a gross correlation of ethnic and economic-political boundaries may constitute a general frame of reference in specific areas, the ethnic-class relationship appears differently when the analysis is extended to the whole economic structure.[1]

In conclusion, the criticism applicable to the works commented on in this section refers to two common points: the use given to culture and the scope of analysis. Two contrasting uses of culture can be abstracted: firstly, culture becomes a self-explicable and tautological concept when Siverts uses it as a primary factor to describe, define or explain ethnicity, losing sight of the ideological, political and economic nature of ethnic reaffirmation. Secondly, the extreme opposite problem appears when culture is contradictorily rejected and used (Friedlander) because of the inability to discern that if culture cannot be used as an explanatory tool, it can, however, be utilized as a means of describing certain kinds of social events. In this case, culture can be neglected when the analysis does not need to describe ethnographic data, or if an alternative concept better than culture can be contrived for describing data of this nature. In Friedlander's study, ethnographic description seems to be a necessary condition but culture is absolutely rejected at the same time and no alternative concept is provided. It is not a reasonable solution to get rid of the concept of culture when describing ethnographic data (with-

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[1] For additional elements of criticism, see comments on Barth, Chapter III.

out a better alternative concept on hand) simply because of its inability to explain ethnicity. "Description" and "explanation" make reference to two different levels of analysis, description being a pre-condition for explanation. If one method is useful for describing and poor for explaining, it does not look sensible to sacrifice the former because of the latter. The problem can be solved by discerning which concepts can be used to describe facts and which can be used to explain them.

In contrast, it is interesting to point out that Bunzel's study, the most cultural of the works analysed in this section, is the most congruent in terms of internal logic. Due to the coherence of the author's proposal and of her ethnographic standards, culture is restricted to its less debatable use, namely pure ethnographic description. Despite her neglect of the wider context and the _ladino_ ethnic group, her approach does not fall into the error of identifying the Indians as an homogeneous group in economic terms. The limitations of the interpretation correspond to the tendency rather than to the internal logic or technical ability of the author, and her ethnographic data can thus be regarded as a useful source of primary data, the raw material for further interpreations.

I shall now deal with the second problem regarding the scope of the analysis. When ethnicity and class are described and explained within the local boundaries, without paying attention to the wider context (and ethnicity, either explicitly or implicitly, deliberately or unconsciously, is equated with culture), important problems of internal logic emerge. In both Siverts' and Friedlander's analyses, ethnic relationships are seen as class relationships. Within the narrow limits of a region the Indians, broadly

speaking, tend to be identified as the exploited and the _ladinos_
as the exploiters. The problem lies in the fact that social class
is a category which has to be examined in relation to the national
perspective. It was already mentioned in the discussion of Bunzel's
material that _ladinos_ are not all the same because, in spite of
their common ethnic origins, they occupy divergent positions in
the class structure. Such a divergence (like the inequality between
Indians economically differentiated) can be masked unless the wider
context is taken into consideration. Class structure only acquires
full meaning when the national framework is taken as the ultimate
frame of reference. Only then does it become clear that an enor-
mous sector of the exploited class is also made up of _ladinos_ in
the nation as a whole. Control over national economic, political,
administrative and military power cannot be identified with a
particular ethnic group. If power was distributed on ethnic grounds,
i.e. by one ethnic group, the whole ethnic group (all the _ladinos_,
for example) would benefit thereby. Of course, this contention is
untenable, even in the most superficial analysis. So, if some
authors consider it convenient to characterise the _ladinos_ as a
privileged group at the local level, they should also be aware of
the inequality of _ladinos_ in the nation as a whole. The inequality
depends on class differences which makes it impossible to deal
with one ethnic group in absolute terms. The study of regions,
whether ethnically analysed or not, cannot disregard a fundamental
fact in Mesoamerica, that the constituent nations are not strucura-
ted upon ethnic bases, but on economic foundations of class differ-
ences.

3. Synopsis of the Structural Approach

We will deal now with the structural antithesis of the cultural position. I do not propose to repeat the definition of the structural model, already described in the introduction to this chapter. I will simply highlight two of the differences which make it a contrasting model: first, the scope of analysis which, in opposition to the cultural, is always related to the whole social framework at the wider dimension. Second, the primary importance given to socioeconomic phenomena of differentiation which override ethnicity and culture (for example, the importance of processes of peasant proletarianization is overwhelming, whereas the importance attached to peasants' religious rituals is minimal). As ethnicity, broadly speaking, tends to be overlooked, either by being merged into the background, explicitly omitted or assimilated into the structure of socioeconomic relationships, it would then be logical to disregard this approach. However, as the gap created would nullify the cultural-structural antithesis, the structural approach will not be either omitted or considered in its own right, but interwoven throughout the sections to follow, as has already been done in the discussion of the cultural model. Here a general outline will be provided.

The general character of the structural approach, which is now characteristic of the attitude of the dominant sociological schools in the area is in fact a strong reaction against the traditional and long-dominant culturalist approach used in the study of Indian communities which disregarded the sharp economic contrasts which shape the region's political realities.[1] Primarily concerned

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[1] The culturalist monographs, which make up a substantial nucleus of the cultural set in Guatemala, can be traced back to 1890 with Karl Sapper's works and even before with the earliest monographs of Otto Stoll (Ewald, 1956).

with the reality of profound socioeconomic inequalities, the
structural approach has focussed on Mesoamerican societies from
an entirely different angle. This approach depends on the under-
standing of the basic social configuration and of the historical
process which has made it possible. The attention has not been
restricted to internal social contradictions, as the hegemonic
rôle of the United States' expansion since the last century has
also been a fundamental focus of study, not only in terms of
economic dependence but also in terms of political interference
and military occupation with permanent appropriation of territories
in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. In such a context,
the ethnic problem has not been a fundamental one and it is not
surprising therefore that at least in recent years structural
approaches have not been particularly interested in the ethnic
problem. For example, in a significant work already utilised in
the Historical Background and illustrative as a paradigm (Torres:
1973), the basic topics concern the development of the socio-
economic formation of Central America, the national State, the
insertion of the regional economy into the international market
and the consequent economic dependence. The study of the social
structure is concentrated on the system of land tenure, commerce
and the effect of policies for rural production. In the extensive
examination of the changing social structure, there is only
occasional reference to the ethnic diversity among the Guatemalan
peasantry, and social classes are unequivocally the only subject
of analysis and explanation; the core of the investigation still
concerns land tenure, social relations of production and changes
in the structure of social classes.

In the overall pattern of the structural model, several

positive and negative aspects are noticed. By relating the social facts at the wider level diachronically and synchronically and by discerning their varying importance, the general picture of the social process achieves a more definite profile and a more congruent meaning; it is possible to perceive order in the otherwise random single events. The gross premises from which to obtain an explanation of a given social situation are provided or at least become available. However, as local peculiarities tend to be neglected, the heterogeneity of local phenomena in any given social formation cannot be grasped. It may well be that precisely because of its possibility of providing a comprehensive meaning to the social interpretation, the structural interpretation may sometimes degenerate into extreme generalisation. Ironically, the assembling of local data and the methodology for collecting them, the quintessence of the cultural tradition, constitute an imperative necessity for the structural approach. These comments suggest that as far as the ethnic-class articulation is concerned, the cultural and structural approaches represent simple models of the interpretation of this articulation; that is to say, reductionist perspectives in which either ethnic material or socioeconomic differentiation are the overriding factors to the detriment of any analysis of the other factor. Nevertheless, other tendencies may represent a different kind of model whereby both factors, so far inequitably highlighted, are examined at their point of articulation. These tendencies are the subject of the next section.

PART THREE

COMPLEX MODELS OF ETHNIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC DIFFERENTIATION

CHAPTER III CORRESPONDENCE OF SOCIOECONOMIC AND ETHNIC GROUPS

I shall now deal with the other tendencies making up what I
will call "complex models". They differ from the preceding simple
models in that neither ethnic nor socioeconomic factors are ex-
cluded or reduced to a minimal dimension. They do not necessarily
presuppose that ethnicity and socioeconomic differentiation are
given the same importance; rather, attention is centred on their
intersection and their reciprocal interplay. In other words, com-
plex models emphasising points of ethnic-socioeconomic articulation
attempt to understand the ways in which the broader social frame-
work determines or shapes the integrity of local-ethnic systems
and how social actions at this (culturally examined) local level
link with the (structurally studied) wider framework.

There are a large number of diverse theoretical sources relat-
ing to socioeconomic differentiation. Some approaches follow a
Weberian scheme; others are based on Marxist theory; others
postulate an ecological viewpoint; some studies analyse structur-
ally simple societies while others deal with more complex structures.
Such a heterogeneity of perspectives creates a methodological prob-
lem for comparative analysis. Is it valid to include in the same
model authors who deal with societies of varying complexity or who
discuss social classes (e.g. Herbert/Guzmán or Stavenhagen) with
those who do not (like Barth)? I feel that any disadvantages are
balanced out by the utility of achieving a wider perspective which
makes the analysis more illustrative. Notwithstanding this hetero-
geneity, all of the works to be examined share a common denominator,

namely an interest in ethnic and economic articulation. The combination of these tendencies provides two alternatives: either the coincidence or the divergence of ethnic and socio-economic boundaries. Both alternatives will be analysed in the following two chapters. This chapter is concerned with approaches which postulate that socioeconomic boundaries correspond strictly to correlative and reciprocal ethnic groups, or that economic and ethnic boundaries coincide.

Before examining works dealing specifically with Mesoamerica, I shall begin by analysing cases from other parts of the world, including studies of simple social structures like the one by Barth, since the discussion of the wider socioeconomic framework implicit in this approach can be clarified through comparative analysis. In Barth's case there is another specific reason, although his approach does not actually correspond to the wider scope inherent in the tendency under discussion: since the theoretical framework used by Siverts in the study of Chiapas already analysed follows Barth's original theory, a broader context for Siverts' discussion is obtained.

In Barth's words, ethnicity should be examined as a form of social organisation rather than as a cultural feature (Barth: 10, 12, 13). Cultural identity, a different concept from ethnic identity, only becomes a part of the latter when a selected set of overt cultural signs and concealed values is enhanced and made significant by the people concerned (Barth: 13-15). This cultural-ethnic set does not constitute a primary or genetic phenomenon in its own right but it results from the organisation of social relationships (on ethnic grounds) for purposes of interaction (Barth:

11, 13-15). The cultural features selected and the principles
governing that selection are unpredictable, and it is only
possible to deduce that "...ethnic categories provide an organisa-
tional vessel that may be given varying amounts and forms of con-
tent in different socio-cultural systems" (Barth: 14). Here
ethnic groups only persist as significant units as long as
they imply marked distinctiveness in behaviour (Barth: 15-16).
Ethnic differences become possible when sectors of the population
impose a social system in which certain sectors of the population
are excluded from certain statuses (Barth: 17-18). This implies
a relationship of interdependence between diverse ethnic groups,
in which one group becomes dominant; interdependence implies in
its turn symbiotic adaptations between the ethnic groups concerned;
since they are determined by cultural symbiosis, inter-ethnic
relationships can be partially analysed through cultural ecology.
This is so because "the other ethnic groups in the region become
a part of the natural environment" and the sectors of activity in
which one ethnic group articulates with the others constitute
"niches of adaptation" (Barth: 19). Both competition for resources
and peaceful symbiotic relationships between ethnic groups are a
result of the ecological niches occupied by the respective groups.
The greater the struggle for the same niche, the more competitive
the relationship between the ethnic groups will be (Barth: 19-20).
Complementary to the ecological approach, ethnicity can be analysed
demographically, since the adaptation of one ethnic group to a
niche in nature is affected by its absolute size but the adaptation
to a niche constituted by the other ethnic group is affected by its
relative size (Barth: 20-21).

Two points have to be emphasised in this approach. First, ethnic organisation is associated with uneven distribution of the statuses relevant to the system among the various sectors of the population. Secondly, this situation is ecologically and demographically explained. Ecological interaction between groups occupying the same niche results in competition for its resources; through competition one of the groups becomes ecologically dominant and achieves control of the resources vital for the whole system; this dominant group seizes the social privileges and establishes social stratification.

Barth gives the example of certain Pathan groups in Afghanistan where social stratification is based on the control of land: the Pathans are the landowners and other groups cultivate the land for them as serfs. The argument is consolidated by an example of the opposite tendency: the Fur and the Baggara in Western Sudan make use of different niches and each have independent access to them; they do not enter into ecological competition and consequently do not make up a stratified system. To put it in theoretical terms: when assets which are highly prized by all the groups in an ethnic system are not fairly distributed, each ethnic group will occupy different strata according to the different assets under their control and a form of hierarchical ethnic inequality evolves. In other words, "where one ethnic group has the control of the means of production utilized by another group, a relationship of inequality and stratification obtains" (Barth: 27).

The first point requiring comment is the generalisation that ethnic group is equivalent to socioeconomic stratum. A second generalisation, relating to control of the means of production and

presented in terms of organic-like control over ecological niches, is open to the following objection.[1] Culture is not the primary factor in ethnic identity, but the consequence of a certain type of social organisation. However, as this organisational type is only one of the forms of social organisation (as can be deduced from the argument), it is necessary to ask why the ethnic form alone is established. Though Barth does not refer to this, ethnicity is described as an imperative system imposed by a group gaining dominance in the context of cultural symbiosis (since this dominant relationship is only feasible within a network of inter-dependent ties between groups which are in some way symbiotically adapted to one another). Hence, a paradox appears: on the one hand, it is flatly asserted that culture is not a genetic factor, while on the other, cultural symbiosis is revealed as primary. This tautology (cf. the same problem in Siverts) is accompanied by a detailed ecological interpretation: every ethnic group con-stitutes a part of the others' natural environment and their inter-action is interpreted in terms of niches of adaptation. Further-more, the focus is on the active and dominant rôle of the environ-ment as far as social phenomena are concerned. Human activity and potential thus appears as an organic adaptation to nature. Since no specific social factors intervene as ethnicity-makers in the social organisation, natural variables become the origins of the social system. It seems that nature and adaptation (which are both highlighted in the ecological niches) appear as the principal causal factors for ethnicity and social stratification. Accordingly, "adaptative response" to ecological situations is equivalent to "culture".

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[1] My comments about socioeconomic differentiation are based on class concepts (see Part Two, introduction). On the contrary, Barth does not speak of social classes. In consequence, my analysis primarily stresses the internal logic of Barth's approach.

Even though nature and subsistence operate powerfully on living organisms, the relation is not a direct one for mankind. Interposed between nature and the phenomena of human subsistence, an economic system is developed by social groups (i.e. social relationships involved in production). It is not the ecological niche per se that is the direct reason for social organisation, whether stratified or not. Any social organisation derives from the will of individuals and groups to develop resources beyond their natural character in order to produce. There is therefore a fundamental conceptual difference between natural resources and the means of production. Although social groupings live in a natural physical environment, this does not of itself generate social processes which must be discovered and transformed into means of production. It is necessary to point out that production is always social production. With the purpose of production in mind, social groups establish relations amongst themselves as well as between themselves and those natural resources which can be reproduced or which can produce other resources. Any form of production of natural resources, even at its simplist level (e.g. the primitive reproduction of cattle and crops), entails some form of production, and consequently some system of relations of production, irrespective of how elementary they can be (e.g. the simplest forms of social division of labour). The human capacity for production is always entangled with social phenomena governing the reproduction and distribution of material assets. This phenomenon lies at the base of the socioeconomic system and it is far different from ecological subsistence. Reproduction and distribution necessarily involve forms of social control, that is forms of possession and ownership. Therefore there is the same profound

difference between ecological control and the socioeconomic
system as between natural resources and means of production.
The process of social stratification, whether ethnically
influenced or not, derives from the control of production and
wealth; such control involves the social relationships which
structure a particular socioeconomic system. In this perspective,
natural resources in ecological niches constitute a rather tenuous
basis of explaining social ethnic stratification, because the con-
cept of a socioeconomic system of production is interposed between
both polarized concepts. In Barth's enhancement of quasi-organic
actor relations, the producers, the real basis of any social
system, are left aside.

As the argument is developed in the form of a theoretical
generalisation, a kind of bio-social formula can be inferred:
wherever similar ecological and social phenomena are interrelated,
the same ethnic stratification will emerge. In this respect it is
evident that such an interpretation would be untenable for simpler
social systems. Once again, social processes are not directly
governed by natural-ecological conditions; thus these conditions
do not fully explain such processes, especially when (as in Barth's
approach) historical factors and the relations with the wider
national context are not given proper consideration.

A comparative examination of Barth's theory in terms of Meso-
america raises a number of problems. In general, the coincidence
of ethnic division and economic stratification may be apparent in
simple social systems where economic differentiation has not
developed within every ethnic group. Yet it becomes a problematic
argument for the analysis of complex societies strongly affected by

capitalist relations of production, where tribal or ethnic
ideologies tend to be superseded by new economic contradictions.
However, a number of interesting points emerge from the compara-
tive analysis of remote examples (like those under discussion)
and conditions in Mesoamerica. It is important to re-emphasize
Barth's treatment of ethnicity as a result of the appropriation
of statuses and assets by one group to the detriment of the others
rather than as a spontaneous phenomenon. It is important to
point out that in those Latin American countries where the native
Indian population was incorporated into the colonial socioeconomic
structure which formed the basis of the Spanish American economy
ethnicity was not a pre-established or objective feature. Instead
it was a device which served at least partially to justify the
appropriation of the social wealth by the dominant group, which
was also able to establish itself as the contrasting ethnic segment.
In that sense some of the authors already discussed (e.g. Severo
Martínez) interpret ethnicity in Mesoamerica as a Spanish creation.
Following Barth, it could be said that the creation of an 'Indian
ethnicity' was the result of the Spaniards' arrogating the "statuses"
important for the whole system for themselves and excluding the
Indians from it. However, this is only partly true for Mesoamerica,
because ethnicity was only one of the expedients used to produce or
justify inequality. There were other methods, generally economic
and political. However, this is a perspicacious point of Barth's,
which should be borne in mind when studying both ancient and present
Mesoamerica; surprisingly, like certain cultural trends, it has
been largely disregarded by scholars.

Let us now turn to a socio-historical situation more directly
comparable with Mesoamerica. Smith's study of Jamaica (1972) follows

the same approach to the coincidence of ethnic and socioeconomic boundaries. When the economic boundaries bluntly coincide with ethnic and even racial boundaries in his description, the profile of Jamaican society which emerges is rather elementary: it is made up of three racial groups which are clearly differentiated in social, economic and cultural terms. The Black majority, some 80% of the whole population, occupy the lowest social and economic positions; the next structural rank is formed by the mestizos who make up 18% of the population and occupy an intermediate position between the subordinated Blacks and the superordinated Whites, while the latter constitute a tiny minority of only 2% of the whole society but enjoy the highest social position. There is no relevant integration between these three clearly divided segments, each having a very different system of institutions.

The privileged Whites are engaged in the most profitable financial, trade and agricultural enterprises, which is reflected in the sorts of associations to which they are affiliated, such as the Chamber of Commerce, landowners' associations or employers' fellowships. Equally, their options of education and employment are the highest possible: the academic professions, executive and managerial positions and landowning. This dominant segment is also culturally distinct according to its values which correspond to a materialist conception of the world and pragmatic knowledge, as well as considerable expertise in modern sciences and administration. Other attendant images are symbolised by their leisure activities, such as golf, polo and yatching: features of material culture (for example a great house with servants) and their way of speaking pure and uncorrupted English, never the local broadly-used anglicised dialect. Home and family are commonly coincident because marriage,

mating and cohabitation coincide.

The second caste in the hierarchy in Smith's model is made up of the mestizos. In contrast to the superordinated Whites, they do not control the fundamental means of production, but depend on small farming and on their activities as merchants and contractors. They join associations of teachers, civil clerks or petty farmers; as an image of their own intermediate position in the social rank, they do not participate in influential economic associations but they also avoid becoming involved in the contradiction capital-labour as expressed in conflicts between employers and workers. Their educational options are normally restricted to the secondary school, clerical employment in the government and commerce. They practise a syncretism of both White and Black cultural traits. Their leisure activities are sports like soccer, cricket and racing, and they normally live in concrete bungalows. They speak either English or the local dialect, according to the occasion. As for marriage and family, Smith characterises them as follows: men, their wives and their children live openly and respectably while their concubines and illegitimate children live a separate life.

The Blacks constitute the last sector, pushed to the lowest social rank. They are either wage-earners, under-employed or unemployed. If they have any land, it is in a "family plot" without any legal title of property. They are associated in trade unions. Smith maintains that the Blacks express themselves ethnically through a folk culture filled with abandoned African-Caribbean survivals; their values are characterised by African-type myths and rituals, such as belief in spirit possession and the efficacity of sacrifices and witchcraft. Illiteracy is wide spread among

them and their schooling, when they do obtain access to it, is usually restricted to the elementary level. As a result, their job options are confined to manual labour in farms and plantations or to menial services in the cities. Their spare time is spent in sports and pastimes generally less esteemed by the more privileged groups, like boxing, soccer, dances, games and drinking. Their housing conditions are extremely poor, and they are only able to express themselves adequately in dialect. Neither cohabitation nor marriage are imperatives for mating and there is no necessary identity between family, home and mating.

The first aspect of Smith's approach which calls for comment is the naive characterisation of a complex social reality whereby society appears like a series of clearly delimited 'patches', each with its economic, ethnic and racial features perfectly harmonised. Another feature which emerges from this is the appearance of immobility; instead of dynamic interrelationships, an apposition of segments is visualised. This kind of differentiation could represent the most pristine example of extreme caste segmentation, or better, the theoretical paradigm of such a system. Here it is necessary to ask whether such pristine caste conditions really exist in the countries of the region under analysis. With regard to Mesoamerica, the answer is in the negative. As for the Caribbean countries, some inferences can be deduced from analogies with their Mesoamerican neighbours, all of which participated in the same historical process of European conquest and colonization.

For example, the stark differentiation between social segments which Smith describes can only be relevant for the earliest stages of European rule. From that moment onwards the correspondence he describes could only have been maintained if original conditions

continued without the slightest subsequent adjustment of the
internal and external social processes. It is surely questionable
that such circumstances should have continued in Jamaica until the
time of Smith's study. This would imply a curiously static situa-
tion as far as the whole American context is concerned, in which
no further complexity in the social structure developed after
many years of foreign domination. Of course, there are obvious
differences between most of the former Caribbean colonies and the
former Meso and Central American dependencies, including the differ-
ent economic and political strategies of the two imperial metro-
polises (Spain and England), dissimilar population policies, the
different character and reaction of the native populations, differ-
ences in the later extension of colonial rule, different processes
leading to the ending of colonial subjugation and finally the
different development of the social process after power had passed
from metropolitan hands. But these divergences do not exclude
aspects shared by all subjects of colonial imperialism: the trans-
formation of economic exploitation, the emergence of a more com-
plicated social structure and the increasing demographic, structural
and ethnic complexity of the exploited population.

As was noted in the analysis of the preceding study, the
approaches of both Barth and Smith look like interpretations which
may have some relevance for very simple isolated groups or for
recently-formed colonial states. But none of these conditions
exist in Mesoamerica. First, even before the Spanish conquest,
the indigenous societies were not simple at all; they were divided
into classes and showed a great complexity in every aspect of their
social organisation. Secondly, a simple correspondence between
ethnic and economic groups, if that ever did exist, could be found

only in the earliest stages of the Spanish colony. Even in the
second half of the first century of colonial rule it is difficult
to find the slightest trace of structural simplicity. Thus it
seems that Smith's analysis constructs a simplistic scheme which
does not take the social structure and historical process of the
society sufficiently into account, and hence the supposed coinci-
dence of socioeconomic and ethnic boundaries in his picture of
contemporary Jamaica must be viewed with considerable reservation.

After looking at the general context through the analysis of
Barth and Smith, our specific area, Mesoamerica, will now be con-
sidered. The first work to be examined deals with class-ethnic
intersection in Guatemala. Since its publication in the late 1960's
it has been surrounded by sharp ideological and political contro-
versy especially in academic circles as the political unrest which
preceded the present open struggle in the country had already begun
at that time. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that
the polemic went far beyond ordinary theoretical interests; the
reasons for the strong emotional feeling it aroused will emerge
from the analysis which follows.

Two authors share the works; the Guatemalan Guzmán Böckler
and the Frenchman Jean-Loup Herbert, although the key theoretical
formulation was provided by the latter. The main theoretical
points are made in Herbert's chapters in a joint work (Guzmán/
Herbert, 1970) and reiterated in a later work by Guzmán (Guzmán,
1975). The present analysis will be based mainly on the former;
only those theoretical concerns closely related to the specific
subject of this thesis will be considered.

The authors take a sharply critical stand against the cultural-

ism of the traditional monographs, but they extend their rejection to the whole of anthropology, a discipline which they consider a misleading ideological device (and all anthropologists as its agents or "social engineers") which leads to a blurring of social realities and the subjugation of the people to a Westernised pattern in order to facilitate the economic exploitation of the Indian masses (Guzmán, 1975: 18-19). Herbert and Guzmán postulate that the Guatemalan social structure is divided into two classes, the ladinos and the Indian ethnic groups. The notion of class is presented in what appear to be Marxist terms, but they equate the Marxist concept of class struggle with inter-ethnic struggle. Both Indians and ladinos are defined inter alia as "hostile brothers", and the state is conceived as an ethnic institution dominated by the ladino ethnic group which holds all power (Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 1).

The fundamental thesis is that the antagonism between Indians and ladinos constitutes the primary and determining feature of the social structure of Guatemala and "it has been the axis of the social dialectic for four-and-a-half centuries". The present correlation between Indians and ladinos is exactly the same as that which existed at the beginning of Spanish colonial rule between the exploiting Spaniards and the exploited Indians (Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 51-52).

This postulate suggests four inferences: first a historical and social hiatus between the conquest and the present; secondly, the feasibility and the necessity of reverting to pre-conquest social conditions; thirdly, the absolute equivalence of Spaniards with exploiters and of Indians with exploited, and lastly, the

transference of this equivalence to contemporary ladinos and Indians.

The first inference implies that the social situation has been stationary for the five hundred years which have elapsed since the Spanish conquest. This notion of immobility suggests an exact correspondence between the Indians of the twentieth century with their ancestors in the sixteenth, and further, an apparent coincidence between the Spanish conquistadores (and their descendants during the colony) and the present-day ladinos. In other words, the authors do not differentiate between social categories which are separated by almost five centuries of social, economic, ideological and political dynamics. Contemporary Guatemala is thus depicted as a colonial relic, a replica of the social conditions prevailing at the time of the conquest. This idea is repeatedly expressed, for example when Herbert assumes that the Indians, in order to

> "recover their identity, to hasten their own
> awakening, to become the arbiters of their own
> destiny, must recommence their own history at
> the point at which it was amputated."

(Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 31)

This implies an anti-historical reversal of development jumping back over 458 years in order to reach back to a 'lost' world of social equity and justice.

The second inference is that the notion of Indian exploitation does not antedate Spanish rule. Despite Herbert's specific allusion to social class divisions in native prehispanic society (Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 16-19), the confused ideological message seeks a return either to a kind of lost prehispanic freedom, or to a prehispanic state of being, irrespective of the actual social inequalities then prevailing. The considerable ambiguity of the theoretical

content and the general ideological confusion permits the assumption of any of the above possibilities. If the second interpretation corresponds to the authors' intention, that the recovery of social justice requires that the Indians resume their history at the moment before the Spanish conquest began, what kind of notion do the authors have of Indian 'welfare'? The prehispanic system of exploitation? If the first interpretation is the one which the authors are putting forward, they must then become involved in serious contradictions since they frequently allude to the socio-economic inequalities among the prehispanic Indians while simultaneously suggesting a return to an ideal aboriginal freedom.

The third inference suggests a direct correspondence between Spaniards and exploiters and Indians and exploited since the time of the early colony. Thus after the conquest "every" Spaniard was an exploiter; there was no exploiter, Herbert implies, who was not at the same time a Spaniard. It is maintained that there was a total correlation between class, ethnic and even racial categories; both concepts, Spaniard and exploiter are equated. This again is a gross historical over-generalisation; my second chapter has already documented the well-known economic inequality which existed among the Spaniards as well as among the Indians (cf. Historical Background, sections 1 and 2). To mention only two cases of the non-correlation of "Spaniard" with "exploiter"; first, the large number of Spanish artisans accompanying the military on the first waves of conquest who either worked freelance or exploited Spanish and mestizo apprentices. Secondly, increasing numbers of Spanish landless, unskilled, workless wanderers, in short the lumpenproletariat, were arriving as early as the middle sixteenth century, only twenty years after the original conquest. Consequently, it is not accurate to make a

simplistic identification of 'Spaniards' as 'exploiters'; this
would be to forget that Spanish society, like any other, was
composed of unequal social classes. The corresponding correlation
of the Indians as exploited, although perhaps less obvious than
the former, also constitutes an oversimplification. Although the
overwhelming majority of Indians were exploited by the Spaniards,
they were also exploited by the former Indian ruling class. Usually
ranked with the Spanish encomenderos, this Indian upper class
collected tribute and exacted personal services from their own
people, developed enterprises, exploited the Indian peasantry and
gave unreserved support to Spanish dominion. In short, it is almost
equally debatable to assume a "total" correlation between the Indian
population and the exploited class.

The fourth and last inference represents the transference of
this biased correlation to the present day: in the same way as the
Spaniards are totally equated with exploiters and the Indians with
the exploited, the present ladinos (mistakenly conceived as the
descendants of the Spaniards) are equated with the exploiters and
the Indians with the exploited. Therefore, "every" ladino becomes
a ruler and an exploiter; as the correlation is total, all ladinos
are exploiters and all of the exploiters are ladinos. Conversely,
all the Indians are exploited, and equally, there are no exploited
who are not Indians at the same time. Both correlations thus lead
to the same central point, namely, that the antagonistic inter-
relationship between both ethnic groups is a class relationship;
hence, as the authors are using Marxist analysis, the social pro-
cess in Guatemala and its potential resolution should be explained
in terms of the struggle between classes, that is to say, between
Indians and ladinos. This postulate derives from the assumed struc-

tural opposition between them, from the imagined correlation
of both the two ethnic groups with two antagonistic social classes,
as is emphatically formulated in the core of both works (Guzmán/
Herbert, 1970: 94-95; Guzmán, 1975: 45-47):   "The [relationship
of] exploitation by the ladino of the 'Indian' constitutes the
dominant contradiction in [Guatemalan] class structure." The
economic argument includes diverse elements, such as surplus
value, which is said to have been confiscated by the ladinos
through the utilisation of Indian labour, a phenomenon persisting
since the establishment of the colonial encomienda and repartimiento
to the present day "by means of the 300,000 workers who migrate
seasonally to the latifundia." Another element taken into con-
sideration is credit, also monopolised by the ladinos, while 70%
of the Indian population, who make up 80% of the peasantry, receive
only 4% of national credit.[1] Commercial circuits are also said to
be controlled by the ladinos, "a fact which dates from the establish-
ment of compulsory commodity distribution in colonial times and con-
tinues to the cornershop owner in the departmental capitals today."
As well as being economically powerful the ladinos also control the
superstructural level; they appear to monopolise "all political
representation", the Government, the Congress, the repressive
forces, the judicial system and cultural instruments such as
language, religion, education and the press. The ladino ruling
class defends its structural privileges through the control of a
wide variety of commercial, industrial, agricultural, professional,
social and political organisations, including all the political
parties. The ladinos also make use of particular ideological
methods to consolidate their domination: "Indigenism, which justifies

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[1] This is an incorrect usage of the concept of "monopoly", since if
the Indians get even a minimal part of the credit, it cannot be
said to have been "monopolised" by the ladinos.

domination." Through the ideological construct called ladinización, which simultaneously implies "the mystification of social integration, the ladinos have prevented the exploited from acquiring any consciousness of their exploitation, and have hindered their unity by implying that the community is a closed society." The argument is pursued to its ultimate conclusion by maintaining that "because of the relationship of exploitation and domination, the ladino is in an ANTAGONISTIC relationship to the 'Indian'." Finally, it is concluded that "the appropriation of the means of production to the point of monopoly, as well as antagonism, the consciousness of the dominant class of class domination and ideology, all combine to point towards the conclusion that THE LADINO-'INDIAN' RELATION CONSTITUTES A CLASS RELATIONSHIP."

This is the basic premise of this approach, in spite of some contrary arguments which appear later in the text; for example, Herbert says that "the fact that all the means of production are monopolised by the ladinos or by foreigners does not mean that all the ladinos share the same situation" (Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 96), and different layers in the Indian segment are also mentioned (Op. cit.: 98). But the identification of both ethnic groups with the corresponding social classes is always the backbone of Herbert and Guzmán's interpretation. It is reaffirmed over and over again, disregarding any intra-ethnic economic differentiation:

> "The existence of distinct layers within
> the 'Indian' class does not remove the
> fundamental fact that the Indians have
> constituted the most exploited class over
> four-and-a-half centuries of imperialism..."

> (Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 99)

This colonial ethnic determinism, which is made to dominate objective material conditions, is further developed, interspersed with ecologi-

cal variables, in a sub-proposition: "The permanence of the
colonial situation is intensified by the ecological opposition
city/country and high lands/low lands....." (Guzmán/Herbert, 1970:
52). This is reaffirmed when the social structure is described in
the context of the economic elements just mentioned;

> "the highly productive land on the Southern
> Pacific Coast and in the North Eastern regions
> is monopolised by ladinos; thus the general
> correlation exists LOWLAND IRRIGATED LADINO-
> OWNED LAND/HIGHLAND LOW PRODUCTION 'INDIAN'-
> OWNED LAND...."
>
> (Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 94)

It is surprising that the authors who proclaim themselves Marxists
should interpret the social structure of Guatemala as determined by
colonial-ethnic factors which moreover are ecologically intensified.
However, the most important point concerns the internal logic of
the argument, which is the matter under analysis.

The first quotation revolves around three main points: the
colonial situation, city/country and low lands/high lands; within
the general context it is clear that all Indians (whether colonial
or contemporary since they are the same) , rural dwellers and high-
landers are equated in Herbert's scheme. Correspondingly, there is
a coincidence between lowland dwellers, the urban population and
Spaniards (or the present ladinos, inasmuch as they are considered
the same). Since the authors ignore the temporal dimension by
assuming that the colonial condition has persisted until the present
time, and actually determines the present, the analysis will con-
centrate on the present. Is it at all possible to see the Indians
as an exclusively rural concentration? Obviously not, and even the
authors themselves speak elsewhere about an urban Indian bourgeoisie
(Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 98-99).[1] Is it possible, on the other hand,

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[1] For more concrete data about urban Indians, see Colby/van den
Berghe, p.160.

to equate the _ladinos_ with city dwellers? This would ignore
the large proportion of rural _ladinos_. In other words, this
correlation is as untenable as the former. Taking this together
with the second quotation, it is observed that the _ladinos_ not
only occupy the cities and the lowlands but they also appear to
monopolise these areas. Here it is necessary to point out that
living in the lowlands does not necessarily mean owning these
lands and, correspondingly, living in the cities is not necessarily
the same as controlling the ensemble of economic, ideological and
political functions generated there. So, the theoretical notion
of a presumptive and total _ladino_ domination of the plantations and
urban power is eroded once it is conceded that the vast majority
of _ladinos_ in the lowland plantations consist simply of workers.[1]

There is a further inconsistency, discussed extensively by
Noval in his criticism of the whole theory (Noval, 1977). When
Herbert affirms that the highly productive lowland plantations are
"monopolised" by the _ladinos_, the concept is not only ambiguous but
actually wrong. It is wrong, Noval points out, because if there
are _ladinos_ monopolising the land, then all _ladinos_ (insofar as,
according to the authors, they constitute a single social class)
monopolise the totality of the lowlands; that is to say, the
majority of _ladinos_ must have been incorporated into the monopolist
fraction, an argument which is clearly nonsensical. Furthermore,
how can the notion of _ladino_ "appropriation of the means of produc-
tion to the point of monopoly.....", (Noval, 1977: 37) be reconciled
with the plots of land owned by minifundist Indians?

Finally, it is necessary to point out that the authors do not

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[1] As a matter of fact, it is well known that the tiny _ladino_ land-
owner fraction does not generally live on the plantation itself,
at least permanently, but spends its life either in the capital
or abroad.

restrict their interpretation to specific localities or regions, which might have made a sensible discussion possible. They theorise in general abstract terms about the whole national system. So they clearly assume that all the ladinos, collectively and severally own and monopolise the means of production: land, industry, finance, commerce; they also appropriate the surplus value (which is of course only and exclusively generated by the Indians), control the Government and command the State. Conversely, they assume that all the Indians are proletarians (in spite of the Indian minifundia). Above all, they omit to mention that the over- whelming majority of ladinos are as poor and deprived as the poorest Indians; that the Guatemalan proletariat actually consists very largely of ladinos with no land or capital whatsoever, with only their labour power to sell. They also omit to mention that not all Indians are proletarians or, at least, permanent proletarians. Therefore, the whole argument conveys the idea that we have a colonial relic, an ethnic-ladino State rather than a capitalist one.

The authors' methodology involves an explicit attack on culturalist approaches extended to the whole of anthropology per se. However, they actually misuse and misapply anthropological methods without providing any evidence for their own generalisations about the nation. Likewise, while they attack the methodology of histori- cal studies carried out in Guatemala, historical facts are omitted, invented, biased or wrongly interpreted in their own work. Furthermore, actual historical events are confused with historical possibilities which the authors would like to have happened; inter alia, anthropologists describing ladinización are attacked on the grounds that they are themselves inventing the process and are doing all they can to make it happen (Guzmán, 1975: 18-19). In

spite of the Marxist approach involved and the terminology used the authors have transformed the primordial Marxist categories, social class and class struggle, into subjective colonial-made configurations and reduced them to the notion of ethnic struggle. The ideological device of ethnicity elaborated by the Spaniards now emerges as an objective relation of production. The total scheme has succeeded in confusing the traditional cultural approach with political socioeconomic criticism, but the authors have not made a positive reformulation of the theoretical matter. Instead an ideological end-product emerges; rather than a theoretical construct, it is in fact nothing more than an ideological call for action. They make great play of the class struggle but they actually suggest an ethnic casus belli. Indian hatred of the Spanish invaders five hundred years ago is now transferred to the ladinos and a struggle between the two equally impoverished heirs of the colonial process is tacitly encouraged. As the Indians constitute "...the most exploited class...they are the ones called upon to deepen the movement of liberation and agrarian revolution which is already on the move" (Guzmán/Herbert, 1970: 99).

So far, this chapter has been concerned with studies like the one by Smith in which the permanent coincidence of ethnicity and class is stipulated without the least complexity. In contrast, Barth's approach does not suggest the concept of social class, although his notion of socioeconomic differentiation, associated with parallel ethnic boundaries, does not appear simplistic in cases (like the one he describes) in which the structural simplicity of the society fits exactly with the ethnic-economic correlation. Other approaches like the one just discussed state the same coincidence in spite of the fact that some contrary data are included.

I am aware of the risk of discussing all the material in taxonomic form as has been done so far, because the general picture might seem a static one. Some authors are particularly difficult to include in a particular taxonomic segment, and Stavenhagen, whose work will be studied next, is one of them. I include him here because the main weight of his analysis contributes, in my opinion, to the thesis that ethnic groups and social classes are equivalent.

Two works by Stavenhagen have been examined (Stavenhagen, 1970 and 1977) both of which analyse the Maya population in Western Guatemala and Chiapas, Mexico. Stavenhagen tries to integrate the "structural" and the "cultural" approaches since he holds that the interpretation of ethnic groups should be based on the wider economic structure in which those groups are situated. Hence Favre sees Stavenhagen's approach as the first example of the application of structural analysis to ethnic problems (Favre: 93). Stavenhagen himself justifies the importance of integrating the cultural list with the socioeconomic structural approach by saying that few previous (culturalist) anthropological studies of relation-ships between the Indian and the ladino ethnic groups "....have attempted a class analysis in the framework of the wider society" (Stavenhagen, 1970: 196). However, his criticism of culturalism implies reformulation rather than rejection, because he does not "...pretend to contribute new facts....(but simply) to reorganise the known facts into an interpretative scheme differing from previous anthropological models....." (Stavenhagen, 1977: 7).

Two important elements can be perceived: first, the cultural-structural approach is being applied to an "international" ethnic

region, in the sense that a whole Maya society has been "accidentally" divided by the border between Guatemala and Mexico. Secondly, while Stavenhagen criticises the culturalist approach he makes use of those elements which are considered to be compatible with the structural economic framework. It is absolutely necessary, Stavenhagen says, to examine economic relationships between both Indians and ladinos, not simply within one group or another (like Tax or Siverts), but within the total economic system in which both groups are situated (Stavenhagen, 1970: 198). Since Stavenhagen's definition of ethnicity as related to social class seems to me to be rather imprecise, the following exposition constitutes a re-arrangement of Stavenhagen's original scheme for my own purposes.

Class, stratum and ethnicity are concepts which are reciprocally intertwined. Stavenhagen's concept of social class combines a "dynamic structural-functional" approach with Marxist theory putting the philosophical, economic and historical dimensions together (Stavenhagen, 1970: 28-29). "Ethnic groups" are thought of as "cultural groups", with consciousness of membership, which can be equated with race, tribe, nationality, minority or caste depending on the circumstances (Stavenhagen, 1977: 9). It is claimed that culturalism failed in its identification of ethnic groups simply as cultural groups and that the structural approach also failed by considering them simply as socioeconomic categories. For Stavenhagen neither approach is exclusively capable of providing a comprehensive explanation. Instead, he tries to combine the concepts of class and stratum for the explanation of ethnicity. We can deduce the following quasi-Weberian formula from this intricate combination when ethnic (i.e. cultural) differentiation

coincides with basic structural (i.e. class) differentiation a stratm results. Since the Indian and ladino groups each have their own class differentiation. "...the two ethnic groups are the only strata in this system...." (Stavenhagen, 1970: 230-237). Indian and ladino strata assemble quantitatively measurable characteristics of an economic nature, commonly named "social classes", and qualitative characteristics (racial, cultural, etc.), commonly named "castes". Accordingly, every stratum is identified not only by its objective conditions but also by the social values associated with it (Stavenhagen, 1970: 237). The two components of every ethnic stratum (quantitative differences of class and qualitative differences of stratum) are repeatedly expressed, and "the stratifications are based upon the relationships between classes and tend to reflect them" (Stavenhagen, 1970: 38). From this it can be inferred that the two ethnic strata exactly mirror class differences, and by being their image, class and ethnic boundaries are coincident. Henceforth, the analysis is so structured as to prove that ethnic groups are social classes.

Two major aspects, land and commerce, are considered in the context of the class component. The first one, land, and its connection with the relations of production is analysed through three sub-aspects: subsistence, commercial agriculture, and agricultural workers. First the Indians are distinguished from the ladinos because they cultivate maize principally for their own domestic consumption whereas the ladinos, who seldom cultivate corn, do not participate in subsistence agriculture (Stavenhagen, 1970: 207-208). The second aspect, commercial agriculture, is also said to identify Indians and ladinos as the two opposing classes in

the region: the <u>ladinos</u> who cultivate land devote themselves to commercial agriculture, in contrast to the Indians who are primarily and fundamentally concerned with subsistence (Stavenhagen, 1977: 17). Furthermore, the <u>ladinos</u> are not exclusively committed to agriculture and they also accumulate capital and employ labour (Stavenhagen, 1970: 210). By introducing this third factor, agricultural workers, the author reaffirms his earlier statement by concluding that

> "....here we have new relations of production
> in which the Indian is always the employee and
> the <u>ladino</u> always the employer. When <u>ladinos</u>
> are employed by other <u>ladinos</u>, they have higher
> positions and incomes than the Indians."
>
> (Stavenhagen, 1970: 213)

Hence, the formulation:

> "We can now attempt a first generalisation.
> Concerning agricultural production, the relation-
> ships between <u>ladinos</u> and Indians constitute
> class relationships."
>
> (Stavenhagen, 1970: 213)

The second aspect, land, is analysed in the framework of three types of tenure: communal ownership, <u>ejido</u> and private ownership. Here the author reaches the same conclusion. Communal land (which is less profitable since it is of very low quality, productivity and commercial value) is in Indian hands. The <u>ejido</u>, a type of Mexican land tenure is also directly associated with Indian groups (Stavenhagen, 1970: 215-217).[1] Private property in land (generally land taken from Indians by <u>ladinos</u>) clearly symbolises class opposition between the two ethnic groups. When the <u>ladinos</u> appropriated Indian lands in the last century, both the groups which resulted were characterised as antagonistic classes; the <u>ladinos</u> became

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[1] This author defines the <u>ejido</u> as property owned and worked collectively by a single family. The land can be administered as if it were private property but it cannot be alienated. Due to the way it is inherited, progressive atomisation takes place with the concomitant phenomena of accelerated migration.

great landowners and the Indians were transformed into peons.[1]
So, "the private possession of land constitutes, therefore, an
additional differentiating class element in the region" (Staven-
hagen, 1970: 222).[2]

The second major aspect of the class component of ethnicity,
commerce, also leads the author to reaffirm the coincidence of
ethnicity with social class. The Indians, by being petty producers,
petty shopkeepers, small purchasers and small consumers, are absol-
utely unable to influence either prices or market tendencies. On
the other hand, the ladino, who is always the trader, the inter-
mediary and the creditor, buys Indian products cheaply, but sells
industrial artifacts expensively to the Indians. The commercial
relationships between both ethnic groups are notoriously unequal,
and "...place the Indian population in a specific and particular
situation in relation to the ladino population: in a class situation"
(Stavenhagen, 1970: 224-228). Therefore, the concluding statement

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[1] Stavenhagen estimates that this process may have operated more
harshly in Guatemala than in Mexico where "it has been partially
restrained by   agrarian reform and the ejido system" (Staven-
hagen, 1970: 218-219).

[2] Here, as in other parts of the work (to be presented in due course)
Stavenhagen is rather elusive. Such absolute statements are
eventually 'softened', implying that not everything is so clear,
first because of other important differences between ladino and
Indian landowners, and secondly because all the latifundists are
ladinos but not all   the ladinos are latifundists (Stavenhagen,
1970: 222). Elsewhere it is cautiously stated that "in the
general consideration of the Maya area in Chiapas and Guatemala
certain local aspects and particular situations of great interest
are inevitably neglected which, if included, would perhaps modify
this general scheme" (Stavenhagen, 1977: 31). However, these
elucidations appear to me to be minor appendices to the main
argument; there is no comparison between the weight accorded to
the two statements.

is clear enough: Indians and ladinos, whichever variables are used to analyse them, constitute two different, opposite and antagonistic social classes, the ladinos being the dominant and the Indians the dominated one.

As may be remembered, ethnicity includes the objective class-components so far discussed and subjective or qualitative stratum-components. The latter, by reflecting the objective cleavage between ladinos and Indians, come to constitute an additional argument to enable Stavenhagen to reaffirm once again the class difference between Indians and ladinos. Thus,

> "the ladinos not only occupy a superior position
> in the objective socioeconomic scale, but also
> consider themselves, in their quality as ladinos,
> as having a superior relationship to the Indians,
> They despise the Indians simply for being Indians."

In this stratified system, the Indians occupy subordinate positions (Stavenhagen, 1970: 237-238). The Indians, as a homogeneous stratum, are not divided internally into sub-strata because, on the one hand, all of them participate in the same value system and, on the other hand, they are not differentiated economically (Stavenhagen, 1970: 231). Arguments which relate to the value system appear intertwined in Stavenhagen's analysis of land which is not restricted to objective class relationships. Subjective aspects of values are given a great importance (cf. Weber), and so the Indians appear as individuals who are emotionally, psychologically and culturally linked to the land; without land (whether communal, ejidal or individual), the Indian loses social and ethnic identity. In contradistinction to the ladinos (whose main goal is to accumulate land and make it productive by utilising the work of thers), the Indians do not consider land as a commodity (Stavenhagen, 1970: 219-221). In addition,

economic pre-eminence is firmly discouraged among the members of this community; on the contrary, an "egalitarian" principle prevails, whereby no pre-eminent stratum can emerge. The so-called principales (who make up the dominant institution in the organisational structure) even encounter economic problems and debts in order to satisfy the expensive duties of the post. Therefore, "under such conditions it is not possible, in the traditional corporative community for any superior stratum or any higher social class to emerge" (Stavenhagen, 1970: 231-233). In contrast, "ladino society, as all 'Western' societies, is stratified." These divisions, which are thought to be non-existent among the Indians, consist of "...private ownership of land, income, occupation, education and the family lineage." In addition to these objective factors, the value system also makes "the ladinos value wealth and ownership highly as one of their raisons d'être" (Stavenhagen, 1970: 235).

Here it is convenient to point out that, as noted above, an inconsistent sequence of arguments and counter-arguments makes Stavenhagen's picture extremely confused. Thus he maintains paradoxically, that the weight of the ethnic contradiction reduces the importance of socioeconomic differences to such an extent that ethnic stratification persists even when many Indians and ladinos share the same socioeconomic level (Stavenhagen, 1970: 239). (My emphasis.)

Therefore, do the ladinos and Indians constitute two social classes or not? It is difficult to answer this question, since it is difficult to grasp Stavenhagen's confusing exposition. In fact, we can perceive a rather convoluted treatment of the subject. It

is obvious that the articulation of ethnicity and class in Meso-
america is not at all a simple matter. It is also obvious that
Stavenhagen deals with this complex situation in a correspondingly
complex manner. However, in the course of the sequence of argu-
ments and counter-arguments, the reader gets confused. In the
course of analysing this complex sequence, three major aspects
predominate: 1) the contradiction about a simultaneous coincidence
and difference of ethnic and class boundaries; 2) the contradiction
between the importance he concedes to the structual/wider context
approach (cf. p.130) and his ultimate omission of this wider con-
text; 3) the biased result achieved when he brings together both
the cultural and the structural approaches.

As for the first, it has been widely documented how most of
the evidence produced in the book attempts to identify the Indians
as an exploited class and the _ladinos_ as the antagonistic exploiting
class. Stavenhagen also includes a historical account in order to
argue that more and more Indians became gradually divorced from
their colonial (i.e. ethnic) relationships, evolving progressively
into social classes, to the point that they were not Indians any
longer (Stavenhagen, 1970: 245-246). He also mentions the fact
that when the nineteenth century liberals introduced the cultivation
of coffee on a large scale and "...the capitalist economy became
dominant in the region, the relationships between coloniser and
colonised, between _ladino_ and Indian, _became class relationships_"
(Stavenhagen, 1970: 248-249). And again, as capitalist agriculture,
industry and the money economy became more widespread, colonial
relationships (i.e. ethnic) decreased in importance at the expense
of class relationships (Stavenhagen, 1970: 260). This is reaffirmed
once more by saying that,

> "beyond the overt inter-ethnic relationships
> in the stratification system, there is a class
> structure. When an Indian works for a ladino,
> what is fundamental is not their inter-ethnic
> relationship but their labour relationship."
>
> (Stavenhagen, 1970: 260)

Here, however, the counter-arguments appear surprisingly confused cancelling the whole previous position: as a result of this peculiarly heterogeneous ethnic-class historical process, present inter-ethnic stratifications do not strictly correspond to the "new class relationships" developed from a money economy. That is why "the 'colonised' Indians do not constitute, as such, a social class." And the same fundamental contradiction to the rest of the work again "...Indians and ladinos are not two social classes" (Stavenhagen, 1970: 250). The antithesis appears again in the final section.[1]

> "We are not saying that Indians and ladinos
> and simply two social classes. To say this
> would constitute an exaggerated simplification
> of a considerably complex historical situation."
>
> (Stavenhagen, 1970: 250)

In the end, one may well ask: what remains? Do ethnic groups constitute classes while simultaneously not doing so? The picture of ethnic and class relationships remains uncertain and, ultimately no fundamentally conclusive proposition can be found.

When we approach the second major aspect the contradiction between his explicit attempt to relate the region to the wider context with his actual omission of this wider context, it is possible to perceive part of the reason for the previous paradox, which Stavenhagen himself does not express explicitly. Here I would say that his regional generalisations become weak when contradictory cases from the wider context (emphatically stressed but actually neglected) are considered. When Stavenhagen describes

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[1] "The Dynamics of Inter-ethnic relationships: Classes, Colonialism and Acculturation".

Indian subsistence cultivators as a class opposing the ladino commercial cultivators, we cannot avoid thinking of, for example, the small ladino farmers in other regions of the wider framework such as Western Guatemala, or Indians selling vegetables, fruit and other products in the Central Guatemalan Highlands. When "labourers and employers" are identified as Indians and ladinos we must think of the ladino labourers in other areas of the wider context, even geographically close like the plantations. The same applies to his argument about land tenure: at the national level, both in Mexico and Guatemala, the term ladino is not synonymous with 'landowner'. This is more surprising since Stavenhagen himself is aware of the incongruences when he accepts that not all the ladinos in the region are latifundists. Why then does he reiterate this argument without mentioning the overwhelming numbers of ladino rural workers who exist in other parts of both countries?

The answer to this question can be found in the context of the last major item in Stavenhagen's approach to be commented upon: the defective aspects of his otherwise useful and positive attempt to bring together the structural and the cultural approach, especially the link between the local and the wider levels. In my opinion, the clue to understanding the failure to link local and wider levels of analysis appears in the last chapter, when Stavenhagen briefly points out that he has been dealing with a class-regional system which can be different from a wider-level class system, since "the regional dominant class represented by the ladinos is not necessarily the dominant class in the national society" (Stavenhagen, 1970: 254-255). A necessary question arises here: is it possible to recognise two simultaneous class systems, a regional system exploited by the ladinos and a national one that is not? Stavenhagen's main argument

permits us to give a negative answer to this question: it is not
possible. In terms of the Marxist analysis invoked by this author,
regional peculiarities cannot fundamentally oppose or contradict
the basic class structure of the national system as a whole. To
assume the contrary would be to assume the absolute economic and
political "independence" of the region in relation to the nation,
implying both socioeconomic and political incoherence. As the
Mayan Highlands, both on the Mexican or the Guatemalan side of
the border, have no political or economic independence, but on the
contrary, constitute an integral part of their respective nations,
economic systems and class structures, it seems to me inaccurate
to concede this kind of independence to these regions. But, if
Stavenhagen were not thinking of the economic or political independ-
ence of the regions, why should the ladinos tend to appear region-
ally dominant but nationally dominated? The key to this incongruence
lies in the fact that the economically dominant segments at the
local and the wider contexts pertain to a social class, but "ladinos"
as such do not. Ladino is an ethnic label and it has nothing per se
to do with any socioeconomic category of class. "Ladino" as an
abstract category, logically includes all ladinos, regardless
of their socioeconomic situation and their regional or national
location. If, for example, the ladinos in certain regions are the
dominant class but are not dominant elsewhere in the national
context, it is obvious then that "ladino" is a term involving more
than a single socioeconomic category. This is of course because
"ladino" (or Indian) is an ethnic term, created for purposes other
than the strictly socioeconomic one. In other words, the fallacy
lies in the fact of confusing categories which cannot be utilised
as interchangeable concepts. Ethnic concepts must be distinguished

from   socioeconomic or class concepts. The ethnic labels of
ladino or Indian should only be utilised in specific circumstances
which are by no means equivalent to the socioeconomic class cate-
gory, slotting specific labels for each socioeconomic segment into
the corresponding ethnic group. In either case, to equate ethnic
labels with social classes becomes an unjustified muddle which
implies playing the colonial ideological rules which are designed
to disguise economic inequalities. Thus, in my opinion, the error
is to transfer local-level ethnic nomenclature to wider-level class
facts and vice versa, because both are of a very different nature
and express clearly distinct truths. They co-exist and overlap,
but they are not equivalent.

From our standpoint, all these problems imply a somewhat
static use of the complex structural-cultural model. In the process
of combining aspects from both models, the final result looks in
the long run like a "patchwork" or mosaic rather than real integra-
tion. Equally, there is a kind of rigidity in the whole scheme:
too much "structura" and too little "dynamics". The intricate
social process has been frozen: Stavenhagen's complex model ulti-
mately appears like a mechanical superimposition of overlapping
cultural-structural/ethnic-class pieces of a mosaic.

However, it cannot be denied that Stavenhagen's approach was
a pioneering attempt to integrate useful cultural elements with the
structural framework, which until then was virtually ignored by the
former. Furthermore, he did not follow the easy way fashionable
then and now, of rejecting a priori everything in previous tend-
encies without giving them serious consideration. An appraisal of
Stavenhagen's work would be negatively biased if the debates then

current were not taken into account. Furthermore, his "inter-national" approach to ethnicity is interesting and valuable. In the light of these comments I think that his ambiguous analysis reflects not only the complexity of the matter but also the caution with which Stavenhagen approaches it. His work makes possible the engendering of new ideas and further theoretical enrichment.

This chapter has discussed examples of the complex models, which postulate an ethnic-class equation. In contradiction to the simple 'cultural' or 'structural' models, we now have major keys for an interpretation of the articulation under study. As far as Mesoamerica is concerned, I have presented reductionist perspectives, like that of Herbert/Guzmán, and more developed studies like that of Stavenhagen. The criticism of the latter constitutes my main comment on the whole position discussed in this chapter, which is my total inability to accept the notion that ethnicity and class are equivalent categories for Mesoamerica.

CHAPTER IV   NO CORRESPONDENCE OF SOCIOECONOMIC AND ETHNIC GROUPS

In the previous chapter I discussed approaches which generally supported the first notion that ethnic groups and classes are correspondent categories. In this chapter I shall explore the second and opposite alternative, the postulate that classes and ethnic groups do not correspond. These approaches assert that more than one ethnic group is present in every social class and that diverse classes are included in every ethnic group; far from being equivalent and equated phenomena both categories are overlapping and do not share common boundaries. As in the preceding section, where the analysis was introduced by material from outside Meso- america, here again a perspective from other regions will be pre- sented in order to bring more light on the matter. As a paradigm, let us begin with the propositional model by Cohen. Cohen assumes a hypothetical situation in which two ethnic groups are internally divided along class lines due to the emergence or presence of economic elites in both of them. The deprived in each ethnic group will reciprocally cooperate for economic defence against the rich classes in each group; these classes will also be articulated in order to defend their privileges. This cooperation along class demarcation lines would exist regardless of ethnic ties, economic interests would prevail over ethnic allegiances and consequently ethnic consciousness would be minimal or could even disappear (Cohen: xxi-xxiii).

Cohen's proposition, taken here as a preliminary point of reference, looks theoretically attractive when the present struggle in Guatemala is observed. In contrast to extreme or simplistic interpretations (cf. Smith, Herbert, Guzmán or Friedlander),

this proposition underlines the importance of objective economic alliances superimposed on subjective and secondary allegiances. However, although such a model can be valid it may be simplistic: can there be observed situations in which ethnic consciousness does not disappear in spite of economic allegiance? Do circumstances exist in which, despite inter-ethnic economic alliance or precisely because of it, ethnic affiliation can be reinforced among economically differentiated groups of people of the same ethnic group? Does the proper view depend on the level of analysis (regional or national), or the specific conjuncture of political inter- and intra-ethnic relationships, or the moment in the process of class consciousness, and so forth? These possibilities will be presented and discussed later on when examples from Mesoamerica are analysed.

In his African example Leo Kuper states that class and ethnic structures constitute different but overlapping systems of stratification. They are considered different because the class structure is intrinsic to the interaction, that is to say, it arises directly from the interaction between members of the society. In fact to some extent the ethnic (or racial, in his terms) structure has its point of reference situated externally to the interaction, and it is thus extrinsic to the interaction. This is because, Kuper argues, even though ethnic-racial differences are involved in the interaction, as social elaborations they have preceded this interaction in the colonial system (Kuper: 1972).

A similar perspective is found in Mitchell's analyses of Zambia. In contrast to Smith's account of Jamaica, Mitchell's general view develops from an anlysis of the concrete circumstances connected with the dynamic effect which the foreign European

presence has exerted to bring about economic differentiation
between ethnic tribal groups. Far from indicating a simple
class-ethnic conjunction, Mitchell maintains that "it is sometimes
assumed that as the African population becomes stratified, the
bonds within each stratum will cut across ethnic differences...."
Such a stratification will eventually overcome and superimpose
itself upon those ethnic differences. McCall is quoted to under-
line this increasingly complex process:

> "Class formation tolls the knell of tribalism
> in the urban environment. The marks of class
> are independent of the marks of tribal member-
> ship; classes comprise people of various tribes."
>
> (Mitchell: 15)

Therefore, unlike the approaches to the Caribbean and Meso-
america discussed earlier, the class-ethnic intersection in
Mitchell's findings does not suggest any such elementary parallelism.
However some obscurity emerges as Mitchell develops his conception
of class; incidentally, it should be made clear that Mitchell's
economic categories, although called "class", may be different
from the structural position derived from their different control
over the means of production, but in the end his definition of
class remains unclear. In a sense, following a Weberian pers-
pective, "class" refers to ranks of prestige. For Mitchell class
distinction occurs in groups of people sharing the same level of
prestige along a continuum and behaving corporately in political
situations. The definition of class begins to get complicated
because of what may appear superficially as "opposition between
'classes' in the prestige system may in fact be aspects of the
general opposition between Whites and Blacks."

Further complications obscure the vision of class; first, because "frequently tribal and class categories coincide" (Mitchell: 16) and secondly, because the contradiction between Blacks and Whites is not unequivocal since there are Blacks whose modus vivendi and economic interests coincide with the Whites' interests, e.g. mine-police, employees, etc.

Weberian influences are again apparent when Mitchell refers to classes as political entities; Africans are opposed to Europeans in the sense of two antagonistic political classes; in such cases, Africans, as a political class, are not yet divided by tribal or socioeconomic class affiliations (Mitchell: 17). Here however it is difficult to discern whether Mitchell views class as a group sharing political consciousness in opposition to Europeans or as an economically differentiated group. In the latter case, the economic criteria would remain unspecified. If, on the other hand, Mitchell's notion of political consciousness applies only to the context of confrontation with Europeans, this would identify ethnicity with political reaction. However, instead of describing an ethnic system made up of two opposite ethnic groups (Africans and Europeans), the word ethnicity is only applied to Africans, not to the opposite group. My own view is that ethnicity (like social class) constitutes a dialectical concept which can therefore only be comprehensible antithetically; the existence of one ethnic group necessarily presupposes the existence of at least another in the same system, in the same way that the concept of class makes no sense if class plurality is not considered.

Nevertheless, these obscurities do not affect the central point which is that ethnic and economic differences do not coincide

in former colonial states. The contrast with Smith's analysis
of another state which also developed under colonial rule is
remarkable. The Zambian social formation has developed in an in-
creasingly complex manner and, despite the opposing political
interests of the two principal ethnic groups, the contradiction
between ethnic and class categories, namely Blacks and Whites,
is not always unequivocal; the fact that Black mine police or
employees had close and unitary relations with the Whites and have
antagonistic relations with Black manual workers highlights the
complex condition of that particular social structure (Mitchell:
15-16).

Similar considerations regarding the overlap and distinctive-
ness of ethnicity and economic differentiation have been developed
in Latin America. Peru, a country where this overlap is as con-
spicuous as in Mesoamerica, has been the object of a number of
cultural and structural studies. When describing the phenomenon
under consideration in this work, Fuenzalida holds that the Peruvian
Indians cannot be assimilated as a whole into a single economically
differentiated social category. When Fuenzalida states that 67%
of the peasantry is made up of Indians, he implies automatically
that the 33% remainder is non-Indian (Fuenzalida, 1970). Corres-
ponding to this non-identification of Indians with peasantry in
terms of a total correlation, Fuenzalida agrees with the criticism
of approaches identifying Indians according to their occupation
because, again, Indians do not constitute an occupational sector
(Fuenzalida, 1971). Non-Indians are also peasants, whereas not all
of Indians are included in the peasant sector. In the same perspec-
tive it is observed that another ethnic group, the mestizo, includes
minifundists and also landowners. To sum up briefly, no correspond-

ence can be traced between ethnic groups and economically differ-
entiated groups (Fuenzalida, 1971: 62).

Mayer presents the same view for the same country (Mayer, 1970).
The Peruvian peasantry is made up of both Indians and non-Indians
or mestizos. In the same way that the economic sector exhibits
ethnic heterogeneity, ethnic groups exhibit economic diversity.
For example, the mestizo ethnic group is divided into two economic
strata: one of intermediaries and the other (which is the upper
one at the local level) of landowners and high level administrators.
The Indian peasants have a serf-like position in the haciendas
(yanaconas) but can also be cultivators on the communal lands.
The mestizo intermediary interrelates directly with the peasants,
buying their crops, but is also in direct relationship with the
powerful exporter who monopolizes the capital and gives credit to
the peasants, who have no capital of their own. Thus the intermedi-
ary controls and canalizes the peasants' surplus product and links
their activities to the national framework. The intermediaries
have an interest in maintaining the peasants in an isolated and
subordinate situation in order to retain their monopoly. These
mestizo intermediaries are not an homogeneous group; they are
divided into two categories, one of which relates most closely to
the Indian peasants and the other which is the link with the rest
of the mestizos. They do not constitute a solidary group, despite
their common ethnicity; they constitute heterogeneous, separate
and competitive groupings rather than a corporate economic segment.
Mayer sites the Cholo sector between the lower intermediary mestizo
segment and the even lower Indians. By being an inter-ethnic hinge,
this group shares both Indian and non-Indian cultural characteristics,
like language and costume. An amorphous group, the Cholos are said

to be engaged in heterogeneous activities; however, they could well be in the process of forming a new intermediate group competing with the _mestizos_. On the political level, the _Cholos_ are seen as the leaders of a rebel movement seeking to overthrow the system; their ideological expression would imply the elevation of Indian identity (Mayer: 124-127). It is interesting to point out that, if Mayer's appreciation is accurate, this process of ethnic reaffirmation would be a similar reaction to that relating to an emerging Indian elite in Chiapas described by Siverts. Mayer brings out another ethnic-economic consequence which, except for the participation of the _Cholos_, could represent a phenomenon parallel to the current process in Guatemala: it is said that increasing rural unrest in Peru, beginning in the early 60's, has been expressed by two forms of action, first the organisation of Trade Unions by the rural proletarians of the Coast, and second, land invasions in the Sierra. The _Cholos_ seem to be playing a leading rôle in the latter (Mayer: 124-127).

The comparative analysis will return now to Mesoamerica, specifically to Guatemala, and concretely to the Ixil region. This small area, whose striking economic, ethnic and political dynamics have already featured in the introduction to this work, unites in a unique way all the anthropological, sociological and political elements which have formed the basis of my argument. One word of warning: as far as I can see, because of the pecular articulation of class and ethnicity in the Ixil and the neighbouring areas, a particular kind of consciousness has come into being. Centuries of economic exploitation and all its implications have now been challenged. As far as I can ascertain, the political consequences may be highly significant for the Indian populations of Latin America.

The tangled combination of a wide variety of factors forces the analyst to deal with an astonishing web of intermingled phenomena, which is why I have thought it useful to include in the following description all the historical, cultural and structural variables considered in the present work.

I will now discuss a study of the Ixil ethnic group located in North Western Guatemala by Colby and van den Berghe. The authors range over all the social factors so far mentioned in this chapter by exploring the particular region in both diachronic and synchronic dimensions and its links with the whole national system, and by postulating the lack of correspondence between ethnic and class boundaries. Their research was carried out nearly twenty years ago, first published in English (Colby and van den Berghe, 1969) and later in Spanish (Colby and van den Berghe, 1977); my quotations are from the English version.

The historical account concentrates particularly on the main pueblos de indios established by the Spaniards, namely Nebaj, Chajul and Cotzal. Throughout Spanish rule, the native leaders' authority and the prehispanic class system were substantially broken down, partly because of the encomienda system; however, the Ixil people maintained a defiant attitude towards Spanish penetration and in 1799 came close to an open rebellion (Colby and van den Berghe: 47). It is argued that the Ixil group, located in what at the time was a rather isolated region, remained to some extent isolated from the Spanish governmental centres. This situation prevailed during the early independent period and even in the late nineteenth century the Ixil group remained more or less isolated from national life (Colby and van den Berghe: 64-69). At that time, the region was

largely self-sufficient economically and was predominantly an autonomous "monoethnic" enclave with considerable intra-ethnic stratification. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries local government was largely in the hands of the Ixil, with only occasional intrusions on the part of the central government (Colby and van den Berghe: 78). But since the latter part of the nineteenth century ladino influence increased as a result of the coffee boom. From then on both ladinos and foreigners flooded into the area as businessmen and traders: furthermore, by seeking to tap the Indian labour market, they undermined the subsistence economy and the virtual political autonomy of the Ixil "and introduced at the local level the cultural pluralism which already prevailed in other parts of Guatemala" (Colby and van den Berghe: 79).

By means of fraudulent contracts and other tricks, some of the first ladino migrants appropriated large areas of land, although a substantial part of the land remained in Indian hands. The Indian labour force recruitment was implanted with its attendant features of money-lending and alcoholism and as a consequence the Indians became trapped in perpetual indebtedness (Colby and van den Berghe: 72-73). On account of the increasing scarcity of land the authors maintain that

> "....where earlier Indians had to be forced
> against their will to work on the coastal
> plantations, now many landless Indians have
> no choice but to seek such seasonal employ-
> ment on these fincas." [1]

(Colby and van den Berghe: 79)

Later on, under the Ubico dictatorship (1931-1944) debt peonage was abolished but replaced by the so-called "vagrancy law" and the "road-making law" (vagancia and vialidad, respectively); members of low-

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[1] Note the constancy of this phenomenon as described by Colby, van den Berghe, Bunzel and many other authors.

income groups with no paid work, that is, most of the Indians in Guatemala, were forced to work for 150 days a year for very low wages in road construction or on private plantations.

Next, the local historical dimension is linked to a macro-level analysis; here it is useful to point out that Colby and van den Berghe base their description on figures which are now largely out of date (their main source is Monteforte Toledo, 1959). In spite of this, their figures do not contradict the fundamental state of things in Guatemala; in any case, a worsening in the appalling social contradictions has taken place. The structural picture in 1955 shows that rather more than two-thirds of the economically active population were in the agricultural sector, whereas only 11.5% were engaged in industry, nearly 10% in services and only 5.4% in commerce. Agricultural activities were divided into two basic sectors: commercial crops and staple articles for domestic consumption. The interaction of both sectors is said to be closely linked with the social class and ethnic structure of Guatemala: commercial crops are primarily, but not exclusively, grown in the coastal plantations "...almost invariably owned by Guatemalan ladinos or by foreigners, many of whom are absentee landlords"; conversely, the workers are generally Indian jornaleros (day wage workers) or colonos, an archaic term for tenant-settlers "...drawn in good part from the Western Highlands to which Ixil country belongs" (Colby and van den Berghe: 33). Scarcity of land, the impact of cash agriculture and the need for a drastic land re-form are mentioned by the authors as the factors which have increased the dependence of hitherto subsistence producers on the plantations and the impoverishment of peasants, who have become "...transformed into a rural sub-proletariat" living at a sub-subsistence level.

While the coastal zone consists largely of large or medium-size plantations (run by *ladinos*), the Highland Indian population, including the Ixil, consists overwhelmingly of landless peasants or minifundia owners "...with a sprinkling of larger *ladino fincas*" (Colby and van den Berghe: 33-34).

In the following table, I have arranged and summarised the data on the structure of land tenure and distribution by family in rural Guatemala in 1950:[1]

	Average Amount Of Land Owned (in Hectares)					
	Landless	0.4	2.2	15.1	165.5	2916.5
% of families	16.5	17.8	56	7.9	7.9	0.1

The authors show conclusively that 40.8% of landed property in Guatemala was owned by only 0.1% of the rural popularion (Colby and van den Berghe: 33-34). Furthermore, most of the land in the large plantations is uncultivated. Arranging the data in a table the following situation is revealed:

	% of cultivated land
22 largest latifundia	5.7
165,850 minifundia under 1.4 Hectares	94.7

The authors refer to the increasing dependence of the Highland Indian minifundists on the coastal *haciendas* by making mention of the *jornaleros* and *colonos*. However, in order to describe the class affiliation of the rural workers in the latifundia more specifically,

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[1] Although these figures add up to 106.2% the general tendency illustrated is clear.

a factor of the utmost importance in the present struggle, as
well as the intermediaries recruiting labour force for the land-
owners (for which Bunzel has provided some of the data), I shall
add information from another source (Cabarrús, 1979), which
describes the different categories of peasants contracted for the
South Coast plantations which produce for export. Even though
this author does not specify which region of Guatemala he is
talking about, the inclusion of coastal plantations, ladino
colonos and Indian migrant workers allows us to locate his data
approximately in the same western area of Guatemala explored by
Colby and van den Berghe. The plantation labour force is struc-
tured in the following way (Cabarrús: 54-56): permanent workers
called rancheros or colonos who are usually ladinos; volunteers
or voluntarios, usually ladino descendants of rancheros, and
seasonal migrant workers, called cuadrilleros, who are mainly
migrant Indians from the Highlands. They are classified into
skilled labourers coming from the neighbouring municipios (Chichi-
castenango, Momostenango, etc.) and simple traditional cutters
(cortadores) who are recent migrants from more remote municipios
like Nebaj. The recruiters (reclutadores or habilitadores) con-
stitute the intermediaries between the landowners and the peasants,
trapping the latter on behalf of the former. Cabarrús distin-
guishes two categories of recruiters: recruiters on a large
scale who are ladinos and constitute the minority, and recruiters
on a small scale, mostly Indians, who constitute the larger propor-
tion. Regardless of the categories, the recruiters appropriate
10% of each worker's wage.

So far, Colby and van den Berghe have dealt mostly with the wider national scale, either in terms of historical background or in terms of the general socioeconomic structure of the nation as a whole. In other words, according to my conventional nomenclature, they have proceeded in a structural way. Their data can now be applied more specifically to the Ixil area. On account of this, it remains clear that while their analysis concentrates on a particular region, it does not isolate it from the wider context (as the cultural trend would) and thus the local phenomena acquire full meaning. By combining what are called here structural and cultural trends the authors concentrate their analysis on a specific matter in the specific area, the economic-ethnic relationships of the Ixil. I shall begin by exploring the authors' view of inter-ethnic economic differentiation, preceded by a brief description of the more general economic features.

Ixil life is predominantly agricultural, to the extent that 82.2% of the economically active population are engaged in agriculture. In contrast, only a tiny proportion work as artisans (8.2%) and even fewer as traders (5.5%). What is more, many of the members of these other sectors are also part-time agriculturalists (Colby and van den Berghe: 107). Although the Ixil own livestock, their economic deprivation is such that they are compelled to sell what should be their nutritional reserves, to the extent that meat is a once-a-week luxury food (Colby: 30). As they depend on the plantations for their complementary economy, they also contribute their human quota to the plantation. Land tenure is uncertain because many of the small landholders have no legal title to their property. Colby and van den Berghe provide the following data on land tenure:

Ixil Land Tenure

	Number	%
Owners	19,177	72.45*
Tenants	3,151	11.90
Colonos	2,341	8.48
Unspecified occupants	1,257	4.74
Administrators of plantations	57	0.21

* Most of them with very little land.

The authors warn that these figures do not include the vast majority of Indian peasants who, although occupying land, have no registered titles to their property, which means that their lands are regularly pillaged. Inter-ethnic economic differentiation is highlighted by the fact that most of the land is still in Indian hands, but most of the larger estates are owned by ladinos, which means that minifundia and latifundia are identified with the Indian and ladino populations respectively. At the same time, most of the Indians are completely landless or have holdings which are too small to permit them to be self-sufficient (Colby and van den Berghe: 107-108). The parallelism between ethnic and economic boundaries is reflected in the status and power dimensions which also favour the ladinos, since there are extensive economic and political ties linking the local ladino upper class and the ruling class outside the Ixil region (Colby and van den Berghe: 85). However, a description of the economic contrast between the two ethnic groups would be incomplete without a consideration of the most important factor in the picture, labour contracting. Like Bunzel, Colby and van den

Berghe stress that the contracts with the plantations demonstrate the "most clear-cut economic difference between Indians and ladinos", and this inter-ethnic economic discrepancy is so firm that "with the exception of one family...all labor contractors are ladinos..." contracting is not simply another source of income, but "....the most important avenue towards wealth accumulation and social mobility in the region....."; since the contractors, basically ladinos, have accumulated enough capital to appropriate Indian-owned land (Colby and van den Berghe: 109), while all the agricultural labourers "trapped" for the plantations are Indians. Therefore, "Labor re-cruiting is one of the main factors making for the relatively un-favorable economic position of Indians vis à vis ladinos" (Colby and van den Berghe: 108). As a result of this structural discrepancy between the ethnic groups, it appears that approximately four or five thousand people, most of them contract workers, move to and from the Ixil area each month, primarily to the coastal cotton, coffee and sugar cane plantations (Colby and van den Berghe: 31). The workers are transported in overcrowded lorries, with at least eighty people in each, and normally take their wives and children with them.

Once in the plantation the workers face terrible conditions, not only those derived from the social relationships of labour, but climatic factors which make the workers' situation abominable. Consequently, morbidity and mortality, especially among the children, are so high that the Ixil regard such work as absolutely undesirable. The economic benefits are either small or non-existent, and there are few prospects "of significant economic improvement within the existing system of production."[1]

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[1] This sentence is extremely suggestive, and must be borne in mind for the final opinion of Colby and van den Berghe (cf. p.165).

The authors maintain that the situation has actually worsened over the last three decades: the proportion of land available has decreased, the number of workers looking for contract work in the plantations has increased despite the appalling conditions, and the contractors have accumulated even more capital (Colby and van den Berghe: 109-110). Among the main Ixil towns, Nebaj is the major contributor to the labour market, probably accounting for two-thirds of the region's labour supply; approximately one-fifth of its adult males leave the _municipio_ each month and "...as much as 30 or 40 per cent of the able-bodied men may be absent from the area at any given time" (Colby and van den Berghe: 131-132). In the same way that Bunzel described the mechanisms used by the contractors in order to obtain the labour force they require, Colby and van den Berghe confirm that the labourers are trapped by payments in advance, to cover debts of textiles, food and alcohol, incurred as a result of artificially created demand. The gross ethnic-class coincidence is also present in the recruitment-contract circumstance, since all the workers are Indians and the majority of the contractors _ladinos_. As they profit from salary and commission, each contractor-recruiter develops an Indian clientele competing with the other recruiters.

In addition to this fundamental ethnic-class interrelation, the economic differentiation between both ethnic groups is established by other relationships, notably money-lending. Most of the borrowers in Nebaj are Indians, while nearly all the lenders are _ladinos_ (although there are a few Indians who lend to other Indians). This money is provided by the landowner in order to subject his labour force (Colby and van den Berghe: 133). Employment is another condition establishing the economic difference between

Indians and _ladinos_;   the employers are almost always well-off
ladinos and the employees are Indians, working in menial services
or as shop assistants.   The opposite case, namely Indian employer
and _ladino_ employee, is extremely rare (Colby and van den Berghe:
132).   When this ethnic division is transferred to the other con-
text, particularly in the plantations, the implications for the
present political situation in the country are striking. Ironi-
cally, in contrast to many social scientists, mainly in the struc-
tural trend, who have neglected the ethnic cleavage as unimportant,
the landowners themselves have perceived the phenomenon precisely
in all its implications, and their economic stability depends to
a large extent on this perception. Cabarrús shows how the land-
owners have traditionally taken advantage of ethnic diversity to
hinder the unity of the working class and the development of class
consciousness on their domains. Following, perhaps unconsciously,
the strategies of the ancient Spanish _encomenderos_, present-day
landowners know very well how to utilize ethnic factors in order
to maintain divisions among the working class (Cabarrús: 56-59).
First, the _ladino colonos_ or _rancheros_ are dismissed and expelled
from the area, and volunteers and Indian _cuadrilleros_ are preferred,
since they lack any rights to land. It is said that during a recent
strike in a sugar cane plantation located on the Southern Coast,
these Indian workers supported the landowners' interests against
the _colonos_. Another device is to encourage competitive division,
between volunteers and _cuadrilleros_. The _cuadrilleros_ are also
divided among themselves, since a further competitive division is
encouraged between the skilled and the non-skilled (cutters)
cuadrilleros, who originate from different ethnic-linguistic groups.
This is in fact another means of creating divisions: the _cuadrilleros_

are recruited from particular municipios, that is, from different linguistic groups. Another strategy is that while on the plantations they are accommodated in distant sheds in order to hinder inter-communication. Again, they are not all contracted at the same time, so any problems which might arise rarely occur simultaneously; furthermore, contracts are made through a number of different contractors. An important divisive tactic is to delay the payment until the end of the contract, when the only potential weapon of the peasants, the strike, is no longer useful. Another element considered by Cabarrús concerns the superstructure; proletarian consciousness is hindered because the cuadrilleros maintain their fundamental interests in their own community, where they usually own some arable land; thus, their proletarianisation is temporary and they can be considered as semi-proletarians. Finally, the cuadrilleros are compelled to depend on the landowner's services for their subsistence in housing, food and tools.

It is clear that in Cabarrús' analysis, ethnic groups are not equated in economic terms. On the other hand, Colby and van den Berghe's approach might seem to indicate an equivalence, however approximate, between ethnicity and economic differentiation at the local level, although they do not accept the fallacy of assuming a true coincidence between ethnic and economic structures. Instead, they show how the Indians are diversified economically over the whole spectrum of agricultural activities, from wage workers or tenants on the plantations to a few large landowners. Thus, it is mentioned that a few Indians "...are relatively well-off, and have substantial land holdings" (Colby and van den Berghe: 107-108). Hence, the findings come to prove that "in terms of social class, there is a considerable overlap between Indians and ladinos..."

(Colby and van den Berghe: 85).

Colby and van den Berghe provide more evidence of the intra-ethnic economic differences among the Ixil group. In spite of the fact that the Ixil as a body are generally in a disadvantageous position vis à vis the ladinos, nevertheless the Indians do not constitute a single economic category on account of "....sizeable differences among Indians in their material possessions and in the state of repair of their houses" (Colby and van den Berghe: 114). Alongside the landless Indians, a number of "upper-class" Indians enjoy a better economic situation, live in a ladino way and speak Spanish fluently (Colby and van den Berghe: 114, 83). Although some of this small and privileged Indian group live in the country-side, most of them are urban dwellers (Colby and van den Berghe: 104)[1]

The study points out that the economic advantages enjoyed by these Indians and the cultural changes which accompany it (since they almost invariably adopt some features of ladino material cul-ture) do not presuppose a loss of ethnic identity, the acquisition of differential self-identification or "ethnic changes" towards ladinizaciòn (Colby and van den Berghe: 115). This statement recalls Siverts' findings in Chiapas, where an Indian elite reinforces its Indian ethnic identity. Both these examples point to the incomplete-ness of Cohen's theoretical model which assumes that the enrichment of a privileged upper ethnic segment results in the disappearance of its ethnic self-identification (cf. p.120). Here Mesoamerica seems to be different, at least in certain places and circumstances. The explanation of this phenomenon varies considerably according to the social scientist's theoretical and methodological viewpoint.

[1] Compare this information with Herbert and Guzmàn's "Indian-rural" equation.

I have shown how Siverts tries to explain the elitist ethnic
reinforcement in cultural terms and how, in my opinion, his
explanation gets lost in theoretical-logical confusion. In a
somewhat similar way, Colby and van den Berghe stress the Indian
elite's gradual adoption of a ladino life-style, but this cultural
perspective interspersed with Weberian sprinklings does not go
far enough to explain what is apparently a curious phenomenon.

In contrast, I shall now review another interpretation of the
same phenomenon. Cabarrús also underlines ethnic reinforcement
in spite of economic differentiation; I would say that, according
to his interpretation, ethnic reinforcement is not only "in spite
of" but rather precisely "because of" economic differentiation.
Cabarrús states that intra-ethnic stratification does not tend to
change the ethnic consciousness of those higher strata Indians who
do not become ladinos. On the contrary, intra-ethnic stratification
tends to reinforce Indian ethnic feeling since higher strata Indians
reap considerable profits and reproduce their sources of income by
encouraging ethnic claims and controlling ethnic politics (Cabarrús:
45). Although the author does not make precise the exact area and
group he is talking about, he is concerned generally with the Indian
people of the Western Highlands of Guatemala interacting with the
South Western Coast plantations. During the contract procedure,
as has already been shown, the recruiters act on behalf of the land-
owner's interests as follows: some Indians, by becoming recruiters,
are in the process of constituting a higher Indian stratum. The
mass of Indian peasants prefer an Indian recruiter because of the
language and their acquaintanceship with him. The landowners also
prefer them on account of their particular position, since it is
easier for Indian recruiters to discover and denounce any possibility

of rebelliousness among the Indian peasants. In other words, the landowners are able to exert greater control over the Indian peasants through the Indian recruiters by taking advantage of the ethnic ideology existing between them. In this case the recruiters' economic interest is not in any sense in conflict with their ethnic self-identification; on the contrary, the colonial ideological device serves their present economic interests and in this way ethnicity is maintained and reinforced (Cabarrús: 60-62).

Other elements prove that intra-ethnic economic differentiation among the Ixil corresponds to the pattern of money-lending. Although Colby and van den Berghe hold that nearly all lenders and borrowers are respectively ladinos and Indians, the expression implies precisely that the correlation is not absolute; and that there is some social "space" for ladino borrowers and Indian lenders. But again, the relationship between the Ixil and the plantations establishes a clear differentiation among the Ixil, since money-lenders, whatever their origin, always risk losing their money. In order to keep an eye on the "unreliable" Indians, the money-lenders employ Indian agents called caporales; their job and interest is to help the contractors follow the debtors' trail, to locate them and recover the loans by any means, including the usual threats (Colby and van den Berghe: 134), which can also imply leaving the debtors in bondage to the landowner.

Differentiation among the Ixil is also stressed à la Weber: the Indians are highly differentiated in prestige, power and wealth. It is argued that the present stratification is no longer the prehispanic caste system which still prevailed in the last century. Because of political and economic transformation on the national level, "this

fairly rigid system has given way to an open class system". The formerly rigid posts in the religious-civic institution of the cofradía, the traditional core of the hierarchy of the Indian towns, is nowadays "....within the reach of anyone who has accumulated the necessary wealth...." (Colby and van den Berghe: 112). Therefore, a close correlation now prevails between economic position and religious or political status. The correlation is so close that Indians with political posts in the municipio have more land, more Indian agricultural workers and more formal education than the Indians who do not hold such political positions (Colby and van den Berghe: 113-114). The authors do not say explicitly whether political hierarchical differences result from differences in the previous economic base or whether political positions have acted as a means of economic acquisition. The first seems most likely, but when the prevalent collusion and corruption is taken into account, the latter alternative is almost equally plausible.

In the perspective of intra-ethnic economic differentiation, internal stratification is not restricted to Indians. Although the ladinos are relatively recent arrivals in the region, the political transformation of the 1944-54 democratic interval has led to some stratification among them. Colby and van den Berghe allude to what were formerly two "distinguishable social classes" among the ladinos. The upper one, locally called "los sociales" (the social ones) consists mainly of landowners, larger merchants and successful labour contractors, all of whom have enjoyed a dominant economic, social and political position for several years; the lower one or obreros ('workers') are mostly craftsmen, small shopkeepers and petty white-collar employees (Colby and van den Berghe: 110). However, the authors argue, the clear division between

both segments had become blurred by the time of their own study,
and there were no longer clearly distinguishable groups. This is
because the upper class has lost much of its local political power,
paradoxically because of its economic success, since most of its
members have left the town to play for higher stakes in the capital.
The remaining ladino elite in the town, consisting of a very few
families, are closely linked with important people in the capital.
Their housing, eating and living conditions are the best in the
town. In contrast, the poorer ladinos live like most of the Indians,
at the same level of subsistence, although in a different style.
Between both, a larger intermediate group ("middle-class", as the
authors call it) or ladinos live differently from the Indians,
employ Indian servants and frequently own some land and livestock
(Colby and van den Berghe: 111-112).

In my opnion, Colby and van den Berghe's work constitutes a
perceptive ethnographic description of what has become one of the
most crucial regions in Mesoamerica. This study is more than a
traditional monograph since the wider national context is considered
an essential component in the understanding of the local one under
analysis, and in structural terms local phenomena acquire full
meaning. Even the cultural traits are implicitly arranged accord-
ing to different hierarchies. In fact, this work goes far beyond
an ordinary cultural view of inter-ethnic relationships by stressing
the key economic elements, which are basic to an understanding of
the full extent of economic exploitation. It could be said that
Bunzel described Chichicastenango in a similar way; however,
Colby and van den Berghe's analysis is much more committed to the
wider structural framework which means, to some extent being con-
cerned with the need for explanations. Hence, it is perceived

either from the data or from explicit formulations that classes, based upon relationships to the means of production and surrounded by all the attendant social consequences, constitute the most acute fact in a deprived area like the Ixil. In this perspective ethnic differences can be understood in their proper and correct sense as being interconnected with economic exploitation, which is why this study can be seen as a fine combination of both cultural and structural approaches.

Therefore, it is very surprising to observe how the authors conclude with an analytical summary and a set of predictions which are completely at variance with their own basic data and also can in no way explain events in the Ixil area (and its neighbouring region) which happened less than twenty years later. Following the authors' descriptions of the key economic elements necessary to understand the regional problematic, the reader may be astonished when he finally arrives at an inconsistent use of the authors' own theory by the authors themselves. For example, a considerable amount of structural data is provided; the information conveys perceptive formulations of the authors' opinions relating to causal economic factors, such as the statement that the Indians in the plantations "...derive few if any economic benefits from (their) labor exports....without much prospect of significant economic improvement within the existing system of production" (Colby and van den Berghe: 109-110).[1] But afterwards, the analysis peters out in an inconsistent caste explanation since

> "The cleavage between ladinos and Indians is
> the deepest and most obvious one in Nebaj, as
> in the rest of Guatemala"

as long as they relate like caste groups in which membership is

---

[1] My emphasis, also in quotations on following page.

"by birth and for life" (Colby and van den Berghe: 85). Further

statements emphasise that economic divisions are not fundamental;

thus "Nebaj is a clearly stratified society, and <u>next to ethnicity</u>

<u>and religion</u>, class differences are probably the main lines of

cleavage" (Colby and van den Berghe: 110). Economic differentiation,

dominant throughout the work, is ultimately devalued; among both

Indians and <u>ladinos</u>, "social class distinctions....have declined

in rigidity and importance during the last twenty-five years."

The counter-argument is made by arranging the distinctive factors,

according to their importance, and so

> "Ethnicity, religion, social class, and place
> of residence make for the main lines of cleavage
> and stratification in Ixil country. Of these,
> <u>ethnic membership is the most basic</u>, especially
> in Nebaj where the <u>ladino</u> population is largest."

> (Colby and van den Berghe: 115)

All the data and arguments, which are otherwise well organised,

end in a conclusion in which authors claim that they have to show

how

> "....the relations between two...ethnic groups
> constitute the source of both integration and
> <u>conflict</u> in a small, plural sub-society in
> Guatemala."

And again,

> "The area of institutional overlap which
> determines both the form and content of <u>ethnic</u>
> <u>relations</u> constitutes <u>the very core</u> of the
> <u>plural</u> society."

> (Colby and van den Berghe: 183-184)

It is now possible to compare the social interpretation with

the true social reality two decades later, something seldom avail-

able in social analysis. This is a particularly fortunate experi-

mental situation, especially as Ixil has now become one of the most

significant areas in Latin America. It is tantalizing, there-
fore, to point out the ways in which Colby and van den Berghe
have "misused" their suggestive data. It may be a matter of
incorrect theoretical premises; in other words, accurate data
but an unrealistic theoretical framework, whereby attention was
diverted from class struggle to the assumed ethnic conflict which
has not happened until now. It may be a matter of the passage of
time: perhaps the social conditions at that time did correspond
to the authors' theoretical assumptions, but from then onwards
the dramatic development of events has served to erode any poss-
ibility of accurate prediction. Whatever the reason, it is a
simple and understandable problem of analysis. A greater problem
arises, however, when social anthropologists venture some form of
social prognosis, particularly if they happen to do so in such an
area. How was the Ixil future predicted?

Ixil dependence on the rest of the country and ladino-Indian
interdependence within the Ixil circle,

> "...are also potential sources of conflict between
> ladinos and Indians. Economically, the position of
> the Indians has deteriorated considerably during
> this century.... Politically, Indians seem to be in
> the ascendancy in local government, and with
> better organisation they could achieve further
> gains. However, at the national level, Guatemala
> is solidly controlled by a ladino ruling class,
> and the Indians as a declining group in the popula-
> tion can be expected to be faced increasingly with
> the alternative of impotent encapsulation in the
> Western Highlands, or assimilation to the dominant
> culture. Even the revolutionary movement of the
> last two decades has left the Indians largely to
> themselves."

(Colby and van den Berghe: 142-143)

This view of the passive, conformist, resigned Indians has been
absolutely contradicted by recent political developments. I shall
conclude this discussion with an account of these major political
changes.

In May 1978 more than a hundred Kekchi Indians, including women and children, were massacred by the National and private Armies in the northern town of Panzos, Guatemala, protesting against the spoliation of their lands. A few days later, a massive protest demonstration took place in the streets of Guatemala City. Ixil men and women came first, accompanied by ladino urban workers, exhibiting a dangerous but defiant attitude towards the military régime. Further events eight months later underline the contrast between the defiant attitude of the Ixil with the passivity predicted for them earlier.

At 6.0 a.m. on Sunday 21 January 1979 the Ixil town of Nebaj was suddenly occupied by about a hundred guerrillas, most of them Indians in military uniform. A direct source (Testimonio, 1982) tells us that the nervous inhabitants were calmed down in Ixil language: "Do not be afraid, we are from the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres)." According to the testimony, the people kept calm when they realised that these combatants were not from the National Army but "that they were from their own people." The crowd was then encouraged, in their own language, to attend a public meeting. This was not an invasion of unknown people but of friends and relatives; many of those who had long been lost were among them and, being unmasked, were recognised by the crowd. "After many years, they joyfully meet each other" (Testimonio: 39). A public meeting was held and several contractors and landowners, who had been brought there by force, were warned about their behaviour with regard to the peasants. During the meeting, which was attended by about three thousand people, a young Indian from Nebaj related how six years before, the local ladino authorities and contractors attacked him because

of his attempt to found a cooperative and peasant league. As
the Secret Police could not find him, first his uncle and later
his father-in-law were kidnapped and abducted, the latter also
brutally tortured.

> "Therefore, he brought his whole family to the
> high mountains, including his widowed mother who
> had also been tortured. It had been rumoured in
> Nebaj that he was dead, but he appeared that day
> with his wife who was also a guerrilla. The
> story was the talk of Nebaj....he spoke in Ixil
> mixed with Spanish, about the class struggle and
> the situation of the Indians."

The next speakers were Indian women, who spoke of the rape of
Indian women by ladinos. Later on, the guerrillas were sympatheti-
cally given food and refreshments by the people; when withdrawing
from the town, the crowd joyfully saw them off, cheering the
Guerrilla Army of the Poor. The frightened older ladinos re-
proached the guerrillas for causing possible retaliation from the
Army, while the Indian population, also alarmed, did not reproach
the guerrillas. As they left the town, the guerrillas said: "We
are going, but we are not going. The Army says that we are hidden
in the mountains. Do not believe that. We are here among you all"
(Testimonio: 40).

Why is such action, culminating in this particular instance
of rebellion, so very much at variance with numerous social analyses
like that of Colby and van den Berghe? It might be argued that this
event was unexpected by the people of Nebaj, but according to the
testimony, it was already quite apparent by that time to everyone
in the town that the guerrillas were ready and about to act. More-
over, the Guatemalan press had already carried accounts of similar
events, which were commonplace in Western Guatemala by then. This
did not in any sense constitute an isolated event. It could be
argued also that the guerrilla movement was an element external

to the Ixil region and that intrinsic social conditions had
nothing to do with the event. However, two facts are noteworthy:
first, there were many Indians present in the guerrilla ranks,
speaking in Ixil to their Ixil kinsmen. Secondly, in order to
survive, consolidate, spread and act, a guerrilla movement needs
local and regional support, a base, a network, and allies, and
it is clear that Indians were in no sense alienated by the movement.

This attitude, which is probably unique among the Indian masses
in Latin America, thus constitutes a tangible reality differing
dramatically from the hypothetical future that the social scientists
had foreseen. Instead of being passive and conformist, significant
Indian groups have opted for fighting to the death. Along the con-
tinuum between passivity and struggle a definite chain of phenomenon
has unfolded. To begin with, the incorporation of Indians together
with equally deprived ladinos in the guerrilla movement or in a
labour alliance on the plantations is a token of their consciousness
of the struggle, which is itself the result of politicisation. All
politicisation, consciousness and struggle are the result of repres-
sion which serves simply as a mechanism of exploitation, the funda-
mental characteristic of the present social structure. For centuries
the structure of exploitation was not confronted by a well organised
movement of popular resistance; now, it is facing an acute armed
response. The whole process seems to be an extremely rapid pro-
gression from a given social situation to another which is qualita-
tively substantially higher. Centuries of exploitation culminate
in a critical moment at which political consciousness crystallizes;
the organised response to exploitation by people who are politicised
in this way, occasions more acute forms of repression; the people
respond by struggling until the end.

In order to illustrate the above argument, this chapter will conclude with some of the evidence recounted in the testimony of the events in Nebaj. I should point out that as a similar situation has existed in many parts of the country for the last few years, this testimony is only a single and particular example of a widespread phenomenon.

I have already explained that the structure of the regional exploitation pivots on the contract system, which is controlled from the coffee plantation-belt surrounding the area, and the plantations beyond the mountain chain, on the Pacific slope and the Oceanic strip, which are owned by some of the most powerful capitalists in Central America. Most of the contractors are ladinos, whereas the peasant cuadrilleros are Indians. Once contracted, the cuadrilleros are packed into the contractor's lorries and start the dangerous journey down to the Coast, 200 kilometres away. As the contractor has paid them in advance, the peasants are immediately forced into debt. As imprisonment for failure to meet debts is technically illegal, there are private jails in contractors' houses where the debtors, captured by the Police or the Army at the instigation of the contractors and the landowners, are beaten up or subjected to other "persuasive" treatment.

At first, more moderate attempts were made to free the peasants from the need to be contracted; instead of seeking to overturn the actual system, legal community actions were attempted, like cooperatives or peasant leagues, all seeking to promote local production and commercialisation. However, such attempts were dismissed as "communist" by local contractors, authorities and landowners.[1]

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[1] Some local Church personnel, when promoting these community efforts, were initially threatened, and later persecuted and even killed. Similarly many lawyers and defending counsel, both in the region and in the capital, have been brazenly killed because of their efforts to provide legal services for the peasants in their search for better conditions. None of the murderers have ever been taken to court.

Then, an intensification of the traditional coercive measures
took place at the local level, because of the excessive reaction
on the part of the contractors and authorities. But the situation
became polarised on both sides: the Indians became increasingly
politicised, partly because of external political factors at the
national level resulting from the democratic interval between 1944
and 1954. The breakdown of the traditional-colonial gerontocratic
Cofradía system and the opportunity given to local political leader-
ship by popular elections, have facilitated more politically con-
scious participation. As this participation served to undermine
the power of the local ladino elite, illegal procedures like elec-
toral fraud became routine. Therefore,

> "if the dominant group changes its own rules
> of play, it means that the rules are no use
> at all and will be utterly useless; then a
> rush of political consciousness overcomes the
> frustrated leaders."
>
> (Testimonio: 43)

The breakdown of colonial conformist institutions, the emerg-
ence of political consciousness among the Indians and the sharper
response from the traditional coercive power in ethnically mixed
towns, brought about a qualitatively different perception of ex-
ploitation and of inter-ethnic relationships. Even though con-
tractors and peasants roughly correspond to ladino-Indian boudaries
the real economic division is clearly perceived: Indians collaborat-
ing with the dominant class are recognised as such by the dominated
Indians, while not all local ladinos are identified with contractors
or landowners.

> "Even though the class struggle is masked and
> partly concealed by ethnic tensions, the former
> is made manifest, since those members of the
> Indian minority who serve and support the oppresor
> ladino minority are recognised as exploiters."

The whole process is seen as a first stage along the road to armed organisation (Testimonio: 43).

Thus intensified, the process arrives at the historical conjuncture at which armed organisation emerges as the only way out, because of the absence of legal alternatives. It seems that a particular conjuncture, in the course of which exploitation and political oppression unmask themselves, is necessary, disrupting any gradual evolution by a multiplicity of events affecting numerous people at the same time. Examples are the ejection of colonos born and raised on the landowner's estate, the burning of the peasants' huts, threats to cooperative leaders, electoral fraud, the seizure of communal lands by a rich local individual, and so forth.

> "That is the moment when the armed organisation suddenly takes root ("pegar"); it is the only means of defence because of the absence of any legal remedies."
>
> (Testimonio: 43)

Since the early 70's the EGP guerrilla movement (locally called "the Army of the Poor") has recruited followers in the region through itinerant merchants who "brought the seed of the guerrilla war to Cotzal" and through cuadrilleros working on the South Coast plantations (Testimonio: 37-38). The progressive peasant organisation and the execution of local oppressors are the expressions of a class engaged in struggle. At the other extreme the dominant structure is shaken with fear. Since 1976 the Government (that is to say the National Army) and the various private armies have unleashed more violent repression in order to root out the incipient guerrilla organisation completely: kidnappings, rape, mutilations, abductions and murders have proliferated. "For each exploiter, twenty Indian peasants died." Many Indian men, women and children

rose up and sought refuge in the mountains, not passively but waging a peasant war against the system. The Indians reacted by enrolling in the guerrilla movement because "if the Army and the Police are going to pursue and kill them all the same, it is better to be pursued in open war" (Testimonio: 43). The Indians incorporate themselves into the insurgency process by "face-to-face" relationships because obviously any indirect diffusion of propaganda is highly dangerous and in any case the illiteracy rate is extremely high. Since 1977 the surrounding mountains have been massively bombed and in the period 1980-82 the whole region was virtually under siege. In the first days of January 1978 the Army stormed the town of Nebaj, beating the people and robbing them of money and food, and for several days nobody could leave the town. The guerrillas responded by executing contractors, military officers and local agents of the terrorist repression.

> "Then the situation became a true war of the Indians against the 'Army of the rich' and against the locally powerful segment of ladinos who, by their mastery of the contract system, also controlled repression at the local level."
>
> (Testimonio: 38)

The Army went back unleashing a massive campaign of bombing, burning, kidnapping, torturing and killing, but they could not catch the guerrilla fighters, because of the strong social networks and support. It was the time when the imminence of guerrilla action was quite apparent; the reaction was the occupation of the town already mentioned in a typical "armed propaganda" action whereby the insurgents display, for several hours, the symbolism of popular power. By showing briefly what the free society of tomorrow will be, "armed propaganda is an open window on the future" (Testimonio: 42).

Similar events have taken place in other regions, intensifying the reaction on both sides, spreading over the most populated areas of the country, including busy tourist resorts and provinces close to the capital itself. The neighbouring regions in Mexico are zones of constant uprisings. At the same time, massive peasant strikes in the plantations have succeeded where the attempts in 1976 failed. The most impressive one occurred in 1980 when virtually all the plantations on the South Coast were paralysed for several weeks and all export production (cotton, sugar and coffee) was disrupted, until a number of short term demands, such as wage increases, were agreed. These strikes are more significant than in other Latin American countries because of the extremely repressive character of the State which has completely denied and abrogated its own legal system. Government reaction has surpassed even its own precedents through an apparently neurotic programme of massive killings, especially after the political changes which have taken place in Nicaragua. The population is persecuted but not prosecuted; in fact, there are no legal grounds at all for any prosecution, and the number of those killed and abducted is amazingly high. Recently, in 1981-1982 masses of desperate peasants and their families fled from their ancestral villages to Mexico with nothing but their bodies, only to be sent back by the Mexican authorities and handed over to the Guatemalan Army. In consequence, larger numbers of Indians have penetrated deep into the mountains to develop the guerrilla war, while their contacts remain in the towns. Until early 1982, transcending ethnic-linguistic limits, the state of war continued over the whole country. By late 1981 reports of increasing unity between Indian and ladino proletarians came from the plantations. The real extent of such a union was not clear since the

organisation has been currently underground, but the success of
the 1980 plantation strike, involving workers of different labour
categories and different ethnic backgrounds, would not have been
feasible without a level of class alliance crossing inter-ethnic
boundaries. This achievement was the more remarkable since a
similar attempt restricted to a single plantation four years
earlier failed partly because the landowner had succeeded in dividing
the peasants by the means already mentioned; it is also even more
remarkable when the established terrorist programme is taken into
consideration.

The testimony which is the source of most of the foregoing
description condenses the problem by saying that "the class struggle
was reinforced by ethnic discrimination and was developed into an
armed struggle because of the government's repression" (Testimonio:
38). The hunted Indian families, those unable to flee to Mexico or
other regions, fight in the mountains because

> "they have no choice but to stay, and to stay
> means to die or to fight. So, the more repression
> exerted by the Government in its search for the
> guerrillas, the more the guerrillas increase their
> numbers."
>
> (Testimonio: 43)

The emergence of the Indian struggle in Guatemala has come to pro-
vide significant material for reflection for those Latin American
countries with predominantly Indian populations. This development
of events represents "the practical resolution of problems formerly
considered unresolvable, namely the combination of class and ethnic
struggle" (Testimonio: 37). So far, the struggle is not between
Indians and ladinos but between rich and poor, whatever their ethnic
affiliation. This is the essential message of the armed propaganda
where

"it is intended to stress that it is not a
matter of struggle between Indians and <u>ladinos</u>,
but between rich and poor, between the <u>Army of</u>
<u>the Poor</u> and the <u>Army of the Rich</u>, between the
peasantry of the whole country and the owners
of large estates and their contractors."

<div align="right">(Testimonio: 42)</div>

In the study of this material, the importance of bringing

together the structural approach at the wider level and cultural

analysis at local level is clearly revealed. In fact, current

developments, including the outcome of the actual relationship

between ethnicity and class, can only be understood fully in terms

of the rôle played by nationwide factors (the exacerbation of ex-

ploitation, governmental repression and popular struggle) in the

attitudes of the ethnic groups. Without this national perspective,

earlier analyses put forward incorrect predictions; equally,

current attempts to interpret the Ixil rebellion might be erroneous.

Hence, without a structural approach, local phenomena may well seem

meaningless.

I have therefore presented what I consider to be useful examples

of the second alternative complex model: ethnic groups and social

classes are overlapping and different categories. The main points

which enable us to grasp ethnic-class articulation are presented

by concentrating on socioeconomic, cultural, local-level and national-

context data.

The two main works dealing with Mesoamerica complement each

other in their respective information and gaps: Colby and van den

Berghe do not perceive the final outcome of the social drama they

have described because cultural interpretation outweighs the struc-

tural emphasis. However, in the light of recent events, it is poss-

ible to guess the identity of the rebels whom the testimony does not describe in detail. The local insurgents are not characterised in terms of socioeconomic structure; in a region made up of minifundists, semi-proletarians, proletarians and so forth, to which classes do the rebel Ixil belong? This question reminds us of one of Stavenhagen's hypotheses, that the Indian agricultural labourers who migrate temporarily to the coastal plantations are in a more defined class situation than those who remain working near their communities (Stavenhagen, 1970: 211). Questions like this remain obscure. I should stress, however, that the testimonial character of the document makes it a chronicle rather than an academic essay, and this is its most useful feature: we are given a first-hand account of events affecting an ethnic group immersed in the most profound ethnic-class interplay, an account which serves to test the various theoretical approaches.

Through the data and eye witness testimony they present both studies suggest that when the class struggle becomes particularly acute in the face of both national and international repression it is clear that ethnicity and class are not coterminous categories, and that class consciousness has ultimately prevailed over ethnic allegiances, although ethnic consciousness has not been wiped out. Thus class and ethnic consciousness would not therefore seem to be incompatible.

Here I am dealing with the ideological aspects of class and ethnic consciousness. This constitutes a level of analysis which is somewhat outside the scope of my work, but, on the other hand, as it is important for any analysis of the nature of the articulation of ethnic groups and social classes, the linkages between the two levels will be discussed in the concluding chapter which follows.

CHAPTER V   GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

So far, I have analysed a number of issues in order to answer
the questions posed at the outset of this work: what is the nature
of the coincidence or difference between ethnic groups and social
classes in Mesoamerica? Is ethnicity simply another name for socio-
economic categories or is it a social entity in its own right? If
so, is ethnicity a primary contradiction between social groups or
is it a secondary contradiction overlapping the primary one of
class? To attempt to provide an answer to these questions, this
final section will set out the major positive and negative aspects
of the theories analysed and will put forward the various elements
which I consider to be important for the development of a theory.

The cultural approach centres upon ethnic aspects and local
peculiarities. It has a certain descriptive value which is useful
for various kinds of analyses, such as ethnographic surveys. How-
ever, culture tends to be used as a self-explanatory condition,
and as ethnicity also tends to be interpreted as a matter of cul-
ture, ethnicity is thus often explained in terms of itself. Further-
more, as the community (or region) is often studied in isolation
from the nation, and the Indians separated from their ladino ethnic
antithesis, the whole interpretation becomes rather fragmented. The
problem is not that a local community is an 'illegitimate' object
of study, but that the wider context is disregarded, and that the
understanding of the Indian situation necessitates an appreciation
of their relations with ladinos, their ethnic antithesis.

In contrast, the structural approach emphasises the wider con-
text as the fundamental element in any social explanation. However,
this wider context is often simplistically applied in terms of

schematic generalisations which cannot explain specific social phenomena in particular regions. Hence in the reaction against culturalism, local ethnic characteristics are neglected. The fundamental framework and meaning are given, but micro-level analysis is missing, which results in the dynamics of Mesoamerican social formations being obscured. For example, key questions relating to the present armed struggle involving ethnic elements in Guatemala remain unanswered: why has this struggle occurred in the Ixil region but not in others with the same structural framework? Why does this struggle go on in Nebaj, in spite of its large minifundist population (commonly considered a conservative sector) but not in other equally minifundist regions? In the first case, the small landholders, it appears, have not been a reactionary restraint to the struggle. It is not surprising that the semi-proletarian cuadrilleros have provided members of the guerrilla forces, but where do the independent itinerant merchants stand? Surely the rôle of the organisational networks like kinship and friendship must be examined? Some complementary methodology may bring more light to the matter, which means that we need a micro-level strategy to explain the concrete facts which macro theory does not elucidate.

But it is also essential that the micro-level approach, unlike the traditional culturalist tendency, should not isolate the region from the wider context. Here a third approach bringing together the structural and cultural dimensions appears to provide a satisfactory integration of the two, and this may be the best way to understand the interrelation of social classes with ethnic groups, as long as one is able to overcome the weak points already mentioned. In the following pages, then, I shall put forward a structural-

cultural approach, based upon a consideration of the following major points.

First, ethnicity should be seen as a form of antithesis in any plural system where more than one ethnic group exists. The analysis should consider that the presence of one ethnic group automatically implies the existence of at least one other in the same system, otherwise defective approaches will result. Thus Bunzel deals only with the Indians and neglects the ladinos (or, in Mitchell's African study ethnicity is restricted to the Black population, while Whites are excluded). By analogy, it would be equally impossible to speak of social classes in a system that was economically homogeneous. Class is an antithetical concept which necessarily and automatically implies the existence of contrasting groups in any particular economic system. The concept of class depends not only on its own characteristics but also on the differential characteristics which distinguish it from other phenomena of the same order. Likewise, no ethnic group "makes sense" by itself if there is no point of reference to which the groups is related. As an example, the category "black" in Africa necessarily implies a relationship with "non-black". Likewise, the Indians in Mesoamerica are labelled, defined and treated as Indians because there is an antithetical group in the system which classifies itself as non-Indian. Therefore, the comprehension of Indians presupposes necessarily the comprehension of ladinos. Like social class, ethnicity is a dialectical concept, only comprehensible antithetically, which makes no sense if plurality is not considered. Hence, ethnicity is primarily ethnic relationships.

The second major point to bear in mind when linking the local level with the wider context is that ethnic concepts must not be

transformed into socioeconomic categories which necessarily relate to the national context. When the socioeconomic terminology of class is "automatically" confused and interchanged with the ethnic terms of Indians and ladinos or mestizos without any readjustment to the new circumstances, an erroneous formulation may result. As the main concern of the structural approach is the antagonism between classes within the wider context, and as the main concern of the cultural approach is the opposition between ethnic groups at the local level, the ladinos or mestizos come to be simplistically equated with the nationally dominant class. The mistake lies in confusing labels of different kinds originally created for categories of a different type. The nature of this error can be understood by the careful application of both cultural and structural perspectives. With regard to the cultural, the better micro-studies reveal that both Indians and ladinos are differentiated internally in economic terms (see Bunzel and Colby and van den Berghe), and that the oppressed Indians recognise the exploiters and exploited, whatever their ethnic affiliation (see Testimony). Hence, the relationship of ethnicity and class at the local level is nothing more than gross association which is in no sense a real correspondence or equation.

Let us now look at the fallacy from the structural perspective. The wider-level approach reveals a class structure based on relations to the means of production, the most important being land. Schematically speaking, there are powerful landowners, minifundists, and landless. Virtually all the latifundia are owned by a tiny proportion of ladinos. However, ladinos also make up a significant part of the landless sector who, like the Indian rural proletarians, have to sell their labour force to the ladino landowners. Minifundia in

the Western and Central Highlands are almost all in Indian hands, whereas in the Eastern part of the country the minifundia are mainly ladino. This heterogeneous situation is expressed by Pitt-Rivers in the following way:

> "Nor does Indian status correspond to any
> particular role in the division of labour,
> nor to any specific relationship to the
> modes of production."

It must be added that the ladinos are in exactly the same heterogeneous economic condition. The same author summarises the whole problem stating that "Whatever ethnicity is, it is not just class" (Pitt-Rivers: 22). Therefore, from whatever perspective ethnic-class interrelationships are observed, the fallacy of equating both categories is clear, unless one assumes yet another theoretical possibility; are there two simultaneous class systems, one at the local level, dominated by ladinos and one at the national level not dominated by them? In fact to maintain this would be nonsense since it would assume total regional economic and political independence, which does not exist at all in the capitalist mode of production in the nations under analysis. When talking about ladinos as the dominant group at the local level but not at the national (as a whole ethnic group), it is clear that "ladino" implies more than a single economic category. Hence, ladino is not an interchangeable term for class. The problem has been that ethnic labels have been used to describe entities which are actually social classes. Hence those who describe social classes in towns or regions should be aware and make it clear that they are a dominant group which at the same time and coincidentally is also a tiny segment of the nationwide ladino category. On this wider level, ladinos make up a significant part of the proletariat, while only a tiny proportion of this ethnic group constitutes true exploiters. Domin-

ant and dominated classes express antagonistic relationships to the means of production. These terms cannot be simplistically substituted for the ethnic labels _ladino_ or Indian, because they express another kind of social relationship interconnected with, but different from, the socioeconomic category.

This kind of relationship, which is expressed in ethnic terms, is the third major point in my attempt to provide a fuller understanding of the structural-cultural approach, and relates to ethnicity as an ideology. It should be pointed out that a discussion of the ideological aspect of ethnicity moves the discussion from the central theme of this work (the structural articulation of ethnic groups with social classes) to an aspect which has not been included specifically under this theme. However it will be discussed at some length in order to show that if it is neglected, ethnic groups tend to appear as social classes, and when it outweighs all other considerations ethnicity develops into a tautological concept and becomes a falsely self-explanatory category. The following discussion is based on two propositions: first, ethnicity is made manifest by means of ideological symbols, the main ones being "culture" and "race". Second, ethnicity operates on an ideological dimension, which is more apparent at the local level.[1]

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[1] For the purpose of this discussion, I will restrict the broad meaning of ideology to the following sense: a distorted system of inaccurate and misleading representations of social relationships, imperceptibly built into men's minds, in which the representation of reality tends to be confused with reality itself. Hence, in a class system, ideology will make reference to irrational and false representations of social relationships, whereby the oppressive nature of the system is effectively concealed and disguised. Furthermore, this distorted image of real inequality and oppression is actually justified in the consciousness of both the oppressors and the oppressed. These distorted social relationships are perceived as natural and immutable, and the fact that they have been created artificially and can equally easily be changed is deliberately concealed.

The notion that culture is an ideological symbol of ethnicity means that culture is an unavoidable element in the structural-cultural understanding of ethnicity but that it is insufficient on its own. Culture is only useful if it is utilised for preliminary levels of description, while explanation requires consideration of the ideological dimension. By identifying ethnic groups simply as cultural groups, the analysis of ethnic-class articulation becomes inadequate. Despite the fact that there is an obvious cultural involvement in ethnicity, and that cultural differences between ethnic groups are qualitative, this difference accounts only super-ficially and insufficiently for the totality of ethnic distinctions. Ethnic groups are not synonymous with purely cultural groups nor can ethnicity be seen simply as a cultural entity. What is more, it is difficult to demarcate a neat cultural boundary between ladinos and Indians since their respective cultural sets, particu-larly the ladino, are rather hybrid.

I have already shown how explanations built on cultural premises result either in the vision of separate systems, tautolo-gies, or in false generalisations. The irrelevance of cultural differentiation as the sole parameter of ethnic identity becomes obvious when it is observed that the confrontation of Indians and non-Indians, from colonial times until now, has not at all depended on the fact that, for example, the Indians wear certain clothing or that the ladinos do not speak Maya languages. It does not really matter if the Indians dress differently from the ladinos; and in fact Indian groups very often abandon their traditional costumes while retaining their ethnic identity. An Indian is not an Indian simply because he wears particular clothing; this cultural trait, like any other, is superficial and does not account for ethnic

opposition and discrimination. Quite the opposite; Indians wear a certain type of clothing because they are Indians. So far, it would seem tautologous unless the analysis is transferred to other levels of interpretation, for which a historical perspective is absolutely essential.

When colonial exploitation began, certain Indian cultural aspects were suppressed, such as the prehispanic religion, because Catholicism was seen as an essential ideological tool which could be used to force the Indians to accept social domination, political rule, military subjugation and economic exploitation. Other cultural traits were readapted and re-created by the Spaniards: Indian clothing was actually made compulsory as a means of identifying Indians as distinct from the different reducciones in order to collect tribute and forced labour for repartimientos and encomiendas. Other cultural manifestations tended to be maintained: particular religious orders tried to preserve the diverse Indian languages for the sake of indoctrination; in the long run, this served the purpose of undermining any attempt at the unification of the various Indian groups. Other cultural aspects, which had no particular bearing on Spanish interests (e.g. dietary habits), were simply allowed to take their own course. Hence cultural aspects were abolished, invented, readapted, encouraged or left alone by the invaders, for a wide variety of ideological, political and economic reasons. All these strategies contributed to the shaping of ethnicity as a colonial phenomenon.

Therefore, although cultural features are useful as the indices or the identifying signs of ethnicity, they also constitute superficial, external and imprecise symbols if cultural analysis is not

complemented by studies of deeper relationships of another nature.
By referring to these deeper relationships, I mean that culture
must be interpreted in terms of its ideological function. This
is implied by Barth (culture is not a cause but a result of primary
factors), by Stavenhagen (culture also comprises ideological feel-
ings closer to other kinds of consciousness, like class conscious-
ness), and by Colby and van den Berghe and Cabarrús (the emerging
Indian elite, while changing culturally, does not attempt to trans-
form its ethnic identification but actually tries to reinforce its
Indian-ness). Siverts' account also permits us to interpret cul-
tural aspects of ethnicity as a matter of ideology.

If cultural symbols form an important ingredient of ethnic
ideology, a second ideological symbol also provides a substantial
base, the notion of racism, which pervades ethnic relations in
Mesoamerica. This racism starts from a popular _ladino_ attitude
spread by the mass media and the educational system in which the
two ethnic entities are thought of as _races_. This fallacy, promul-
gated by the _ladinos_, can be fully perceived if the problem is
divided into two aspects, the biological dimension of "race" and
the ideological one of "racism". To argue a racial cleavage between
ladinos and Indians is to ascribe a specific phenotypical set to
each ethnic group. However, the progressive miscegenation of
Spanish, _mestizos_ and blacks up to the present time has blurred
this supposed phenotypical-ethnic differentiation. In particular
cases the phenotype if irrelevant for ethnic self-identification,
for instance among Kekchi Indian groups in Northern Guatemala who,
despite considerable miscegenation with German immigrants, still
identify themselves as Indians. Ironically the weakest point in
the presumed ethnic-phenotypical correlation most affects those most

interested in proving it, the ladinos. Although the Indians may appear to correspond with a certain phenotypical set, the racial impreciseness of the ladino sector cannot be associated with any identifiable phenotype. Although a large proportion of them are conspicuously "Indian" in appearance, they still identify themselves as non-Indians in order to justify social distance and discrimination. In consequence, the racial or phenotypical factor is irrelevant for ethnic diagnosis or for the study of ethnic relationships.[1]

The second element in this racial designation, which derives logically from it, is racism. While the racial phenotypical aspect is ethnically irrelevant, the ideological call to action, the racist allegation deriving from this false notion, is socially important. In fact, racist-based ethnic allegiance often overlaps with class consciousness.

I shall now deal with the second proposition, that is, ethnicity as an ideological dimension, which is more vigorously perceived at the local level. Any appeal to ethnicity is infused with intense ideological emotions. Other super-structural dimensions are alien to ethnic experience. For example, on the political level it is illogical to think of a ladino national power, a ladino Church, a ladino State or a ladino Government. Otherwise, entities in the modern sense of the word, like Mexico or Guatemala, would be examples of anomalous "nations" based on ethnic foundations, which is a political contradiction in terms. Ethnic ideology is more intensely perceived at the local level because ethnic interaction is directly developed in personal relationships. The fundamental ethnic entities in Mesoamerica, Indians and ladinos or mestizos, confront each other

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[1] Even international publications dealing with the regional situation describe the ladinos or mestizos as a "mixed" population in contrast to apparently "unmixed" Indians.

primarily in local conjunctures where face-to-face interactions occur. The structural and ideological conditions in which ethnic conflict or alliance can unfold are more vigorous at this level. Here, ethnic interaction displays its original strength: it is in the towns where the competition for power develops in its pristine form and it is on the plantations where the shared misery of the proletarians can unify the two ethnic groups, and where the landowners make use of all the ideological mechanisms they can in order to undermine this potential unity. This is why Blacks in Guatemala are not considered as _ladinos_ or _mestizos_: they are not Indians, but they rarely develop any direct interaction in the Indian towns, or form a part of the daily context at that level. Being mainly confined to the Caribbean shores, the Blacks are "outsiders" in the reciprocal ideological identification of _ladinos_ and Indians. For the same reason, if a non-Indian outsider in an Indian town (a _ladino_ for other _ladinos_) keeps neutral or supports the Indians against the _ladinos_, this outsider may not be considered as a _ladino_ by the Indians. Here, the ideological dimension of ethnicity appears again: if Indian is an ideological formation, and ethnicity is an antithetical concept, _ladino_ is also an ideological formation. Thus, ladino does not imply primarily being of different race, class or culture: it means accepting the role the Indians have been forced and are expected to play, or to participate in discrimination towards them. Hence, if I am not an Indian but I oppose racial and social discrimination towards Indians, I am not a _ladino_ either because to be a _ladino_ is basically a matter of ideology.

Hence ethnicity has taken the form of a façade, confusing economic relationships, racist presuppositions, customs, languages

and history. It has been used as an ideological weapon to conceal the reality that neither Indians nor _ladinos_ are races, cultural groups or classes. They are simply the results of a process which depends on the impoverishment of them all. Used to divide those who are equal in poverty, ethnicity has acted as a weapon against all the people concerned.

As an ideology ethnicity contrasts with class consciousness, although this does not imply that they are necessarily incompatible. Some studies have put forward the view that proletarianisation inexorably tends to dissolve ethnic consciousness, while others take the opposite view. In Mesoamerica, ethnic ideology, allegiance, consciousness or however it is described, have been considered a powerful restraint on the development of class consciousness. Stavenhagen holds that ethnic antagonism, although progressively displaced by the contradiction of class, tends to hinder this contradiction (Stavenhagen, 1970: 260), to obstruct class consciousness and to maintain the _status quo_ by opposing _ladinos_ to Indians irrespective of their class relationships (Stavenhagen, 1970: 251). This author envisages that this is likely to take place in Guatemala rather than in Mexico since the latter is considered to have experienced a faster development of class relationships at the expense of ethnic relationships (Stavenhagen, 1970: 255). Similarly, Bunzel suggests the possibility of a form of Indian solidarity in the Guatemalan Highlands (Bunzel: 12-13). Others foresee the possibility of a pan-Indian bloc, in which the Indians defend themselves as the exploited but reinforce their ethnic identification (Cabarrús: 76).

In modern times the spectre of an Indian rebellion has actually materialised, but possibly not in the way anticipated formerly,

since it may herald a progressive inter-ethnic alliance of the exploited rather than a ladino or Indian coalition. As far as can be ascertained, there has not been any indiscriminate killing of ladinos, nor has it been possible to discern a ladino coalition in a purely ethnic sense. Thus the notion that there are ethnic restraints on class consciousness is outdated, at least for some Indian and ladino groups. Although it is not possible to assume anything at the moment, it is certain that some analyses have not only proved to be at variance with the contemporary situation but, more important, it is evident that there have been significant recent changes in the social and ethnic consciousness of the ladino and Indian groups. The main reasons, which result from increasing theft of land, proletarianisation and politicisation, are that colonial practices such as forced labour or cofradías have been undermined and replaced by new institutions like wage work, political parties and ideologies of liberation, and that on consequence the Indian communities have become more and more exposed to national political life. In this context, the organisation of individuals has not followed ethnic lines. An attempt by Indian politicians to found an Indian party in 1976 failed largely due to the indifference or opposition of the Indians (Falla, 1978: 437-461). On the other hand, no ladino party has ever been proposed. Participation in important peasant leagues like the Peasant Unity Committee (Comité de Unidad Campesina) is not based upon selective ethnic criteria, as is also the case with the trade unions. There have been no ethnic coalitions, such as pan-Indian or ladino movements. Today the guerrilla movement incorporates to an ever-increasing extent people from diverse ethnic groups and their proclamations about the inter-ethnic alliance of the oppressed are resoundingly

clear. It seems that those ladinos and Indians who are in some way engaged in protest, organisation or struggle affirm their class allegiance while retaining their ethnic identification.

It is possible that the peculiar character of the various régimes in Guatemala has helped to undermine the colonial-ethnic concealment of class divisions. None of these régimes, with the exception of the brief democratic experiment in 1944-1954, has ever made any serious attempt to alleviate, channel or even divert social tensions. Members of legally registered trade unions, other labour organisations and of professional or religious progressive institutions have been severely persecuted and even massacred.[1] Such unrelenting exploitation and the harshness of the strategies employed to conceal it, may be an important cause of the accelerated dynamics of intra-class/inter-ethnic alliances.

Although I must now return from this ideological and political dimension to the structural level which has been my main concern, the superstructural dynamics must always be borne in mind: the sharper the picture of ethnic-class relationships, the more static the phenomenon appears. Nevertheless, a comparative analysis of the various theories I have examined permits me to suggest certain answers in the light of recent political events.

In the cases I have studied, ethnic groups and social classes constitute overlapping categories of a different nature, either at the local or at the wider (national) level. Class presupposes anti-

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[1] In this respect, Guatemalan methods are far removed from Mexico's sophisticated ways of diverting social tensions, such as indigenist policy strategies designed to exalt post-revolutionary nationalism, the "national" ideology of the "mestizo Mexico" and the other ideological and political devices whereby real social inequalities are masked (see Friedlander: 67-68; 77; 128).

thetical oppositions in the socioeconomic dimension, whose meaning is fully grasped in the national context. <u>Ethnicity</u> is also a category of antithetical character, but it pertains primarily to the ideological dimension, and its meaning derives mainly from the local context. Classes manifest objective relationships, but due to its ideological character ethnicity is manifested through ideological symbols like culture and "race", the latter involving racism. Therefore, it is not proper to investigate the question of the existence or non-existence of a relationship between ethnicity and class.

Both concepts operate on and pertain to different levels of analysis: class pertains to the structural level of objective relationships, whereas ethnicity pertains to the superstructural level of ideology. Hence it would be more accurate to look for the relationship between ethnicity and class consciousness, both operating at the ideological level. However I believe that at this level both concepts refer to distinct contexts: class consciousness has particular reference to the national context, and is ultimately connected with political institutions like the State and the Government, while ethnicity (in the sense of ethnic consciousness) has no direct relationship with the State and the Government but with subjective images such as culture or "race" which in this context necessarily implies racism. Hence we cannot, for instance, speak of a "<u>ladino</u> Government", and ethnicity cannot therefore be analysed either as a primary or a secondary contradiction which overlaps social class. It can only be analysed as an ideological construction overlapping class consciousness, on the part of either the dominated or the dominating element. Here it would be desirable

to see whether ethnicity or class consciousness is dominant in
a particular region: however, it falls outside the scope of this
work and I will restrict myself to the following line of reasoning.
The accelerated development of class consciousness which is taking
place at the moment has repercussions for ethnic consciousness.
If the ethnic consciousness of those participating in some aspect
of the struggle is significant for the rest of the people, and if
their proclamations reflect exactly what is happening in terms of
the class and ethnic allegiances of the masses involved, ethnicity
has not been eradicated by class consciousness but plays a rôle
which is subordinate to it. The whole subject is largely unresolved,
mainly because of the confusing use and meaning of imprecise ethnic
labels (Indian, _ladino_, _mestizo_), ancient terms of identification
which have outlived the specific historical conditions in which
and by which they were created. This is a reflection of the con-
tinuous confusion of levels, in which the concept of class (struc-
tural level) and the concept of ethnicity (superstructural level)
are erroneously interrelated. In short, ethnicity has not been
consistently studied as an ideology, and a coherent theory based
upon this consideration is clearly urgently needed. This urgency
has a theoretical as well as an academic aspect, since social
scientists in particular must make every effort to understand the
real nature of the struggle currently taking place in Mesoamerica.
It would of course be idle to attempt to predict the outcome of
this struggle, but whatever the result, a theoretical understanding
should provide the necessary elements to contribute to the construc-
tion or consolidation of what those involved in the struggle envisage
as a better world.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Circular from Amnesty International,

London, England, 25 June 1979

VIOLENCE IN RURAL GUATEMALA

(Repression of Campesinos and Indians)

"What happened here is the eternal story of the Americas.
The Indians are driven off the good land by the settlers
who grab whatever they can by any means."

(A foreign diplomat quoted in
Newsweek magazine after the 29 May 1978
massacre at Panzos)

Panzos is a small town of about 7,000 inhabitants, located on the
Polochic River in the northern Guatemalan province of Alta Verapaz, about
300 kilometres north of the country's capital, Guatemala City. The name comes
from   Kekchi, the language of the local inhabitants, and means 'wheat bread
with frost', from 'pan', wheat bread, and 'zos', or frost. On 29 May 1978,
over 100 Kekchi Indians from surrounding hamlets died in 'Panzos in a clash
with an army detachment which had moved into the town three days earlier.
Twenty-five women and five children were among the dead, including
some who drowned in the swift flowing Polochic as they fled the shooting.
During the year since the incident, which has come to be known as
'the Massacre at Panzos', Amnesty International has monitored a variety of
sources, including the Guatemalan and foreign press, and has noted a large
number of abuses of human rights involving campesinos in Guatemala, including
140 murders. During this period, characterised by Guatemalan journalist
David Saul Oliva as the most violent year in Guatemala's history, the
statistics gathered by AI reveal that the primary human rights problems in
the country have continued to be widespread political murder, torture and
disappearance, sometimes at the hands of official security forces and
sometimes following abduction by para-military death squads. Bodies are often
found mutilated in such a way as to make identification impossible, and at a
great distance from the original place of abduction, further complicating the
identification process. In contrast to the apparently more random violence
of earlier years, recent repression appears to have been directed at the
leaders of trade union, campesino and political movements. In most cases
involving campesinos which have come to AI's attention over this period, it
has been possible to establish a link between kidnappings, disappearances
and killings and disputes concerning land.
Such was the case at Panzos. Several times over the past few years,
Indian villagers of the area had applied to INTA (the Institute for Agrarian
Transformation), a government agency empowered to adjudicate in land disputes,
for settlement of a conflict over ownership of land which the Indians had
farmed for from 40 to 100 years. On the day of the killings, the campesinos
had come to Panzos to meet with local authorities and discuss a letter which
they had recently received from Guatemala City concerning their land claims.
Following the killings, army spokesmen charged that it was the campesinos
who initiated the violence, but reliable church, university, peasant, labour

and legal organisations within Guatemala maintain that it was the army that opened fire.

The incident at Panzós received a great deal of international publicity, but the underlying tensions that exploded in May in this small northern Guatemalan town exist throughout the country, and the incident should be viewed as illustrative of general problems facing Guatemala's rural and indigenous populations, rather than unique. To understand what happened at Panzós, it is helpful to look briefly at Guatemala's agrarian history and the situation of her campesinos today.

It is estimated that as many as 75% of Guatemalans are rural and their greatest problem is that of land, a problem which dates back to the days of the conquest, when the indigenous population was first enslaved, made to pay tribute and forced to work in the mines and on the agricultural lands seized by the new colonists. The concept of private ownership of property, as opposed to simply individual use (usufruct), was alien to pre-colonial society, and forms of cooperative labour that existed before the conquest are still practised today. Pre-conquest communal forms of land-holding also still obtain in some areas, but Indians often lack formal title to prove ownership and many lands have been taken over fraudulently or illegally by ambitious and unscrupulous individuals. In other instances, the existence of a formal title was no obstacle to indigenous ownership being challenged, and Indians have ended up paying two and three times for new title to their lands.

Today, over 400 years after the Spanish first arrived and first dispossessed the indigenous peoples of their lands, Guatemala reveals a classic pattern of mini-latifundia, so characteristic of developing societies: two per cent of land-owners hold over 60 per cent of the land on which they raise crops or cattle for export, while the number of tiny subsistence farms of under one hectare (2.5 acres) on which the campesinos raise maize or black beans for their own consumption has risen significantly over the last 20 years. Few of the campesinos succeed in maintaining a decent standard of living; in 1975, a director of INCAP (the Nutrition Institute of Central America and Panama) stated that 80 per cent of Guatemalan children now suffer from malnutrition, which accounts for over 65 per cent of the deaths of children under five years of age. To eke out an existence, an estimated 60,000 land-hungry highland Indians migrate yearly to the large coastal estates, where they provide a cheap source of day labour. Transport to the coast is dangerous and working conditions unhealthy for the highland peasants, but, cut off from most sources of credit and forbidden by law to strike during the harvest season, the campesinos have few possibilities with which to improve their lot.

Indeed, this system, described as akin to slavery in a recent paper presented by the Anti-Slavery Society of the UK before the Joint Working Group on Slavery, United Nations Human Rights Commission, has been enshrined in law at several points in Guatemalan history. In 1877, a legal framework for debt peonage was provided with the so-called Ruling for Labourers, which enabled local authorities to arrest any persons who were in default of their obligation to work a certain amount of days in return for the right to cultivate subsistence plots on a plot within the estate. President Lisandro Barillas (1885-92) ordered that all lands should be recognised by private title, in a measure highly prejudicial to the indigenous communities, who had never registered their land and who quite probably knew none of the legal requirements for land registration.

Only in 1906 was the sale of agricultural workers outlawed, while debt bondage was officially abolished in 1933, but replaced the following year by the oppressive Vagrancy Law, which obliged landless peasants and those with small plots to provide regular work on the estates.

Following the overthrow of the dictator Ubico in 1944, the Reform Era of Presidents Arevalo and Arbenz (1944-54) saw some move towards land

redistribution and the beginnings of a cooperative movement, but the land that was redistributed was primarily national rather than privately owned, and the basic feudal structure of the society remained largely unaltered. An important measure was the Law of Supplementary Ownership (Ley de Titulación Suplctoia) under which the legal basis of land tenure was to be the proven use of land, rather than the dubious tities which had been used to wrest land from the Indians over the centuries. The Labour Code of 1947 provided for labour contracts, minimum wages in all sectors, and the free right to organise and to strike, although there was still some discrimination against the rural sector as unionisation was only permitted on the larger estates.

In December 1949, a Law of Forced Rental was enacted, enabling the landless or subsistence farmers to request lots for rental in writing or verbally from large land-owners. If an excessive rent was demanded, the peasant could request an audience with the municipal authorities who would have to adjudicate immediately. These measures are still formally operative today and form the legal basis on which peasants attempt to seek legal and official redress when their lands and livlihood are threatened. But the peasant groups continually charge that the two government agencies, INTA and FYDEP (Institute for the Development of the Petén), which are to adjudicate in such disputes, habitually favour large land-owners.

Further reforms under the Arbenz government (19 -64) led to charges that his government was communist inspired, and President Arbenz was overthrown in 1954 in a US-backed invasion.

Developments since 1954 have only served to reinforce the essential features of the Guatemalan rural economy -- the need for a peasant population that has land for some subsistence requirements, but not enough to satisfy them all - and rural organisations have not been permitted to recover since that time. The political force which the peasantry had attained during the Reform Era was first broken by legislation against organisation, and then by systematic repression of selected peasant leaders, after a degree of rural organisation had been permitted. The first military presidents, Castillo Armas, Ydigoras and Peralta, simply made rural trade unions illegal; since then, colonisation schemes have been encouraged, but often for the benefit of the military and land speculators, with efforts occasionally made to attract Indians to areas where their labour will be needed on new estates.

The social disorder caused by the 1976 earthquake was used as an excuse by the army to move strongly against the remaining campesino organisations, and illegal eviction of the indigenous peasantry, both by authorities as well as by private land-owners, appears to remain common practice. Peasant groups can often produce a title to the land they claim, but new owners can usually produce an alternative title, backed up by lawyers and the threat of violence, often with the tacit support of the military and political authorities.

The greatest areas of rural violence in recent years have been those where improved communications and the promise of oil and mineral exploitation have increased the value of previously inaccessible or low-priced land. Such, again, was the case at Panzos. As a foreign diplomat remarked to the American magazine Newsweek after the Panzos killings, "What happened here is the eternal story of the Americas. The Indians are driven off the good land by the settlers who grab whatever they can by any means".

The lands for which the Indians died at Panzos were of little value until recently, owing to their isolation. However, Panzos is now near the boom area of Guatemala. The large nickel operation of EXMIBAL, a Canadian-

American firm, lies to the north-east at El Estor. Petroleum is already being extracted at nearby Rubelsanto in modest amounts, and further exploration is underway. A projected oil pipeline to the port town of Livingston will not pass too far from the area and much of the land now in dispute flanks the booming real estate market along the 'Transversal del Norte', where a cross-country road is being built from the Mexican border to the Caribbean to open up the north of the country for agriculture and cattle ranching. General Romeo Lucas, Guatemala's president, is himself from Alta Verapaz, and is said to own more than 78,000 acres in the area. Former President Kjell Laguerud is also reported to own large holdings in the north-east, and the area, which once only the Indians cared about, is now referred to as the 'Zone of the Generals'.

Those who died at Panzós were Kekchí, onee of the more than 22 identifiable indigenous groups which together are estimated to account for more than 50 per cent of Guatemala's estimated 7 million people. The diversity of Guatemala's native peoples, combined with their isolation and widespread illiteracy, has made it difficult for indigenous groups to work together at a national level in the face of such speculation and expropriation, and Indian political parties have foundered. An additional problem is that despite the fact that rural ladinos (a term usually used to describe a person of mixed Spanish-native parentage, but today often used in a cultural rather than racial sense) face much the same difficult existence as do campesinos, the disdain with which the latinos have been taught to regard the indigenas has meant that the two groups have rarely worked together politically.

However, the recently formed CNUS (National Council for Trade Union Unity) embraces a number of urban and rurally based federations, and over the period since the Panzós Massacre, Indian and ladino workers and peasant groups have joined forces on several occasions to protest the kidnappings, disappearances and murders directed at student, religious, campesino and trade union leaders, apparently aimed at destroying the tenuaously united popular movement. The future of the alliance between the rural and urban movements is somewhat uncertain, as the CNUS has recently broken from CLAT (Latin American Workers Central) which held a strong influence over many campesino leaders. However in the middle of April 1978, a new committee, the CUC (Comite de Unidad Campesina), was formed to fight for the rights of campesinos and, in conjunction with CNUS, has succeeded in drawing national and international attention to incidents of human rights abuses in the Guatemalan countryside which would previously have gone unreported, among which we note the following:

        (the following seven pages are a
        chronological inventory of the murders)

APPENDIX 2

Excerpts from an interview with the President of
Guatemala, General Kjell Laugerud, on the occasion
of the massacre of Indian peasants in Panzós,
Northern Guatemala in El Gráfico, Guatemala, June 1978.

"The happenings in Panzós, Alta Verapaz, are the result
of a general plan of subversion whose responsibility
falls on the misnamed Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres".
(Guerrilla Army of the Poor),

stated the President of the Republic yesterday. He also added

that

> "On the basis of the investigations ordered immediately
> after this regrettable incident, we have in our hands
> some names of those people who come to the villages in
> the area in order to indoctrinate the peasantry....."

> "General Laugerud, what is your opinion of these
> incidents?"

> "To begin with, let us put the situation in the singular,
> because it is not a matter of 'incidents'. It is just
> one which unfortunately occurred last Monday. I will
> begin by telling you that some time ago my government
> handed over one finca, La Soledad, to nearly sixty peasants
> in perpetuity. They had to pay between 20 and 25 quetzales
> a year. However, last Friday, as a result of disagreements
> between themselves, the problem of Panzós began. They
> quarrelled because 18 of the beneficiaries did not want
> to pay off their monthly shares whereas the remainder did.
> There was an initial disagreement among them there. Later,
> this Monday around 9.30 a.m., a crowd of 1000 or 1200
> peasants gathered together opposite the municipalidad.
> When they arrived there, they began to call for the alcalde
> and in the street itself they shouted: we want the lands...
> the lands are ours... away with the Army... the land belongs
> to God and to those who work it.... death to the rich....."

> "Anyone who knows the Coban area also knows that the Kekchi
> peasant has always been a peaceful, quiet and hard-working
> man",

the leader pointed out, adding that,

> "however, on that day he was not the same because for some
> time now a programme of indoctrination has been carried
> out by extreme left wing factions....And I want to make it

absolutely clear that these factions are left wing,
and that they do not even come from the area of Panzós
or Cobán, because they convoke and assemble the peasants
in the villages and bring them tape recorders with
Kekchi tapes, using them to stir up their hearts, as
the left wingers themselves do not know or speak the
dialect....

So that was why, on that tragic Monday morning, the
peasants came to Panzós in huge numbers. Those who
have come to the capital can say whatever they like,
but I insist that these people were looking for those
organisations which have been encouraging them to
occupy lands which are private, lands which have owners.
It is not true at all that the peasants were coming
along the road and that the Army intercepted them in
order to kill everyone. This is an absurd calumny...
you can see at once that it is an open and shameless
lie, when it is alleged that the dead in Panzós may
number more than 200 and the wounded around 250. The
official figures this morning are 38 dead and 13 wounded,
seven of whom are in the Army Hospital and six in Cobán.
But soldiers are also wounded, three of whom are in such
a critical condition that they are in the intensive care
unit of the Army Hospital, and four who have not yet been
evacuated from Cobán because of their severe injuries...
they are very ill......"

The President stressed that,

"Those responsible for this will have to pay for it.
I mean, those who encouraged and forced the peasants to
take up an attitude of defiance never seen before in
the north of the country. General Otto Spiegler [the
Minister of the Defence] is from that area and knows
his own people very well. I myself have served in Alta
Verapaz and I know that the peasant is an honest, peace-
ful and hard-working labourer, but he has been urged on,
indoctrinated, encouraged in order to create this kind
of problem for us."

The President described some reports as false and slanderous

by stating that

"the soldiers intercepted the peasants in the road and
that once there, they were raked with gunfire. Freedom
of thought must not be based on spreading lies but upon
telling the truth and the Government of the Republic
does not need to hide the reality. The bulletin of the
Army Public Relations Office and of the Government itself
are plain and unadorned because the truth must not be
adorned but presented as it is....lies have to be orna-
mented so the people can swallow them... According to
reports from peasants who have come to the capital, there
were 150 soldiers in the post in Panzós last Monday. I
can give you my word of honour as General Commander of

the Army that there were only 22 men in that garrison.
These señores, pseudo-peasants, are spreading the notion
here and there that they were attacked with machine guns
and hand grenades. I can assure you again, on my word
of honour as a military man, that there was not a single
machine gun or hand grenade in the post. Even now there
are none there, because if the soldiers would have thrown
hand grenades into a crowd of 1000 to 1500 people, the
number of dead would now be fearfully high......"

The President continued saying that

"it is also said that the peasants came peacefully, but
I wonder: does coming peacefully mean surrounding the
post and coming in at the back and giving three blows
with a machete to the head of one of the sentries, taking
his rifle and doing the same to another sentry who ran to
help him, and then doing the same to four others? In the
face of this, the personnel in the post could only respond
by trying to defend their own lives. It is also said that
the peasants were not armed for any hostile purpose, but
although the machete or the hoe are certainly working tools,
it is also true that they can kill as has been proved during
the peasants' own fights."

The President also bluntly rejected the suggestion that

"the peasants did not carry any firearms. This contention
is false because they did carry firearms which are now in
the military base at Cobán. Even a shotgun for hunting rabbits
deer or game can also kill a man. There are certain people
who have an interest in hiding the truth. For example, the
political parties, especially in the Congress, want to bathe
in rose water. The Christian Democrats, for instance, say
that an investigation must be held. The Government of the
Republic does not need to be asked for an investigation,
because the tragic events were investigated immediately
after they had taken place. It has also been suggested
by the peasants that the Army continues to chase them in
the mountains. I stress that this is not so; rather,
what we are doing is to look for the wounded, so we can
evacuate them and taken them to a safe place."

Finally, the ruler stated:

"It is a lie that any child has been shot in this incident.
What is true however is that when the soldiers were attacked
and they had to defend themselves, the aggressors put six
women in the front line, who passed away because of bullet
wounds."

APPENDIX 3

Excerpts from the labour demands of the cane and cotton workers on the South Coast plantations, affiliated to the Comité de Unidad Campesina, CUC, for the general strike in January 1981. (Newspaper La Nación, Guatemala, 29 January 1981.)

Because of the grievous economic situation we are enduring the result of the high cost of living, low wages, robbery, threats, and ill-treatment, all of which constitute a situation quite at variance with the increasing production and the rise in price of the products which we harvest, because of this situation, we bring and demand, on the occasion of the present sugar and cotton harvest, the following dossier of demands:

Article 4. The labour relations of the workers should be established directly with the finqueros (landowners) of cane and cotton, and not through the contratistas (contractors)....because their participation has harmed us for a long time, in the following way:

a) The contratista is a person who produces no benefit at all, because even before he contracts us he gains an advance which allows him to capture considerable numbers of workers in need, on our own lands, taking advantage of our needs.

b) The contratista also receives money from the finquero in order to make sure that we are transported from our own lands to the South Coast fincas (plantations). By transporting us, the contratistas have shown their ambition for money and the scorn for our lives and for that of our families, inasmuch as they seek to transport us in lorries instead of buses, since this enables them to draw substantial profits whereby they become owners of the means of transportation.

c) Once in the _finca_, the _contratista_ just leaves us and moves away to enjoy the meaty profits obtained, while we, the workers, have to leave our families without any money, so as to make sure that we survive a month on the _finca_. When the _contratista_ comes back, after a month's absence, he begins to participate directly in the robbery of our wages in association with the payers (_planilleros_), with the weighers (_pesadores_) and with the land agents (_administradores_), using double payrolls. As if this was not enough, the _contratistas_ have gone to the point of opening the envelope containing our wages, and removing the money which should go to us. This is done by the _contratistas_ in collusion with the foreman (_caporal_); if any of us complain about it, we are accused of being politicians or communists.

d) In the labour relations, the _contratista_ represents for you _finqueros_, a useful means of evading your responsibilities as _patrones_ (patrons) because when we, the workers, appeal to you in order to claim our rights or to solve some problems and gain the legal rights which are due to us, you simply wash your hands of it through the _contratistas_, telling us that we have to come to agreement with them because they are responsible for us, when in fact it is the _patrono_ who contracts. When we appeal to the _contratistas_, they send us to you, _finqueros_; in this way we, the workers, never find any solution to our problems. Both _finqueros_ and _contratistas_ always turn out to be the gainers in the long run.

Article 11. Cane-sugar and cotton _finqueros_ will have to give free transport by bus to the _cuadrilleros_ from their place of origin to the _fincas_, and the return journey; likewise, the _finqueros_ will have to promise to give free transport by bus to the workers who

have to go every day from their homes to the _fincas_ and _vice versa_.

Article 12. The _finqueros_ must promise to pay to us, _cuadrilleros_, the same wages which our _compañeros_ the volunteer workers are paid. It must be understood that we, _cuadrilleros_ and volunteer workers, will be given free daily food rations which will have to be of the required dietary standard and variety.

Article 13. We, _cuadrilleros_ and volunteers, demand that the sugar-cane and cotton _finqueros_ should give us housing with the following facilities:

a. Lined houses with roof, cement floor, lavatory, electric light, drinking water and firewood for cooking.

b. In each sugar cane or cotton _finca_ a medical dispensary must function in which a male nurse for first aid and a midwife to take care of deliveries must be present. Likewise, the cotton and sugar-cane _finqueros_ will employ doctors to attend each of the _fincas_ twice a week, eight hours per visit, in order to give free medical treatment to us workers and our families.

APPENDIX 4

Excerpt from El Combativo (regional bulletin of the South Coast, Committee of Peasant Unity (Comité de Unidad Campesina). April 1980.

"31st January : CUC present in the struggle against repression.

Chepe Yos: with us in our struggle.

Volunteers, Indians and rancheros: United in the struggle for better wages.

WHY DID WE MAKE THE STRIKE?: We are the masses of peasants, volunteers, Indians and rancheros who participated in the great strike of cane and cotton cutters. Need itself has forced us to take such a decision, the dirty rich men (ricachones) have again increased the prices of the products we need every day to keep our families alive. In this way they have increased the price of salt, sugar, oil and many other products. Wages hardly go up. The wages of one-and-a-half quetzal (1 quetzal - $1 US) to two quetzales that we earn for a ton of sugar cane and a ton of cotton is not enough even to feed our families in the rest of the year. Far from increasing our wages the finqueros (landowners) take away our jobs, bringing machinery instead and using poison. So, instead of our wages increasing they have been coming down. We the peasants are not disposed to bear this injustice any longer. We know that the prices of the products that we produce have gone up, but we have not seen even a cent of the profits that we yield to the patron."

APPENDIX 5

Excerpts from the Declaration of the Indian People of Guatemala (Declaration of Iximché). A. Fuentes M. Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Guatemala, and the Worlds Council of Churches. Geneva, Switzerland, 1980.

INTRODUCTION TO THE IXIMCHE DECLARATION

The right of the Indian population to be master of its own destiny is something more than a mere declaration of intent, elaborated by intellectuals. The first two Barbados meetings already showed this to be true, and it has been amply demonstrated since then by the new experiences of the Guatemalan people in its political and social struggles. In February, 1980, a meeting of representatives of Guatemala's indigenous peoples was held at Iximché, ancient capital of the Cackchiquel kingdom. This was an extraordinary meeting thanks to spontaneous efforts, the great number of ethnic groups present and the clarity of topics discussed.

The creation of the Committee for Labour Unity(Comité Nacional de Unidad Sindical, CNUS) in 1976 , and of the Committee for Peasant Unity(Comité de Unidad Campesina, CUC) in 1978 constitute significant events in the development of popular organization and mobilization. The CUC is member of the CNUS and the Democratic Front Against Repression (FDCR), and it aims at the unification of the peasants as a social class, independently of their Indian or Mestizo origins.

The struggles of the Guatemalan people have been greatly strengthened by progressive incorporation of Indian peasants who have chosen to resist and to defend themselves. During the last years, the expansion of savage capitalism, under the leadership of the military-bourgeois clique in close collaboration with foreign capitalists, has severely affected the indigenous population: its lands have been forcibly expropriated, whole villages have been assassinated and persecuted; once again the dominant class has applied its traditional racist policy towards the peasants.

The massacre of Panzós, the mass assassinations in the Quiché and Baja Verapaz regions and the deliberate genocide at the Spanish Embassy are some examples of the murderous hatred shown by the military-bourgeois clique in their attempts to solve social conflicts.

The present document, which should be made known to international public opinion, is a reflection of the unyielding will to fight of the Guatemalan people as a whole, and of the Indian masses who today join the struggle for their own future.

THE INDIAN PEOPLES OF GUATEMALA DECLARE AND DENOUNCE TO THE WORLD MORE THAN FOUR CENTURIES OF DISCRIMINATION, NEGATION, REPRESSION, EXPLOITATION AND MASSACRES BY THE FOREIGN INVADERS, WHICH CONTINUE EVEN TODAY THROUGH THEIR EVEN MORE SAVAGE AND CRIMINAL DESCENDANTS.

1. The massacre of Ixil and Quiché Indians at the Embassy of Spain.

In 1975, squads of the National Army arrived at Nebaj in the Department of Quiché, and afterwards came soldiers of Somoza's National Guard, with the pretext of maintaining order. But the truth is that this region forms part of the area known as the " Transversal del Norte", an area rich in minerals such as nickel, petroleum, and where the land is fertile for cattle-raising and rich for the exploitation of lumber. A large part of this zone is populated by Indians. The population of Nebaj and its surroundings works in "cuadrillas", work teams controlled by middle men and rented to the fincas on the South Coast; around 75 o/o of the working population work in such teams. The people, mostly Indian, have begun to demand their rights which, for centuries, have been abused by owners of the fincas and by the government. With the presence of the National Army came the burning of ranches and harvests, plundering of money and animals, forcible rape of women, theft of lunch baskets of Indians working in the countryside, kidnappings, tortures, disappearances, assassinations and massacres of Ixiles and Quichés.

Because of the criminal acts of the National Army, at the end of 1978 about 50 women from Cotzal denounced them and demanded the return of their husbands, among whom were some leaders of Catholic Action and several Cooperatives. The authorities did not listen to the women, and the Army continued killing our brothers and sisters in this zone.

The Indian people continued struggling, and on August 14, 1979, men and women demonstrated in Uspantán in order to demand of the Mayor release of our Indian brothers who had disappeared, kidnapped by the Army. Struggles similar to this one took place in Cotzal and other towns of the region. But the Army responded with ridicule, beatings, threats, and more kidnappings, and so the kidnapping of nine of our brothers in Uspantán took place. After this new criminal act of the National Army, 50 of our Indian brothers and sisters of Uspantán went to the capital to the Congress of the Republic to denounce this fact, and to demand the return of the brothers kidnapped by the Army. The response from Congress, as usual, was ridicule, and later, to demand that they leave Congress. On leaving, various of the workers and students who accompanied them were captured and kidnapped by the "judicial police", one of the most repressive forces of the government and the wealthy.

In the month of December, 6 Indian brothers of Uspantán and one from Cotzal were massacred in Chajul, the same whose kidnapping had been denounced in September. In the midst of so much despair, again more than 100 Indian brothers and sisters of Uspantán, Chajul, Cotzal and Nebaj decided to go to the capital to denounce and to demand the end of the extensive repression

which the Army was carrying out in this zone. But the authorities did not listen to them, nor did the mass media publish anything, as the government threatened their employees with death if they denounced injustices. This same government accused our people, Ixiles and Quichés, of being terrorists, subversives, and guerilla soldiers, and said they were not Indians because they talked Spanish and did not use "guarachas" (sandals) - all because it is not convenient for the wealthy and their government that the poor people of Guatemala and the world learn the truth about what the Army is doing in the North of Quiché. Those who joined us in the suffering and struggles of our Indians were workers, poor townspeople, true Christians, committed students, and democratic institutions. Together they decided, in order to make their voices heard, to occupy peacefully the Spanish Embassy so that they could make the truth known to the poor of Guatemala and to the whole world, and to beg that a delegation of honourable persons go to investigate the acts of repression which the Ixil and Quiché peoples were suffering.

And concretely, to beg for the exhumation and identification of the 7 Indian brothers massacred by the National Army in Chajul. For this reason the assassin government of Lucas García ordered its repressive forces to gun down and burn alive our Indian brothers, together with all who had joined them in the struggle.

This same government told many lies to the people through the radio, press and TV, in order to confuse them regarding the savage massacre of the Ixiles and Quichés. Thirty-nine persons died, the majority being Indians, one poor ladino peasant, one worker, one inhabitant of the shantytowns and four students, all clear witnesses to our people and to the world of the criminal and murderous character of the wealthy and of the government in Guatemala. They do not respect anything, not even the lives of their own people and of the Diplomats. Among the burned, one brother Indian, Gregorio Yuja Xona, was saved. He was later kidnapped from the hospital, tortured and assassinated by the government, so that no witnesses would remain. All these acts that took place in the Spanish Embassy show the bestiality of the Lucas Government, who does not even respect the rights of other nations in our country.

WHY SO MANY MASSACRES OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE ?

The answer is quite clear:

THE VORACITY AND LUST FOR WEALTH OF THE CRIMINAL INVADERS CONTINUE IN THEIR RICH DESCENDANTS.

And to be able to continue stealing land and forcing work from the Indians, these rich criminals created the National Army in 1872, during the period of the thief and assassin Justo Rufino Barrios. Thief, because he robbed many communal lands from our people to plant coffee, which is one of the crops that produce much money for the wealthy today.

From 1872 until 1974, the National Army served to take care of the wealth of a handful of rich people. With the army at their beck and call, they have been able to steal, maintain and increase their wealth at the expense of the Indians and poor ladinos, robbing them of their work in the coffee, cane and cotton fields, and in the factories. But from 1974 on, the Army stopped taking care only of the money and interest of the wealthy. The Colonels and Generals also began to steal the land of our people, making dirty business agreements to make more money. Examples of these are the military assassins Arana Osorio and Laugerud, and the military group from Cobán, with Spigler Noriega and Lucas García, today one of the principal landlords in the Transversal del Norte zone.

These wealthy people and their governments, in complicity with rich foreigners such as the "Gringos", kidnap, torture, rob and kill Indians and other poor people of Guatemala, not only through the National Army, but also through the ambulatory military police, the "Guardia de hacienda"(sort of fiscal police), the "Judicial"(secret police), regional and national police forces, the "Comando 6", the "Peloton modelo"(Model Squad) and other groups, comprising altogether 13 repressive groups. These same groups appear with other names

such as "The White Hand", "The Death Squad", "The Eye for an Eye", ESA and FUA, and some other "ghost" groups at the service of the government.

All these repressive bodies of murderers receive their training in the USA, often with money from the AID and instructors from the CIA. These criminal descendants of the invaders have been killing our people in many ways: killing us by hunger, by paying us miserable salaries in the fincas and the factories; they also rob us by cheating on the weight of coffee and cotton, by poisoning us in the cotton fields, by raising the prices of basic products such as sugar, salt, soap, fertilizers and equipment which we need for sowing, etc...They kill us when they transport us in trucks which were not made to carry human beings; this is why, year after year, many Indian brothers die when these trucks overturn. The law prohibits the use of such trucks for transporting people, but this is of no importance to the wealthy. Another way of killing us is through sterilization of our women, by deceit and forced family planning. They kill our children too, when they are taken off to the army barracks with blows and kicks. There they kill their noble sentiments, those which characterize our people, and change them into killers. And these sons of ours are used by the wealthy and the high military chiefs to kill their own people; all this to defend the money and interests of the wealthy, the Colonels and the Generals.

These rich people and their government are the worst liars because they massacre us in many ways and still try to deceive us, by organizing folkloric festivals such as the day of Tecún Umán, the day of the Race, festivals such as those of Cobán and lately, of Solola, Huehuetenango and others, handing out medals, diplomas, pats on the back and smiles to certain professionals and Indian "Queens". Their cheating ends in speeches filled with lies, and finally, the photographs which the INGUAT exploits for tourist trade. The INGUAT is the organization in charge of tourist propaganda abroad. It paints Guatemala in a very romantic and picturesque way with its Mayan ruins, its weaving, dances, and traditions. The Indian becomes an object of tourism, a commercial object. All the benefits of this business go to the hotel chains, the transportation firms, the middlemen of Indian crafts and the government itself. But we, the Indians, are those who gain least benefits from tourism, which in the last few years has occupied the second place in the national economy.

3. But in spite of all this, our voice and our struggle advance at a firm pace towards our liberation.

All these savage acts by the invaders and their rich descendants and their government in complicity with the wealthy in other countries, such as the United States, all these persecutions, threats, tortures, dispossession of land, cheating and massacres by the National Army, the police forces, bands of killers, politicians and well-known spies, cannot deter the people, who revolt in all towns and villages. The Indian people has never stopped struggling. History and the present are a testimony of our constant struggle. From the time of the Spanish invasion in 1522, our grandfathers Quichés, Tzutuiles, Pocomames, Mames, Kekchíes, and other peoples fought with decision and courage to defend their lives, lands and culture. The Cackchiqueles even forced the invaders to abandon the first capital of Guatemala, when they descended from the mountains to take up the struggle.

The most important rebellions after the invasion are: Chiapas in 1708; Ixtaguacán in 1743 by the Mames; Santa Lucía Utatlán in 1760; Tecpán in 1764 by the Cackchiqueles; Cobán in 1770 by the Kekchíes; San Martin Cuchumatanes, Santiago Momostenango, Ixtaguacán in 1813; Totonicapán in 1820 by the Quichés headed by Atanacio Tzul; Jumay in 1833; another one in Ixtaguacán in 1839; San Juan Ixcoy in 1898 by the Canjobales; another by the Quichés in Totonicapán in 1905; Patricia by the Cackchiqueles; Xujuyu between Solola and Suchitepequez in 1971, and many others. This demonstrates our people's unending struggle.

Another example of struggle and suffering is the latest massacre at the Spanish Embassy where 21 Indian brothers and sisters fell, machine-gunned and burned alive, among them 4 women. These women gave their lives valiantly in this peaceful occupation of the Embassy, leaving their parents, husbands and children forever, thus demonstrating to our peoples and to the peoples of the whole world their courage, abnegation and heroism. This is not a casual occurrence, since the Indian woman always was and is part of our struggle, since she has always been exploited in the cotton, cane and coffee fields, and discriminated against because of her clothing, language, and customs, and by her condition as woman. She has been betrayed through rape-unmarried, married or pregnant- by the National Army and the rich exploiters, in the countryside, in the city, and in every corner of Guatemala.

To end all these evils perpetuated by the descendants of the rich invaders and their government, we must fight allied with workers, poor ladino peasants, committed students, poor townspeople, and other popular and democratic sectors, to strengthen the union and solidarity among the Indians and poor ladinos, since the solidarity of the popular movements with the Indian struggle was sealed with blood at the Spanish Embassy. The sacrifice of these lives now brings us closer than ever to a new society and the dawn of Indian liberty.

May the blood of our Indian brothers and their examples of a firm struggle and their bravery strengthen all Indians in their continuing struggle to secure a just life: FOR A SOCIETY OF EQUALITY AND RESPECT, SO THAT OUR INDIAN PEOPLES CAN DEVELOP THEIR CULTURE NOW BROKEN BY THE CRIMINAL INVADERS; FOR A JUST ECONOMY WHERE NO ONE EXPLOITS OTHERS; WITH COMMUNAL LANDS AS IN THE TIMES OF OUR ANCESTORS; FOR A LAND WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION; SO THAT ALL REPRESSION, TORTURE, ASSASSINATION AND MASSACRES MAY BE ENDED; SO THAT FORCED RECRUITMENT BY KIDNAPPING STOP; SO THAT WE ALL HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS TO WORK; SO THAT WE NO LONGER SERVE AS OBJECTS OF TOURISM; FOR THE JUST DISTRIBUTION AND USE OF OUR WEALTH AS IN THE TIMES WHEN THE LIFE AND CULTURE OF OUR ANCESTORS FLOURISHED.

But we also have to understand clearly that while we struggle for all this, the wealthy and their government will always accuse us of being terrorists, delinquents, subversives, guerilla soldiers, etc... But in the face of the calumnies and lies of the wealthy and their government, our Indian peoples will continue to fight step by step until our final triumph because THE BLOOD OF OUR HEROES MASSACRED ON JANUARY 31, THE LIFE, STRUGGLE AND BLOOD OF THE INDIANS AND POOR LADINOS COVERING THE PATH OF OUR FIGHT HAS FERTILIZED AND FORTIFIED OUR STRUGGLE.

- THAT ALL EXPLOITED AND DISCRIMINATED INDIANS OF THE WORLD
- THAT ALL WORKERS OF THE WORLD,
- THAT ALL FREE AND DEMOCRATIC PEOPLES OF THE WORLD,
- THAT ALL AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANS OF THE WORLD,

ESTABLISH THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLE
OF THE INDIAN PEOPLES AND OTHER EXPLOITED
GROUPS IN GUATEMALA!

THAT ALL RISE, CALL OUT TO EVERYONE, THAT
THERE BE NOT EVEN ONE OR TWO GROUPS AMONG
US WHO ARE LEFT BEHIND ! (POPOL-VUH)

Iximché, February 14, 1980

APPENDIX 6

Excerpt covering ethnicity and class struggle, from a manifesto of the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres. Magazine Compañero, Costa Rica.

THE INDIAN GUERRILLA FIGHTERS

For more than half a century, Guatemala has held a strong attraction for different types of foreign visitors: students, artists, tourists and businessmen. Archeologists, ethnologists and linguists have encountered ancient Mayan cities in our country, micro-societies with precolumbian traits; living laboratories of Mayan tongues. Artists have delighted in the singular beauty of the textiles and other crafts found in the colorful highland marketplaces. The tourist, uninformed, seeks rest and distraction in the indigenous local color, unaware of what lies beneath the elaborate scenario mounted by the tourist business. Many young people have settled permanently in villages and towns, believing they would find a paradise of simplicity and quiet among the indians. The more pragmatic businessmen detect favorable conditions for investment; in tourism, among other things. These visitors have returned to their countries with newly-learned skills, inspiration and projects. The tourist left with anecdotes and gifts, unaware that he had been the victim of an outrageous trick: the travel agencies gave him an adulterated product, a distorted image of the indian component of Guatemalan society. However, in the last few years, visitors with a more discerning eye have gone back to their countries with many unanswered questions and serious concern over the indigenous population of Guatemala, over their living conditions, their role and their future. Recently, the hotels in Antigua, Panajachel, and Huehuetenango have been abandoned by tourists; the archeologists and other foreign researchers have been leaving; businessmen have ceased investing their capital in the country, and the young dreamers of peace have become aware of the state of war convulsing the countryside.

Exactly a year ago on January 31st, newspapers the world over headlined the horrendous massacre of 36 people in the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala, transformed into a blazing bonfire by the repressive forces of General Lucas Garcia's government. Of these thirty-six people, twenty-seven had engaged in a peaceful takeover of the embassy as a last resort, to denounce before the civilized world the genocidal repression practiced by the army in the northwestern part of the country. Counted among these were 23 indians: Quiché, Ixil, Achi and Cackchiquel peasants from the areas under attack by the soldiers. In May of 1978, in the town of Panzos near the nickel deposits exploited by the international Nickel Company —INCO, a multinational corporation with headquarters in Canada— more than 100 Kekchi indians were also massacred by the army, in the public plaza, as they protested the robbery of their lands.

Every day more peasant families in that area are being forced off their lands. These recent instances are but two examples, the most widely known, of the already incontainable struggles of the Guatemalan indians and of the criminal response on the part of the government in the face of any show of discontent. But little has been said about the work stoppages and strikes carried out by the agricultural workers and sugar-cane cutters, the coffee and cotton pickers —indians, for the most part— who, side by side with workers not of indian origin, claim their rights, organize, and mobilize for struggle. Also, little is known outside the country about the takeovers of towns and farms by guerrilla forces of indians in arms, who communicate the ideas of the Guatemalan revolution in their own quiché, ixil, mam, kanjobal, and other indian languages; and almost nothing is known about the constant combats, in all parts of the country, carried out by indian guerrilla forces against government troops.

What has happened? What is now going on? How can one explain the contrast between the falsely normal image of a day at the market in the plaza at Chichicastenango or any other town in the highland, and the thousands of primarily migrant sugar-cane workers who come together at a crossroads near the southern coast to protest, machete in hand, their right to a just wage? What is it that has transformed the quiet worker in the cornfields from the provinces of Quiché and San Marcos into a decided guerrilla warrior? What has driven the tranquil Ixil, Mam, or Kanjobal indian women weavers to replace the loom with a weapon turned against their oppressor?

The minorities that are the majority

Of the seven million people in Guatemala, four million are indians, descendants of the peoples who inhabited Guatemalan territory at the moment of the conquest, who, in turn, descended from the great line of the Maya-quiché. In 1524, these peoples, represented in greatest numbers by four groups —the Quichés, the Mames, the Cakchiquels and the Kekchis— constituted nationalities that were related through their ancestors, but whose languages and customs had become differentiated to a greater and lesser degree through time; and who vied for land and power. They were undergoing a process of change, and generalized conflict. Socially and politically, the maya-quiché people were well structured, well-versed in agriculture, architecture and astronomy —exemplified by the mayan calendar they lived by.

They had varied and complex forms of cultural expression, developed around a maize culture.

Their military defeat at the hands of the Spaniards was followed by the plundering of their lands, the subjugation of the population to laws and institutions which reduced them to slavery, and the imposition of a different religion and culture from their own. Spanish domination was total: military, economic, political and ideological. The mayan-quiché peoples were completely subjugated. At the beginning, when they were forced into slavery, there was a drastic reduction in numbers of the native population. Soon they were subjected to new forms of exploitation. The indians were divided up among the conquistadores along with the lands, and the right to ownership included not only the product of the land and the mines, but also the work of men, women and children. They were forced to pay tribute in many ways.

During the 300 years of the colonial period, the Spaniards imposed measures of control and segregation, which served to further increase the fragmentation of the indigenous population, already divided into different ethnic groups with their own languages and customs. They grouped the indians into small communities, the so-called "indian towns" and forced the inhabitants of each community to wear distinctive dress. So they broke down the ethnic groups into small concentrations. The indians were conveniently relegated to these small groupings, and were obliged to work on the lands of the conquistadores according to the demands for labor. So it was, with the forced labor of the indians, that the cities were built, and the roads, and bridges and aqueducts.

Upon this system of oppression and exploitation and the need to justify it, an ideology was developed that characterized the indians as inferior beings, full of defects and incapable of governing themselves, beings that could not enjoy the same rights as the conquistadores. With time, the discrimination against the indians became part of the of the ideology of the ladinos (mixed Spanish and indian ancestry). The indian culture, came to be regarded as a subordinate, negated, contemptible culture, even by the poor and oppressed ladinos.

The ethno-cultural contradiction in Guatemalan society originated in the relationship between the Spaniards and Indians, where one dominated the other, and was reinforced by the ideological mechanism of discrimination used by the conquistadores in their oppression of the indians. Today, the racial content of the contradiction has been necessarily reduced as result of the high degree of intermarriage. Nevertheless, an ethno-cultural contradiction continues to exist, product of those old ideological mechanisms, although the terms within which there is domination have been modified. On the other hand, the ethnic border between indians and ladinos no longer corresponds to the class structure of present-day society. But despite this fact, the present system of exploitation makes use of the cultural oppression and discrimination developed in pre-capitalist periods, to its own advantage.

The culture of the indian peoples of today is the product of 400 years of a way of life centered around the communal peasant economy based on the cultivation of corn; it is also the product of interaction with the world of the Spanish, and then the world of the ladino, incorporating, in a very particular way, elements of Western culture and especially of the Christian religion. There are differences in richness and vigor among the cultures of the different ethnic groups. The sense of identity has also changed over time: once determined by the ethnic group —the conquered nationality: Quiché, Mam, Cakchiquel or Tzutuhil— later it centered in the smaller group, the "indian town" of the colonial epoch: Chichicastenango, Nahualá, Patzún. Still later, under capitalism, the borders between communities break down to give rise to a feeling of solidarity, identification and affirmation of the consciousness of being "indian" in general, without losing, each groups specific identity.

The Situation Today

The end of Spanish colonial rule with the independence of Guatemala in 1821, changed nothing for the indians, who continued to be oppressed, exploited and discriminated against. With the growth of capitalist agricultural enterprises as a result of the "liberal revolution" of 1871, the process of monopolizing large extensions of the best land —the latifundios— and, their concentration in the hands of a few land-owners, accelerated. For a long time, the indian peasants from the highlands, where there were still large reserves of land, were required by law to go down to the coasts to pick coffee. As land began to become scarce as a result of plundering, exhaustion of the soil and the growth of the population, the increasingly small plots of land were not enough to provide sustenance for whole families. Poverty and need took the place of laws, and now these were what forced the indians to seek seasonal employment on the coffee plantations. Many communities resisted, and to avoid having to work on the plantations, began to work new lands in more isolated wooded areas or on any usable land, even steep hillsides. As available lands were used up and the needs of the impoverished indian population grew, entire families including women and children ended up going to work on the plantations.

Since that time, the poor peasants, minifundistas (owners of sub-subsistence plots) have no other choice than to migrate periodically to the coast, if they are to survive. This reality constitutes one aspect of the inextricable relationship between the latifundio and the minifundio; the other aspect is the landowners' reliance on this migrant labor force, and the convenience of its poverty. This system, which requires hiring additional workers during the harvest, increased the seasonal mobility of the indians. This, together with the growth of commerce, gave rise to more and more contact among the different communities and ethnic groups, increasing the ties between them as indians. Within this process of capitalist transformation, the indian peasants have become wage workers part of the year, or semiproletarians. The rural semiproletariat, on the increase each year, is estimated to include at least 650,000 indian families. It constitutes the fundamental labor force for agro-export activity, the mainstay of the Guatemalan economy.

Upon becoming agricultural workers, the indians come in contact with a new kind of life. They come to experience exploitation, different from the poverty suffered in the highlands. For the first time, they are working for another, the landowner, the boss, and are paid a salary that is always insufficient. At the same time, within sight are the well-built homes of the landowners (who have other residences in the city, since they don't live on the farms); there, for all to see, are the luxurious cars, the airplanes, the machines. The indians discover that the money they receive in exchange for their work is not enough to buy what they need in order to survive, on the farm itself where the food ration is not enough and later on in their towns. Still less does this pay suffice for accumulated debts incurred in buying medicines, fertilizers and seeds. They see how their salaried work goes hand by hand with unfair treatment, tricks and abuses in the allotment of work tasks, and in the weighing-in of a day's picking during harvest time. They are subjected to constant surveillance and to the violence of the bosses' and government's repressive forces. They see that the poor ladinos, equally dispossessed of their lands, also work as day-laborers on the same farms. Their whole vision of the world, of themselves and of others, is affected as a series of elements previously unknown, or interpreted differently, become part of daily life. Even the notion of time and its use has to change, because the long hours spent working for pay leave little time for religious rituals and craftswork. Moreover, their craftswork is also increasingly framed within capitalist relations, becoming at-home labor dependent upon local, national and even transnational commerce.

In the indian towns themselves, a process of proletarization also takes place. Thousands of indians from the provinces surrounding the capital, needing monetary income because they have no land to live from, commute to the city on a daily or sometimes sporadic basis, in search of domestic or other service jobs; some work for a fixed salary, others on a contract basis. The majority do not completely abandon peasant life, and regularly return to their communities where other members of the family continue to cultivate plots of land which they either own or rent.

The process through which the indians become wage workers is a violent one, full of insecurity and suffering. It is doubly painful for the indians because this process is accompanied by discrimination. In fact, many become aware for the first time of individual and collective discrimination as they live through this process. Exploitation, while it brings together the indian ethnic groups among themselves as indians, also brings them closer to the ladino workers, as workers.

The transition imposed by the capitalist system upon the indigenous groups, from a peasant economy and way of life to the sale of their labor in exchange for wages in agricultural or industrial enterprises, coupled with the ever-increasing incorporation of ladino ways of life and customs into their culture, leaves no future for the indians. Their misery will continue to grow, accompanied by the loss of their culture as a result of the loss of their lands and destruction of their communal life style. And, on top of all this, the perpetuation of discrimination. The Revolutionary Popular War, and the ethnic affirmation of the indians in the process of this war, today offers the only alternative and future solution to the ethno-cultural complexity of our country.

The Indians in the Revolutionary Popular War

The process of revolutionary transformation that characterizes the Central American region as of a few years ago now, is familiar to all. The popular revolution of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua is an irreversible victory. The struggles of the Salvadorean people become more intense and decisive with every passing day. In Honduras, the popular organizations are making their voices heard with increasing vigor. The Panamanians are determined to demand the implementation of the Canal Treaties and free themselves of the Northamerican presence in the middle of their territory. The Costa Rican people, in the midst of an acute economic crisis, links up its own struggles with those of its neighbors and expresses its solidarity with them. In Guatemala, a Revolutionary Popular War has begun that will not be contained until the enemies of the working people are overthrown, and the foundations for a more just society are laid.

Within this constant, ascending revolutionary process, one characteristic is peculiar to Guatemala, and distinguishes it from the rest of the Central American countries. In our society, there will be no revolution without the incorporation of the indian population to the war, and without their integration with full rights to the new society, a society which the Indians must contribute to build. The more than twenty Guatemalan indian groups constitute, as a whole, the majority of the population. But in addition, the indians are also the fundamental factor in agricultural production for export (coffee, sugar cane, and cotton), and in the production of foodstuffs. They make up the bulk of the rural semiproletariat. Their role as producers of the wealth gives the Indians both strength and rights: strength to wage the war, and an undeniable right to participate in the construction and leadership of the new society.

In Guatemala, the indian and ladino workers are standing together at war against the present regime. The descendants of the Maya-Quichés, oppressed, exploited, repressed and discriminated against for more than four centuries, and after hundreds of rebellions and local uprisings without clear prospects that were mercilessly put down, are rising up today in a struggle for clearly defined revolutionary objectives. This is the most fundamental fact in the present history of Guatemala. It is the first time that the indians align themselves fully with a political revolutionary plan that contains their most deeply felt demands. The indians are not only supporting the revolutionary popular war, they have also assumed in it the principal role that corresponds to them. They are the fighters and guerrilla cadre of the revolutionary organizations. It is their incorporation that has allowed for the development of the ideas, the methods and forms of organization of the revolutionary struggle. It is their combative spirit that has resulted in the massive growth of the popular and revolutionary organizations. The indians are fighting in their towns, on the ranches and farms and in the mountains, carrying out the work of the war together with their ladino compañeros. The military actions that are causing many and constant losses to the army and other repressive forces, the ambushes, takeovers of towns and ranches, and the attacks on enemy posts are the work of guerrilla units made up fundamentally of indians, and supported by the indigenous population in the zones where the guerrilla forces operate. This presence of the indian people in the revolutionary popular war —in all its forms of struggle— is a political and military fact that the present government can no longer deny or contain. It is critical to understand this particularity of the Guatemalan revolutionary process, in order to fully understand the magnitude and depth of the revolutionary transformation which the country is undergoing.

The present system reproduces and takes advantage of the discrimination against the indians that the exploiters of past times practiced and imposed upon the entirety of the population as the dominant ideology. It maintains the idea that the indian is inferior, in order to set ladino and indian workers against each other, and to perpetuate amongst the indians a submissive and resigned attitude. For this reason, the elimination of cultural opression is a central objective of the revolution and is only possible in the framework of the revolutionary process. If the Guatemalan revolution does not solve the dual problem of exploitation and cultural opression suffered by the ethnic groups, it will not be a real revolution.

In fact, the first steps towards a solution have already been taken in the revolutionary struggle which unites indian and ladino workers around the same objectives, confronting the same enemy. And it is in the course of the revolutionary struggle that the ethnic indian groups recuperate and develop their own identity, of revolutionary indians, joined through war with the rest of the poor, indians and ladinos, who are the builders of our new society.

APPENDIX 7

Considerations on ethnic participation in the class struggle in Guatemala, from the International Declaration of the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerrilla Army of the Poor). London, Newspaper The Guardian, October 26, 1979

The Ethnic-National Question and the Revolution

Although the Central American countries share many common structural and geopolitical characteristics, Guatemala has a particular situation which distinguishes it from the rest. It is factor which, although not determining in terms of the essentials of social dynamics, of the class and revolutionary struggle, introduces a distinguishing element, and represents in turn an additional need for a revolutionary transformation of our country.

We are referring to the national ethnic question. In Guatemala, a majority of the population, 60%, belong to 22 minority ethnic groups. All together, these groups constitute the majority of Guatemalans, the majority which has a rightful tittle to its country.

This 60% has been marginated, discriminated against and oppressed since Colonial times. It is on them that the heaviest oppression and exploitation have fallen, as they also constitute the main source of cheap labor, and are the main part of the semi proletariat.

In some areas they have been forced to migrate to the most remote inhospitable and poor regions, which means that they do not have access to the advantages and disadvantages of services, State power, and of the institutions of the ruling classes. These groups also suffer tremendous problems of communication, and a lack of social, cultural and economic contact and interchange.

In these conditions it is impossible to speak of Guatemala as an integrated nation. The oppressors of the Guatemalan Indians, in the past and the present, believed erroneously that with servitude, exploitation and margination they could breack the spirit of resistance of the Maya-Quiche peoples, and that their social and cultural features would disappear with time and be absorbed and digested by the system. This has been a deep and fatal error; these conditions have strengthened the elements of self-identity of the Indian peoples, and their silent rebelliousness has been increasing, to such an extent that it can no longer be ignored. Not only is this mounting rebelliousness a catalytic force, it is rapidly becoming a decisive factor for the future of our country.

The ethnic minorities in Guatemala cannot construct and lead their cultural development freely. They cannot enjoy their legitimate right to participate in the life of the country, and of participating in the formation of its social and cultural life, in a country in which the system of production and development are determined by the laws of class exploitation and the oppression of races and cultures.

This is why no partial change which could take place in Guatemalan society, or in its regime, could eliminate the differences which make the majority of the Guatemalan population a subjugated mass. History has proven that capitalism cannot solve these problems, because its own dinamycs of class domination leads it to incorporate national oppression into its operating system. The real and total liberation of the national and oppressed groups is impossible in the framework of a society divided into classes, exploiters and expoited.

Only through socialism, which eliminates the borders of exploitation and class divisions, will the Guatemalan Indians become part of a national community and culture without loosing their identity, because then the factor which will bring cohesiveness to all the components of Guatemalan nationality will be common interests, and not the domination of some over others. The Guatemalan community will not be determined by the subjugation of the majority to an uneven lot. Rather, it will be determined by the sharing of a common destiny, characterized by communication, reciprocity, interaction and participation of all. Only then will it be possible to speak of a Guatemalan nation. And this social imperative, along with the class struggle constitutes the essential impulse of the Guatemalan revolution.

APPENDIX 8

Proclamation of Unity of all the guerrilla movements
in Guatemala in January 1982. News from Guatemala,
Costa Rice, March 1982.

Proclamation of Unity

The revolutionary organizations – Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), Organization of People in Arms (ORPA), and Guatemalan Labour Party, National Leadership Nucleus (PGT), – to the people of Guatemala and international public opinion,

PROCLAIM

That profoundly convinced of the validity of the Guatemalan revolution and of our people's true aspirations, we have continued to develop the process of revolutionary unity which our people know guarantees that their efforts, struggles, and sacrifices will bring victory this time.

That the unity of the Guatemalan revolutionary forces is based on the strategy of Popular Revolutionary War; that it is the same unity that our massacred populations are forging day by day on a grass roots level to defend themselves and defeat our enemies; that it is a unity to defend ourselves from exploitation, oppression, discrimination and brutal repression; that it is a unity to struggle under the banner of the Popular Revolutionary War to defeat our enemies, take power and set up a Revolutionary, Patriotic, Popular and Democratic Government.

Today the Guatemalan people are fighting the most important revolutionary war in their history. Workers, peasants, Indians and Ladinos, Catholics and Protestants, men and women old enough to think and fight, and all patriotic and democratic sectors are involved. The war has been going on for over 20 years, and now covers nearly the entire country. Hundreds of patriots have given their lives fighting in the guerrilla forces, and thousands every day contribute with their efforts and sacrifices so that our people can break the chains of social injustice once and for all. We are defeating our enemy, and more than ever before we are sure that we will win.

The people of Guatemala are waging a Popular Revolutionary War because the rich, both national and foreign, have not left us any other way to free ourselves from repression, exploitation, oppression and dependence.

The Most Infamous Genocide in America

The most infamous genocide that has ever existed on the continent is taking place in Guatemala today. Never before has an American country endured such large-scale and condemnable slaughter. Since 1954, when the anti-communist right wing and U.S. imperialism overthrew the democratic government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzman. 83,500 people have been assassinated in Guatemala. In 1981 alone, 13,500 people fell victim to the official repression. The genocide carried out by the self-proclaimed "National" Army and the regime's various repressive forces makes no exception for age or sex. It has been directed principally at the Indian population, at Ladino workers from the city and countryside, at Christians and students, progressive professionals and politicians from the democratic opposition. Panzos, Chajul, Cotzal, Santiago Atitlan, Sacala, San Jose Poaquil, Chuabajito, Coya, Suntejal, Rabinal, Semuy, Chupol, San Antonio Huista, and other less known but equally horrible massacres are engraved in the national conscience as an indelible testimony to the vile genocide which the regime is carrying out, and above all, against the Indians. Our comrades who were burned alive on January 31, 1980, in the Spanish Embassy will remain in the people's hearts forever, as an example of a common martyrdom in which Indians, Ladinos, workers and campesinos, slumdwellers, Christians and students fell struggling side by side.

In the past 18 months, 12 catholic priests and 190 catechists have been slain, and 49 democratic journalists were silenced for remaining faithful to their conscience and commitment to the Guatemalan people. Every day, an average of 36 people are kidnapped, "disappeared", or assassinated. Later their brutally tortured and maimed bodies appear in common graves, clandestine cemeteries, ravines or along the roadsides. In 1981, the regime moved from the assassination of individuals to the massacres of entire villages. During the 1981 anti-guerrilla offensives, the Lucas Army began to employ scorched earth tactics, slaughtering entire populations, burning crops, killing livestock and burning homes. This policy was clearly demonstrated when entire villages were leveled in the Peten, in areas bordering Belize and along the Usumacinta River, forcing the population to seek refuge in Mexico.

The Air Force bombs the civilian population, and uses helicopters to generalize the massacres. During the last few months the self-proclaimed "National" Army has begun to forcibly organize reactionary militias, in a vain attempt to turn what is in reality a confrontation between an entire people and their national and foreign oppressors into a civil war. In a cowardly and criminal manner, the Army uses the civilian population to shield its troops and sets up its barracks in populated centers. Such a war of extermination has not been seen since the day of the Spanish Conquest.

The Ruling Classes' Crisis of Power

The power of the ruling classes is in a crisis. It is an economic, political and military crisis. Their power is crumbling. They can no longer govern as they always have and must use brute force to remain in power.

The Guatemalan economy is undergoing an acute crisis because the rich have sent most of their capital out of the country to foreign banks. Since 1979, the year of the Sandinists' victory, they have sent more the $500 million out of the country. In September alone, $119 million left the country. At the end of last year, the Bank of Guatemala was left with only $23 million, and the government has begun to seek help from international credit agencies to cover its expenses. The price of a 100 lb. bag of coffee in 1981 was $95, and of the 3.5 million bags produced in Guatemala, only 1.4 can be exported. Rich foreigners do not want to invest in Guatemala because of the political instability, and foreign banks are refusing credit to the local rich and the government. More and more factories are closing because of capital flight, the lack of foreign credit, and because local industry has started to lose the Central American market it had until a few years ago. The Central American Common Market (CACM) is folding because the power of the ruling classes is crumbling in Central America, and because of the revolutionary struggles. The construction sector is in crisis, and tourism is on the verge of collapse. This means fewer jobs, lower salaries, higher prices for basic staples, and more difficult working conditions for the working population. All of this in a country in which already, in 1975, 36,336 children under 5 died of curable diseases; where 81% of the same age population is undernourished; where 76% of the population in the capital city does not have running water, and where this service is nonexistent in the countryside; where there is only one doctor per 100,000 people; where 80% of the population can neither read nor write; where in 1976 the deficit of housing reached 674 thousand units, a figure which increased after the earthquake that same year; and finally, in a country where the price for basic staples increased by 300% since 1975.

The political crisis of the ruling classes is demonstrated by the fact that they are only able to maintain control of the State through the use of force. The ruling sectors have never had popular support, and now they have even lost the support of the middle sectors by assassinating social democratic leaders Manuel Colom Argueta and Alberto Fuentes Mohr, as well as hundreds of members and middle level leadership of the democratic political parties. A group of new rich, formed by corrupt, greedy and repressive officers, businessmen, and functionaries, makes use of the State apparatus to accumulate capital, becoming a distinct fraction of the ruling classes, aided by its control of the military hierarchy. This group is responsible for the bloodbath in our country, as well as for the current economic, political and military crisis.

The traditional sectors of the ruling classes refuse to accept the hegemony of the new fraction, while at the same time they need the self-proclaimed "National" Army to guarantee the survival of the system of exploitation, oppression, discrimination and repression from which they have all benefited. This represents an additional contradiction in the already chronic crisis of the Guatemalan social and economic structures.

Today, the Guatemalan ruling classes are politically split. The ruling classes as a whole, and U.S. imperialism, view the elections in March as the last political hope for averting the defeat of their exploitative, oppressive, and repressive system. The Reagan Administration has felt it necessary to change the regime's image by placing a civilian in the presidency. But the ambition of each of the sectors of the ruling classes, and the lack of real programs to deal with the current crisis have made it impossible for them to unite. None of the four presidential candidates is willing to abandon his aspiration to the presidency. But in Guatemala, no-one believes in the grand deceit of elections. From one election to the next, the number of citizens who do not vote increases, and the people know that not only is there always fraud, but that the candidates all represent the rich. The people have not had a candidate of their own for the last 30 years. Today the ruling classes face an even greater problem: elections will not be held in 60% of the country, where most of the population lives, because the people reject them, and because these areas are recognized as combat zones.

The military crisis of the ruling classes is manifested in the continuous and increasingly frequent defeats that the self-proclaimed "National" Army is being dealt by the revolutionary guerrilla organizations; it is manifested in the extension of the Popular Revolutionary War to most of the country, and most important, in the massive incorporation of the people to the great revolutionary effort, and in the widespread identification of the population with its combatants.

Today the flame of the Popular Revolutionary War is burning strong in all parts of the country. In the West, North, South, East and center, and in the capital city, there are victorious guerrilla operations every day, and mass sabotage and propaganda support activities. The revolutionary forces maintain a constant seige in the border areas, in the plantations, the oil zones, highways, tourist centers, and the slums in the capital. Nearly all of the Indian groups have incorporated in the Popular Revolutionary War, and together with the Ladino population they support thousands and thousands of guerrillas. In 1981 the guerrilla organizations moved from occupying villages and plantations to the occupation of municipal and departmental capitals, and from propaganda actions to generalized military harassment operations. They are now beginning to systematize operations which directly destroy the enemy forces. In 1981 we caused approximately 3200 enemy casualties, including soldiers, police agents and members of the local repressive power in the countryside and in the city. Our guerrilla units have begun to recover enemy weapons, destroy military transport and to down planes and helicopters. We have moved from operating with small units to using larger ones, we have managed, despite important blows, to completely defeat the offensives launched by the enemy in 1981 against the strongholds of the revolution in the city and in the country; it is deepening its mass support and is increasing its offensive capacity. The exploited, oppressed and discriminated Guatemalan Indians have risen up and through their incorporation to the Popular Revolutionary War, together with the masses of Ladino workers, have already decided the outcome of the war.

The popular and democratic organizations have continued to struggle around popular demands, using the most varied forms and spreading their activity to the countryside and beyond Guatemala's borders. Thanks to their efforts, international solidarity with the struggle of the Guatemalan people increased greatly in 1981. In this effort, the Democratic Front Against Repression and the January 31 Popular Front have earned a special place. New and higher forms of struggle await the organized masses in the coming year.

The International Situation and Foreign Intervention

Faced with increasing victories in the progress of the Popular Revolutionary War, and the threat and loss of power by the Guatemalan ruling classes, our enemies must resort to foreign intervention to prop up their decayed regime. A coup d'etat, supported by the Reagan Administration, is another solution proposed by equally ambitious and repressive sectors for the current crisis of reactionary power.

We are living in an era of political and social changes. People rise up and begin to struggle for national liberation and social emancipation under the banner of Revolution. The warmongering clique in power in the U.S., headed by Ronald Reagan, is desperately fighting to maintain its domination and hegemony, is futilely attempting to recover its power in the world, and is making vain attempts to contain the revolutionary struggles in Central America and the Caribbean. In their ambitious quest for world domination, Reagan and his clique have resorted once again to a cold war policy, to a renewed arms race. They are attempting to cow other people into submission with nuclear threat. All of humanity is endangering and this is one more powerful justification for our struggles.

Today, Central America and the Caribbean constitute one of the major areas of conflict. In addition to the unyielding presence of revolutionary Cuba, in this region we find the glorious Sandinista revolution now in power, the Grenada revolution, the heroic revolutionary struggle of the Salvadorean people, and the victorious Popular Revolutionary War which is unfolding in Guatemala.

The Reagan Administration threatens the Cuban revolution in an increasingly aggressive way. It is making fruitless efforts to increase the economic and political blockade, and has gone so far as to threaten the Cuban people with military intervention. At the same time it is promoting political measures against the revolution in Grenada.

In Central America, the Reagan Administration is promoting all kinds of military blocks, political alliances, conspiracies and armed interventions against the Sandinista revolution. In El Salvador, it has given total support to the genocidal Military Christian Democrat Junta through economic, military and political assistance and diplomatic cover. In Guatemala it is now promoting aid for the bloody Lucas Garcia regime, providing it with weapons, military transport, spare parts and munitions, while at the same time, it is pro-

moting the direct intervention of Israel, Argentina, Chile, Taiwan, and the mercenary forces recruited from the most reactionary elements around the world.

Honduras is being developed into a stronghold, and the Reagan Administration is trying to use the most reactionary sectors as a counter-revolutionary police force in Central America, and a spearhead against the revolutionary processes in the area. But these attempts are rejected by the Honduran people and are met with a patriotic stand by important sectors of the armed forces.

Costa Rica is caught in an anguished economic situation that is mainly due to the IMF's imposed monetary policies, forming parts of Reagan's general stance towards non-aligned democratic governments. This imperialist maneuver has led to Costa Rica's economic bankruptcy. The democratic liberties that have existed in this country have begun to erode.

Despite the death of General Omar Torrijos, its main anti-imperialist leader, Panama continues its tenacious struggle for sovereignty over the Canal Zone which is still in U.S. hands. Belize won its independence in 1981, despite threats by the military hierarchy and the extreme right wing in Guatemala. We wholeheartedly welcome its independent status, which will be subject to U.S. imperialist pressures and blackmail, trying to force the Belizean government to give up its non-aligned status.

In its plans to contain revolution in the area, the Reagan administration is trying to reconstruct the Iron Triangle, promoting an alliance among the armies of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras; it has formed a new, aggressive bloc including the governments of Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador, thus cheapening the word "democracy". This is yet another contradictory effort to attack the Sandinista revolution and the struggling Central American peoples.

The Unity of All The Guatemalan People In The Revolutionary Struggle

Faced with our people's acute situation and the risks of imperialist intervention in Central America and the Caribbean, the Guatemalan Revolutionary Guerrilla Organizations proclaim that our people's path to achieving definitive national and social emancipation is the Popular Revolutionary War. This is the only road which will enable us to take power and to set up a Revolutionary, Patriotic, Popular and Democratic Government that will put an end, once and for all, to the exploitation, oppression, discrimination, repression and dependence.

To this end, the Revolutionary Organizations call for the constitution of a great National Patriotic Unity Front, which will be the expression of the broadest alliance of all our people. Under the leadership of the Revolutionary Vanguard, following the strategy of Popular Revolutionary War, it will overthrow the power of the rich, both national and foreign, who repress, exploit, oppress and discriminate against us, and set up a Revolutionary, Patriotic, Popular and Democratic Government.

The political military Revolutionary Organizations which today proclaim this historic unity of the Guatemalan Revolution, issue a fraternal call to the sector of the Guatemalan Labor Party that has not yet incorporated the practice of Popular Revolutionary War to begin discussions towards joining the Revolutionary Unity on the following basis: bringing its political line into accordance with, recognizing and beginning to practice, the strategy of

Popular Revolutionary War and the programmatic objectives set forth in this document by the National Revolutionary Unity.

Principal Points of the Program for the Revolutionary, Patriotic, Popular and Democratic Government

The Revolutionary, Patriotic, Popular and Democratic Government that we will construct in Guatemala commits itself to the Guatemalan people and to the international community to fulfill the following five fundamental programmatic points:

I. The Revolution will eliminate once and for all the repression against our people and will guarantee to all citizens, the supreme rights of life and peace.

Life and peace are supreme human rights. The Revolution will end our people's repression and the political regime that has given itself the right to assassinate its opposition to remain in power. Since 1954, the government of the rich exploiters and repressors has killed thousands of Guatemalans for political reasons. Their blood represents for the Revolution, a commitment to freedom, peace and respect for life.

II. The Revolution will set down founda-
tions for resolving the basic needs of
the great majority of our people by e-
liminating the political domination of
the repressive rich, both national and
foreign, who rule Guatemala.

The Revolution will put an end to this do-
mination and guarantee that those who pro-
duce with their own creative effort will
benefit from the product of their labor.
The properties of the very rich will be
taken over by the Revolutionary government
which will see to it that this wealth is
used to resolve the needs of the working
people. The Revolution will guarantee a
true agrarian reform, giving land to those
who work in an individual, collective or
co-operative fashion. The Revolution will
guarantee small and medium sized agricul-
tural properties, and will distribute to
those who work the land with their own
hands, those properties now held by the
military hierarchy and the corrupt, greedy
and repressive functionaries and business-
men. The Revolution will guarantee small
and medium sized commerce and stimulate
the creation and development of a national
industry which Guatemala needs to be able
to develop. The Revolution will guarantee
an effective price control to benefit the
great majority and will, at the same time,
allow reasonable profits as long as they
do not hurt the people. The Revolution
will wrest power from the very rich, both
national and foreign, and thus create jobs
and guarantee decent salaries for all wor-
kers in the countryside and the city.
Once the people have power, we will have a
base to begin to resolve the great prob-
lems of health, housing and illiteracy
which afflict the vast majority of the
population.

III. The Revolution will guarantee equali-
ty between Indians and Ladinos, and
will end cultural oppression and dis-
crimination.

The domination by the rich is the root
cause of the cultural oppression and dis-
crimination which the Indian population
suffers in Guatemala. The first step to-
wards eliminating cultural oppression and
discrimination is to enable Indians, who
are an integral part of the Guatemalan
people, to participate in political power.
The participation of the Indian population
in political power, together with the La-
dino population, will allow us to meet In-
dians' needs for land, work, salary,
health, housing, and general welfare.
Meeting these needs is the first condition

towards achieving equality between Indians
and Ladinos. The second condition toward
guaranteeing this equality is respect for
their culture and recognition of their
rights to maintain their own identity.
The development of a culture which gathers
and integrates our people's historic roots
is one of the great objectives of the Re-
volution. Indians and Ladinos in power
will freely decide Guatemala's future con-
tours.

IV. The Revolution will guarantee the cre-
ation of a New Society, in which all
patriotic, popular and democratic sec-
tors will be represented in the gov-
ernment.

The Revolution will respect the people's
rights to elect their local, municipal and
national representatives. All those citi-
zens who with their work, skills or capi-
tal, are willing and able to help Guate-
mala overcome its poverty, backwardness
and dependence will have a place in the
New Society. Patriotic businessmen who

are willing to contribute to the achieve-
ment of this great objective will have
full rights, without conditions, except
that they respect the interests of the
working people. The Revolution will guar-
antee freedom of expression and of reli-
gious belief, as a way of facilitating the
contribution of all citizens to the con-
struction of a New Society. The Revolu-
tion will be severe in its judgement of
the most repressive among the enemy, and
of the clique of high-ranking military of-
ficers and their accomplices who have
planned and directed the repression a-
gainst our people. The Revolution will be
flexible in its judgement of those who
have refused orders to repress our people.
The Revolution will eliminate forced con-
scription for military service, a practice
which discriminates against the Indians.
All patriotic officers and soldiers who
have not stained their hands with the
blood of our people will be able to parti-
cipate in the new Popular Revolutionary
Army which the Guatemalan people will
build to guarantee the security and de-
fense of the country.

In the New Society, women will have the
same rights as men, since they share the
same obligations as man and even greater
ones in their role, as mothers. Children
and the aged will enjoy the protection
they deserve for the contribution they
will make or have made to production of
social wealth.

The Revolution recognizes the Christian
population as one of the pillars of the
New Society, since they have placed their
beliefs and faith at the service of the
struggle for the freedom of all Guatema-
lans.

V. Based in the principle of self-determi-
nation the Revolution will guarantee a
policy of non-alignment and interna-
tional co-operation which poor coun-
tries need in order to develop in the
modern world.

In today's complex and interdependent
world, it is necessary to maintain a posi-
tion of non-alignment with the great pow-
ers and of international co-operation.
Poor countries need foreign investment and
this must be agreed upon on the basis of
respect for each country's national sover-
eignty, taking into account both the needs
of poor countries and reasonable returns
on foreign investments. Political stabil-
ity is in this respect indispensable, as
without it there can be no international
co-operation. International co-operation
is possible between nations which are dif-
ferent ideologically, and have different
forms of government as long as there is
respect for each country's right to self-
determination.

LET'S BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY UNITY OF ALL
THE PEOPLE OF GUATEMALA!

LET'S DEVELOP THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY
WAR!

LET'S OVERTHROW THE EXPLOITATIVE,
OPPRESSIVE, DISCRIMINATORY AND REPRESSIVE
REGIME!

LET'S TAKE POWER AND INSTITUTE A REVOLU-
TIONARY, PATRIOTIC, POPULAR AND DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNMENT!

"... OUR PEOPLE HAVE AN INDOMITABLE SPIRIT
AND WOULD RATHER BE DEAD THAN ENSLAVED..."

- Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity
(URNG), Guatemala, January, 1982.

GUATEMALANS TELL OF MURDER OF 300

Refugees in Mexico Say Army Killed Villagers in July — List of Dead Compiled

By ALAN RIDING
Special to The New York Times

COMITAN, Mexico, Oct. 5 — Guatemalan soldiers participating in an offensive against rebel forces entered the tiny Guatemalan Indian village of San Francisco on July 17 and killed over 300 men, women and children, according to survivors who have taken refuge in Mexico.

One survivor, 57-year-old Mateo Ramos Paiz, said he witnessed much of the killing and was saved when he was trapped under the corpses of some 10 men who had been killed by grenades.

"I apologized to the dead, took my boots off and fled after dark," he recalled in an emotional account.

Another villager said he escaped death when he and seven other peasants were ordered to bring two cows from nearby fields to be slaughtered to feed the soldiers.

"I was sure we were going to be killed," recalled Andrés Paiz García, "and I decided to hide." The seven others returned to the village and were murdered, as were his wife and nine children, he said.

A 'Scorched Earth' Strategy

In the refugee camps that now string Mexico's border with Guatemala, reports of such massacres are common. Most refugees say they fled here after killings by the army in their own or nearby communities. A majority seem to have had a relative, friend or acquaintance who died in the wave of violence that has swept the Guatemalan highlands in the last three months.

Among the latest refugees to arrive at the Rancho Texas camp were families from Xamoxu in the municipality of La Democracia. Standing beside the remaining members of his family, Pascual Méndez Sánchez recalled that his father, brother, brother-in-law and niece and seven other villagers were kidnapped and murdered by soldiers Aug. 17. After troops returned to Xamoxu Sept. 21 and killed 16 more people, he said, the entire village fled.

"All that was left was silence," he added.

Since a military coup brought Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt to power last March, the regime has sought to destroy support for leftist guerrillas among the country's Indian population. Communities in areas where rebels have been active have therefore become the target of a systematic "scorched earth" strategy.

In the refugee camps, the July 17 attack on San Francisco is known mainly to Indian peasants from nearby villages who also fled. But the reports of a massacre in the village are now attracting outside attention, not only because of the number of people involved but also because several witnesses escaped. At the prompting of Roman Catholic priests in Mexico who wished to celebrate a mass for the dead, the survivors have drawn up a list of the names of 302 victims, including in most cases their ages and relationships.

Troops Arrive in Morning

Mr. Paiz García, 45 years old, said he was in San Francisco when some 500 soldiers "and six colonels" arrived around 11 A.M. on Saturday, July 17. Shortly afterward, he recalled, a helicopter landed and some men were ordered to help unload boxes. The soldiers then called all the villagers together, putting women and children in the hamlet's chapel and a nearby house and gathering the men in a wooden building, known as the "juzgado," where an auxiliary policeman had his offices.

Mr. Paiz García was among those assigned to collect the cows and he escaped into the undergrowth surrounding the village. "I hid about a kilometer away," he said. "They began to kill the poor people at around 3 P.M. That evening I came to Mexico."

Mateo Ramos Paiz was among the men crowded inside the juzgado.

"The war started first with the women in the house," he said in an interview. "With shooting, with pure lead, they killed the poor women. Afterward they burned the house. They then turned on the chapel. No firing, just machetes and knives. We heard the noise of crying women and children and they said our turn was next."

Mr. Ramos, who was interviewed in the Mexican village where he is hiding for fear of reprisals, said he could see women and children being led from the chapel to nearby houses.

"We saw one little boy of about 7 crying as a soldier pulled him along by the wrist and then ripped open his stomach with a knife," Mr. Ramos said. "Then the women were over and the men began."

He said the men were taken out of the juzgado in groups of eight and shot. "We were asking, 'What have we done wrong? Did we steal anything?' but the groups kept being called out," he said.

There were only about 20 men left, he said, when, at about 5 P.M., four men escaped. "I didn't want to leave, to save myself," he said. "My family was all dead. I wanted to die. There were three old men with us. They grabbed them by the chins and cut their throats with machetes. But the machetes were blunt and they cried out."

Mr. Ramos said he was pushed into a corner of the juzgado by the other men, who were panicking.

"I knelt down, then suddenly I felt how they threw bombs — one, two, three, four, five, the sixth didn't explode," he said. "I felt a stream of blood. Why doesn't it hit me, I asked. I was under about 10 bodies. Then the soldiers began shooting again. I heard one man say, 'Give me another, you bastard, because I'm still alive.' I lay still, my face covered in blood, and they lifted me up and said, 'This one is done,' and threw me on a pile of bodies."

He said that in the evening, at about 8 P.M., when the soldiers were listening to music on stolen tape recorders, he escaped through the window of the "juzgado" and, nine hours later, reached Mexico. There he met up with Mateo Pérez Ramos, one of the four men who had fled the juzgado earlier and the only one of them who had escaped being shot. Mr. Pérez's account of events up to the moment he left coincided with that of Mr. Ramos.

Facsimil

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