

## GUATEMALA

# Refugees Evaluate New Government And Costs Of Recent Repression

*Domingo Hernandez Ixcoy, a Maya-Quiche Indian who now lives in Mexico, was one of the founders of the Peasant Unity Movement in Guatemala. During a visit to the San Francisco Bay Area in June he made the following comments in a meeting with SAIIC:*

When we refugees think about the possibility of returning to Guatemala in the future, we are aware that we may be used by the new civilian government of Vincicio Cererzo. We think that the government is looking for a way to bring the refugees back, especially those living in the border areas of Mexico. We've drawn up some points to be considered.

First, we can't go back as long as our villages are militarized. We fled the military government and we're not going back simply because there is a civilian government.

Second, the civilian patrols should not be continued. If the refugees living outside the country are to return, it must be to have freedom and not to be forced into civilian patrols.

Third, upon returning to the country the people should not be subject to manipulation by religious sects. In recent years religious sects from the United States have played a central role in dividing our people by supporting the counterinsurgency program of the Guatemalan army. We want to be left alone. We want autonomy and to continue developing as a people independently. We don't want programs from the United States financing the division and destabilization of our unity.

Fourth, we want our own organizations—peasant cooperatives, peasant leagues, craft and artisan groups—to be allowed in our country so we can really help ourselves as communities. If we return, we are against the idea of being reorganized as “model” or “developing” communities, called “strategic” villages.

It's important to note that the repression has hurt us profoundly. In vast parts of the country a large number of mass political organizations existed before. We know that the counterinsurgency program killed 30,000 people in four years. Now there are more than 200,000 orphans in the country and almost 200 villages have been destroyed. In Guatemala great setbacks were suffered by the democratic, popular, and revolutionary movements in the country. But the counterinsurgency has not been able to completely set back the aspirations of the people. We will continue establishing a more just society, changing Guatemalan society, acquiring independence and self-determination for our country, which our people have come to under-



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stand is the only way to resolve our social and economic problems.

Significant achievements in Guatemala were made through the organization which I represent and of which I was a founding member, the Peasant Unity Movement in Guatemala. We organized a large number of Indian farmers and managed to bring attention to significant events in Guatemala, such as the heroic takeover of the Spanish embassy, the southern coast uprising of 76,000 workers, and the insurrection of Indian people in the central highlands.

We succeeded in erasing an image of ourselves as inferior imposed on us since colonial times. It was said that we didn't have ability, that we didn't have political expertise, and that we didn't form a part of the political spectrum. Now the Guatemalan Indians, in addition to knowing our abilities, are immersed in a revolutionary political process which is seeking social change in our country. Another important step is that we came to know the enemy better, principally the army, which protects the interests of rich people in our country.

There has been self-evaluation since the time of the repression. Some people don't accept the fact that we've been set back considerably. For some the belief that the righteous spirit of the Guatemalan people will bring about social changes in our country is the departure point. Another position, one that I subscribe to, is the belief in the necessity of the formation of leaders who really grasp the global nature of the struggle, who will know not only political concepts but also military ones with which to push the struggle of our people forward in the future, who will understand the different forms of struggle which are important to develop in our country. It is something that we must deal with, that we have suffered a defeat, but that we haven't been totally exterminated.

*Domingo also spoke of the role of religion in resistance.*

We mix Christian and our traditional beliefs quite a bit. We participate in the Catholic church, but we also maintain our rituals as Indian people. We ask forgiveness to the mountains. We burn copal for the mountains and also for the moon. Maya-Quiches consider the moon to be our grandmother, the sun our father, and the earth our mother. We have ceremonies every year to thank them for the life they give us. We also believe that corn gives us life. We respect animals and plants, as they are part of the universe. Our parents taught us to live in harmony with nature. We look at the stars to know when to go to sleep. They guide the people. We rise at 4:00 a.m. and the first thing we do is look for the stars, to see where they are.

I believe in all this, and I will continue to. I am also teaching it to my daughters. It is part of us, of our identity, our Indian culture. The Guatemalan army knows all this. They know our rituals and are trying to destroy our culture. They are burning our sacred mountains.

**EL EJERCITO DE GUATEMALA**  
INVITA A LA  
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USPANTAN 10-11-12 DE AGOSTO 1979

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