

TRUTH AND FORGETTING IN GUATEMALA:  
an examination of *Memoria del Silencio* and *Nunca Más*

A Thesis Submitted to the College of  
Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Masters of Arts  
in the Department of History  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

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## Introduction

In August of 1790, a stone carving of a skull and claw-like hands, framed by streams of blood, was found in Mexico City. Experts identified the image as the Coatlicue, the mother of the Aztec pantheon, and kept the stone from the public for scientific investigation. Word, however, got out about the stone's discovery and many of the area's indigenous peoples made pilgrimages to the university, where the stone was being kept. Religious authorities worried about the spiritual consequences the discovery might have on their congregations and demanded that it be reburied. In her discussion of this incident, Adina Cimé argues that the "unilateral decision [to rebury the Coatlicue] clearly attained the quality of dialogue: one group talked, acted and established dominance; the other reacted, resisted, and remained resolute in its apparent silence." Cimé further states that "[w]hile the dominant ideology and power groups controlled the speaking social environment, the dominated groups maintained their memory in silence."<sup>1</sup> Cimé's interpretation of the discovery and reburial of the Coatlicue stone, pointing to the relationship between power and memory, and popular resistance to the memory of the powerful, can easily be applied to Guatemala, as well as to relationships of power around the world. In Guatemala, the military and its allies dominated the country politically and economically and attempted, throughout the country's decades-long war, to dominate memory and history by forcing Guatemalans, and especially indigenous Guatemalans, to remember and understand the war in the military's framework.

In the decades that followed the 1954 CIA-backed overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, the second president to govern Guatemala during the so-called "ten years of spring," the military came to control all aspects of life in Guatemala. From that point until the mid-1980s when the army decided to allow a civilian to take office, the military accumulated power and influence and maintained a vise-like hold on the government and other seats of power. Though the military was able to maintain a significant level of control during its decades in power, that dominance was rarely, if ever, unchallenged. Guerrilla groups, which first sprang up in the 1960s, harassed the military and its proxies into the 1990s when the government finally agreed to a negotiated peace. Neither side had been able to defeat the other decisively and, after years of discussion, the two parties laid down their arms.

The war, though it finally ended in 1996 with the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement commonly referred to as the Oslo Accords, was at its height over a decade earlier. In the 1980s, the Generals Lucas García and Ríos Montt resorted to scorched earth campaigns and genocidal warfare, constructed model villages in the highlands, and organized Civil Self-defense Patrols in their attempt to defeat the insurgency once and for all. Though they failed to achieve this goal, they did manage to attain an unprecedented level of militarization in the countryside. Military institutions became entrenched to such an extent that they were able, to a large degree, to impose their own interpretation of both the insurgency and Guatemalan history on the population in what Judith Zur labels an “Orwellian falsification of memory, a falsification of reality.”<sup>2</sup> However, this falsification was unable to penetrate beyond outwardly expressed, public memories; as with the Coatlicue stone, the dominated group--the indigenous population--maintained its memory in silence, at least until the situation changed sufficiently to allow those silenced, private memories to be heard and made public.

By the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the opening of space to remember differently than the army dictated accelerated and culminated, at the governmental level, in the creation of the Commission for the Clarification of History, the CEH. As a result of both international and domestic pressure, two and a half years before the signing of the final peace accord in December 1996, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, or URNG, and government signed the Agreement on the Establishment of the Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence that Have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer. (See appendix A) This agreement recognized that Guatemalan history had recently been “marked by grave acts of violence, disregard for the fundamental rights of the individual and suffering of the population” and that, to strengthen democracy and to prevent these events being repeated in the future, Guatemalans were entitled to know the “whole truth” of the conflict. To this end the CEH, would be established to:

- I. To clarify with all objectivity, equity and impartiality the human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer, connected with the armed conflict.
- II. To prepare a report that will contain the findings of the investigations carried out and provide objective information regarding events during this period covering all factors, internal as well as external.
- III. Formulate specific recommendations to encourage peace and national harmony in Guatemala. The Commission shall recommend, in particular, measures

to preserve the memory of the victims, to foster a culture of mutual respect and observance of human rights and to strengthen the democratic process.

The CEH was to be a purely investigatory and analytical body; it would not “name names,” nor would its work have “any judicial aim or effect.” The Commission was to work for six months, with the possibility of a six month extension. In that period, the CEH would investigate the 36 years of war, receiving “particulars and information” from both the signatories and from those who felt that they had been affected by the war.<sup>3</sup> The CEH would “place on record Guatemala’s recent, bloody past” in the hope that the truth about the past would help lead to national reconciliation, democratization, and “a culture of harmony and mutual respect.”<sup>4</sup>

Few were satisfied with the agreement to establish the CEH. The army, of course, had opposed the creation of any sort of historical commission, preferring to let other, non-military versions of the past be forgotten. However, once they had come to terms with the fact that some sort of accounting of past human rights violations had to be made, they no doubt were pleased that the CEH’s mandate was so weak, especially regarding the naming of names, the inability of the Commission to subpoena those implicated in the atrocities, and the fact that the commission’s findings would not have any legal consequences.<sup>5</sup> Nor did the URNG prioritize an investigation of the past for, as Christian Tomuschat, the head of the CEH, points out, “[t]he work of a truth commission never lies in the interest of the main actors involved, who almost inevitably have dirty hands and cannot hope to reap any direct benefit from its revelations.”<sup>6</sup> In reference to the CEH, guerrilla commander Rodrigo Asturias said that “we’re not the biggest promoters of this.” He recognized that “the victims have an inalienable right to justice” and that

the most important thing to all of us is that this never happen again. But the way to guarantee that is to build democratic institutions. If we don’t do that, then finding out the truth about what happened in the past is only marginally important.<sup>7</sup>

For their part, the Assembly of Civil Society, the Church, human rights groups, and non-Guatemalan observers who had been pushing for the formation of some sort of commission to look into past violence were disappointed with the CEH’s mandate. These groups considered the clause denying the Commission the right to “attribute responsibility to any individual” and stating that the Commission’s findings would not have any judicial consequences to be grossly inadequate, and even a betrayal. The CEH’s weaknesses were even more devastating to those

wishing for a binding and detailed accounting of the past when seen in combination with the passage of the 1996 Law of National Reconciliation, a broad amnesty law that covered all political crimes except torture, genocide, and forced disappearance.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the CEH's mandated weaknesses, it cannot be denied that its creation, and indeed the peace process as a whole, opened up space to remember the war, and for other groups, individuals, and communities to take the initiative and engage in their own history projects and memory work. At the national level, the Catholic Church is perhaps the most significant of those who took advantage of these openings to remember and talk about the war. The Church's Recuperation of Historical Memory Project, REMHI, grew partly out of the perceived need to fill in some of the holes in the CEH's mandate, especially those about identifying the perpetrators,<sup>9</sup> and partly out of the recognition that the population, those who had suffered the most during the decades of violence, had a very real need to speak about their experiences and to remember after years of official denial and silence.<sup>10</sup> The Church, thus, sought to return history to the population, to "giv[e] people back their memory."

The published Reports, which include both the primary testimonies of the victims as well as the CEH and REMHI Project staff's analysis and interpretation of these testimonies, offer an explanation of both the historical and more immediate causes of the war and provide a narrative of Guatemala's history since the nineteenth century, focusing on the decades following the 1944 Revolution and subsequent "ten years of spring." In addition to explaining the important events and characters of the war, the Reports give a detailed account of the "mechanisms of horror"--the army, special forces, death squads, patrols, police, and other groups the military used to control and terrorize the population and the long list of human rights violations these units committed. In this respect, the Reports provide an extensive examination of the particulars of the rapes, tortures, disappearances, massacres, and executions committed by both sides throughout the war and attempt to explain, as much as possible, the logic behind these atrocities. The investigation of the atrocities forms the bulk of both Reports and the information found therein represents the Reports' most substantial and significant findings. In addition to describing the violations in more descriptive terms, both of the Reports include long lists of the names, when these could be determined, of the victims whose deaths were reported in the testimonies (there were approximately 200,000 dead and disappeared in total though the Reports only received information about a portion of that number). When the names could not be verified, they provide

as much information about the dead as possible. The Reports also list the names of the over 600 villages and hamlets massacred and razed by the army, provide a statistical analysis of who, in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity, was killed, when they were killed, how they were killed, where they were killed, and who killed them, and give more detailed descriptions of specific well-known cases. The two Reports' several thousand pages of information, in short, provide a thorough examination of Guatemala's decades long war and, as well, offer recommendations for the future that are meant to contribute to the construction of a different nation.

The Reports are impressive in both length and scope. They address over three decades of history in unimaginable depth, recounting events that occurred during the war at the international, national, and local levels. You come away with a sense of the war's "top down" history of presidents and generals as well as the "bottom up" history of otherwise obscure and ignored villages where Guatemala City was a world away and the war was *the* determining factor in the lives and experiences of millions of Guatemalans. Through the testimonies, you come to understand, to a certain extent, what it was like to live in any of the villages located in the (in)famous Ixil Triangle, what it was like to watch and participate in the most heinous human rights violations, what it was like to live in silence with loss, guilt, and pain weighing on your soul for years, often with no end in sight. You also get a sense of the enormous task ahead of the nation if it is truly to change for the better.

The CEH's *Memoria del Silencio* and the Church's *Nunca Más*, published in February 1999 and April 1998 respectively, were able to challenge and even negate the army's attack on memory and were, therefore, largely successful in their eponymous goals of clarifying history and recuperating historical memory. Multiple versions and interpretations of the war had existed before the Reports were published and the version to which an individual subscribed depended largely on the social group to which that individual belonged. Though categorizing Guatemalans as either victims or perpetrators is overly simplistic, misleading, and simply incorrect, it is a useful grouping from which to begin an exploration of the war, especially since the Reports use similar categories when they speak of the victims and "those responsible," or *los responsables*. Using these general groups, then, the victims and the perpetrators, because they were not part of the same social group, experienced, interpreted, understood, and remembered the war in different ways. The victims were largely indigenous and lived in the numerous rural towns and hamlets found throughout Guatemala's highlands. The perpetrators, on the other hand, were soldiers and



members of paramilitary organizations, and while many of them were indigenous, they had been forced to serve and their ties to the indigenous community had been brutally and intentionally severed. Often they no longer fit in or were welcomed back to the rural towns they had formerly called home. As for the “intellectual authors” of the war, those who planned and ordered the scorched earth campaign to be carried out, they were generally career officers and *ladinos* from larger, more urban centers who viewed the indigenous majority with disdain.

Maurice Halbwachs argues that an individual’s memory is determined by membership in a group and that they cannot remember outside the group’s frameworks of memory. Thus, it stands to reason that the victims and perpetrators will remember the war differently. In Guatemala, the military, which is largely synonymous with “the perpetrators,” would not stand for the existence of competing memories and sought to control, through terror, what the victims remembered and how they remembered it. The military, thus, attempted to impose their own particular memory of the war onto the indigenous population and succeeded, at least in the public sphere. Privately, however, people remembered and interpreted the war differently and, when finally given the opportunity to tell what they had seen and experienced and how they understood the war, the existence of competing and diverse memories became evident. The military had been less successful than they would have wished in dictating how people remembered the war. Instead of their one version of the violence, a plurality of memories existed that directly challenged the military’s version. The Reports belie the army’s claims to have, in razing villages and massacring their inhabitants, been attacking legitimate military targets, to have been acting to save Guatemala from the guerrillas. Rather, the Reports relate the experiences of the victims and survivors and expose the army’s strategies and motives for all to see. Drawing largely on Foucault’s musings on the topic of memory the Reports can thus be seen as a counter-memory, an insurrection of knowledges long repressed by the memory espoused by the dominant group. As shall be seen in the second chapter, the Reports, as a counter-memory, rehabilitate the memory of the thousands of Guatemalans who had to suffer in silence and serve to denounce and condemn the army, its officers, and tactics.

Beyond this certainly significant victory over the military’s once powerful hold on memory, however, the Reports are open to criticism, especially in regard to their respective agendas. The Reports seek to honor the memory of the victims, to return to them their dignity, to prevent a recurrence of war, and to help make Guatemala function as a newly reconstructed

society reconciled with itself and its past. While these goals would surely be considered laudable in most circumstances, in the case of the two Reports, they become in many ways contradictory because, by facilitating reconciliation and encouraging forgiveness, the Reports force the thousands of stories and experiences collected into frameworks not necessarily implied by the testimonies. In their analysis, the Reports thus, do not reflect the contents of the testimonies themselves which express anger, pain, grief, frustration, confusion, and hatred and not reconciliation and forgiveness. The testimonies, thus, are studied from within frameworks determined by the staff of the two commissions rather than those suggested by the victims and survivors who gave their testimony. The CEH and REMHI Project are, therefore, attempting to shape how people remember the war, especially how future Guatemalans will remember it, to help rebuild the nation and pave the way to a democratic and peaceful future.

The Reports, since they contain the memories of the victims and seek to honor those memories can be considered as monuments to the war. *Memoria del Silencio* and *Nunca Más* can also be considered as monuments because of the way in which they attempt to shape the memories contained in their pages. Many scholars, some of whose writings will be examined in the first chapter, have commented on the way monuments manipulate memory, the way monuments shape people's memories of certain events and force those people to remember in particular ways. Monuments, thus, often memorialize a nation's glorious past while passing over the more shameful episodes or they celebrate a nation's heroes while seeking to erase its villains from history. Monuments and the commemorative ceremonies that surround them are, thus, selective; they are designed and built to make people remember some things but not others, and to remember those things in particular ways. Some of those academics who study monuments and commemoration have taken this argument a step further. They suggest that monuments facilitate and even encourage forgetting because, by setting a particular interpretation or version of the past down in such a permanent form, there is no longer the need to actively remember that past. While the Reports do not openly promote forgetting the past as a whole, they do clearly seek to promote a forgetting of certain aspects of the past, especially of those emotions which will not lead to their aims of reconciliation and forgiveness. The Reports' monumental nature will be discussed in detail in the final chapter. As monuments, the Reports wish to force future generations of Guatemalans to remember the past differently, not as it was experienced by their parents and grandparents, but as those experiences were interpreted by the

CEH and REMHI Project. In this way the two Reports facilitate forgetting by shaping memory, by making people remember differently.

This thesis will explore these issues in greater depth. The first chapter lays the theoretical foundations for an analysis of the CEH and REMHI Reports and introduces the topics of memory and counter-memory, monuments and commemoration, and historical or truth commissions. The chapter opens with a discussion of some of the most relevant literature that addresses the issue of memory. The discussion of memory is followed by a brief examination of the academic discourse surrounding monuments, commemorative ceremonies, and investigatory commissions. The second chapter examines the issues of memory and counter-memory as they relate to Guatemala and the two Reports. The first section of the chapter examines the various ways the military attempted to control what Guatemalans knew, understood, and remembered about the war. The second section contrasts this with what the Reports reveal about the war, unsilencing the victims and survivors and allowing them to remember “what really happened.” The Reports are shown to be a counter-memory that denies the validity of the military’s version. In the third chapter, the Reports’ flaws are highlighted and examined; the Reports are shown to be structured in particular ways to promote reconciliation and forgiveness, sentiments that are almost entirely absent from the testimonies themselves. *Memoria del Silencio* and *Nunca Más* can, therefore, be considered as monuments to the war that petrify the past and allow Guatemalans to forget or ignore the past more easily. Nevertheless, the Reports cannot be viewed as a complete failure. Their very existence must be seen as a victory, a victory that has the potential to turn Guatemala upside-down.

## Counter-memory, Commemoration, and Commissions

Before turning to look at the CEH and REMHI reports themselves, a brief exploration of memory and the way it is memorialized, as well as the literature surrounding truth and similar commissions, is in order. The fortunes of memory have risen and fallen over the centuries. By the time of the Renaissance and Reformation, many influential thinkers, such as René Descartes and Francis Bacon, had become skeptical about its value. Capitalism, rationalism, and the theory of progress also did their part to undermine the value of memory, though there were, at the same time, those that advocated the relevance of memory, especially as a stabilizing force in an otherwise chaotic and amoral world.<sup>1</sup> The idea that memory could help create a degree of equilibrium and continuity in a rapidly changing world continued into the nineteenth century as Romantics, folklore societies, and ethnographers, among others, strove to preserve a knowledge of the past, claiming that without a connection or understanding of the past, the nations of the Earth would suffer from an ignorance of their own identity, as well as of their respective place in the larger scheme of history.<sup>2</sup> Modernists, on the other hand, wished to empty the world of all that they considered to be old or outdated, and, therefore, of no use to the present, and to bring in those things they saw as new and useful, those inventions and ideas that contributed not to nostalgia as did the “dead things of the past,” but to production and growth.<sup>3</sup>

Historicists writing around the turn of the twentieth century regarded memory in a straightforward manner. They identified collective memory as the subject matter of historical understanding and, therefore, viewed the relationship between memory and history as simple and fluid.<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud regarded memories, preserved in the unconscious and revealed in dreams, in a similar manner. He concluded that nothing that we have known in the past could ever be entirely forgotten and that, in remembering, we are resurrecting the past.<sup>5</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, one of the most influential authors who wrote about memory and its relationship to both tradition and history, disagreed with Freud’s interpretation of memory and, thus, problematized memory. He argued that the past could not simply be resurrected by remembering because, in the process of remembering the past it was forever being revised. Halbwachs identified two “moments of memory” that existed in a reciprocal relationship with each other: habits of mind (or repetition) and recollection. He further defined these two facets of memory as images that are

repeated intuitively and images that are reconstructed consciously, respectively. He suggested that if we had recourse to a specific memory often enough, its particular imagery would erode. It would become merely an ideal or a stereotype and would thereby be transformed into a habit of mind and find a place in the collective imagination or collective memory. Collective memory, therefore, is not an accurate record of the past; rather, it distorts the past by reducing the infinite number of historical events and personalities available for remembrance to a handful of selected ideals that stand out from the rest, which are thereafter forgotten.<sup>6</sup> Halbwachs argued, furthermore, that the past was not preserved and remembered in a straightforward way but was reconstructed from the standpoint of the present, based on present needs and problems,<sup>7</sup> an interpretation of memory that has become widely accepted in the decades since Halbwachs' work was published.

Halbwachs went on to state that the individual or autobiographical memories that Freud analyzed--memories of events that we have personally experienced--were ephemeral and could not be retrieved or documented accurately. Halbwachs suggested that our memory of autobiographical events would fade as time passed and the event become more distant, unless the memory was strengthened from time to time by those who experienced the event with us. Autobiographical memory is, therefore, "rooted in other people."<sup>8</sup> Historical memory, though similar to autobiographical memory in that it, too, is based in the group, is opposed to autobiographical memory in that the former refers to the memory of those events that we have not experienced ourselves. Individuals do not remember these events directly but through festivals, communal celebrations, and other forms of commemorative ceremonies that indirectly stimulate memory, and without which the past would be forgotten.<sup>9</sup> Halbwachs argued, therefore, the past could only be reconstructed by examining its material traces, in the form of "commemorative leavings."<sup>10</sup>

Though Halbwachs died at Buchenwald in 1945, his work received much attention in the 1980s when the study of memory's relationship to history experienced a boom. In this decade, scholars writing in the field of memory developed a newfound appreciation for Halbwachs and, above all, for his insights on social or collective memory, some of which were mentioned above. Halbwachs wrote in the Durkheimian school of sociology and expanded on Durkheim's concept of "collective representations." Writing around the turn of the twentieth century, Durkheim had used this term to identify a set of beliefs and values that were held by the average members of a

society and which formed a “determinate system that has a life of its own.”<sup>11</sup> Halbwachs took this idea of collective representations and adapted it to his own views on the social context of memory. As suggested above, he argued that it was not possible for individuals to remember in any sort of coherent fashion outside the context of the social group to which he or she belonged. The past, therefore, is only remembered when it is located within the conceptual structures of a community.<sup>12</sup> Though Halbwachs recognized that individuals generally belong to a succession of different groups over the course of a lifetime and that each group has its own frameworks and collective memory that determine which memories are important to it, he argued that, despite an individual’s changing group membership, it is always from the standpoint of that individual’s present group that he or she remembers the past.<sup>13</sup>

Halbwachs, thus, defined collective memory as an “elaborate network of social mores, values, and ideals that marks out the dimensions of our imaginations according to the attitudes of the social groups to which we relate.”<sup>14</sup> He recognized that collective memories were not fixed or immutable but changed over time as they were revised and reshaped to suit present needs. He saw that the ability of a collective memory to survive depended on the continued existence and social power of the group that held that particular memory and attributed changes in a society’s “reigning conceptions and mentality” to the fading away of the group that had developed that specific mentality, and the first group’s replacement by a second group with different customs and opinions.<sup>15</sup> Halbwachs, therefore, denied that a society could forget its past; rather, he explained forgetting as the disappearance of the groups that prioritize certain events of the past and hold, via the group’s frameworks of memory, these events in their collective memory.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the group that is able to determine the dominant schemata, no matter how they define it or how they impose it on themselves or society, can exert a great deal of influence over how the rest of the population understands the past and the present, as well as the future.<sup>17</sup> The problem of memory for Halbwachs was, therefore, also one of social power.

Halbwachs also touched on the question of uniformity of memory, both within a group and within society. Regarding the former, Halbwachs argued that in smaller groups especially, if an individual’s perspective of a past event, and especially of an important event, becomes too different from the way the rest of the group remembers that event, if his memory of that event becomes too “distorted,” “he need only place himself in the viewpoint of others to rectify” his own memory.<sup>18</sup> Speaking of societies themselves and not the groups of which they are

composed, Halbwachs pointed out that a certain degree of accord and understanding about the past was necessary for any particular society to continue to exist. As a result, those things which might divide the various individuals and groups that are members of that society are eliminated from the collective memory.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, in addition to recognizing the connections between memory and power, Halbwachs also acknowledged the manner in which collective memory could act as an agent of uniformity and conformity.

Halbwachs further expanded on this idea of collective memory to include the related concepts of tradition and commemoration, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section. He identified tradition as the process by which individual recollections are incorporated into the collective memory. Tradition, he continued, also had a role in modifying the social frameworks through which social groups remember. These modifications occur so slowly and are so subtle that those immersed in that tradition do not notice that it is changing. They are, as a result, reluctant to acknowledge or accept these alterations and often resort to acts of commemoration in order to shore up the group's memories and traditions.<sup>20</sup> Patrick Hutton, in his explanation of Halbwachs' idea, describes this process in the following manner:

Commemoration is a calculated strategy for stabilizing collective memories that are otherwise protean and provisional. ... In its monuments and shrines, it locates memorable places on the landscape of memory. It anchors the past in the present, creating the illusion that time can be made to stand still.<sup>21</sup>

For Halbwachs, commemoration, though it creates the illusion that collective memory is stable and unchanging, does not preserve a group's memory intact. Rather, it accentuates the natural tendency of collective memory to select a limited number of events, people, or places the dominant social group deems worthy of recollection, leaving all that falls outside that limited number to be forgotten. The specifics and the variety of experiences are eroded and consumed by the stereotypical.<sup>22</sup> Halbwachs thus identified memory as attempting to affirm the continuity between the past and the present and as attempting to substantiate the similarities between the two.<sup>23</sup> History, on the other hand, established the differences between the past and the present and it is only through the "commemorative leavings" and images of the past that historians can know of the past, and can identify which group was in power at a particular time. According to Halbwachs, therefore, the historian's role is to correct memory's inaccuracies.<sup>24</sup>

Michel Foucault also wrote about history and memory and was, as well, interested in the rhetoric of "imaginary discourse," that is, discourse as it relates to images. He argued that there

was a fundamental difference between ideas and images, between the history of ideas and the history of discourse, and between memory and counter-memory. Memory, he asserted, sought to locate continuity between the past and the present and, as a result, imposed a hidden agenda on the past. Counter-memory, on the other hand, uncovered the discontinuities of history, the breaks between the past and the present that memory hoped to hide.<sup>25</sup>

Foucault's concept of counter-memory is linked to his idea of genealogy. Foucault defined genealogy as "the union of erudite knowledge and local memories" and claimed that the genealogical project "entertains the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them." Genealogies, then, are concerned with the "insurrection of knowledges" and the role of the genealogist is to preserve those knowledges which have been forgotten, buried, disguised, or rejected, knowledges which he termed "subjugated knowledges."<sup>26</sup> The genealogist's work "disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent within itself."<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the genealogist's task, according to Michael Mahon, is to "dredge up forgotten documents, minor statements, apparently insignificant details in order to recreate the forgotten historical and practical conditions of our present existence,"<sup>28</sup> thereby producing a counter-memory which makes memory function as it is supposed to function: "to recover what has been forgotten, to restore what has been lost, to perpetuate the presence or being of words and things."<sup>29</sup>

Foucault's notion of a counter-memory is similar to his idea of "effective history" which he describes as history that introduces discontinuity, uproots traditional foundations, and "deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature." Effective history shuns "suprahistorical history" and turns history toward genealogical ends.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the effective historian recognizes and acknowledges the fact that knowledge is merely perspective,<sup>31</sup> linked to power. In his writings, Foucault frequently mused about the nature of power and wondered if anyone would obey power if it were only repressive, if it only dictated what could *not* be said or done. Answering his own query in the negative, Foucault asserted that power is productive, that it produces discourse, induces pleasure, and forms knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Foucault viewed knowledge and power as being "integrated" and suggested that it was pointless to think of one without the other because "it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it



is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.” Power, therefore, creates knowledge and knowledge “constantly induces effects of power.”<sup>33</sup> Foucault also made similar connections between truth and power. We are, Foucault stated, “subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.”<sup>34</sup> Expanding on this, Foucault argued that each society has its own “regime of truth,” which he defined as the “types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true.” He continued by stating that truth was “the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true.” Power, therefore, produces and sustains truth and truth induces and extends power and its effects.<sup>35</sup>

Continuing his discussion about power, Foucault argued that it must be examined at the extremities of society where it is in direct contact with its object; in addition, it must be studied using an ascending or “bottom up,” and not a “top down” approach.<sup>36</sup> As well, in order to make power intelligible, it must be understood in terms of the techniques and methods by and through which it is applied.<sup>37</sup> These techniques allow for the exercise of power and the production of knowledges and it is against these techniques that resistance must be directed if it is to be most effective.<sup>38</sup> Speaking briefly about resistance, Foucault noted that, paradoxically, as more sites of resistance are produced, the more widespread and functional power becomes and the more it attempts to regulate and standardize.<sup>39</sup> When, however, “the tyranny of globalising discourses” is eliminated, a genealogist may begin to conduct his or her work, unearthing “subjugated knowledges” which have been either “buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation” or have been “disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated.”<sup>40</sup> Genealogy, thus, belies the belief that history is homogeneous and continuous, exposes history’s inconsistencies and, like effective history, “introduces discontinuity into our very being.”<sup>41</sup>

Foucault, therefore, recognized the value of subjugated knowledges and counter-memory which are those memories that resist the “official version” of history, a version which is revised depending on, as Halbwachs also noted, the power of a particular group to impose its own version of the past onto the society of which it is a part. Many other scholars have interpreted memory in a similar way. In his discussion, of post-colonial commemoration in Zimbabwe, Richard Werbner identifies a phenomenon he terms anti-memory. Werbner imagines anti-memory to be buried or repressed memory; “it is the accomplishment of memory, as if it were

forgotten, almost beyond recovery, and yet somehow recovered.”<sup>42</sup> In the case of Zimbabwe, as in Guatemala, the memory that the state attempted to bury is one of terror which the state, in what it considered to be the best interests of the nation during civil war, inflicted on one portion of the country.<sup>43</sup> People, of course, do not actually forget state terror--how could they? Rather, they have not been allowed to remember, a situation which, when recognized, can be dangerous for the state’s continued dominance since people may seek to “unbury the memory and reject their past submission.”<sup>44</sup> When this buried or anti-memory of state-sponsored terror is remembered, it represents a victory, an opening of space in the public sphere for anti-memory to be “commemorated, documented, narrated and even physically felt.” Even before such a public space can be created, however, buried memory is often remembered and commemorated in what Werbner calls popular counter-memorialism, which is ever more common, especially in the rural parts of Zimbabwe, and stands in direct opposition to elite memorialism.<sup>45</sup>

Yael Zerubavel also highlights the opposition between popular or marginalized memory and that of the elite in her discussion of the making of Israeli national tradition. Zerubavel argues that most members of society know about the past through commemorative ceremonies, each of which, when performed, produces a commemorative narrative. The commemorative narrative is merely “a story about a particular past that accounts for this ritualized remembrance and provides a moral message for the group members.”<sup>46</sup> When all of these stories are collected, they form a master commemorative narrative that structures collective memory. The master commemorative narrative dictates which events, people, or periods of the past are most important and will be commemorated and which will be deemed insignificant and, because they are not commemorated, will be collectively forgotten.<sup>47</sup> These forgotten pasts are not necessarily gone forever and may be recovered, a process which may, and usually does, entail the forgetting of other pasts, now considered unimportant or troublesome.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the above tension between different pasts, there exist, as well, different interpretations of the same past which occasionally come into direct conflict. In Zerubavel’s estimation, when this occurs, when the equilibrium between the dominant and alternative readings of the past breaks down, then the society’s collective memory experiences a dramatic shift, as seen in, for example, the era of the French Revolution when the alternative commemorative narrative was widely accepted and became, for many, France’s new collective memory. If, however, the master commemorative narrative, the dominant interpretation of the past embraced

by the elite, refuses to accept the alternative commemorative narrative, the counter-memory espoused by the marginalized sectors of society, then the past becomes contested as the two groups attempt to make their narrative the accepted version of the past.<sup>49</sup>

For Werbner and Zerubavel, as for Halbwachs, a group's memory of the past is thus intimately connected to commemorative ritual. Pierre Nora, writing about the history of collective memory in France as seen through its symbols, also addressed this issue, examining and analyzing *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, places where memories converge, are condensed, and conflict, places where the relationship between the past, present, and future is defined.<sup>50</sup> *Lieux de mémoire* exist, Nora argued, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, "real environments of memory." If the latter still existed, if we were able to live *within* memory, then there would be no need to create *lieux de mémoire* in order to remember.<sup>51</sup> Nora suggested that we feel the need to commemorate events, to amass archives, to celebrate anniversaries, to create *lieux de mémoire* because these things are no longer done naturally. We create "bastions of memory" because we feel that memory is in danger of disappearing; it is threatened by history and "if history did not besiege memory, deforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it, there would be no *lieux de mémoire*."<sup>52</sup> Nora, whose thinking will be examined in greater detail in the next section, therefore, viewed history and memory as existing on opposite ends of the spectrum and it is precisely because history's goal is to "suppress and destroy" "spontaneous memory" that we create *lieux* to shore up that imperiled memory.<sup>53</sup>

In reference to the relationship between history and memory, Nora also argued that history is merely the official memory a society decides to recognize and that, in Patrick Hutton's words, "the historian's task in our postmodern age...is to identify and classify the imaginary schemes in which the nation's past has been conceived according to an assortment of places of memory." The historian, furthermore, is only free to look for counter-memories once history has been separated from the "memory of the particular political tradition in which it has been studied."<sup>54</sup> Thus, *lieux de mémoire*, for Nora as for Halbwachs, Foucault, and many others, are created and are only relevant in so far as they assign a meaning to the past that reflects the dominant concerns and discourses of the time.<sup>55</sup>

Commemoration and monument-building are, therefore, inherently political acts, a fact which Jay Winter, writing about monuments erected during and immediately after World War I,

recognizes. Winter argues that, from the outset of the war, commemorative acts were imbued with a political message. Speaking of Britain in particular, Winter suggests that memorializing the war served to affirm community and to exclude those ideas or individuals that would threaten it.<sup>56</sup> Commemoration tied the living and the dead together and also, through the act of mourning and remembering together, tied the living to the living; commemorative ceremonies created bonds between people and between communities and, by extension, between those individuals and communities and the nation.<sup>57</sup> Yet Winter points out that monuments have no fixed meaning--they mean different things to different people at different times. Whereas the generation that lived through and erected monuments to remember World War I saw them as sites of mourning, places that represented an identifiable resting place for the dead, subsequent generations viewed them as “artefacts of a vanished age, remnants of the unlucky generation that had to endure the carnage of the Great War.”<sup>58</sup>

Returning to Pierre Nora’s musings on the topic, he, like Winter, commented on the monument’s malleability of meaning. He argued that *lieux de mémoire* are, at their most basic level, created to “stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial” in order to “capture a maximum of meanings in the fewest of signs.” They are, therefore, only created because of their ability to change--“an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications.”<sup>59</sup> Peter Carrier echoes and expands on this sentiment when he suggests that the meaning of any given commemoration is based on both the original event being remembered and the environment in which the commemoration takes place.<sup>60</sup> Carrier, thus, is not alone in asserting that

[t]he evolution of the event as represented in commemorations over the long term ... serves essentially to elucidate both the present with respect to the past, and the uses and abuses of the past in each successive present.<sup>61</sup>

Nora also believed that “we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left,”<sup>62</sup> an observation many others have made as well, especially when discussing the flurry of memory work surrounding the Holocaust that took place in the last decades of the twentieth century as fear blossomed that the past, the memory of the Holocaust, would die along with its survivors.<sup>63</sup> This and similar phenomena led Nora to argue that, unlike peoples and cultures of earlier eras, contemporary society's internal experience of memory was constantly decreasing and memory increasingly existed only through its “exterior scaffolding,” an observation which leads

one to wonder if the reverse is also true, that the more memory is created and experienced externally, through *lieux de mémoire*, the less it is experienced internally.<sup>64</sup>

This question points to a paradox of commemoration where memorials, built in order to contribute to historical consciousness and perpetuate the memory of a particular person or event, actually serve to encourage forgetting and historical indifference. Such indifference may be created by the “familiarity and persistence of commemorative forms,” as seen, for example, in either the physical existence of a monument or in the regular and repeated process of commemorating an event through an annual ceremony. Indifference may also arise because of the fact that commemoration involves “participation without participation,” as Nora labeled it, where the act of remembering is carried out in such a way as to ultimately separate the spectators from the event being remembered. Nora particularly criticized the mass media for its role in creating indifference because, he argued, the media, by making a commemorative act public and ritualized, effectively reduced the act, and history itself, to a mere spectacle.<sup>65</sup> Nora also criticized the monumental form commemoration frequently takes by stating that monuments displace memory and act as a substitute for a community’s active memory work.<sup>66</sup> Other commentators on the nuances of commemoration have also noted its paradoxical aspects and have suggested, as did Nora, that war memorials, for example, were, in fact, a form of forgetting in that, “once we assign monumental form to a memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember.”<sup>67</sup> James E. Young, writing about Holocaust memorials and monuments, even suggested that “the initial impulse to memorialize events such as the Holocaust may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget them.”<sup>68</sup>

Before examining this and other critiques of commemoration in greater depth, a brief history of commemoration is in order. John Gillis suggests that commemorative acts are reflective of the reciprocal relationship between memory and identity and that, by tracing the historical record of commemoration, the history of the relationship between memory and identity comes to light. The memory/identity relationship is reciprocal because the central meaning of any group or individual identity is sustained by remembering, and what is remembered is defined by identity. In addition, both concepts are politically and socially constructed, and reconstructed. Memory and identity are not, for Gillis, things we think *about* but things we think *with* and, therefore, as Halbwachs also noted, only exist within the context of our social relationships, our politics, and our histories.<sup>69</sup> Young argues a similar point. He asserts that all

societies are dependent for their existence on a shared memory and that monuments provide a place where members of a particular society or group can gather to remember their particular past. As the years pass, the very act of remembering together, and not necessarily what is remembered, becomes a group's shared memory, the memory that unites the individuals as a single entity. Therefore, "by creating common spaces for memory, monuments propagate the illusion of common memory,"<sup>70</sup> an illusion because, as Gillis underlines, commemorative acts ignore the contestation and struggle that brought those acts about.<sup>71</sup>

Based on the recognition of the connections between memory, identity, and commemoration, Gillis proceeds to recount the history of commemorative acts in the western world. He identifies three phases in the development of commemoration in the West: the pre-national (before the American and French Revolutions), the national (the decades between the Revolutions and the 1960s), and the post-national (the years since the 1960s). In the pre-national phase, memory pervaded society so extensively that people, and especially commoners, hardly noticed its existence. The common people very much felt the past in the present and, as a result, saw no need to record or preserve it or to fill in any gaps that existed in their memory of past events. *Milieux de mémoire* existed and so there was no need to create *lieux de mémoire* to remember. The elite, on the other hand, did attempt to fill in any lapses in memory in order to create a continuous narrative of events. As well, they had recourse to institutionalized memory in the form of archives, genealogies, and family portraits, all of which were rare outside the Church and upper echelons of society.<sup>72</sup>

In the national phase of commemoration, "modern memory" was born. It was born at a moment when Americans and Europeans launched a massive campaign to reject existing and conflicting versions of the past and to entrench their own interpretation of it, thereby laying the foundations for a new post-revolutionary national identity. Revolutionaries wanted to construct a new future and, as a result, there was a sort of collective amnesia, a concerted forgetting of particular aspects of the past. The need to commemorate, which was heightened by the fragility of post-revolution American and French societies, arose from this desire to break with the past and to construct as great a distance as possible between the old and the new, as seen in the French revolutionaries' construction of the *Ancien Regime*, as well as in the "cults of new beginnings" that existed in both Europe and the United States.<sup>73</sup> There was, therefore, a simultaneous drive to reject the past, but to remember it as a point of reference against which to

contrast the present, a trend which continued into the mid-twentieth century, as seen in the West German government's use of the memory of Nazism to legitimize democracy.<sup>74</sup>

Commemoration in the nineteenth century, though it may have served similar ends as it did in the twentieth century, was, however, quite different in nature and focus. In the nineteenth century, commemoration was *for* the people, but not *of* the people. Commemorative acts remembered the kings, generals, and leaders who determined the course of history, but not the vast numbers of ordinary soldiers who fought and died in the battlefield, following their kings' commands. In the 1800s, commemoration was thus very much reserved for elite men; women and minorities were largely absent from national commemoration and, when included, played an allegorical role as symbols of a "lost past." As well, commemorative acts at this time remembered the dead rather than the living. Indeed, commemorating those who had fallen was part of the revolutionary program as the dead became martyrs to the cause and, thus, men to emulate.<sup>75</sup>

In the twentieth century, commemoration became slightly more democratic and inclusive as tombs of unknown soldiers sprang up, erected in order to remember all those who had died by remembering no one in particular. The idea of military cemeteries, where officers and those they led were buried side by side, also became increasingly popular and aided in the democratization of memory.<sup>76</sup> The individual memory of those who had died for the nation was combined, and even subsumed, into the collective memory of death in order to spread nationalism and create the feeling of a "memory-community," the feeling of the nation as a family collectively mourning the death of its numerous sons.<sup>77</sup> Commemoration was, thus, intricately connected with ideas of memory and identity, though, before World War II, those memories and identities were still largely limited to dead men as memorials to the soldiers who had survived and to the women who had contributed to the war effort continued to be rare. After the war, however, there was a new emphasis on veterans, as well as on women and minorities.<sup>78</sup>

The Vietnam War Memorial marks the beginning of Gillis' post-national phase. For Gillis, it represented a turning point in the history of memory and commemoration. It is an "anarchy of memory" where soldiers are no longer anonymous, and where passersby are asked, even forced, to do their duty to memory in some way or another. Gillis identified this third phase of commemoration as being characterized by the feeling that the individual needs to record, collect, and preserve, and that everyone is his or her own historian. Because we can no longer

rely on collective memory to remember, he argued, the burden to remember is, to a large extent, placed on the individual's shoulders.<sup>79</sup>

The post-national phase of commemoration has also been characterized by a radical critique of institutionalized memory practice.<sup>80</sup> Commemoration, as stated above, has increasingly come to be regarded as paradoxical in nature, as seen in many scholars' insistence that, although commemorative acts are supposed to encourage remembering, they actually promote forgetting by relieving us of the responsibility to remember. Peter Carrier expanded on the paradox of commemoration by stating that,

[a]lthough the transmission of history as an aesthetic medium for mass consumption does fulfill the object of commemoration by 'calling to mind,' it also categorizes and fixed the past in a given form that ritually creates and fulfills an appetite for uncritical information, and thereby renders ineffective the pertinence of the past in the present. It petrifies the past both literally and metaphorically by imposing monolithic form which, ritualized and banalized, is historically redundant and effectively invisible.<sup>81</sup>

Monuments, especially those made of stone, have thus been criticized for mummifying and ossifying the past. Young, one of the most vocal critics of these more traditional monuments, states that the very fact that a monument is fixed and static renders it "benign" and irrelevant. Stone and metal, for Young, provide only the illusion of permanence and power, and of remembering; only when a monument comes to life does it actually urge people to remember and to reflect on the fact that memory, unlike the stationary stone structures built to preserve it, is not static and unchanging.<sup>82</sup> Young and others, therefore, advocate a more interactive approach to monument design, and commemoration in general, in order to make remembering a part of daily life. Proponents of this more active remembering wish to narrow the gap between past and present and between history and memory, partly by changing how monuments are constructed. They seek to build "counter-monuments" that do not collect memory but distribute it, that do not dictate what will be remembered but allow people to find their own memories.<sup>83</sup>

The power and influence of this critique of traditional monuments has led to a push to erect counter-monuments, and has seen a number of such monuments constructed. In Harburg, Germany, for example, an obelisk dedicated to the victims of fascism was erected in the 1980s. The public was invited to inscribe messages or names on to the surface of the obelisk and as exposed spaces were filled, the monument was lowered until it disappeared completely and its



only trace was the living memory of those who had visited the site themselves.<sup>84</sup> A similar idea was behind the reconstruction of the “Jews’ Fountain” in Kassel. The city invited artists to suggest ways to rebuild the fountain, destroyed during the Nazi era because it had been financed by a Jew. The chosen reconstruction was designed based on the belief that building a replica of the original fountain would promote forgetting. Instead, a mirror image of a fountain was built and buried in the ground to “rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of all Kassel citizens so that such things never happen again.”<sup>85</sup>

Counter-monuments are not, however, without their critics. Peter Homans, for example, remarks that counter-monuments “torment” and do not lead to healing or allow people to mourn their losses, as do traditional monuments.<sup>86</sup> Noam Lupu, on the other hand, suggests that counter-monuments have failed largely because the counter-monuments that have been built in Germany have been understood and treated by the public in ways similar to those in which traditional monuments are understood and treated. The counter-monuments built in Germany are discussed and understood in the traditional discourse of representations and have not created a new discourse, as they were intended to do.<sup>87</sup> As well, the Holocaust memorial/counter-monument build in Kassel, for example, came to be seen as a metaphor and is treated with the same distance with which other Holocaust memorials are treated, a distance the counter-monument was meant to negate.<sup>88</sup>

On a related note, Andreas Huyssen, who recognizes monuments as tools of forgetting, nevertheless points out that “the monument has a new lease on life.” Huyssen suggests that the very permanence of monuments that so many have criticized assumes a different and newfound significance in a world so dominated by television, by the “fleeting image on the screen and the immateriality of communications” where the public is so dissatisfied with “simulation and channel-flicking.”<sup>89</sup> The monument, on the other hand, is a three-dimensional object and cannot be made to disappear as easily as can images on the computer monitor or television screen, by simply pushing a button. Huyssen, therefore, suggests that the struggle for memory is a struggle against “high tech amnesia.”<sup>90</sup>

Scholars, therefore, have long commented on the manipulative aspects of commemoration in regard to collective memory and forgetting, highlighting its ability to distort the public and collective memory to suit the needs of those in power. Those social groups wishing to make themselves the dominant force in a society, or already in that position, are thus very much

concerned with controlling and determining what, through commemoration or any other means, a society remembers and forgets.<sup>91</sup> Collective memory is thus, as Jacques Le Goff noted, “one of the great stakes of developed and developing societies, of dominated and dominating classes, all of them struggling for power or for life, for survival and for advancement.” Continuing in this vein, he remarked that “collective memory is not only a conquest, it is also an instrument and an objective of power,”<sup>92</sup> a fact the Guatemalan military understood perfectly, as shall be seen.

Determining collective memory is infinitely more important in societies coming out of long periods of internal conflict, as Guatemala did in the mid-1990s. In some of those countries that have decided to deal with past wrongs, such as Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, the perpetrators have been put on trial in an attempt to make them take responsibility for their actions. In others, suggestions have been made, and occasionally acts have been passed legislating that the victims and survivors receive compensation for what they were made to suffer, and then largely ignored. But perhaps the most popular approach has been to establish fact-finding or truth-seeking commissions to investigate the events and atrocities committed during the conflict and to identify the responsible parties. The most famous of these, though not the first, is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established after the fall of the apartheid government to find out the truth about the decades of minority rule. It was based on the premise that knowing the truth of those years would help lead black and white South Africans to reconcile their differences and move toward a more peaceful coexistence.

Truth and truth-like commissions are generally created at a point of political transition or impasse as, for example, in South Africa where the apartheid government, viewed internationally as an illegitimate governing body, had been forced to give up their control of the government yet still dominated other institutions, such as the police and the army. While the situation was not identical in Guatemala in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the country was, nevertheless, deadlocked--neither the army nor the URNG had been able to defeat their opponents.<sup>93</sup> Both the Peace Accords, which included the agreement on establishing the CEH, and the Church's decision to put together their own commission to look into the violence that had ravaged the country were results of this stalemate where, according to some observers and participants, the guerrillas had won the political war, the war of international opinion, but had been defeated by the army on the ground, in the actual military war where so many thousands died.

Commissions created at such a crucial juncture in a nation's history are stimulated, in part, by the desire to make the past known in order to prevent the victims' deaths from being in vain. Once a conflict ridden society finally decides to attempt to find a solution to their particular problem, that society certainly does not want the past to be repeated, a repetition fact-finding commissions, which bring a nation's dirty past into the light and expose it to scrutiny and discussion, are meant to prevent. By giving a more balanced and accurate account of the past, and by naming the many victims of the war, such commissions, furthermore, are meant to prevent the past and the victims from being forgotten, to prevent "forgetfulness from killing the victims twice."<sup>94</sup>

As suggested above, however, these commissions' primary and most basic goal and purpose is to create a more complete and representative historical record than previously existed. Writing about testimonial literature, a category into which historical commissions' reports surely fall, Antonella Fabri suggests that such narratives disturb official attempts to create a grand and totalizing narrative, a "monument" of history. Testimonies unsilence the victims, they unsilence and awaken the past and, in the case of South Africa and Guatemala, allow it to be rewritten in a manner more reflective of what the majority, who had previously been excluded from the nation's official memory, remembers.<sup>95</sup> Priscilla B. Hayner describes the purposes of commissions of inquiry in a similar fashion. Commissions aim to "establish an accurate record of a country's past, clarify uncertain events, and lift the lid of silence and denial from a contentious and painful period of history."<sup>96</sup> In this regard, they serve to counter the disinformation, propaganda, and lies previous regimes told in order to justify their dominance, their repression of the opposition, and their violations of human rights. For Hayner, as for Fabri, these clarification commissions and their corresponding interviews with victims reveal a hidden history and end the reign of silence that existed about a nation's past, opening it up for discussion and contestation. Hayner, however, is quick to highlight that commissions do not dig up new truths but allow previously unspoken and silenced truths to be made public,<sup>97</sup> a statement with which many historians of Guatemala's recent bloody past would agree.<sup>98</sup>

Most scholars agree with this most basic objective of these commissions--that of fact-finding. Beyond this, however, academics, politicians, perpetrators, and victims, among others, have raised a seemingly infinite list of questions and criticisms about bodies created to investigate and discover "the truth" or clarify history. One of the most common criticisms leveled at truth

commissions and other similar investigatory bodies is that they, like monuments and other forms of commemoration, dictate what will be remembered and what will be forgotten or brushed aside, that they limit the range of memory and turn the wide variety of experiences of the past into one typical experience. Though most critics recognize that truth commissions make plausible denial virtually impossible and narrow the permissible range of “lies” about the past significantly, they highlight that commissions also narrow the range of “truths.” This restricting of the past and rewriting of a nation’s history is usually motivated by the mostly laudable hope of creating a common memory from which a new national identity and unity can be forged,<sup>99</sup> but it, nevertheless, requires that *something* be forgotten. Thus, truth commissions, critics argue, iron out the “wrinkles” of memory--the competing memories that exist about the past and the nuances, complexities, and inconsistencies of that memory.<sup>100</sup> Truth-seeking commissions, therefore, impose monolithic form on a non-uniform past, a criticism also leveled at monuments and other acts of commemoration that celebrate a stereotypical past in an attempt to bring a people together, to create a sense of nation, and to strengthen an individual’s attachment to that created nation.

Critics of truth commissions, thus, argue that truth commissions are merely reflective of a different ruling schemata, a different (but at times not very different) regime in power. Once, as is usually the case in post-conflict societies, the military has surrendered its vise-like grip on power and the conflict has been resolved, at least politically, the majority, whose memories of the recent past had been denied and repressed, is encouraged to remember once again, encouraged to tell what had *really* happened during the conflict. Following Foucault, their counter-memories had, in effect, become memory once again; subordinate and subversive discourse, had become the dominant, and very much accepted, discourse of the international and, perhaps to a lesser extent, national community. Critics argue that, though this new memory is more reflective of what the majority of the population remembers, it, nevertheless, is merely another official version of the past. This now-official history, as other official histories before it, does not embrace all the competing interpretations and memories of the past but, instead, attempts to dictate what and how people should remember, and how they should heal.

Some scholars have a more critical view about truth and fact-finding commissions’ relation to “unassimilated” or counter-memory. Brian Havel, for example, argues that truth commissions “cannot be viewed solely as altruistic acts of a well-intentioned successor regime” but, rather,

represent a “public law device” instituted by that new regime in order to “outmaneuver” counter-memories. Truth commissions, Havel suggests, are the government’s attempt to include the victims’ narratives and values into a new national founding mythology that will ensure societal stability.<sup>101</sup> Critics, therefore, suggest that by incorporating the victims’ previously unacceptable counter-memories into sanctioned memory, truth commissions, in the name of stability and nation-building, impose new silences on the past and, thus, allow for the creation of new counter-memories that may, and most likely will, challenge the national project in the future.<sup>102</sup>

Whereas some form of “truth” is an oft-achieved short term goal of post-conflict commissions, the goal of molding a new national identity and of reconciling a nation’s disparate memories and members is one of the most ambitious longer term goals of truth and clarification commissions, and one least often accomplished. This failure can be attributed, in part, to the fact that in most nations recovering from long internal conflicts, the sectors of society that these commissions hope to bring together to live in “a culture of harmony and mutual respect” have never been reconciled in the past. Commissions, thus, are not trying to fix something that is now a broken but once unified whole; rather, they are attempting to create that unity, that “whole,” for the first time. This makes their task even more difficult, and unlikely.<sup>103</sup>

The need for truth and similar commissions to create a grand and totalizing narrative of the past and the “unity mantra” which motivates its production are, as some have argued, counterproductive and self-defeating.<sup>104</sup> Critics suggest that for reconciliation and national unity to be achieved, the reigning conceptions of both must be changed. Reconciliation should not be equated with forgiving, as it often is, but should be regarded as the construction of functioning relationships between the parties involved in the conflict and the crafting of a history that makes sense of and incorporates those groups’ contradictory memories.<sup>105</sup> Reconciliation, for Priscilla B. Hayner, therefore involves “coming to a generally agreed understanding of a country’s history and past wrongs,” not finding *the* truth about the past because the existence of such a unitary truth is a myth. There is never only one truth; there are, however, certain basic facts that must be accepted as true for anything more than surface reconciliation to occur and it is these fundamental facts that form the basis of Hayner’s “generally agreed understanding” of the past.<sup>106</sup>

Related to the concept of reconciliation are national unity and nation-building, goals partly relegated to historical and truth commissions in Guatemala, South Africa, and other

societies emerging from long periods of internal conflict. While critics do not deny the importance of national unity, they do, however, suggest that the reigning conception of that unity needs to be altered from one of uniformity and homogeneity to one of diversity and heterogeneity. Rather than forcing a nation's diverse members to accept one founding myth, one identity, one history, one truth imposed from above, critics argue that recognizing the diversity that exists within a nation is the best way to "grow" unity from the bottom up.<sup>107</sup> Rather than basing the national project on assimilation and the denial of difference, critics suggest that these differences must be acknowledged before any sense of nation can exist and be honored. Writing about the Antilles, Nobel laureate Derek Walcott writes:

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of the original shape. It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars.<sup>108</sup>

Relating these comments to South Africa, Ingrid de Kok asserts that the "fragmented, mutilating shards" must be seen and felt before "the white scar can be celebrated,"<sup>109</sup> a statement which also applies to Guatemala and other post-conflict societies, and which is often disregarded as these societies opt to create commissions to record and commemorate a single history and uniform memory.

Truth-like commissions and the reports they publish, therefore, gloss over the complexity of memory and attempt to fit the diverse memories of a population into an overarching framework of reconciliation and national unity. Furthermore, critics assert, these commissions regard the relationship between truth and healing as simple and direct--they are founded on the assumption that knowing the truth about a nation's turbulent past will automatically lead to either societal and individual healing. Many scholars, however, counter this belief. They suggest that, though truth and similar commissions do answer the very real need many victims feel to have their private memories made public and given credence, this simple telling does not mean that the teller, or the nation, is "cured." Nor can it be assumed that there is only one way for a people and a nation to heal. While many will find telling their story to be enough, some will demand that the perpetrators be brought to justice and punished, that they, the victims, receive financial reparations for their suffering, or that taking revenge on those who hurt them is the only way they will be able to come to terms with the past.<sup>110</sup> Truth commissions generally deny the

validity, and in some cases the possibility, of these other options and dictate that peace is born from truth or that, as in South Africa, telling the truth about one's past crimes will lead to judicial immunity.<sup>111</sup>

## An Insurrection of Knowledges

Drawing largely on Foucault's writings on the topic of memory, this chapter will explore the Reports as an insurrection of knowledges, a counter-memory that stands in direct opposition to that embraced by the military during their decades in power. For years, before the CEH and REMHI Project began their work, before Guatemalans were encouraged to remember, before the victims were memorialized and immortalized, the Guatemalan military controlled the population through terror. This was especially true during the worst years of the violence in the early 1980s when, according to both the CEH and REMHI reports, approximately 80% of the human rights violations occurred.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, much of the following description and analysis of army tactics and strategy will focus on these years, though violence and terror existed before and after the early 1980s; from the 1954 overthrow of Arbenz until the 1996 signing of the Peace Accords, the Guatemalan population, and especially its rural, indigenous sector, was terrorized by the military's human rights violations and, to a lesser extent, the guerrilla's corresponding "acts of violence."<sup>2</sup>

After the 1954 coup and continuing for the next several decades, the state, through its liberal use of terror, attempted to "erase the memory" of, first, the ten years of spring<sup>3</sup> and then of *la violencia* itself. The army's main strategy for controlling memory was to create a climate of fear, confusion, mistrust, division, and guilt among the population in order to silence them and force them to forget. The disappearances, the torture, the rape, and the massacres contributed, by the 1980s, to a situation where, in Victor Montejo's words, "[n]o one was safe; the army's intent was to kill all suspected guerrillas, and all Maya were suspect."<sup>4</sup> This philosophy can be traced back to Carlos Castillo Armas and the Cold War, anti-communist ideology that was behind his CIA-backed invasion of Guatemala; *el anticommunismo* defined as communist all those who had benefitted from Arbenz's agrarian reform.<sup>5</sup> As the years passed, the army expanded and redefined its category of "communist" to include all those "subversives" who were opposed to the state and its ultra-conservative, anti-reformist discourse,<sup>6</sup> thereby creating the very broad category of the internal enemy, *el enemigo interno*, defined by Beatriz Manz as "anyone who was not a fervent military supporter."<sup>7</sup>

The army, thus, understood the internal enemy to be all those intent on disrupting the



established order, whether they had communist tendencies or not. Therefore, the military equated the indigenous, popular, student, labor, and later human rights, movements with the insurgency, making the distinction between the guerrillas' armed combatants, their unarmed supporters and sympathizers, and other non-violent groups nominal at best. Furthermore, since the army high command considered the population to be the guerrillas' base, their strategy for defeating the latter was to direct their counterinsurgency tactics at the former. The army's understanding of the situation led, especially during the presidencies of Lucas García and Ríos Montt, to the exaggerated belief that all members of the rural, indigenous population, regardless of sex and age, were potentially either members of one of the several guerrilla organizations or were supporting them.<sup>8</sup> The military's view of the population as the sea in which the guerrilla fish swam and the corresponding need to "drain the sea," can be seen in the following statement made by Ríos Montt's press secretary:

The guerrillas won over many Indian collaborators. Therefore the Indians were subversives. And how do you fight subversion? Clearly you had to kill Indians because they were collaborating with subversion. And then it would be said that you were killing innocent people. But they are not innocent, they had sold out to subversion.<sup>9</sup>

The army's policy regarding the population was further and effectively described by a former soldier, Chilin Hultaxh, as to "kill ten people, because at least one of them would be a guerrilla, even if the other nine were innocent."<sup>10</sup>

The army's equation of the civilian population with the insurgency was even more evident when the displaced and the Communities of Population in Resistance, or CPRs, are considered. Hundreds of thousands of rural inhabitants were displaced by the scorched earth campaigns of the 1980s. Some fled to Mexico and, to a lesser extent, Honduras to escape the army's wrath, though even there they were not safe since the army made occasional incursions into foreign territory to capture supposed guerrillas. Others fled to the mountains and lived there for years, perpetually harassed by the army's attempts either to woo them down from the mountains through amnesties or to force them to settle into model villages through sweeps and terror campaigns, conducted either from the ground or the air. After a time, those in the mountains formed CPRs in order to increase their chances of survival. These communities, as well as those living on their own in the mountains, posed a clear challenge to the military and were deemed to be guerrilla sympathizers. Considered, therefore, to be the enemy, the displaced

and the CPRs became legitimate military targets, and were treated as such both in the mountains and, in most cases, after their descent and return to army control.<sup>11</sup>

The military's counterinsurgency plan was characterized by the supposedly complementary strategies of military and civil action, brutally suppressing the population and then winning them over to the military's side and way of thinking through socioeconomic development work. In terms of the former, the military resorted to massive, genocidal warfare in the highlands, systematically conducting a scorched earth campaign that massacred and razed hundreds of villages in order to destroy the guerrillas' base of support.<sup>12</sup> For their part, massacres, which were generally preceded by torture and rape, were meant not only to eliminate guerrilla collaborators and potential collaborators, but also to "scar the living." The "demonic manner in which people were left butchered and the highly visible way in which their cadavers were left, charred and unburied,"<sup>13</sup> was intended as a deterrent, to discourage nearby villages from supporting the guerrillas. Massacres also served as a silencing mechanism because by killing the inhabitants of an entire village, the army also killed the witnesses to their crimes, silencing those who could have denounced the army's actions. Those villagers who happened to have survived the massacre were also silenced; though still living, their tales of the atrocities were suppressed by their own fear of the consequences of speaking out.

The other weapons in the army's vast arsenal--rape, torture, forced disappearance, etc.--also acted as silencers. The massive and systematic rape of indigenous women in the highlands and the rape of women in detention centers and clandestine prisons was meant to generate terror within the population and was simply another part of the army's counterinsurgency war. Because rape is stigmatized in Mayan culture, the rape of Mayan women was also seen as a way to keep the victims quiet and to prevent them from telling what had happened to them and who had done it.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the rape of indigenous women in the countryside was seen as a way to devalue and destroy Mayan communities, as was the murder of children and pregnant women. The latter had, from the army's point of view, the additional benefit of *arrancando la semilla*, of attacking the continued existence of the indigenous population by "plucking the seed."<sup>15</sup>

Rape was generally accompanied by torture. In addition to the goal of obtaining information, torture, like massacres, was meant to prevent the organization of labor, peasant, political, or social movements and to convince the population not to participate in the insurgency. Torture, however, was designed to act not only as a deterrent but also as a stimulus,

to encourage the population to support and collaborate with the army. Through the use of torture, the victim was “reeducated,” his or her free will destroyed and personality transformed to such a degree that he or she was considered a *muerto vivo*, a sort of “recuperated” zombie prepared to collaborate with the army.<sup>16</sup> At a broader level, the torture of individuals and communities was meant to increase the level of fear in the population at large and the frequent appearance of mutilated corpses in Guatemala’s streets was meant to send a clear message of what happened to guerrillas and their collaborators who acted against the regime.<sup>17</sup> The appearance of cruelly tortured bodies also contributed to the atmosphere of fear and silence that surrounded the war because the relatives of the victim often chose not to claim the bodies as their own lest they, too, suffer the same fate and, therefore, remained quiet about the identity of the victim.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, relatives of the dead or disappeared often denied that their loved ones were dead or that they had suffered “unnatural” deaths. As Judith Zur points out, “[h]aving a political death or ‘disappeared one’ (*desaparecido*) in the family is like admitting to a contagious disease.”<sup>19</sup>

For those still living, the appearance of a body, even with signs of torture, was often considered better than not knowing what had happened to a loved one after he or she had been taken, a situation that many Guatemalans find themselves in to this day. The forced disappearance of an individual, where a body was never recovered, was very common in Guatemala throughout the war and was a method used by the army to hide their responsibility for the act.<sup>20</sup> In cases of forced disappearance, the army consistently denied all knowledge of the victim’s detention and whereabouts, leaving the victim’s colleagues and relatives in a state of uncertainty, often forcing them to cease whatever activities they may have been involved in to seek refuge or go into hiding,<sup>21</sup> all of which further heightened the levels of fear and silence existing in the community and nation.

By terrorizing the Guatemalan population and creating a climate of fear, the army managed to silence those affected by the violence, both directly and indirectly. The army’s atrocities created a situation where “it was not possible to speak” and where people chose not to speak in order to protect their own lives and the lives of their loved ones.<sup>22</sup> Guatemala, as one testimony in the CEH report states, “is a silenced country, it is an isolated country.”<sup>23</sup> This muting of the population was compounded by the presence of military commissioners and army spies, or *orejas*,<sup>24</sup> throughout the highlands and, after the early 1980s, by the existence of model

villages and Civil Self-defense Patrols, or PACs. The possibility that a neighbor or relative was an *oreja* and would report one's actions and conversations to the local army commissioner or garrison contributed to the reign of silence in the countryside and to the creation of a climate of self-censorship and mutual mistrust where people talked about the violence, the deaths, the disappearances, the torture either euphemistically, by referring to the war as *la situación* (the situation), "that painful time," "that desperate time," or not at all.<sup>25</sup> The ever present danger of being denounced as a guerrilla combatant, collaborator, or sympathizer, either rightly or wrongly, divided communities against each other, divisions which facilitated the ability of the army to exercise complete control over rural communities.

The military's level of control in the countryside, already significant by the 1970s, was heightened by the resettling of the rural population into model villages and their incorporation into PACs in the early 1980s. During the presidencies of Lucas García and Ríos Montt, the army increasingly accepted that they were not winning the war and would not be able to win it through repression alone; as a result, they adopted a counterinsurgency strategy that contained military, political, economic, and social aspects.<sup>26</sup> The army began to see the need to "win the hearts of the population" through development work. For this to happen, however, the army needed a captive audience and, to this end, set out to collect those displaced by the massacres and now living, and starving, in the mountains and relocate them first into reception centers and then into the army's new model villages. While in the reception centers, the displaced were interrogated and tortured in order to gain information about the guerrillas' location and strategy which, it was assumed, the displaced knew. Those in the reception centers were also subject to "reeducation" and "psychological preparation" for their reincorporation into the civilian sphere and into the army's counterinsurgency strategy.<sup>27</sup> The displaced, thus, were given approximately ten ideological lectures a day and were also taught, among other things, how to perform patrol duties, how to denounce a suspicious person, and how to prepare food properly.<sup>28</sup>

Those that survived the reception centers were forcibly resettled into model villages, often intentionally located in inhospitable places, far from their inhabitants' places of origin and purposefully composed of a mix of peoples from Guatemala's numerous and distinct indigenous groups, thereby intensifying feelings of mistrust and division. Beatriz Manz describes the model villages as being "laid ... out in a grid form...[w]ith grim-looking watchtowers overlooking a barren landscape covered by tightly packed dwellings... appear[ing] more like run-down prison camps

than villages.”<sup>29</sup> In the model villages, the army was able to exercise total control over the population now in their care (an estimated 500,000 Maya ended up under the army’s watchful eye) more easily than when that population had been scattered throughout the countryside and, through obligatory participation in the PACs, the army was able to militarize the countryside significantly and further entrench military institutions in the rural areas.<sup>30</sup>

Model villages were meant also to reorganize social relations, making the indigenous population subject to the army’s authority and dependent on the army for all of its needs. The villages restructured rural life in its entirety, including its cultural, social, and economic aspects, for what Jennifer Schirmer terms “security-qua-development purposes.”<sup>31</sup> Model villages were, furthermore, designed to make the inhabitants and their actions visible to the army garrison usually located up a nearby hill, as in Xe’caj where,

to an untrained eye, the [military] encampment is not obvious from below. The camouflaged buildings fade into the hillside, but once one has looked down from the there it is impossible to forget that those who live below do so in a fishbowl.<sup>32</sup>

Those who lived in model villages were under constant surveillance, watched by the soldiers from the garrison, by the army’s spies, and by their own neighbors who, by denouncing their neighbors as guerrillas, wished to remain in the army’s good books, wished to settle an old dispute, or wished to enrich themselves in some manner. In the model villages, therefore, the inhabitants “internalized discipline and obedience;” they

internalized a feeling of control not only from their guards, but also from themselves to the extent that they tried to forget or repress whatever thought that could be interpreted as ‘subversive’ or disloyal by an army that was constantly scrutinizing [their] lives.<sup>33</sup>

This situation has led Linda Green to describe the situation in Xe’caj as “Bentham’s panopticon internalized.”<sup>34</sup>

In both model and non-model villages, the army waged a psychological war against subversion and also, given their broad definition of the term, against the rural population. Villagers were inundated with anti-guerrilla, pro-army propaganda. At a fairly unobtrusive level, the streets in the newly organized model villages were given names like “Avenues of Hope,” “National Army Avenue,” and “Friendship Street” and, leading into the villages, signs welcomed residents and the rare outsiders to, for example, Saraxoch, “an ideologically new, anti-subversive community.”<sup>35</sup> The army also conducted “confessional rituals” in the model villages. In an effort

to win inhabitants over to the army's side, the army encouraged local men to tell how the guerrillas had betrayed them and how the army had saved them.<sup>36</sup> This sort of attempt at pro-army indoctrination was combined with other types of strategies throughout the highlands to convince the rural population that the guerrillas were bad and the army was good. According to Judith Zur, the indigenous population was unfamiliar with terms such as "communist," "guerrilla," "subversive," "human rights activist," and many other terms the army frequently used and, in order to make these terms mean something at the local level, the army played off of preexisting indigenous beliefs that divided "us" from "them." The army, therefore, lumped the above into the "them" category. To make the category of further significance, and to reinforce their point that all those now in the "them" category were dangerous, the army portrayed "them" as evil, as devils, both of which were meaningful in the villages. The army equated guerrillas with the malicious or mischievous spirits found in many indigenous stories in order to persuade the people that guerrillas, like these spirits, were something to be avoided. The military also attempted to use indigenous conceptions of witchcraft in their favor by likening guerrillas to *bines*, witches that led double lives.<sup>37</sup> The army also distributed illustrated pamphlets with sketches that made the guerrilla/devil connection unmistakably clear. In some of the pamphlets handed out in the K'iche' area, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor was depicted as a creature with Ché Guevara's head and beret and a hairy and muscular body with horns, a tail, and clawed feet and hands, the last of which were dripping blood.(See appendix B)<sup>38</sup>

The army, on the other hand, portrayed itself as saints and saviors, protecting the people from the guerrillas with the help of the PACs. To reinforce this view, the army again distributed pamphlets stating that "God guides and blesses those who fight as brothers to maintain the peace and the defense of their homes."(See appendix B)<sup>39</sup> The army also dressed local religious icons in uniform to underline military benevolence and the connection they wished locals to make between soldiers and saints. Zur, however, points out that the army failed to recognize that in syncretic indigenous worldview, saints could do both good and evil,<sup>40</sup> a point that easily applies to the army's carrot and stick approach to defeating the insurgency.

The army, therefore, in accordance with the National Plan of Security and Development, aimed to portray itself as the savior of the nation and to paint everyone else as responsible for *la violencia*.<sup>41</sup> The army also sought to do this in more concrete ways by making the rural population responsible for the violence<sup>42</sup> by forcing rural villages to organize PACs. Through the

PACs, the army forced patrollers to participate in the commission of atrocities against neighboring communities, members of their own community, and, indeed, against their fellow patrollers.<sup>43</sup> The patrols, created as part of the counterinsurgency campaign, were also another mechanism that the army used to increase their control over the many communities in the highlands; by the time Vinicio Cerezo entered office in 1986, the PACs, which were obligatory despite the army's claims to the contrary,<sup>44</sup> had been organized throughout the countryside, involving, according to many estimates, one million Guatemalans.<sup>45</sup> Of these, however, only an estimated five to ten percent were armed; most patrollers carried only sticks, machetes, or guns carved from wood and painted black, the last of which only served to make them a more obvious target for the guerrillas. Even when armed--having either been told they had to buy weapons, usually from the army, or actually provided with weapons by the army itself--the patrols, nevertheless, were hardly any match for the guerrillas they would face on patrol. When the army deigned to arm the PACs themselves, they did so with weapons of varying age and quality, often according to the level of trust the army felt toward a particular patrol. Maryknoll priest Ron Hennessey stated that "when the army really trusts the patrol, they give them carbines; when they don't, they give them mausers."<sup>46</sup> Despite the deficiency of arms, and a similar lack of military training, the PACs were regarded by the military as an instrument of war and were often forced to accompany the army on sweeps of the area and to participate in the army's murderous missions to neighboring villages. The PACs, however, were also treated by the army as cannon fodder and were frequently used as a "human shield" to protect the real soldiers from the guerrillas' surprise attacks.<sup>47</sup>

As part of the counterinsurgency war, the PACs acted as the army's eyes and ears at the local level. The patrollers were expected to make lists of "enemies," deliver suspects to the army garrison, monitor and inform the army of their neighbors' movements and actions, and denounce sympathizers and collaborators, all of which many patrollers did in order to protect themselves and their families. The PACs represented a permanent military presence in rural villages, thereby freeing the regular troops for redeployment elsewhere. The organization of Guatemalans into PACs on a massive scale served to involve and implicate much of the previously civilian population directly in the war effort.<sup>48</sup> This turned the war between the army and its guerrilla opponents into a war between and within indigenous communities, blurring the line between victim and perpetrator,<sup>49</sup> and spreading the guilt around, as the army hoped and

expected would happen.

In her study of San Bartolomé Jocotenango, Matilde Gonzalez extends village participation and culpability beyond the PACs, documenting the rape of the village's women by the army and PACs, as well as the victims' neighbors and relatives. She argues that such incidents of massive rape were intended to make accomplices of the entire community. The army, by ordering the rapes, was trying to "make everyone dirty, to stain them with shame, in order to guarantee their silence. The purpose was that nobody would get away free, nobody would be morally innocent and capable of judging, or would even talk about what had happened."<sup>50</sup> Imposing this feeling of culpability on the population, therefore, had, for the army, the additional benefit of silencing the population, at least until the army's power had waned. The army, especially in the model villages, also sought to make the rural population feel guilty by "reeducating" them to believe that those who were killed had done something wrong, that they were guilty of some crime, and that their death was proof of that guilt; if they had been innocent, the army argued, then they would not have been killed.<sup>51</sup>

The army also sought to make the guerrillas appear responsible. The inhabitants of Santa María Tzejá, for example, received daily propaganda talks that blamed the guerrillas for destroying their homes, burning their fields, and kidnapping and killing many villagers.<sup>52</sup> One of the "professors" at these lectures described his job as "brainwash[ing] the people." "My work," he stated, "consisted first in erasing the cassette that the subversion had recorded onto the people, and later record onto them a new cassette," a "new cassette" which blamed the guerrillas for the war and the resulting devastation and described the guerrillas as terrorists living off of and exploiting the rural population.<sup>53</sup> This was more than merely army rhetoric; the army and its various incarnations often attempted to hide their identity when on missions by, for example, wearing typical guerrilla clothing in order to confuse the population as to the identity of the perpetrators.<sup>54</sup> Even when they failed to take such precautionary measures, the military still attempted to lay the blame for the atrocities at the guerrillas' feet, though, in the end, given the wealth of evidence to the contrary, these efforts usually failed; the indigenous population was clearly not as easily manipulated as the army had thought. As Ricardo from Santa María Tzejá states in reference to the army's propaganda talks, "[t]hose talks did not have an affect on me. I was very clear as to what had happened. But I had to listen."<sup>55</sup>

The army, thus, made every effort to convince the population that supporting the



insurgency would only lead to further suffering, that the guerrillas had committed the majority of the atrocities, and that the army was Guatemala's savior and had the best interests of all Guatemalans at heart.<sup>56</sup> A radio spot that ran in January 1986 illustrates this point perfectly:

[*ladino* voice] Two years ago, with the destruction of the indigenous villages by the subversive, the Indians encountered in the Army of Guatemala a brave and loyal ally in their return to their place of origin [Mayan drums and flutes]. For their security, the Civil Patrols of Self-Defense were organized. For the reconstruction of their villages, the Inter-Institutional Coordinators functioned, and for their interconnection, the Army Corps of Engineers carried out their work, constructing highways and bridges as paths of rural development [marimba music, *ladina* voice]. Today, two years later, new horizons have been opened in the country. The Army of Guatemala has fulfilled its obligation to you.<sup>57</sup>

In its psychological war against the insurgency, the army, therefore, sought to shape the indigenous population's mentality and loyalty, a task that met with varying degrees of success. While some, like Ricardo, were not persuaded by the army's lies, others proved more susceptible and assumed the army's counterinsurgency philosophy and strategy as their own.<sup>58</sup> Regardless of whether the population truly believed the army's propaganda or merely echoed it in the name of survival, the army sought to turn the population away from the guerrillas and toward the army and the nation by portraying the army as Guatemala's saintly savior and by forcing a feeling of patriotism and national identity onto the indigenous mentality.

The army, in order to accomplish the latter goal, attempted to instill military values and outlook in the villages, making the villagers raise and salute the flag every morning, sing military songs, execute military maneuvers, and listen to military speeches.<sup>59</sup> This militarization was combined with attempts to sanitize indigenous culture and foment feelings of nationalism among the country's Mayan majority. The army high command believed that the indigenous population was involved in the insurgency and in social organizations because they were not sufficiently integrated into state structures and because they lacked a strong sense of nationalism; the army, therefore, taught that "[y]our nation is Guatemala. The flag is blue and white. The coat of arms is the quetzal bird. Our independence day is 15 September, 1821. The national flower is the white orchid. The national anthem..."<sup>60</sup> In addition to these basic facts about the nation, the army further planned to inculcate its own version of nationalism, which glorified the military, as a counterweight to "International Communism."<sup>61</sup> The military, in Jennifer Schirmer's terms, sought to create a "Sanctioned Maya," an apolitical Maya "loyal to national symbols, the state,

and by extension, the army.”<sup>62</sup> The army’s goal was to form a “Sanctioned Maya prototype constructed and continually reconstituted through the military’s optic, deprived of memory and mute to the recent subversive past.”<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the army’s appropriation of indigenous cultural symbols, such as the hero Tecúm Uman, as well as their use of Mayan words to, for example, refer to the Kaibiles, an especially brutal army battalion, was not intended to perpetuate and promote respect for indigenous culture and identity but was meant to create a new, safe Mayan identity that would pose no threat to the nation.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to this molding of the new Maya, the army also hoped to erase and destroy indigenous identity, especially among its own soldiers and the PACs. The Guatemalan army depended on forced recruitment of mostly Mayan men, and boys, to swell its ranks. The army would arrive in a rural town on a market day or would hang around the Church waiting for mass to be let out in order to capture entire battalions of new recruits, or would use its own roadblocks and checkpoints to do so a few at a time. <sup>65</sup> Once the recruits had been rounded up, they would be delivered to the local army base to receive military and psychological training. The recruits’ military training consisted of desensitizing the soldiers to enable them to carry out massacres, as well as to torture and rape “subversives.” This was done through the liberal application of physical punishment, threats, and acts of moral degradation, all of which continued after a soldier’s initial training, in order to ensure his blind obedience and submission; training was designed to destroy the individual’s values and dignity to such an extent that he would be able to commit acts deprived of any and all respect for life.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, soldiers were trained to mete out punishments similar to those received; as one former soldier relates, they “ ‘are trained to kill and nothing more.’ ”<sup>67</sup>

The recruits also received psychological training, programming in them, as in the civilian population, the belief that the army was the innocent victim in the war and that the guerrillas were the perpetrators, the ones to blame for the violence and Guatemala’s poverty. The army taught its soldiers that all Guatemalans had to join together to fight the threat communism posed to the nation, *la patria*,<sup>68</sup> though, according to one former soldier, “they never tell you what ‘guerrilla’ or ‘communist’ really mean. They tell you that Cuba and Nicaragua have ‘communism’ but you don’t know who your enemy really is.”<sup>69</sup>

The indigenous recruits, who formed a significant portion of those forced to serve, were, furthermore, imbued with the belief that “if their father is a guerrilla, then he is their enemy and

they have to kill him.”<sup>70</sup> This statement, made by former soldier Chilin Hultaxh, points to the discrimination that was rampant in the Guatemalan armed forces.<sup>71</sup> To begin, despite the fact that military service is obligatory, *ladinos* were rarely, if ever, forced to serve. One testimony in the CEH Report illustrates this point by explaining that few “citizens” wanted to do military service in such a “difficult period.”<sup>72</sup> This point was reinforced by the comments of an officer stationed in Nebaj who stated that “[the indigenous population] shouldn’t live anymore anyway. They are savages, they live in the jungle. Not like in Guatemala City and in Xela where you have good people; these miserable people should be swept from the face of the earth.”<sup>73</sup> The officer’s blatantly racist statement reflects the attitude held by the army as an institution, an attitude they attempted to impose on their indigenous recruits. The recruits were, among other things, separated from their friends and other recruits of the same background and language, were prohibited from speaking their native tongue, and were forced to learn and speak Spanish, all in an effort to assimilate the Maya into the *ladino*-dominated army, and society.<sup>74</sup> The army sought to change people, and succeeded in many respects. Recruits, as one villager in Xe’caj commented, “leave as Indians, but they don’t come back as Indian.” The army made recruits more aggressive, more macho; it took away “soldiers’ cultural identity. They are no longer indigenous or anything else, just soldiers.”<sup>75</sup> In the army, therefore, as in the civilian population, Mayan culture, values, language, and religious practices were attacked in an effort to create a “new Guatemala,” brimming with patriotism and free of subversion, and free of Maya.

A similar fate awaited civil patrollers who, like army recruits, were very much forced to “do their duty to *la patria*” by patrolling the countryside, seeking out and destroying subversion, a point made perfectly clear in the Civil Patrol Code of Conduct and anthem which highlighted these functions. (See appendix C) PACs, as well, received military training and anti-communist propaganda from the army in order to make them more able to follow orders without question and commit atrocities against their own relatives and neighbors.<sup>76</sup> Patrollers were separated from their families and were made to feel alienated from them and from customary social values. Combined with sleep deprivation and the fact that patrollers were punished severely and even killed if they refused to patrol, participate in human rights violations, or were not as enthusiastic or dedicated as the army believed they should have been, this led PACs to identify with their fellow patrollers and the army. As a result, patrollers’ resistance to army propaganda was reduced and they were more willing to follow orders.<sup>77</sup>

In addition, PACs were taught that guerrillas were delinquents and terrorists who “raped women, stole chickens, stole the crops, they were savages, had no conscience, bothered their daughters, kidnapped people, burned houses, and did all kinds of barbarity.”<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately for the local civilian population, the army referred to them as communists and subversives, labels that often had fatal consequences when combined with rhetoric meant to make patrollers believe that “a guerrilla seen is a guerrilla dead.”<sup>79</sup> In this way, countless numbers of Maya were forced to fight the army’s war against the insurgency, a war that transformed them, the victims of forced recruitment and forced organization into PACs, into perpetrators of even more heinous crimes.

The army, therefore, used repression and reeducation in order to control both what Guatemalans knew and understood about the war, as well as what they remembered about it. Through massacre, rape, torture, and disappearance, the army tried to silence the population, to force them to forget what they had seen, experienced, and knew to be true. Having created, through terror, a situation where individuals and communities lived in constant fear, the army made every effort to impose its own version of history and current events onto the minds of the now-silenced population. The open secret of clandestine cemeteries epitomizes the army’s attempts to dictate what people remember, and, as shall be seen, their failure to do so. The military consistently denied that these mass graves, containing the bodies of the disappeared, the executed, the massacred, and the tortured, existed or claimed that those interred within, as in the case of Plan de Sánchez, were the victims of a battle with the guerrillas. Most people in the community, however, know where the graves are located and know that the victims were not killed in the course of a confrontation between the army and guerrillas. Thus, there exists a general knowledge about the cemeteries and some survivors are even brave enough to leave flowers and offerings at the graves of their loved ones, though most do not dare to talk about the cemeteries in public.<sup>80</sup> This situation has led Judith Zur to comment that “[o]ne of the subterranean secrets which pervades the K’iche’ countryside, as well as the minds of its people, is the clandestine graves beneath its surface,” a sentiment Victoria Sanford echoes in her assertion that clandestine cemeteries are “truly clandestine only in the official negation of their existence and the silence imposed on communities.”<sup>81</sup> As the army began to lose some control of the countryside and as space was created for different memories of *la violencia*, the survivors started demanding that their relatives be exhumed, that what really happened be made known, and that the dead finally receive a proper burial. The army’s version of events was, thus, shown to be a

lie. In many communities, the survivors reclaimed the cemeteries as their own; they “challenged these public spaces as mere reminders of Maya loss and remade them into sites of popular memory contesting official state stories.”<sup>82</sup> Therefore, despite their efforts and the vast arsenal of weapons at their disposal, the military had varying degrees of success in these attempts to control popular knowledge and erase people’s memories of *la violencia* in the long term, after their hold on the country had begun to slip away.

In this situation, it seems fairly clear that the testimonies the commissions collected and the reports they published fall into Foucault’s category of counter-memory. The reports represent, in Foucault’s words, an insurrection of knowledges. They show Guatemalan history to be much less seamless than the army would have one believe. They give voice to silenced and buried memories and allow for the participation of the majority of the population, the Maya, in their own history and the history of Guatemala, a participation that had long been denied to them, even before the war began in the early 1960s. In collecting these counter-memories, the staff of the two commissions acted in much the same way as Foucault’s genealogists, unearthing subjugated knowledges, allowing them to come to light, and exposing the army’s memory for what it is: a lie that attempted to impose conformity and homogeneity on a society and a history that is nothing if not heterogeneous.

The Reports, above all, explain and clarify what happened during the war and why and, as well, reveal the army’s motives and goals in planning and carrying out their counterinsurgency campaigns. One important component of this elucidation is to quantify responsibility. The Reports, thus, attribute 3-5% of the violations to the guerrillas and 90-93% to the army and its various incarnations.<sup>83</sup> The Reports, thus, belie the army’s claim that the guerrillas were to blame for the thousands of atrocities committed, as the army had asserted throughout the war. Despite the fact that few had believed the army’s propaganda and despite the fact that most had known that the army and not the guerrillas was responsible, the Reports’ confirmation of the army’s guilt in this matter is, nevertheless, significant since it reaffirms what the highland population knew to be true and rehabilitates their memories of the counterinsurgency. This simple statistical statement of responsibility, therefore, is one of the surest indications that the history of the war as written in the Reports will run counter to that taught by the army and, therefore, represents an alternative, and more accurate, history of *la violencia*.

The Reports, furthermore, show that the rape, the torture, the forced disappearances, and the massacres each had a driving purpose behind them and were not isolated incidents. They show what may have seemed at the time to be random acts of violence to have been part of a carefully planned strategy for defeating the guerrillas and all other forms of opposition. The Reports, therefore, provide a broader framework within which the war can be understood; the survivors can now understand the army's actions and their commission of atrocities as part of the larger counterinsurgency war. The Reports detail the events of the war and the changing government strategies for conducting it; they expose the army's motives and methods and explain exactly how the army was able to gain such power and control over the population, how the army was able to silence that population through fear, and how the army was able to train its soldiers to commit unimaginable atrocities against their own brothers and fathers. The Reports describe and document the seemingly endless litany of human rights violations and show that the victims who survived are not alone, that thousands of others lived through the same experiences, and that many thousands more did not.

In the Reports' analyses of specific, and notorious, cases of abuse or massacre, such as the fiery massacre at the Spanish Embassy in 1980, the detention and torture of Maritza Urrutia, and the executions of Myrna Mack Chang and Manuel Colom Argueta, among a long list of others, the CEH and REMHI Project lift the veil of denial under which the army operated for the duration of the war and expose some of their most monstrous acts for all to see. In many of these famous violations, the army had long denied responsibility, had lied about what exactly had happened, or had consistently claimed they had no knowledge about the events or the fate of the victims. Yet the Reports show these claims to be false, as seen in the case of Colom Argueta, who had gained some notoriety as the charismatic leader of the opposition in the late 1970s. Argueta was killed on 22 March 1979 in Guatemala City, weeks after having made a statement to the press that, since the extreme right had recently killed Alberto Fuentes Mohr, he did not expect to live much longer. At the time, though all the evidence pointed to the Lucas García government as being responsible for the assassination, they blamed the crime on enemies of the government.<sup>84</sup> The REMHI Report and, to a greater extent, the CEH Report lay out the facts and the progression of events on the day of the assassination and clearly find the government responsible. The CEH Report finds, furthermore, that Argueta Colom's assassination was representative of clandestine state repression directed against selected members of the political

opposition, repression that was based in the National Plan of Security and Development's erroneous assumption that the opposition was tied to the armed insurgency. The CEH concludes by stating that the Argueta Colom case illustrates the manner in which the spaces for political participation were continually closing, a closure that "contributed to the lengthening" of the armed struggle.<sup>85</sup>

In general, then, the Reports roundly condemn the government's actions and expose the inner-workings of the army for the world to see. More specifically the CEH and REMHI Reports point out that not all of those who took up arms against the government and army were motivated to do so by their Marxist convictions; rather, many of those who fought the state did so because they felt compelled to, because they felt that armed struggle was the only way available to them to make Guatemalan society more just and improve their situation.<sup>86</sup> This is, of course, in direct opposition to the army's claim that it was fighting against the threat of international communism in the highlands. Though the Reports, and especially *Memoria del Silencio*, do not deny the importance of the state and elite's strong anti-communist sentiment and the influence of the Cold War in determining, in part, how the war developed, the Reports do further undermine the army's claims to be saving the nation from communists by naming poverty, economic and political exclusion, an unequal distribution of land, racism, and Guatemala's authoritarian tradition as historical causes of the insurgency.<sup>87</sup>

The CEH and REMHI Reports also show that the army's concept of *el enemigo interno*, where "[t]he enemy has the same sociological characteristics as the inhabitants of our highlands," was a gross exaggeration and was used to justify the army's waging of war against such a large portion of the population. By denying the validity of the army's all-inclusive concept of the enemy, a concept on which many of the army's campaigns of terror were based, the Reports effectively negate the army's ideological and strategic justifications for the war, thereby denying much of the validity of the war, and certainly all of its brutality. The Reports, for example, acknowledge that the CPRs did have contact with the guerrillas, especially in their early days as the guerrillas led the communities to safety in the mountains and provided them with some needed supplies. They, however, go on to underline the fact that, though some members of the CPRs were implicated in the guerrillas' actions and organizations, the two groups were independent of each other and the CPRs did not belong to the guerrilla organizations en masse, as the army claimed.<sup>88</sup> Rather, as one CPR member put it,

The CPR is a civilian community, it is not armed. This distinction must be made: when it is civilian, it is civilian, and when it is guerrilla, it is guerrilla. It is not true that the community is guerrilla. And not only me, but many people have come to see the communities, journalists, it is a zone in the mountains, in conflict, yes, it is true, we do not deny it, here there are guerrillas, but we are civilians.<sup>89</sup>

Despite much evidence and testimony to the contrary, and despite the fact that, as seen above, international observers visiting the CPRs affirmed the fact that the CPRs and guerrillas were autonomous bodies and “clearly separate,” the army, nevertheless continued to harass the CPRs, which they considered hostile and, therefore, a “military objective.”<sup>90</sup> By confirming the CPRs’ autonomy, and denying their direct and permanent connection with the guerrillas, the Reports deny the validity of the army’s justification for attacking them and, by extension, much of the army’s rationale behind the war as a whole.

The Reports also denounce the army’s failure, as in the case of Rabinal, to make any distinction between combatant and civilian, especially in the case of women, children, the elderly, and the infirm.<sup>91</sup> The Reports also describe other situations where, upon hearing of the army’s expected arrival, the men of a particular community fled their homes, into the mountains and forests, leaving the women and children alone in the village, believing that the latter would be safe from the army’s aggression. The soldiers, however, had been trained to regard all those they encountered as subversives and, therefore, exhibited few qualms about raping, torturing, and killing women and children, even those still in their mothers’ wombs.<sup>92</sup> One of the CEH’s testimonies highlights the army’s blindness in the matter of its victims, and part of the motivation behind it, by repeating the orders a commander gave to his soldiers: “You have to exterminate all of them, from the biggest to the smallest, until not a single one remains, so that the root does not sprout again.”<sup>93</sup>

The CEH’s inclusion of such episodes was, perhaps, meant to help assuage the guilt the army had attempted to impose on the population, and especially on the survivors, blaming them for *la violencia*.<sup>94</sup> The two Reports underline the fact that, had the survivors been in their homes the day their wives, mothers, sisters, and children were killed, they would have suffered the same fate. The Reports point to the fact that, faced with the army’s superior strength, those who fled would not have been able to save either their own lives or the lives of their loved ones and, thus, would have been unable to provide details of the army’s genocidal campaigns to either of the commissions. Had no one been left alive to tell of the events of the war, the army would have



won; thus, as Ricardo Falla states, “testimony is good news.” The witnesses’ testimony

‘I shall never forget’ uttered from the depths of his harrowing memory, states an existentially positive reality for him: that he is alive. ...The more terrible the account of what he witnessed, the more awesome the reality that he announces: I am alive.<sup>95</sup>

The REMHI Report echoes a similar sentiment, that the Report is not simply a denunciation of human rights violations but *un anuncio*, an announcement and an affirmation of life, of “the resurrection of the martyred people.”<sup>96</sup>

More than merely announcing that the survivors are still alive, the Reports also return to them their agency, clearly portraying them as intimately involved in their own fate and not merely pawns of the guerrilla or as cassette tapes which could easily be erased and re-recorded, as the army thought.<sup>97</sup> Such agency can be seen, for example, in the CEH’s account of the army-mandated organization of the PACs. In some towns, the residents, obliged by the army to go on patrol, refused to carry weapons while they were on duty. The town residents, therefore, proposed to turn the army’s program of *fusiles y frijoles* into one of *azadones y frijoles*, hoes and beans, not rifles and beans, and promoted community and not military projects, a proposition the army accepted.<sup>98</sup> Such independence of action on the part of the PACs was not, however, typical and most were forced to patrol and attack nearby communities or face the potentially fatal consequences, as seen in both the CEH and REMHI reports.<sup>99</sup>

The Reports, therefore, try to mediate between the sheer power and near-complete dominance of the state and individual or community agency, between a situation where the indigenous population was largely incapable of independence of action lest they be tortured and killed by the army and, thus, chose to conform and remain silent as a survival mechanism and one where people acted to temper the army’s hegemony and make their domination less absolute. The Reports attempt to find a balance between affirming that those who adopted passivity and indifference as a means of survival should not feel guilty for either that survival or for their inaction, and praising those communities which chose to act to save themselves. It is a balance which, though difficult to find, was surely infinitely easier for the staff of the CEH and REMHI Project to find in the mid to late-1990s than it must have been for those living in the highlands throughout the war. Though the Reports often have a good deal of trouble finding this balance, they show the indigenous population to be multi-dimensional, torn by conflicting strategies of survival, inundated with competing ideologies, yet capable of making their own decisions.

The Reports also expose the guerrillas to be less than the Robin Hoods they sometimes portrayed themselves as. The sections of the Reports that deal with the guerrillas' "acts of violence" cannot be considered a counter-memory in the same way that the sections denouncing the army's actions can be, if only because the guerrillas were never able to impose their ideology and version of events as completely on the population as did the army. Nevertheless, the Reports show that the guerrillas' record during the war was not perfect. They, too, committed "errors" and were not always the champions of the people or, as one Organization of People in Arms publication stated, *hijos del pueblo*, children of the people, they professed to be.<sup>100</sup> The guerrillas were responsible for some of the violence: the CEH Report attributes 3% of the violence to the guerrillas while the REMHI Report blames them for almost 5%.<sup>101</sup> The CEH Report includes executions, massacres, forced recruitment, kidnapping, sabotage, extortion, pillage, the levying of war taxes, and the mistreatment of soldiers outside of combat, among others, on its list of acts the guerrillas committed that are against norms of international humanitarian law<sup>102</sup> and both Reports include detailed narratives and analyses of massacres, executions, and kidnappings undertaken and carried out by the guerrilla organizations.<sup>103</sup>

The inclusion of the guerrillas' wrong-doings further serves to make the history of the war transparent and known and shows that no one's hands were clean, a point the CEH highlights by stating that, though the war may seem at times to be a struggle between two competing forces, the army and the guerrillas, in fact many other parties were involved, including the political parties, the economic elite, various sectors of civil society, and the Church,<sup>104</sup> a point the REMHI Report confirms. The Reports directly involve and implicate even more Guatemalans in the war by describing the actions of the PACs, as well as those of the military commissioners, army spies, and others who took a very active role in the development of the war. By showing such a large portion of Guatemalan society to be involved in the war, the two commissions are clearly suggesting, and indeed state this explicitly,<sup>105</sup> that a similarly broad spectrum of society must take responsibility for and be involved in building a new Guatemala, a Guatemala where the past is known so that it will not be repeated.

## The Cenotaph

The CEH and REMHI Reports, however, are more than counter-memories, they did more than simply collect testimonies to clarify the history of the war and to recover the historical memories of those affected by it. The Reports are also memorials to the war and to its victims. Focusing on the Reports' recommendations and frameworks of analysis, this chapter will examine the Reports as monuments and will analyze them in reference to the criticisms about monuments explored in the first chapter. Thus, like monuments, the Reports seek to shape the way people remember the violence in an attempt to build a new Guatemala. In addition, therefore, to unsilencing the victims and survivors, allowing their memories to come to the surface and be expressed for the first time in decades, the Reports made recommendations as to how similar violence could be avoided in the future. Both Reports are explicit in this goal: *Memoria del Silencio* states that "by means of its recommendations, the CEH aims to help strengthen the hope of the people of Guatemala that its violent history will never be repeated" while *Nunca Más* makes this promise in its title, *Never Again*, and echoes the "demands and opinions" of those who gave their testimony in regard to "what should be done to avoid a recurrence of the destruction and disregard for human rights."<sup>1</sup> The Reports and their recommendations, however, are more than merely preventative; they are also curative and aim to "facilitate unity in Guatemala and banish centuries-old divisions" and to "bring about social reconstruction," or at least, in the words of Monseñor Gerardi, "to contribute to the construction of a different country."<sup>2</sup>

The Accord that established the CEH as an investigatory commission to "clarify past human rights violations and acts of violence that had caused the Guatemalan population to suffer" was clear in its stipulation that the Commission "formulate specific recommendations to encourage peace and national harmony," addressing in particular measures to "preserve the memory of the victims, to foster a culture of mutual respect and observance of human rights and to strengthen the democratic process."<sup>3</sup> To this end, the CEH made recommendations that fell into five categories: in addition to the three set out in their mandate, stated above, the commissioners also looked at the issue of reparations and made other recommendations that fell into the broad category of promoting peace and harmony. This final group included

recommendations about further investigations of the past, the participation of indigenous peoples in the political process, the elimination of racism, and fiscal reform, some of which reiterated the contents of the Peace Accords. In addition to these suggestions, the CEH made one final recommendation: the Commission called for the creation of a “Foundation of Peace and Harmony” to “aid, promote and monitor the implementation of the recommendations,” and to be established within sixty days of the publication of the Report.<sup>4</sup>

The CEH, therefore, was meant to contribute to reconciliation in Guatemala. Though this word does not specifically appear in the mandate, it is clear that this is what the commissioners and staff understood “peaceful coexistence” and “a culture of harmony and mutual respect” to mean. This hope for reconciliation, and indeed the need for it, can be seen in the CEH’s recommendations. Claiming that reconciliation is everyone’s responsibility, the commissioners went on to state that “truth, justice, reparation and forgiveness are the bases of the process of consolidation of peace and national reconciliation,” that “collective reparatory measures should be implemented in such a way as to facilitate reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, without stigmatizing either,” that “exhumation...is in itself an act of justice and reparation and is an important step on the path to reconciliation,” and that “to achieve national harmony and reconciliation, a concerted effort at cultural change is required.”<sup>5</sup>

The drive for reconciliation is also found elsewhere in the CEH Report and is made explicit from the outset. The Prologue states that the authors of the Oslo Accords hoped that “truth would lead to reconciliation and, furthermore, that coming to terms with the truth is the only way to achieve this objective,” though, the commissioners recognize, “no one today can be sure that the enormous challenge of reconciliation, through knowledge of the truth, can be successfully faced.”<sup>6</sup> Despite this and other concessions to reality and to the great challenge Guatemala faced, especially given its history of exclusion, racism, authoritarianism, and repression, the CEH, nevertheless, remained firm in its conclusion that “to achieve true reconciliation and construct a new democratic and participatory nation which values its multiethnic and pluricultural nature, the whole of society must, among other things, assume the commitments of the peace process.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the Commission even seems to remain at least partially confident that Guatemalans will recognize the debt they owe to the “thousands of brave men and women,” including Monseñor Gerardi Condera, “who sought to obtain full respect for human rights and the democratic rule of law and so laid the foundations for this new nation.”<sup>8</sup>

The CEH Report, therefore, is written in such a way as to promote and facilitate reconciliation and the testimonies are analyzed with these goals in mind. This framework, however, frequently seems forced or imposed on the testimonies which, for the most part, simply relate events as they happened and make few comments of any other nature. The CEH's main strategy for encouraging reconciliation and unity is a multi-step process. The first of these is to remind its readers that few were left entirely untouched by the war; almost all Guatemalans were affected by the war in one way or another and a significant portion of the population--especially in the indigenous communities but in the *ladino* as well--were perpetrators. In a country of seven to eight million (in the 1980s), over half of whom are indigenous, the CEH estimated that over 250,000 men were recruited into the military and, using the army's statistics, one million were mobilized into the PACs at their height in 1982.<sup>9</sup> Most of those recruited into both were indigenous. To this already high number can be added the thousands of military commissioners, *orejas*, collaborators, military and intelligence officers, the military police, the national police, the *Guardia de Hacienda*, the air force, the death squads, and, of course, the guerrillas. The CEH also states that politicians, the business sector, and the Church were involved in the war in a more indirect manner. Thus, the CEH points out that almost everyone in the country was responsible in some way for the war. From the Commission's point of view, it seems that, with the notable exception of children, the elderly and infirm, and most women, few were entirely blameless, few were truly innocent victims in the decades-long war.

At the same time that the CEH spreads the blame across so many sectors of the population, encompassing a significant portion of society, it exculpates many of those deemed to be responsible, especially soldiers and PACs. The Commission does this by attempting to explain the actions of patrollers and soldiers, to explain how they could commit such atrocities against their fellow human beings and, as was often the case, against their friends and relatives. To this end, therefore, the CEH is quick to point out that both groups received brutalizing and dehumanizing treatment during their training and, indeed, throughout their period of mobilization; this sort of treatment was intended to desensitize the recruits, make them obey orders blindly, and mete out punishments similar to those they had received.<sup>10</sup> The CEH further excuses the actions of many soldiers and patrollers by highlighting the obligatory nature of their service and their actions. Regarding PACs, for example, the CEH relates that the army forced highland communities to organize in patrols and many, having seen what the army did to nearby villages,

complied in the name of survival.<sup>11</sup> Once formed, the PACs were forced to observe interrogations where torture was applied extensively in order to terrorize or obtain information from the victim. They were later forced to carry out similar tortures under military supervision, under the threat that they would be tortured or killed if they did not.<sup>12</sup> PACs were also forced by the army to participate in a variety of military operations; in addition to capturing, torturing, and executing guerrillas and their collaborators, patrollers were forced to make lists of suspects, carry out sweeps of the area, and generally sow terror in the countryside, either together with the army or on their own, following the army's orders. It was a situation where one killed or was killed and many chose the former in the name of self-preservation.

The Commission's analysis of the counterinsurgency campaign also focuses on the hierarchical nature of the army as a means to pardon some of the perpetrators. The CEH asserts that the human rights violations that were committed during the war were not the product of "mere chance or the result of excesses" but were planned by the army high command, the *Alto Mando del Ejército*, made up of the president, the minister of defense, and the chief of the Army General Staff. The chain of command in the Guatemalan army is vertical and control is centralized. Members of the army, therefore, did not act independently when they carried out military actions against the guerrillas or civilian population but were following orders they had received previously from their superiors. These orders ultimately originated in the *Alto Mando*. It was, the CEH concludes, army policy to commit atrocities against the unarmed civilian population and any arguments claiming autonomy among the lower ranks is groundless. Once an action had been completed, information flowed the opposite way as inferiors informed their superiors of what had taken place. In this way the *Alto Mando* knew everything that was going on in the field and could claim neither ignorance of the atrocities nor could they claim that those atrocities were the result of over-zealous or sadistic officers committing excesses.<sup>13</sup>

The CEH makes a similar point about the PACs which were, after all, the primary means by which the army militarized the countryside and attempted to refashion rural society in its own image. The patrols, as with the army, were organized hierarchically. Rank and file patrollers were subordinate to the local patrol leader who was, in most cases, appointed by the army and was if not a military commissioner or former soldier usually sympathetic to the army's cause and trusted by them.<sup>14</sup> Despite this trust, however, patrol leaders received instructions from the local army detachment about, for example, how and when to patrol, when patrollers

should be punished, and what that punishment should entail.<sup>15</sup> Patrol leaders were granted discretionary powers and there was some independence of action on their part, as seen in the fact that some refused to be armed and others went above and beyond what the army required of them. Nevertheless, the CEH asserts that the army maintained total control and that “the acts and life of the other patrollers and of the entire population was subordinate to military power, whether it was directly in the hands of members of the army or in the hands of patrol leaders and commissioners.”<sup>16</sup>

The final step in the CEH’s strategy for promoting reconciliation was to make sure that Guatemalans had someone to blame and toward whom they could direct their anger and hatred. By rehabilitating the “following orders” defense, the CEH, to a large extent, exonerated soldiers and PACs from responsibility for the human rights violations they were forced to commit. Therefore, instead of locating blame at the local level, among neighbors and relatives, the CEH places responsibility for the war on the shoulders on the *Alto Mando* and other high-ranking military officers. These were the men who planned the counterinsurgency campaigns; they ordered massacres to be carried out, crops to be burned, houses to be destroyed, communities to be torn apart, and genocide to be committed all in the name of defeating subversion, a force which, according to *Memoria del Silencio*, at no time during the decades long war posed a serious threat to the state’s continued dominance.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the war’s “intellectual authors”--the long succession of presidents, generals, and ministers of defense--to whom the CEH assigned responsibility for the particularly brutal way in which the war developed, the CEH also points to a select list of “material authors” --those who carried out the high command’s orders--who are also to blame for the high frequency of human rights violations. Included on this list are the many patrol leaders and military commissioners whose actions served to make the war more violent than it needed to be. The way in which the CEH is written takes the majority of the blame out of the highlands, out of the rural communities which the army specifically targeted for repression and which had already suffered so much, and places it in Guatemala City, a city of many million, where it can do much less harm to the Commission’s goals of reconciliation and reconstruction.

It should be noted that this singling out of military commissioners and patrol leaders as the guilty parties at the local level does not, as it first may seem, contradict the CEH’s apparent policy of displacing blame in order to help reweave Guatemala’s social fabric. The rural

population clearly understood the war in more local terms, as seen in their explanations about why people were killed. The list of motives includes jealousy and envy (mostly about land), vengeance, debts, and old arguments, among other things. Though many of the testimonies state that a victim was killed because she or he was accused of being a guerrilla or collaborating with them, this is as far as the majority of the testimonies go in explaining the war in non-local terms. Rural Guatemalans, thus, understood and explained *la violencia* in “traditional,” local ways. The CEH recognizes the survivors’ and victims’ need to point to known reasons for what had befallen them and, thus, names specific local actors as responsible. The CEH’s concession to local ways of understanding does not, however, significantly negate or undermine their goal of reconciliation and unity; in 1982, for example, one million men and boys were forced to patrol and approximately 30,000 men were forcibly recruited, while only approximately 7,000 military commissioners, the local actors most often singled out in the CEH Report, served throughout Guatemala.<sup>18</sup>

This numerically small concession to the testimonies is an exception to the CEH’s general tendency to force the testimonies to fit into its overarching framework of reconciliation. Not only does the CEH wish, by publishing its Report, to contribute to reconciliation but analyzes the testimonies in order to facilitate its achievement. The Report is written to influence how Guatemalans will remember the past for generations to come. The testimonies themselves, however, offer little hint that the CEH’s framework is reflective of how the survivors and victims remember the past, or how they see the future. Except for those testimonies given by former soldiers and patrollers, few of the testimonies collected by the CEH suggest that the victims will be able to reconcile with the perpetrators, a reconciliation to which the CEH hoped *Memoria del Silencio* would contribute. Furthermore, though they do suggest an understanding of the forced nature of service in the military and PACs, few of the testimonies indicate that the perpetrators will be forgiven because they had to “kill or be killed,” as the CEH, patrollers, and soldiers assert. Anger, hatred, pain, sorrow, grief, confusion, disgust, desolation, these are the emotions expressed in the testimonies, and not respect, reconciliation, unity, peace, harmony, or any of the other more optimistic words used in the CEH’s mandate and recommendations.

Before looking at this in greater detail, a preliminary comment about remembering and forgetting is in order. The inability to forget is a common refrain in the testimonies. Whether you were a mother who wanted to forget what had happened to your children, whether your



brothers had seen their younger sister raped and their father tortured, or whether you had served in the PACs and had been made to kill your own brothers,<sup>19</sup> you can never forget; you will never forget. Linked to this feeling that the past cannot and will not be forgotten is the idea that the “pain of our dead remains with us” and that, for patrollers, “the pain that they killed their brothers” is still there.<sup>20</sup> The CEH, of course, was not explicitly suggesting that people forget either their pain or their past; rather, the commission interpreted the testimonies in an attempt to make people remember differently, in ways that were contrary to the victims and survivors’ memories, contrary to their emotions, and contrary to their understanding and experience of the war.

The contrast between the CEH’s framework of reconciliation and the testimonies’ very different framework is most stark in the sections of the Report that examine violence against women and that directed toward children. The testimonies tell of women, especially younger, childless women, being raped by dozens of soldiers, one after the other, repeatedly over days or weeks, for hours at a time. The soldiers lined up, “took their turn,” and then, usually, executed their victims in gruesome, macabre, and perverted ways.<sup>21</sup> The soldiers “were thinking about raping and robbing...plunder and rape were more important to them.”<sup>22</sup> The soldiers and patrollers, as many testimonies relate, laughed; they laughed as they violated women and they laughed when they killed them.<sup>23</sup> They showed no respect for women and viewed them as meat, as plunder, as their reward for a job well done.<sup>24</sup> Few of those women who did survive ever told anyone that they had been raped: “It is not easy for a women to dare to say that they raped her, it is much more difficult for an indigenous women [to say this].”<sup>25</sup> For many rape victims, therefore, relating their experience to the CEH was the first time they had spoken about what had happened to them during the war. Women remained silent out of fear; they were afraid of those who had done this to them and, as well, of what their husbands might do to them if they ever found out. Despite the silence, women can not forget what had happened and some are “still sick with fright and sadness.”<sup>26</sup>

The testimonies about rape, therefore, give little indication that there will ever be any sort of forgiveness between the victim and the rapists, or between the victims’ fathers, husbands, and children who were forced to witness the act and the men who committed it. There is only pain and hatred. There is no sense that the victims and their relatives understand that rape was simply part of the army’s campaign to generate terror and that soldiers were ordered to rape their

female prisoners and any women they encountered while in the field, and were threatened with death if they did not comply.<sup>27</sup> Instead, it is clear that rape, and the violence, humiliation, and laughter that accompanied it, left deep wounds that have yet to heal, and that, perhaps, never will. As deep as these wounds are, however, violence directed against children left even deeper wounds. Whether in the mountains from hunger or in the villages at the hands of the army, children, “the hope of our future,” “died by the hundreds.”<sup>28</sup> The testimonies are very clear about the fact that, as with most of the women who were raped, the children were innocent because “a baby of six months, what crime has he committed? Are they also going to say that he is a guerrilla or that he will be one when he is older...”<sup>29</sup> Yet, despite their innocence, the children were killed, often brutally, and “it did not take much for the patrollers [to do it].”<sup>30</sup> Those who gave their testimony could not understand these deaths, nor the violent manner in which they occurred, and they repeatedly expressed confusion on this subject; people “could not understand why they killed [everyone, including] a baby of scarcely one month.”<sup>31</sup> This confusion is coupled with guilt, especially when, for example, a mother accidentally suffocated her child when she was attempting to muffle its cries or when a mother, fleeing the army, with her baby on her back, noticed that her child’s face was covered in blood and stopped to see what was the matter. It was then that she saw that her baby was dead, that her baby had been shot and had, in that moment, saved the mother from a similar death.<sup>32</sup>

The pairing of confusion and guilt, emotions expressed especially by those relating both the rape of women and the killing of children, points to the challenge of reconciliation, a challenge which is heightened by the army’s blatant and direct attacks on both the dignity and the culture of the victims. Women’s dignity was particularly attacked. To begin, the army, understanding the shame attached to rape, often intentionally left their victims’ bodies naked or in compromising positions in order to ensure that people knew what fate the women had suffered and that the humiliation they had felt in their last moments of life continued in their death. As well, women were forced to cook and clean for the soldiers and, especially the younger, more attractive women, were forced to go to the *fiestas* the army organized and dance with “all the soldiers, with all the patrollers...and this caused great pain for the elderly, for the parents and for the girls themselves who had boyfriends but were forced to dance with the uniformed soldiers and with their weapons.”<sup>33</sup> This situation also affected men’s dignity since they were powerless to protect their daughters, sisters, and wives from the soldiers’ demands and were threatened if

they expressed their unwillingness to let their female relatives dance with the soldiers and patrollers at the army's *fiestas*.<sup>34</sup> One testimony tells of a situation where the women were forced to dance for the soldiers and the younger women were taken aside and raped; "later, they were forced to walk...up the mountain...[the soldiers] beat the women a lot, told them that they were cows, treated them as if they were cows changing pastures..."<sup>35</sup>

Many of those who gave testimonies made a similar comparison, commenting on how the soldiers "treated us like animals," on how the soldiers "made them feel like animals;" "the best [for them was that] indigenous peoples were finished...and therefore to kill *indios* was to kill dogs."<sup>36</sup> Many testimonies assert that the soldiers "did not respect our people," that "they did not respect our lives," that they refused to let the survivors bury the dead and perform those funerary rites indigenous culture requires; instead, the bodies were left out in the open air, a fact which angered and disturbed many "because we are not animals who can be left [anywhere]."<sup>37</sup>

The belief that the army wished to finish with or exterminate all indigenous people was repeated in numerous testimonies<sup>38</sup> and does not only relate to purely physical extermination but also applies to cultural life. Regarding religion, many became Evangelicals "because this is what the army said."<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the military systematically assassinated Mayan priests in order to "finish with" Mayan culture because the "priests...are those who drive and guide" us.<sup>40</sup> The soldiers "destroyed our sacred places...they offended us by killing our guides, our priests, our elderly."<sup>41</sup> These losses were so great because "we respect our elderly a lot, they are authorities, they bring with them the experience of our people...[and] much of the knowledge of the elderly was lost because they died..."<sup>42</sup>

The testimonies also reflect attacks on indigenous language and dress, as seen in the following testimony: "The Poptí people felt very affected by having to hide their rites, to change their customs and to have to be afraid to speak their language because they said that all the guerrillas spoke Poptí."<sup>43</sup> Others relate that soldiers

killed [a woman and her family] when [the soldiers] recognized that they were from Nebaj. [Also] in Patulul Suchitepequez they killed people who were identified as Ixil, they were recognized by the women's *cortes*. They were accused of being guerillas. To survive, they had to change their *traje* for that of the K'iche.<sup>44</sup>

This is just a small sample of the testimonies the CEH collected but they clearly do not

reflect the framework of reconciliation in which the commission analyzed the war. They are full of anger and hatred directed against soldiers, military commissioners, patrol leaders, and patrollers. For the survivors, the blame lies at the local level and not in the Presidential Palace. There are, for example, few references to any of the presidents who governed during *la violencia* while, at the same time, there are numerous references to the PACs from Xenup and Xococ, the lieutenant from Joyabaj, the soldiers from Rabinal, Cobán, Concepción Huista, and other towns scattered throughout the highlands.<sup>45</sup>

The discrepancy between the CEH's analysis and the testimonies themselves, especially those given by the victims and survivors and not the former soldiers and patrollers, is even more obvious when those testimonies that give some indication of Guatemala's present and future are examined. Speaking of the situation in Guatemala at the time, the testimonies relate that now there is no trust, no unity, no respect, no friendship. The war left divisions and different ways of thinking, as the following testimony makes clear: "Those who live in La Antena now, we do not recognize them because now they are not like us, they have the ideas that the soldiers left them, [the soldiers] did much damage."<sup>46</sup> The war "left a negative mentality, which is to say that in this country there is nothing good."<sup>47</sup> People no longer communicate, they have been left with fear, negligence, laziness, uncertainty, impunity, resentment, apathy, loss, and weakness. "Now there is mistrust and fear, all of this began with the conflict because the army was using neighbor against neighbor" to get information.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, people have internalized the army's prohibitions against organizing and it is very difficult to get people to unite, to join together to demand anything but the most immediate of changes.<sup>49</sup> People believe that organizing is bad, that it brings only trouble and suffering; as one testimony states:

The violence changed us. We had to forget about our organization that we had in our community before the violence, about our experience in the cooperative. Well, now we cannot remember...we can only remember what we all suffered all those years as if it erased that from before...<sup>50</sup>

As one Mutual Support Group, or GAM, member opined:

I feel that...the army is the big winner in this war. That the army achieved the objective that it wanted, to totally demobilize civil society, to totally dismantle it and that today, there is practically no social movement, it does not exist. I don't know if I'm wrong but I don't see it, a movement which awakens interest, which goes to the streets, which protests...<sup>51</sup>

Though this is, perhaps, an extreme view of the war, and one that most testimonies did not echo, the sense of pessimism about the future is reflected in many of the other testimonies, especially those that address the impunity rampant in Guatemala; indeed, in Petén, “impunity is the law.”<sup>52</sup> The impunity the perpetrators enjoy, and a rejection of it, is evident in the following testimony:

What the rapes left us is that one is accustomed to rape women, there is no respect, there is no punishment for the rapists, the youth also learned this, a woman is not worth anything, a woman cannot defend herself, she does not speak Spanish, she cannot complain.... They told us that the peace has already been signed, but [those responsible for the rapes] are calm, they know that they can do what they want, they are authorities, so what peace is this?...Now there is peace and they rape my daughter...I look at her and it causes me much grief, I don't know who is worse, her or me...they broke her life and I remember all that happened to us and I cry, I cry, because nothing has been achieved, there is no hope.<sup>53</sup>

It would be difficult to make the case that this and other testimonies show any feelings of reconciliation, any sense that Guatemalans will one day live in the culture of harmony and mutual respect to which *Memoria del Silencio* was meant to contribute.

People did not come to tell their stories so that the perpetrators and victims could be reconciled. Rather, they gave their testimony to demand that the past not be repeated and that military governments never return to power.<sup>54</sup> They gave their testimony to get answers, to find out what happened to relatives who disappeared, to find out whether a loved one was alive or dead, and to find out where they were buried.<sup>55</sup> They gave their testimony to demand that the dead receive a proper burial.<sup>56</sup> They gave their testimony to affirm the victims' innocence and to name the guilty parties.<sup>57</sup> They gave their testimonies to demand justice and an end to impunity.<sup>58</sup> And were disappointed.

The CEH, partly because of its mandate and partly because of the goals it sought to achieve, denied the victims' demands to name names and their demands for justice. Instead, the Report attempted to impose its own interpretation onto the testimonies; it sought to fit the testimonies into its framework of reconciliation. The CEH sought to force its own vision of the future onto the testimonies, a future of peace and unity, a future that the testimonies surely do not reflect. Where the testimonies tell of division, the Report sees a future of unity. Where the testimonies tell of impunity, the Report sees a future of democracy and the rule of law. Where

the testimonies tell of anger, the Report sees a future of harmony. Where the testimonies tell of hatred, the Report sees a future of reconciliation and respect. Where there testimonies remember, the CEH Report remembers differently.

The REMHI Report is subject to similar criticisms. First conceived as a way to compliment the work of the CEH, focusing on “rural communities whose physical inaccessibility and linguistic diversity would complicate the Commission’s task,”<sup>59</sup> the Church was interested in helping to build peace “from below and from within.”<sup>60</sup> By publishing the testimonies it had collected in these out of the way villages, the Church sought to contribute to a “true peace cemented in truth, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.”<sup>61</sup> To begin, the Church sought to “know the truth that will make us all free” and the REMHI Project, as Monseñor Gerardi stated when he presented it to the public in April 1998, was intended to break the silence and allow victims to tell their stories “so that they may feel liberated from the burden that has weighed them down for so many years.”<sup>62</sup> Truth, thus, would allow the wounds of the past to heal, truth would make it possible “to open ourselves to a future of hope and light,” and truth would allow for the moral rebuilding of society.<sup>63</sup> The search for truth, however, did not end with the publication of the REMHI Report. Rather, the Church made a commitment to return the truth--these collected memories--to the people and “to support the use of memory as an instrument of social reconstruction.”<sup>64</sup>

*Nunca Más* also touched on the themes of reconciliation, justice, and forgiveness, all of which are, like truth, related to rebuilding Guatemalan society. The Church’s hope that their work would contribute to reconciliation in Guatemala is clear in Monseñor Gerardi’s comments at the ceremony celebrating the REMHI Report’s publication. Explaining why the Church involved itself in non-spiritual matters, Gerardi remarked that

the Church has a mission to accomplish in terms of constructing the social order. ...[The REMHI Project] is an alternative aimed at finding new ways for human beings to live with one another. ...This is a pastoral approach. It is working with the light of faith to discover the face of God, the presence of the Lord. In all of these events it is God who is speaking to us. We are called to reconciliation. Christ’s mission is one of reconciliation. His presence calls us to be agents of reconciliation in this broken society and to try to place the victims and perpetrators within the framework of justice. ...<sup>65</sup>

Gerardi, then, believed that discovering the truth of the past would lead to reconciliation and

social reconstruction, a point made even more clear when looking at the REMHI Report's recommendations. The REMHI Project asserted that both the state and the URNG, as well as any other actors who had played a role in the war, must, first of all, recognize their responsibility for the violence. The state, as well, must act so as to ease the damage it caused, compensating the victims economically, socially, and culturally, and should also cover the cost of any medical, psychological, legal, and social assistance the victims might require.<sup>66</sup> For its part, the URNG must change its behavior so as to fit with its rhetoric and must, as well, admit to any "errors" its members committed.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the Church demanded that exhumations be undertaken to discover the location of clandestine cemeteries and, if possible, the whereabouts of the disappeared so that the survivors' pain could be eased and the victims' dignity could be reaffirmed.<sup>68</sup> The Church's recommendations also included the issue of demilitarization and the end to forced recruitment, as well as the related matter of reassessing the role of civil authorities and strengthening their power. The REMHI Project also called for a change in economic relations, a more equal distribution of land, and a legalization of communal land.<sup>69</sup> All of these recommendations were meant to contribute to social reconstruction, and also to facilitate reconciliation and to help Guatemalans come to terms with the past and to move forward toward a more peaceful, equal, just, and tolerant future.

As for the issue of justice, the Project, asserting that the victims felt a sense of injustice because of the high level of impunity that existed in Guatemala at the time, suggested that the atrocities be recognized and that the perpetrators be judged. The demand for justice, however, does not contradict the calls for reconciliation. This can be seen in the statement that, without a recognition of the atrocities, the perpetrators would never have the opportunity to confront their past, reconstruct their identity, and redefine their daily relations with the victims. The Project, then, clearly envisioned a post-conflict Guatemala where victims and victimizers lived side by side. For the Church, forgiveness is an integral part of this post-conflict reconciliation and coexistence, as Monseñor Próspero Penados del Barrio makes clear in his introductory comments to the Report: "[t]he Church teaches us that 'no one is so perverse and so guilty that they cannot trust that they will one day be forgiven as long as their behavior is sincere.'"<sup>70</sup> While they did recognize the fact that forgiveness could not be imposed from above, the REMHI Project and the Church have an obvious position on this issue, as seen above and in the statement that "forgiveness is a voluntary act that is born inside every person who has learned the truth and

experienced justice,”<sup>71</sup> two conditions to which *Nunca Más* was meant to contribute.

Thus, for the Church, peace, justice, truth, reconciliation, and forgiveness are all interconnected and interdependent, and all are inextricably intertwined with and preconditions for social reconstruction, which is clearly the Church’s overarching goal. *Nunca Más*, the Project stated, was a collective memory which looked not only to the past but also to the future and “support[ed] the [victims’] demands for truth, justice, and reparation which must form part of the process of social reconstruction in Guatemala.”<sup>72</sup> The Church’s concept of reconstruction was very much community-based. The REMHI Project suggested that the victims receive compensation for what they had suffered; economic compensation “should be guided by a community development rationale...[and] must foster local participation to avoid creating dependency.”<sup>73</sup> The Project also suggested that the victims receive economic compensation for “physical or moral harm, loss of opportunities and education, loss of supplementary income due to the violence, and attacks on people’s reputation and honor.” In terms of more humanitarian compensation, or what the REMHI Report terms “readaptation measures,” the Project recommended that “psychological and social services should be provided in an atmosphere of trust and community participation” and they should be “imbued with social awareness of the experience and sensitive to the fact that, above all, the dignity of the victims must be respected.” On a final note, the Project stated that these services “should avoid rigid clinical models focusing on decontextualized individual care and should respect cultural differences.”<sup>74</sup> Clearly, then, the REMHI Project was interested in reversing a portion of the damage caused by the army during *la violencia*; through these recommendations, they were attempting to rebuild rural communities, they were attempting to remedy the army’s divisive wartime strategies and return, as much as possible, highland communities to what they had been before the violence tore them apart.

Among the other recommendations included in *Nunca Más* were those regarding collective memory. The REMHI Project suggested, first of all, that a more accurate version of history be made known to all Guatemalans and that these historical materials and information be produced so as to reflect the “multilingual, pluricultural reality and the oral, nonliterate traditions of many rural communities.” Those materials created to make this history more widely know must, therefore, “avoid contributing once again to a memory that is segregated from the vast majorities who have been the protagonists of this history.”<sup>75</sup> As well, the REMHI Project recommended that the victims be remembered and honored in such a way that they become a “permanent



fixture in the collective memory of present and future generations;” to this end, the Project suggested that plazas and streets be renamed after people or events that have a “collective significance and epitomize the struggle for human rights.”<sup>76</sup> And, finally, it was recommended that the Joint Commission on Sacred Sites created by the Peace Accords aid in the research and creation of monuments of “indigenous collective memory in traditional Mayan sacred sites that were desecrated during the armed conflict.”<sup>77</sup> These demands are, like those regarding compensation, geared toward communities and, more specifically, the indigenous communities that were hardest hit by the violence. They aim to rehabilitate and revalue local, community-level memories of the war and, at the same time, to turn them into a broader, national memory. They seek, on the one hand, to reconstruct indigenous communities by recreating common memories and to reproduce the bonds that tied those communities together; on the other hand, these recommendations aim to turn the nation into a community that remembers the war in the same way, that honors the same individuals and events, and that is fighting the same battle to reach common goals--peace and social reconstruction.

Peace and social reconstruction are undeniably worthy and desirable goals and they reflect the sentiments expressed in the testimonies that celebrate an end to the violence and demand that changes be made to ensure a better future, especially for the indigenous population most affected by the war. To this end, those testifying demand that their experiences be made known and that their stories be recorded and remain as a history of the conflict. The victims and survivors demand that their human and cultural rights be respected. They demand that the atrocities be denounced, that justice be served, and that those responsible for the violence be punished in accordance with their crimes. They demand an end to impunity and corruption.<sup>78</sup> They demand that the dead be buried properly, that land be distributed to the poor, that lost belongings be returned.<sup>79</sup> They demand that the guns be taken away, that the PACs be eliminated, that the army stop taking their sons. They want fathers to teach their sons how to plant and see to the *milpa*, not how to handle weapons. They want to be able to practice their religion and perform their ceremonies. They want to live “calmly,” as they had before. They want freedom, and they want peace.<sup>80</sup>

In this regard, the recommendations of the REMHI project reflect the demands of the victims; at the same time, however, the REMHI Report’s rhetoric of forgiveness finds few echoes in the testimonies. As seen above, the Church encouraged forgiveness and considered it to

be an essential ingredient in the recipe for peace and social reconstruction. The REMHI Report is, therefore, written in such a way as to enable the victims to forgive those responsible for their suffering. The Project's main strategy for accomplishing this goal is to portray the perpetrators as remorseful; the REMHI Report attempts to show that the perpetrators are sincere in their expressions of regret and, thus, can be forgiven. First, the REMHI Report underlines the forced nature of serving in the army and, to a greater extent, in the patrols. Both the REMHI Project's analysis of the testimonies and the testimonies of former soldiers and patrollers stress this fact, that the military forcibly recruited its soldiers from the indigenous communities and forced those communities to organize to defend themselves against "leftist terrorists." The obligatory nature of military service and patrolling is a frequent refrain in the REMHI Report, as is the fact that patrollers and soldiers were simply following orders when they were on duty and committed atrocities. Furthermore, the REMHI Report highlights the fact that disobeying orders was not an option. Patrollers and soldiers followed even the most heinous orders because they were afraid, because if they refused to obey, they would be severely punished.<sup>81</sup> The testimony of one former patroller relates that "we had brothers that did not carry out the orders; [the military commissioners] grabbed them, tortured and punished them, and afterwards assassinated them."<sup>82</sup> Other testimonies support this and recount how it was impossible to ignore orders because the army had indoctrinated its soldiers and proxies with the belief that orders were followed without discussion.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, the PACs and soldiers received dehumanizing treatment and training from the military to imbue in them a group mentality entirely devoid of moral or ethical qualms about behavior that would, in other times and places, be considered abhorrent.<sup>84</sup>

By including the experiences of patrollers and soldiers, the Project staff were seeking to explain how these men could commit so many human rights violations. They were attempting to help the victims understand the perpetrators, often their own neighbors and relatives, to facilitate reconciliation, reconstruction, and forgiveness. The REMHI Report, therefore, is seeking to explain why people patrolled or became soldiers (they were forced to), how they were able to massacre and torture their fellow human being (they were trained to), and, finally, why they did it (they were ordered to). It is, after all, easier to forgive something you understand, to forgive someone for doing something when you know why they did it. Thus, the REMHI Project, to a certain extent, was attempting to make victims out of the perpetrators for it is easier to live with other victims than it is to live with those who are to blame for your pain.

The REMHI Report continues in its efforts to encourage forgiveness by rehumanizing the perpetrators and showing that many of them--especially former soldiers and PACs--regret what they did. The Project, in its analysis of the perpetrators and their testimonies, admits that, since few came forward to testify, generalizing about them is difficult; further complicating the making of generalizations about the perpetrators is the possibility, which the Project staff recognizes, that those who did chose to give their testimony did so precisely because they felt guilty about what they had done and so their testimonies must not be taken as representative. As a result, coming to any sort of reliable conclusion about how the majority of the perpetrators feel about their past actions is impossible.<sup>85</sup> That said, however, the REMHI Report goes on to look at testimonies that talk about personal effects of the violence, effects that suggest that the perpetrators, too, are human and regret what the army forced them to do.

The testimonies, as suggested above, tell of guilt over “how many died at my own hands, how many men were kidnapped at night, in the day...on the banana plantations. Many other places that I don’t remember but yes, I kidnapped many people with my own hands.” This same man has the events of a particular massacre engraved in his mind: “I remember our brothers who died in Izabal, I always have them on my mind, to remember that it was my own hands that cut their lives short, but it wasn’t my desire.” As a *judicial*, he had no choice but to do it.<sup>86</sup> Other perpetrators echo similar sentiments and recognize that, indeed, they did “bad things” but that they were ordered to do so and had no other choice.<sup>87</sup> The REMHI Report is trying to show that the perpetrators, like the victims, are still affected by the war. The testimonies tell of officers hospitalized and still in treatment for psychosis; they tell of perpetrators drinking to excess in an attempt to forget the war and their role in it. One man relates that he is still very troubled by what he has lived through; what hurts him the most is that people he and other patrollers were ordered to kill were “people from our own community, our brothers” who had been identified as guerrillas.<sup>88</sup> One testimony brings many of these different streams of thought and emotion together and also points to a better future. Speaking of a squadron leader, one sub-official tells that this man on occasion gave orders to kill and that, as could be expected, these orders were followed. “Now he has a pain in his heart...and he drinks to forget but doesn’t succeed. Now he wants to fix his life, he already confessed what he did and now he counsels young men not to join the army, that it’s better to study and work;” his past pains him and he does not want the same thing to happen to others.<sup>89</sup> This one testimony shows the perpetrators

to feel and to care, to want a different future, and to be acting in ways to achieve this, all of which the victims can surely understand and with which they can identify and which, perhaps, they will respect and appreciate. In this regard, the REMHI Project is attempting to bring the victims and perpetrators together to fight for a better future.

The REMHI Report includes these testimonies in order to help the victims understand those who caused them to suffer, to see the perpetrators as unwilling accomplices in the atrocities who, like their victims, wish it would never have happened. The REMHI Report, thus construes the fact that the victimizers came forward to give their testimony as genuine repentance<sup>90</sup> and strongly suggests that, given this, they be forgiven. The REMHI Project staff are not necessarily denying the validity of the victims' anger, hatred, and pain; rather they are suggesting that the victims move beyond these emotions and work with the perpetrators to ensure that the past will never be repeated, that it *can* never be repeated. Looking at the victims' testimonies, however, there is little hint of either understanding or forgiveness. As with the testimonies included in the CEH Report, the REMHI testimonies do not reflect the overarching framework in which the REMHI Report was written--that of forgiveness. Rather, the REMHI testimonies convey feelings of anger, hatred, pain, confusion, grief, and a mixture of equally unforgiving emotions.

Those who related their experiences to the Church's staff express a clear inability to forget, as they did in *Memoria del Silencio*. The testimonies state that "until now we have this history in our memory because for us it will never be forgotten because these are things we lived and it is a sadness." Fourteen years later, "we cannot forget it," "many people died...we still remember, we also remember...how many people they burned and we saw this, and the army did this."<sup>91</sup> One person who witnessed an assassination states that "[s]uch a hard blow cannot be explained. ...One hears reports on the news, but it's not the same, there's a big difference between hearing and seeing. One feels bad, traumatized;" what one saw is left etched in one's mind, and it will only be erased when one dies.<sup>92</sup> The things people saw and lived, therefore, are forever burned into their memories and "even though some say that you must forget what happened, I haven't been able to, I remember."<sup>93</sup> In addition to being unable or unwilling to forget, the testimonies tell that "the pain in our hearts will never pass;" "I feel as if I have a knife in my heart." People still remember, years later, and those memories are still painful and "we are still sad."<sup>94</sup> The Church was not necessarily asking people to forget *la violencia*; they were, after

all, engaged in recuperating historical memory, in collecting memories of the war in order to rebuild Guatemala from the bottom up. The Church, however, was harvesting these memories so that they would no longer weigh people down and prevent them from acting and organizing to better their lives, so that people could put their memories and the most extreme, and immobilizing, of the range emotions associated with those memories aside and move forward.

Coupled with the unhappy and ever-present memories is a sense of confusion and a lack of understanding or knowledge about why an individual was kidnapped or killed. The survivors wonder why such tragic things happened to them. They wonder what crime their loved ones must have committed to have been killed with such brutality. This is especially true for the most vulnerable members of the population. The survivors are left asking rhetorical questions about the dead: Perhaps the elderly and the children were guerrillas? What was the poor girl doing wrong; what mistake did she make? In response, they assert that the victims did not know how to handle weapons, that the girl was doing nothing,<sup>95</sup> and, thus, that their deaths were undeserved. It is clear the survivors believe that the victims' deaths made no sense; that they were meaningless. In its mission to promote and facilitate forgiveness, the Church sought to give meaning to the thousands of seemingly senseless deaths, to explain the seemingly inexplicable in order to help the wounds of the past heal and, thus, to help the victims and survivors move forward to a new, more promising, future in a newly reconstructed, and reconciled, Guatemala.

It is, however, difficult to imagine a time when those who suffered so much will be able to live peacefully or calmly with the perpetrators, when they will be able to let go of their hatred, pain, and anger and forgive. These emotions are especially palpable in the numerous testimonies that compare the treatment the indigenous population received at the army's hands to that usually directed toward animals, a comparison also made frequently in the CEH Report. In both life and death, the army and its proxies treated its victims like animals. In Río Negro, the soldiers told them that they were not people, they tied the women up as if they were cows; in Alta Verapaz, they treated their victims as one would treat a dog; in Petén, the victims died like animals.<sup>96</sup> In death, while some "were buried as if they were animals ready to be roasted," others remained unburied and the survivors hoped that their bones would be found because the victims are not animals whose bones could be thrown out and left anywhere.<sup>97</sup> One woman was left alone to care for her children after her husband had been taken. She did not know how he had died or if they had buried him. Her children say: "Mama, where will they have left my poor

papa, maybe the sun passes over his bones, maybe the rain or the air passes over him... as if my papa were an animal.” This is what pains her, the fact that she was unable to perform the proper burial rites for her husband and that his bones may be anywhere, exposed to the elements.<sup>98</sup>

Combined with these comparisons are references to the soldiers’ particularly brutal and inhuman acts and statements about the soldiers’ complete lack of respect toward the rural population. In the town of Xix, near Chajul, “the soldiers arrived with patrollers, they killed entire families and burned their houses, they slit their throats and shot them...they killed everyone, they opened a girl’s head, they took out her brain and seemed to eat it. They slit a neighbor’s throat and began to drink the blood.”<sup>99</sup> One mother can never forget her son’s death because the perpetrators, not content to simply kill him, had pulled out all of her son’s teeth, as well.<sup>100</sup> In Alta Verapaz, the army cut the children up into small pieces with their machetes and near Rabinal “[a] column of soldiers arrived. They began to shoot. My cousin R. J. died there, and I. and E. [also cousins]... H. J. S. didn’t die from the bullets, so they took out his heart.”<sup>101</sup> There is no dearth of similarly macabre acts in the Report; the REMHI Project, however, attempted to explain how soldiers and patrollers could sink to such amoral behavior. In addition to stating that they had to kill or be killed, the REMHI Report describes the training soldiers and PACs received to enable them to kill, rape, and torture. In order to complete their training course, soldiers were, in one instance, told to kill approximately 300 dogs. The officers filled a large cask with blood and each recruit was forced to drink from it. Those who refused had to drink double the standard amount. The blood was lunch; dinner was stew made from the dogs they had just killed.<sup>102</sup>

In addition to the soldiers and patrollers’ cruel and degrading acts, the testimonies describe the soldiers’ contempt and disrespect for the victims. After a massacre in Huehuetenango, the soldiers were “content, they were shouting, killing, singing and whistling. ... As if they felt nothing...they were calm.”<sup>103</sup> As well, they laughed as they went about their business, raping women, removing unborn children from women’s wombs, and playing with these as if they were balls.<sup>104</sup> The PACs also laughed; “after all the violations, [the PAC from Xococ]...were laughing because they had succeeded in finishing off the community of Río Negro. One said: I killed eight, 10, 15. Another said: 20.”<sup>105</sup>

This disrespect for both life in general and the lives of the victims in particular is evident throughout *Nunca Más* and was an attitude the army sought to inculcate into its recruits and the

PACs. It is, however, a significant obstacle to social reconstruction and forgiveness, as is the fact that many of the survivors interpret the army's actions as attempts at genocide, as an attempt to exterminate the entire indigenous population. The REMHI testimonies, like the CEH testimonies, relate that the military wished to *acabar con*, or finish with, and "terminate" the people living in indigenous towns throughout Guatemala. The military not only resorted to mass killings to accomplish this goal but also sought to attack the indigenous population by "destroying the seed." "The army's plan was to leave us without seeds. Even if one was a child one year old, two years old, all are bad seeds, or so they told us. This was the army's plan. This is what I have seen."<sup>106</sup> In addition, the army occasionally singled out and killed the male children in particular because, according to the military's logic, if they were left alive, they would seek to avenge the death of their fathers and so they must be killed now.<sup>107</sup> If it was decided to allow the children to live, they were often taken away to work at the army post or in the homes of army officials, or were adopted by *ladino* families. The PACs from Xococ, for example, took the children who survived the massacre at Río Negro back with them; the children no longer went to school but were forced to work and "so our community was destroyed."<sup>108</sup> As for violence directed against women, the testimonies recognize that rape was a calculated strategy formulated by the army in order to affect both indigenous women and indigenous communities because women are the ones who "preserve the family and take care of the others," because "women are a symbol, the symbol of life, of the perpetuity of life." As a result, "to kill a woman was to kill life,"<sup>109</sup> which was, of course, exactly what the army wished to accomplish.

The testimonies are full of the effects the army's actions had on life and on community, on people's lives together. The war changed life completely. People began to withdraw; they began to live in fear, afraid of the army, afraid of the unknown. Families disintegrated as some fled to the mountains or the cities and others chose to stay, as relatives supported opposite sides in the war, as family members stopped trusting one another, as husbands saw their wives raped, as sons killed their fathers. People lost their land, their livelihood, their sacred places, their children, their parents, their spouses, their siblings. As a result, "our community was left like a desert, no one lives there."<sup>110</sup> A Mam man from San Marcos recalls how the war affected his community:

the community was destroyed, only two families remained, the rest left. Before there were *fiestas*, there were fireworks, the *padre* came to baptize, people were happy, people came to sell bread, they killed livestock to sell, the *fiestas* lasted

two days and two nights, there was a marimba band, meat... The time for *fiestas* came to an end, everything was lost... Before the war, Xolhuitz's *fiesta* was very bright...everything ended because of the war, now there are no *fiestas*.<sup>111</sup>

Thus, for the highlands, the past and the present are characterized by pain, grief, anger, a sense of loss, and, in many cases, continued fear. The image of the future fares only slightly better; though the testimonies that make reference to the future clearly show that the victims and survivors support the Church's desire to see Guatemala rebuilt, they hardly suggest that an attitude of forgiveness will reign. The survivors' thoughts about what the future will look like become clear when their demands and reasons for giving their testimony are examined. The demands include freedom, peace, respect, and a range of reparatory measures. Those who related their experiences to the REMHI Project staff demanded answers to their questions about what their loved ones had done wrong, what had happened to them, and where they had been buried. They demanded that both the military and the guerrillas' acts be investigated and those found responsible be punished. They denounced the military and the government for what those institutions had done to Guatemala's indigenous population. They demanded that the Peace Accords be complied with.<sup>112</sup> They did not come offering forgiveness. They came demanding repentance, justice, and punishment; they did not demand vengeance because this, they asserted, would only lead to more violence, a violence they wished never to see again.<sup>113</sup> People came, offering their stories, to make sure that the nation and the world knew what they had suffered at the hands of those who were supposed to govern, not terrorize and kill. They offered their stories so that the past would come to light so that it could never be repeated, not so that they--the victims--could forgive the perpetrators their crimes and begin to rebuild Guatemala together.<sup>114</sup>

The victims and survivors, understandably, want to see a different Guatemala rise from the ashes of the one they remember as violent, where their lives were constantly in danger, where their communities were torn apart, and where death no longer made sense. The testimonies recognize that this process of reconstruction will be long and difficult. As well, the testimonies point to the hope of the survivors that the Church will continue its involvement with its congregations and will continue to play a vital role in the communities as they struggle to rebuild and reconstitute themselves.<sup>115</sup> The REMHI Project echoes these sentiments yet forces another on them--forgiveness. The REMHI Project analyzed the testimonies within the framework of



forgiveness and wrote the final Report in such a way as to pave the way toward that goal. In its analysis, therefore, the REMHI Project attempts to shape how people will remember *la violencia* in years to come; like *Memoria del Silencio*, *Nunca Más* seeks to make future generations remember differently, not as the victims and survivors remember, but as the Church wishes they would.

When discussing monuments, it is instructive to define the word fully and examine it from an etymological perspective. The Latin root of the word “monument,” *monere*, has a number of different meanings. First, as one would expect, it means “to remind.” However, defining monuments simply as reminders is reductive and simplistic since they are more selective and nuanced than is commonly believed and serve to help people remember the past in particular ways. They also have other functions. Again based on the Latin root of the word, monuments are meant “to admonish,” “to warn,” “to advise,” and “to instruct.”<sup>116</sup> War monuments and memorials are, thus, meant both to perpetuate the memory of the fallen, as well as to inspire the next generation to follow a different path than that taken by its forebears. Though monuments are, perhaps, the most common and most visible form by which to mark these events, remembering can take many other forms, including, as many authors have remarked, the recording of history in narrative form. Thus, *Memoria del Silencio* and *Nunca Más* can be seen as monuments to the thousands who died during Guatemala’s 36-year war. Considered as monuments, the Reports, however, are subject to similar criticisms as are monuments.

To begin, as Winter made clear in his analysis of World War I monuments in Britain, monuments are inherently political. They are created with a clear purpose in mind and are meant to convey a particular message to those who see or visit them, though that message can change over time or become less powerful or relevant with the passing of the years. *Memoria del Silencio* and *Nunca Más* are, in this sense, clearly political. The CEH, for its part, was created in order to accomplish certain explicit goals, as set out in the Commission’s mandate, and, in compiling and analyzing the testimonies, the CEH had a clear message it wished to get across, that of reconciliation. Similarly, the Church had clear aims in mind when it decided to form the REMHI Project and the staff, in writing the Report, attempted to promote those goals of social reconstruction and forgiveness. As with Britain’s monuments to the fallen, the Reports were written in order to (re)create bonds, to (re)create community, to (re)connect the survivors to both

the dead and to other survivors, bonds and connections which many Guatemalans, especially among the indigenous population, clearly do not feel. The Reports are, therefore, forcing people's memories to fit into a predetermined framework. They, like monuments, are attempting to dictate what people remember about the war and how they remember it. The Reports, in this sense, are not an "organic" outgrowth of the testimonies but are contrived and constructed in order to reflect the commissioners' and Project staff's visions of the future, a process which has many parallels to the way in which the army imposed its vision of Guatemala onto the population throughout the war. This criticism applies especially to the CEH. The CEH Report, claiming a "common project of nationhood,"<sup>117</sup> was written to tie the survivors to the new nation created by the Peace Accords, an inclusive and tolerant nation, a democratic and demilitarized nation, a nation that is multicultural and multilingual, a nation that respects both "minority" (though the Maya are, in fact, the majority) and human rights. In this regard, the CEH is rather like the Guatemalan military, seeking to foster a sense of nation among Guatemala's diverse population, a population that, more often than not, feels no such thing. Though certainly the CEH's idea of the new Guatemala is far more benign than was the military's and their linked concept of the "sanctioned Maya," and though reconciliation is a far more laudable goal than any the military sought to obtain, the CEH and *Memoria del Silencio*, nevertheless, merely reflect a different agenda, a different schemata, a different framework of memory, one that is not implied by the victims but is forced on them.

The CEH Report, thus, is attempting to make people remember differently, within a framework of reconciliation, respect, unity, and harmony. By faithfully recording people's testimonies of the past, the CEH hopes to shape how that past is remembered in the future. The REMHI Project does the same thing; the manner in which the testimonies are analyzed is meant to make subsequent generations remember the war differently, not as their parents and grandparents experienced it, but as it was seen and interpreted by others, within a framework of reconciliation, forgiveness, and social reconstruction.

## The Melancholy Flowers of Forgetting

The CEH and REMHI Project, thus, are Guatemala's own cenotaphs, monuments to the war that contain, not the physical remains of the dead, which remain scattered throughout the country in clandestine and not-so-clandestine cemeteries, in mass graves, on hillsides, and even in proper cemeteries, but the innumerable memories of those who lived to tell the tale. These memories, taken alone, are diverse and multifaceted yet, when read as part of the larger Reports, they lose this quality and become, instead, consumed by the stereotypical and subsumed by the overarching frameworks within which the Reports are written. Despite this, the Reports remain a counter-memory; they stand in direct opposition to the army's version of Guatemalan history and society, they denounce the army's wartime strategies as genocide and tell "what really happened" during the insurgency. And, though they do attempt to fit the testimonies into predetermined frameworks of analysis, though they seek to make future generations remember their parents and grandparents' experiences differently, the Reports, nevertheless, are a powerful indictment of the army, the guerrillas, the political parties, the economic elite, sectors of civil society, and key international actors.

The Reports, despite their flaws and shortcomings, are powerful, a fact which the perpetrators clearly recognized, as seen in their behavior during the investigatory phase and in the period surrounding the publication of the Reports. The perceived power of the clarification process is evident when the military and guerrilla's cooperation with the CEH is examined. *Memoria del Silencio* classified the army's cooperation as "precarious and not satisfactory." Though the CEH and the army were able to establish cordial relations, the army's response to requests for information were "slow, incomplete, and insufficient. The majority of the petitions were not resolved, or were only done so partially and up to four months late." The CEH further condemned the army's cooperation by stating that the army frequently claimed documents the CEH wished to study had been lost, had been destroyed, or had never even existed. Many of these claims the CEH knew to be false because they had previously looked at the documents in question or later discovered them in the archives.<sup>1</sup> Documents shared with the CEH by the American government further belie the army's claims to have lost documents. Declassified American documents stated that the Guatemalan military destroyed many particularly

incriminating documents while negotiations to form some sort of historical commission were being conducted.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, though not all of the CEH's requests for information were answered by the URNG, the CEH Report, nevertheless, described the participation of the URNG as satisfactory. The Rebel Armed Forces and the Guerrilla Army of the Poor were particularly helpful and their members delivered documents that were relevant and occasionally pointed to the guerrillas themselves as responsible for the commission of certain cases under investigation. The Organization of People in Arms, however, proved more evasive and unclear as to its actions during the war.<sup>3</sup> Given especially the army's reluctance to provide information to the Commission, it is clear that they, first of all, were opposed to any investigation into past errors. As well, their actions indicate that they wished to continue to control what was known about the war and the army's role and actions in it; they wanted their version of recent history to dominate all others because they recognized the potential power of the survivors' version to turn Guatemala upside down.

The REMHI Project was also faced with attempts to influence what people said about the war. In Joyabaj, Chimaltenango, and other communities throughout the country, former PAC leaders, military commissioners, and others not keen on an unearthing of the past often warned community members against giving their testimony to the REMHI Project staff, continuing the well-established practice of terrorizing people into silence and compliance.<sup>4</sup> The guerrillas also sought to shape the nature and scope of the testimonies by discouraging people from giving testimony or by encouraging them to talk only about the army's atrocities. As Edgar Gutiérrez, the director of the REMHI Project, relates, in some areas, the guerrillas' instructions were to "go and tell everything bad about the army. Don't go into details about what really happened. Talk about the massacres, talk about the early 1980s. And don't say anything more."<sup>5</sup>

Both sides, then, recognized the potential power of information, of giving testimony, and of the Reports themselves; thus, they sought to make people recount a limited and manipulated memory. This trend continued, especially on the part of the army/government, in the period surrounding the publication of the two Reports. The state's desire to downplay and discount the CEH's Report is evident given then President Alvaro Arzú's actions at the 1999 publication ceremony. Arzú did not personally accept *Memoria del Silencio* and left the ceremony without shaking hands with the CEH commissioners or the UN and URNG representatives; the Secretary of Peace was quick to remind the public that the perpetrators would not be brought to justice. In

addition, in mid-1999, Arzú denied that what had occurred in Guatemala during the war was genocide, as the CEH Report had asserted. Arzú based his denial on his interpretation that the army's motivation was not to eliminate an entire ethnic group and, thus, was counter to the internationally recognized definition of genocide.<sup>6</sup>

The REMHI report was greeted with a similar degree of enthusiasm. The Church published *Nunca Más* in April 1998 and was accused by the army of giving a one-sided view of the war.<sup>7</sup> Though such charges clearly demonstrated the military's opinion of the REMHI Report, the military's dissatisfaction with the Report's findings was made infinitely more clear when Monseñor Gerardi, who had announced the Report's findings to the public a few days earlier, was found beaten to death. Gerardi's assassination sent a clear message to Guatemalan society that the Church had gone too far and that military would not willingly accept too close an investigation of the past, especially one that named those responsible.<sup>8</sup>

*Memoria del Silencio* and *Nunca Más*, therefore, were regarded, especially by the army/government, as dangerous and potentially powerful, a potential they tried to stifle throughout the whole process of gathering and publishing the memories of the victims and survivors. In this, the army/government was assisted by the most unlikely of allies--the CEH and REMHI Project staff. By recording the "true history" of the war and by analyzing the variety of experiences collected within a predetermined and limited framework, the two commissions have increased the ease with which the past can be set aside, put down like a book one has grown tired or read enough of. The Reports have made it so one does not have to be confronted by the past if one does not wish to be. There is, to be sure, a general knowledge about the major events, such as the massacre at the Spanish Embassy, and key actors in the war, as well as a basic understanding of the Reports' findings that the military and its local incarnations committed 90-93% of the human rights violations, that the majority of the over 200,000 victims were indigenous, and that over 600 massacres were committed.<sup>9</sup> This information has, to some extent, pervaded public consciousness but the human aspect, found in the testimonies, has been lost and the past, as described in gruesome detail by the survivors and not as analyzed by the CEH and REMHI Project, has yet to be seriously and effectively dealt with in Guatemala.

It must be remembered, however, that the Reports are simply one version of the past and, though it may be one to which more people can relate than they did to previous versions, might it

not be better to accept that contested and conflicting memories of the past are an inevitable, and even desirable, legacy of the transition from conflict and authoritarian rule to democracy? Since democracy thrives on conflict, at least as long as it is contained and conducted in an orderly manner, the existence of competing memories could have a salutary effect on the political process. The past is, after all, a site of struggle, not a fixed object with which all members of a nation must identify. Perhaps, rather than the one narrative of the past that truth commissions seek to create, a plurality of memories which are discussed within democratic parameters would be a better means of achieving the social cohesion and reconciliation that these commissions aim to achieve.<sup>10</sup>

An assortment of diverse memories certainly exists in Guatemala today and, despite the publication of the Reports, the past continues to be an issue of discussion. Much of this discussion, however, points to the ease with which the victims' memories can be dismissed and silenced. An August 2004 *Prensa Libre* article on the military's new ideological doctrine hints at the tenuous hold the Reports and the memories they contain currently have on history. The new doctrine highlighted a dozen principles, which included a respect for human rights and international law, and prohibited subordinates from following the illegal orders of their superior offices. Despite these gains, the 60-page document made no mention at all of Guatemala's recent history of war because, according to both the military and those sectors of civil society involved in drafting the doctrine, the two sides could not reach an agreement on the topic. As further explanation, civilian representatives stated that the military viewed the war as being fought in defense of the state; the military replied that "the left has another vision of the conflict." As a result, and in order to keep the discussion going and to prevent a stalemate, the participants decided not to touch on the theme of history at all.<sup>11</sup>

The subject of the former PACs is also a contentious one in Guatemala today. At issue for the PACs is the matter of payment for "services rendered." In 2002, former patrollers began mobilizing and demanding indemnity for the time they had served as the army's proxies at the local level. Alfonso Portillo, the president at the time, promised that they would be compensated for their services and managed to find the money to pay hundreds of thousands of people claiming to be former patrollers, though according to one estimate, only 7,000 of those 400,000 who received money had served in the PACs. During the course of his campaign, Guatemala's current president, Oscar Berger also promised to pay the PACs and in November 2004 passed a

law legislating that the PACs be paid in cash for their service, as the PACs had demanded. In December, a number of human rights and victims' organizations brought an action against the law and the Court suspended it temporarily until a ruling could be made on its constitutionality. In February 2005, the Court declared the law unconstitutional because it did not specify where the money would be coming from and did not state exactly how many former patrollers would be paid. In response, the government first stated that the ex-PACs would receive compensation in the form of developmental projects and then, after a long meeting with a delegation of former PACs, declared that they would indeed attempt to pass another law legislating payment in cash.<sup>12</sup>

Also in February 2005, on the day celebrating the dignity of the victims, Berger announced that a fund of Q300 million would be created to compensate the victims as part of the National Compensation Program; this money would be used not only to compensate the victims financially, but also to give them much-needed psychological and therapeutic support, to contribute to cultural recovery, and restore dignity to the dead. At the same time, however, Berger announced that the Q445 million he had previously approved for returnees, the uprooted, and others most affected by the war would be used to compensate former patrollers because they too had been deceived, they too had suffered and, thus, could also be seen as victims. This announcement came soon after Berger participated in a ceremony to commemorate the victims and affirmed that the victims had been innocent and that their deaths had not been just. Guatemalans are, understandably, divided on this issue. While the government and others support the former PACs' demands for compensation, others, such as Rigoberta Menchú, Rosalina Tuyuc, and GAM, oppose Berger's decision, believing it to be offensive and equivalent to robbing the victims of their dignity.<sup>13</sup>

A variety of different memories of *la violencia* clearly exists in Guatemala today. Yet whatever the benefits of such a range of diverse memories may be, many scholars agree that there still needs to be a minimum level of consensus about the past in order for a nation to move forward, toward a better future. It is clear that this has not been achieved in Guatemala, despite, or perhaps because of, the efforts of the CEH and REMHI Project. Though their aim was quite the opposite, the Reports, by labeling Guatemalans as both victims and perpetrators, have in the end legitimized contradictory versions of the past. They made it so that the PACs can demand to be paid for the atrocities they committed and that their demands will be heard and addressed.

They had enabled official denial of the Reports' conclusions regarding genocide. They have made genuine change much harder to accomplish. They have made it so that anyone can claim almost anything about the past, can interpret the past in a wide variety of different ways, and are almost certain to find others who share their beliefs. The Reports have not led to any sort of basic, common understanding of the war as they were meant to do. Rather, they have made this understanding all the more difficult to achieve; this can only darken Guatemala's future, once thought so bright, as a nation reconciled with itself and its past.

Nevertheless, many scholars argue that the existence of conflicting memories and contested histories, as long as they are based on a common understanding of the past, makes it less likely that those memories and histories can or will be forgotten or repressed.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, as others have argued, too much memory may act only as an obstacle to the construction of a new, conflict-free, and harmonious society. Peter Novick made a similar point in reference to Jews and the Holocaust. He argued that Jewish American culture had been negatively affected by its obsession with the Holocaust. This "Holocaust fixation" could potentially result in the Jewish community effectively granting the Nazis a retrospective victory if they resort to defining themselves in terms of victimhood and mourning rather than a more positive, forward-looking agenda.<sup>15</sup> Others have noted a similar phenomenon in relation to a range of cultures and societies recovering from devastating conflicts; they suggest that being too concerned with the past could mean that the past, and its divisions and wounds, comes to dominate the present, and to determine the future.<sup>16</sup> Forgetting, as long as it is done selectively, therefore, could be healthy since, without forgetting, "we would be overburdened by our past, individual and collective."<sup>17</sup> Thus, there is value to both remembering and forgetting, as Kirkegaard noted when he recommended that individuals engage in both activities; they must "live as much in the hope that stems from forgetting as in the continuity that is produced by recollection."<sup>18</sup> Whether one should remember rather than forget, forget rather than remember, or do both equally and simultaneously is, however, a question best left for the victims and survivors. Though scholars will no doubt continue to debate the drawbacks and benefits of both, it is, ultimately, something each individual or community that was affected by the violence must decide independently, without fear of the consequences of that decision.

In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Milan Kundera wrote:



There are all kinds of ghosts prowling these confused streets. There are the ghosts of monuments demolished--demolished by the Czech Reformation, demolished by the Austrian Counterreformation, demolished by the Czechoslovak Republic, demolished by the Communists. Even statues of Stalin have been torn down. All over the country, wherever statues were thus destroyed, Lenin statues have sprouted up by the thousands. They grow like weeds on the ruins, like melancholy flowers of forgetting.<sup>19</sup>

A similar, though perhaps shorter, progression of monuments and the corresponding versions of history can be seen in Guatemala. Most recently, the army and political elite's historical truth and memorials celebrating it were torn down, for the most part, to make way for those of the downtrodden, the oppressed, the majority. This new history and its monuments are not perfect. Nevertheless, discrimination is now a punishable crime.<sup>20</sup> Guatemalans can publicly gather to celebrate and remember together. They can denounce those who perpetrated crimes against them. They can tell their story and they will be believed. These are victories; they are victories that many thousands fought for decades to achieve, and that many, killed unjustly during that time, never saw. It is these and similar victories that, taken together, will lead the nation toward the future the CEH and REMHI Project sought, by collecting the stories of thousands of Guatemalans, to achieve.

## Appendix A

### **Agreement on the establishment of the Commission to clarify past human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer**

Whereas the present-day history of our country is marked by grave acts of violence, disregard for the fundamental rights of the individual and suffering of the population connected with the armed conflict;

Whereas the people of Guatemala have a right to know the whole truth concerning these events, clarification of which will help avoid a repetition of these sad and painful events and strengthen the process of democratization in Guatemala;

Reiterating its wish to comply fully with the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights of 29 March 1994;

Reiterating its wish to open as soon as possible a new chapter in Guatemala's history which, being the culmination of a lengthy process of negotiation, will put an end to the armed conflict and help lay the bases for peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights among Guatemalans;

Whereas, in this context, promotion of a culture of harmony and mutual respect that will eliminate any form of revenge or vengeance is a prerequisite for a firm and lasting peace,

The Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (hereafter referred to as "the Parties") have agreed as follows:

To establish a Commission whose terms of reference shall be as follows:

#### **Purposes**

I. To clarify with all objectivity, equity and impartiality the human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer, connected with the armed conflict.

II. To prepare a report that will contain the findings of the investigations carried out and provide objective information regarding events during this period covering all factors, internal as well as external.

III. Formulate specific recommendations to encourage peace and national harmony in Guatemala. The Commission shall recommend, in particular, measures to preserve the memory of the victims, to foster a culture of mutual respect and observance of human rights and to strengthen

the democratic process.

### **Period covered**

The Commission's investigations shall cover the period from the start of the armed conflict until the signing of the firm and lasting peace agreement.

### **Operation**

I. The Commission shall receive particulars and information from individuals or institutions that consider themselves to be affected and also from the Parties.

II. The Commission shall be responsible for clarifying these situations fully and in detail. In particular, it shall analyse the factors and circumstances involved in those cases with complete impartiality. The Commission shall invite those who may be in possession of relevant information to submit their version of the incidents. Failure of those concerned to appear shall not prevent the Commission from reaching a determination on the cases.

III. The Commission shall not attribute responsibility to any individual in its work, recommendations and report nor shall these have any judicial aim or effect.

IV. The Commission's proceedings shall be confidential so as to guarantee the secrecy of the sources and the safety of witnesses and informants.

V. Once it is established, the Commission shall publicize the fact that it has been established and the place where it is meeting by all possible means, and shall invite interested parties to present their information and their testimony.

### **Composition**

The Commission shall consist of the following three members:

(i) The present Moderator of the peace negotiations, whom the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall be asked to appoint.

(ii) One member, a Guatemalan of irreproachable conduct, appointed by the Moderator with the agreement of the Parties.

(iii) One academic selected by the Moderator, with the agreement of the Parties, from a list proposed by the University presidents.

The Commission shall have whatever support staff it deems necessary, with the requisite

qualifications, in order to carry out its tasks.

### **Installation and duration**

The Commission shall be set up, installed and shall start to work as of the day the firm and lasting peace agreement is signed. The Commission shall work for a period of six months starting from the date of its installation; this period may be extended for a further six months if the Commission so decides.

### **Report**

The Commission shall prepare a report which shall be handed over to the parties and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations who shall publish it. Inability to investigate all the cases or situations presented to the Commission shall not detract from the report's validity.

### **Commitment of the Parties**

The Parties undertake to collaborate with the Commission in all matters that may be necessary for the fulfilment of its mandate. In particular, they undertake to establish, prior to setting up the Commission and during its operations, the necessary conditions so that the Commission may fulfil the terms of reference established in the present agreement.

### **International verification**

In conformity with the Framework Agreement of 10 January 1994, implementation of this Agreement shall be subject to international verification by the United Nations.

### **Measures for prompt execution following the signing of this Agreement**

The Parties agree to ask the Secretary-General to appoint the Moderator of the negotiations as a member of the Commission as soon as possible. When he is appointed, he shall be authorized to proceed forthwith to make all necessary arrangements to ensure that the Commission functions smoothly once it is established and installed in conformity with the provisions of this Agreement.

Oslo, 23 June 1994

### **For the Government of the Republic of Guatemala**

(Signed) Héctor ROSADA GRANADOS

(Signed) General Carlos Enrique PINEDA CARRANZA

(Signed) Antonio M. ARENALES FORNO

(Signed) General Julio Arnoldo BALCONI TURCIOS  
(Signed) Mario PERMUTH (Signed)  
General José Horacio SOTO SALAN  
(Signed) Amilcar BURGOS SOLIS

**For the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca**

**General Command**

(Signed) Carlos GONZALES  
(Signed) Commander Rolando MORAN  
(Signed) Commander Gaspar ILOM  
(Signed) Commander Pablo MONSANTO

**Political and Diplomatic Commission**

(Signed) Luis Felipe BECKER GUZMAN  
(Signed) Miguel Angel SANDOVAL  
  
(Signed) Francisco VILLAGRAN MUÑOZ  
(Signed) Luz MENDEZ GUTIERREZ

**Advisers**

(Signed) Mario Vinicio CASTAÑEDA  
(Signed) Miguel Angel REYES  
(Signed) Jorge ROSAL

**For the United Nations**

(Signed) Jean ARNAULT  
Moderator

(Source: [http://www.usip.org/library/pa/guatemala/guat\\_940623.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/guatemala/guat_940623.html))

Appendix B



Figure 1: "Soldier Saints"  
Flyers distributed in K'iche' villages



Figure 2: "Guerrilla Devils"  
 Flyers distributed in K'iche' villages

(Source: Judith Zur, *Violent Memories: Mayan War Widows in Guatemala*, p. 265-6.)

## Appendix C

### **Civil Patrol Code of Conduct**

1. I will defend my family, home and community against any subversive attack or natural catastrophe.
2. I will never allow subversion to penetrate my community.
3. I will support the Guatemalan Army in all its actions.
4. I will deny support to subversion and whoever acts against the peace and security of the honorable nation.
5. I will capture any suspicious-looking person who enters or pillages my community and I will inform the nearest Military Commander.
6. I will inform the Military Commander, Military Commissioner or the Head of the Civil Patrol about any subversive hiding place, encampment or movements.
7. I will never abandon my civil defense companions when they are in difficult situations, whether it is antisubversive combat or any other kind.
8. I will not abuse the authority I have as a member of the Civil Defense.
9. I will not misuse the arms and munitions given to me for use in the Civil Patrol.
10. I will respect community customs and traditions as well as Civil and Military authorities.
11. I will protect and not harm the crops where I walk.
12. I will always fight to maintain peace, tranquility and the well-being of my community.
13. While on watch I will be responsible for the lives of my companions in the countryside; I will carry out my duties thoroughly and safely and be an example to the person who relieves me.
14. I will support all the plans that encourage community development and progress.

(Source: America's Watch)



From Civil Patrol booklet

I am a victorius soldier  
Of the Civil Defense  
Always side by side like a brother  
With the brave army.

For my country Guatemala  
My blue and white flag  
For my home, my ideals  
I shall fight with fierceness.

I swear to my country  
To defend it to the death  
To reject subversives  
And to help my neighbors.

At daybreak  
With my hand I'll till  
But my gun always ready  
To fight for Guatemala.

(Source: America's Watch)

## End Notes

### Introduction

1. Adina Cimet, "Symbolic Violence and Language: Mexico and Its Uses of Symbols," in *Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. Jacob J. Climo and Maria G. Cattell (New York: Altamira Press, 2002), 150.
2. Judith Zur, *Violent Memories: Mayan War Widows in Guatemala*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 159.
3. *Guatemala: Peace Agreements Digital Collection*, 1994, <[http://www.usip.org/library/pa/guatemala/pa\\_guatemala.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/guatemala/pa_guatemala.html)> (7 February 2005).
4. *Conclusiones y Recomendaciones*, vol. 5 of *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) (Guatemala City: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1999), 12 and *Guatemala: Peace Agreements Digital Collection*, 1994.
5. Richard Wilson, "The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting in Guatemala," in *Guatemala After the Peace Accords*, ed. Rachel Sieder (London: University of London Press, 1998), 188 and Susanne Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 74.
6. Christian Tomuschat, "Clarification Commission in Guatemala," *Human Rights Quarterly* 23 (2001): 235.
7. Quoted in Stephen Kinzer, "Guatemala: the Unfinished Peace," *New York Review of Books*. 21 June 2001: 62.
8. Rachel Sieder, "War, Peace, and the Politics of Memory in Guatemala," in *Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice After Civil Conflict*, ed. Nigel Biggar (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 190. When the Report was published in 1999, however, many of those who had been critical of its mandate were pleasantly surprised to find the Report's conclusion and recommendations so strong. For example, because of the way *Memoria del Silencio* was written, it was perfectly clear who exactly was responsible for the gross human rights violations that the Report documented and, therefore, the CEH's limitation regarding the naming of names proved to be less of a problem than many had thought it would be. As well, the CEH, though it lacked the power to bring the perpetrators to justice itself, highlighted the need for this to occur and its investigation and analysis of events was done in such a way as to facilitate prosecution. (Paul Seils, "The Limits of Truth Commissions in the Search for Justice," in *Post-Conflict Justice*, ed. M. Cherif Bassiouni (Ardsley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2001), 789-790 and Tomuschat, 234)
9. Marcie Mersky, "History as an Instrument of Social Reparation: Reflections on an Experience in Guatemala," *The Just Word* 5, no.1 (2000) :1, Carlos Martín Beristain, "The Value of Memory," *Forced Migration Review* 2 (1998):24-25, and Tomuschat, 243. The agreement to establish the CEH did not, however, mark the beginning of non-governmental memory initiatives. In the mid-1980s, GAM began its work, denouncing the many disappearances that took place throughout the country, thereby breaking the silence about such events. After the 1985 election of Vinicio Cerezo and the corresponding "democratic opening," many groups, such as the CUC, CONAVIGUA, the National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows, and CERJ, the Council of

Ethnic Communities 'Runujel Junam,' started organizing and mobilizing to protest, for example, the civil patrols and to denounce human rights violations to the newly created Human Rights Ombudsman, the PDH. On a more local level, Simone Remijnse's work in Joyabaj tells of Padre Vásquez's various commemorations of his predecessor, Padre Villanueva, killed in 1980. (Simone Remijnse, *Memories of Violence: Civil Patrols and the Legacy of Conflict in Joyabaj, Guatemala* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2002), 189) Linda Green's study of indigenous widows in the highlands states that in 1990 in Santa Cruz del Quiche, Judge Roberto Lemus, who was later forced to go into exile, began accepting petitions for exhumation from the locals. Though, as Green points out, other judges had allowed exhumations to take place, Lemus' decision was the "first time they were performed with the intention of gathering physical evidence for verbal testimony of survivors in order to corroborate reports against those responsible." (Linda Green, *Fear as a Way of Life: Mayan War Widows in Rural Guatemala* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 71) Also at this time, the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Team was organized to unearth mass graves and cemeteries--that were only clandestine in so far as their existence is officially denied--and document and attempt to identify the bodies found therein.

10. *Impactos de la Violencia*, vol. 1 of *Guatemala: Nunca Más, Informe Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI)*, Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG) (Guatemala City: Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, 1998), xxix.

## Chapter One

1. David Gross, *Lost Time: on Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 98-100.

2. Gross, 105.

3. Gross, 103-4. Paradoxically, however, as many scholars have pointed out, the more the past is rejected and viewed with disdain and contempt, the more the present relies on the past. This is partly because, in order to have a new beginning, to move inexorably forward, toward a better future, one must have something to move away from. This phenomenon can be seen especially in eras of revolution and political transition. (John R Gillis, "Introduction," in *Commemoration: the Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 8 and Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver, "The Memory of Catastrophe," *History Today* 51(2001), 11)

4. Patrick. H. Hutton, "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History," *The History Teacher* 33 (2000): 534-535.

5. Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 94 and Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993), 7-8.

6. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 79.

7. Lewis Coser, "Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs, 1877-1945," in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited and translated by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 34 and Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited and translated by Lewis

- A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 40.
8. Coser, 24.
  9. Coser, 24.
  10. Le Goff, 94 and Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 7-8.
  11. Patrick Devine-Wright, "A Theoretical Overview of Memory and Conflict," in *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Ed Cairns and Mícheál D. Roe (New York: Palgrave MacMillan Ltd, 2003), 11.
  12. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 43 and Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row Books, 1980), 33.
  13. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 72-3.
  14. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 78.
  15. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 64.
  16. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 82 and Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 172.
  17. Gross, 117.
  18. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 78.
  19. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 182-3.
  20. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 79-80.
  21. Hutton, "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History," 537.
  22. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 79-80.
  23. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 82 and 76.
  24. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 7-8 and Hutton, "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History," 538.
  25. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 5-6 and 112.
  26. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, edited and translated by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 81-4.  
Subjugated knowledges stand in contrast to official knowledges which serve to normalize and make people conform so that they think and act in "correct" and "functional" ways. (Amec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 17)
  27. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited and translated by Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 147.
  28. Michael Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy: Truth, Power and the Subject* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 9.
  29. Carroll quoted in Mahon, 180.
  30. Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, 154 and 170.
  31. Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, 156.
  32. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 119.
  33. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 52.
  34. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 93.
  35. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 131-3.

36. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 97 and 99.
37. McHoul and Grace, 65.
38. McHoul and Grace, 86.
39. McHoul and Grace, 72 ad 83.
40. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 81-2.
41. Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, 154.
42. Richard Werbner, "Smoke From the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Reinscription in Zimbabwe," in *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*, ed. Richard Werbner (London: Zed Books, 1998), 74.
43. Werbner, "Smoke From the Barrel of a Gun," 73.
44. Richard Werbner, "Beyond Oblivion: Confronting Memory Crisis," in in *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*, ed. Richard Werbner (London: Zed Books, 1998), 9.
45. Werbner, "Smoke From the Barrel of a Gun," 73.
46. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.
47. Zerubavel, 6 and 8.
48. Zerubavel, 8.
49. Zerubavel, 10-2.
50. Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, "Introduction," *Representations* 26 (1989), 3.
51. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 7-8.
52. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: les lieux de mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989), 12.
53. Nora, "Between Memory and History," 9.
54. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 9.
55. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, 10.
56. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 80.
57. Winter, 28, 52, and 80.
58. Winter, 28 and 90.
59. Nora, "Between Memory and History," 19.
60. Peter Carrier, "Historical Traces of the Present: the uses of commemoration," *Historical Reflections* 22 (1996), 435.
61. Carrier, 433.
62. Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7.
63. Gray and Oliver, 13.
64. Nora, "Between Memory and History," 12-3 and James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust, Memorials, and Meaning* (New Haven, CT:Yale University Press, 1993), 5.
65. Carrier, 439.
66. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 5.
67. Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From "Collective

Memory” to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998), 119.

68. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 5.
69. Gillis, 3-4.
70. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 6-7.
71. Gillis, 5.
72. Gillis, 6-7.
73. Gillis, 7-10.
74. Gillis, 8, Gray and Oliver, 11, and Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 13 and 61.
75. Gillis, 9-10 and Le Goff, 86.
76. Gillis, 11.
77. Gray and Oliver, 12.
78. Gillis, 11-2.
79. Gillis, 13-5.
80. Gillis, 16.
81. Carrier, 440.
82. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 37 and 47-8.
83. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 46 and 33.
84. Gillis, 16-7.
85. Noam Lupu, “Memory Vanished, Absent and Confined: the Countermemorial Project in 1980s and 1990s Germany,” *History and Memory* 15, no. 2. (2000): 149 and Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 43-6.
86. Peter Homans, “Introduction,” in *Symbolic Loss: the Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at Century’s End*, ed. Peter Homans (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 22-3.
87. Lupu, 133 and 155.
88. Lupu, 154.
89. Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 255.
90. Huyssen, 5.
91. Le Goff, 54.
92. Le Goff, 97-8.
93. Tomuschat, 235.
94. Paul Ricoeur quoted in Wilhelm Verwoerd, “Towards the Recognition of Our Past Injustices,” in *Looking Back, Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, eds. Charles Villa-Vicencio and William Verwoerd (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000), 159.
95. Antonella Fabri, “Memories of Violence, Monuments of History,” in *The Labyrinth of Memory: Ethnographic Journeys*, eds. Marea C. Teski and Jacob J. Climo (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1995), 142.
96. Priscilla B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity*,

(New York: Routledge, 2001), 24-5.

97. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 25-6.

98. See, for example, Victoria Sanford, Antonella Fabri, Simone Remijnse, Linda Green, and Judith Zur.

99. Priscilla B. Hayner, "In Pursuit of Justice and Reconciliation: Contributions of Truth Telling," in *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*, ed. Cynthia J. Arnson (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1999), 317 and Brandon Hamber and Richard A. Wilson, "Symbolic Closure Through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in post-Conflict Societies," in Cairns and Roe, 145-6.

100. Cheryl Natzman, "Remembering and Forgetting: Creative Expression and Reconciliation in Post-Pinochet Chile," in Climo and Cattell, 161 and Janet Cherry, "Historical Truth: Something to Fight For," in Villa-Vicencio and Verwoerd, 143.

101. Brian Havel, "Public Law and the Construction of Collective Memory," in *Post-Conflict Justice*, ed. M. Cherif Bassiouni (Ardsley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2001), 389.

102. Maria G. Cattell and Jacob J. Climo, "Meaning in Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives," in Climo and Cattell, 32-3.

103. Linda Bishai, "Forgetting Ourselves: Nietzsche, Critical History, and the Politics of Collective Memory." Paper presented at Political Studies Association-UK 50th Annual Conference, 10-13 April 2000, London, 3.

104. Bishai, 3.

105. Natzman, 162 and 164.

106. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 160 and 163.

107. Bishai, 3-4.

108. Derek Walcott quoted in Ingrid de Kok, "Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition," in *Negotiating the Past: the Making of Memory in South Africa*, eds. Sarah Nuttall and Carlie Coetzee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62.

109. de Kok, 62.

110. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 135-6 and Hamber and Wilson, 160-2.

111. The TRC's "truth for amnesty" clause stipulated that if perpetrators of human rights violations told the truth, they would receive amnesty and, thus, be immune to criminal prosecution. The families of Steve Biko and other notable ANC activists, on the other hand, were not satisfied with this and wanted the murderers to receive a fair trial, where the evidence would speak for itself and where, presumably, the defendants would be punished severely, in accordance with the rule of law. This avenue of healing was, however, closed to the families and they were forced to accept that the murderers of their sons and daughters would walk free, as per the mandate of the TRC. (Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson, "The Moral Foundations of Truth Commissions," in *Truth v. Justice: the Morality of Truth Commissions*, eds. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 26.)

## An Insurrection of Knowledges

1. *Los Violaciones de los Derechos Humanos y los Hechos de Violencia*, vol. 2 of

*Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) (Guatemala City: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1999), 320 and Hamber and Wilson, 160-162.

2. Following the Oslo Accords, the CEH makes this distinction, labeling the military's atrocities as human rights violations and those of the guerrilla organizations as acts of violence, a category into which the acts committed by private individual acting in their own self interest and without the collaboration or consent of the army also fall. Despite the difference in name, however, the CEH found that both the guerrillas and the Guatemalan Army had the responsibility of respecting the "minimum standards" as set forth in the Geneva Convention. (Vol. 1 of *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) (Guatemala City: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1999), 46-7)

3. Diane Nelson, *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 9.

4. Victor Montejo, *Voices from Exile: Violence and Survival in Modern Maya History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 52.

5. Jennifer Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: a Violence Called Democracy*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 157, Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and US Power* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 41, and Jim Handy, *Gift of the Devil: a History of Guatemala* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1984), 151-2.

6. Jean-Marie Simon, *Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), 17, Zur, 66, and CEH, vol. 1, 120.

7. Beatriz Manz, *Paradise in Ashes: a Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror, and Hope* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 18.

8. Zur, 67, 69, and 76.

9. Quoted in Zur, 67-8.

10. Quoted in Montejo, 90.

11. Jonas, *Of Centaurs and Doves*, 29 and 74 and *Los Violaciones de los Derechos Humanos y los Hechos de Violencia*, vol. 3 of *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) (Guatemala City: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1999), 275-6 and 296.

12. The CEH found that 626 villages had been destroyed. (CEH, vol. 3, 256)

13. Manz, 117-8.

14. Mathilde González, "The Man Who Brought the Danger to the Village: Representations of the Armed Conflict in Guatemala from a Local Perspective," *Journal of African Studies* Special Issue: Popular Culture and Democracy 26, no. 1 (2000): 327, Zur, 120, Manz, 146, and REMHI, vol. 1, 218.

15. CEH, vol. 2, 367 and CEH, vol. 3, 61.

16. Manz, 158, CEH, vol. 2, 514-5, 463-4.

17. Remijnse, 100, *Los Mecanismos del Horror*, vol. 2 of *Guatemala: Nunca Más, Informe Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI)*, Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG) (Guatemala City: Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, 1998), 56, and CEH, vol. 2, 463-4.



18. Simon, 212 and REMHI, vol. 2, 58.
19. Zur, 77.
20. Ricardo Falla, *Massacres in the Jungle: Ixcán, Guatemala, 1975-1982*, translated by Julia Howland (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 21. The army also attempted to get rid of the evidence of violations by burning the bodies beyond recognition, burying them in clandestine cemeteries, or by dumping them into lakes, rivers, or the ocean to “make them disappear.”(Montejo, 75) These strategies were designed to hide the army’s culpability for human rights violations, as well as to prevent the insurgency from using the deaths in their propaganda campaigns. (REMHI, vol. 1, 24 and REMHI, vol. 2, 17)
21. Zur, 206-7, CEH, vol. 2, 414, and *El Entorno Histórico*, vol. 3 of *Guatemala: Nunca Más, Informe Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI)*, Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG) (Guatemala City: Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, 1998), 53.
22. Quoted in Carlos Y. Flores, “Bajo la Cruz: Memoria y Dimensión del Gran Sufrimiento entre los Q’eqchi’ de Alto Verapaz.” Cobán, Guatemala: Centro Ak’Kutan, 2001 and Fabri, 142.
23. CEH, vol. 3, 154: “Guatemala es un país silenciado, es un país incomunicado.”
24. *Oreja* literally means ear in Spanish.
25. Remijnse, 190, Zur, 71-2, and Victoria Sanford, *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 15.
26. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 18 and 23-5 and Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala*, 157-8.
27. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 69-70 and 119.
28. Sanford, 136-7. A typical day at one of the many displaced persons/reeducation centers scattered throughout the highlands began at 5 AM. Before breakfast, the refugees would participate in the flag raising ceremony and would be subjected to a “civic talk.” After the morning meal, an “ideological talk” would be given followed by lessons in civil defense and, after a break for “recreation,” health. Lunch would then be prepared but, before the meal was eaten, the displaced would be given another ideological talk. Following lunch, yet another ideological talk would be given, after which the refugees would be allowed to do some agricultural work and enjoy another period of recreation before being lectured on “group dynamics” and patriotic symbols. Dinner would follow the flag lowering and, before turning in for the night, a film would be shown, often depicting how free and easy life in the United States was and, in contrast, how different the situation was in Cuba and Russia. (Simon, 178-9 and 182)
29. Manz, 158.
30. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 69-70 and 119.
31. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 72-3 and 65.
32. Green, 61.
33. Flores.
34. Green, 60, see also Remijnse, 27-8 and Nelson, 96-7.
35. Simon, 172 and 236.
36. Sanford, 138-9.

37. Zur, 261-3.
38. Sanford, 78 and Zur, 266.
39. Zur, 265.
40. Zur, 268.
41. Manz, 129.
42. Enrique Sam Colop paralleled this technique of guilt displacement to that used by Alvarado and the Spanish *conquistadores* in the 16th century. Sam Colop suggests that Alvarado manipulated the situation in such a way that the indigenous leaders of the time felt responsible for their own downfall and guilty about the many deaths that resulted from Alvarado's own scorched earth policy. Though Sam Colop does not explicitly relate the 16th and the 20th centuries, but leaves the reader to make the connection him or herself, the parallels are clear. (Kay Warren, "Mayan Multiculturalism and the Violence of Memories," in *Violence and Subjectivity*, eds. Veena Das, et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 304-5 and 309)
43. The CEH report found that PACs participated in 18% of the human rights violations the commission documented; the army and/or other state forces were involved in 85% of those violations while 15% were committed by the PACs acting on their own. (CEH, vol. 2, 227) The REMHI report had similar findings, stating that PACS, for the most part, swept the area for guerrillas and participated in massacres together with army battalions but that, occasionally, they seemed to act with greater autonomy. (REMHI, vol. 2, 131)
44. Despite the army's insistence that they had sprung up spontaneously as a popular response to the guerrilla threat, the PACs were mandatory and failure to patrol was punished severely, punishment that often resulted in the death of the offending patroller. (Zur, 98-9 and Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 93) Partly because of the harsh punishment meted out to those who refused or were unable to patrol, most Guatemalan complied with the army's demands.
45. Americas Watch. *Civil Patrols in Guatemala* (New York: Americas Watch Committee, 1986), 2. Officially, the patrols mobilized only men between eighteen and fifty but often the local situation dictated that boys much younger than eighteen and men much older than fifty went on patrol. Women, also, on occasion, went on patrol, especially widows who were unable to find a replacement for their dead husbands. (Americas Watch, 27-8 and 38 and Zur, 9) The frequency at which patrollers were on duty depended on the size of the village. In larger centers, where there were more available patrollers, an individual's patrols were less frequent and the possibility of paying for a replacement higher. In smaller towns and villages, the opposite was true: patrollers were on duty more often and for longer periods of time and the possibility of buying one's way out of duty was much smaller. (Americas Watch, 51)
46. Quoted in Americas Watch, 28-9 and Zur, 97.
47. Americas Watch, 56-7 and Montejo, 67.
48. Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala*, 150-2 and Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 91.
49. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 81-2.
50. González, 328.

51. Remijnse, 199.
52. Manz, 159.
53. Quoted in Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 111.
54. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 118 and Robert M. Carmack, "The Story of Santa Cruz Quiché," in *Harvest of Violence: the Maya Indians and the Guatemalan Crisis*, ed. Robert M. Carmack (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 59-60. These tactics seldom worked and the population was generally well aware of who was responsible, as Linda Green points out in her study of rural war widows. The women who Green interviewed and befriended knew who had taken their relatives, even if these men attempted to disguise their identity by wearing civilian clothes, because of the boots they wore: only people in the army wore army boots. (Green 73, see also Falla, 74 and Sanford, 17) The army's proxies in rural communities--PACs and military commissioners--also resorted to such ruses in their actions. In their study of commissioners in San Pedro la Laguna, Benjamin D. Paul and William J. Demarest tell of a kidnapping where the local commissioners attempted to confuse the villagers about what exactly had occurred by "leaving behind two of their men tied up with ropes to create the impression that the commissioners had fought with guerrillas during the night and had been beaten before the intruders made off with the victim." In fact, of course, the victim had been thrown in the lake, a sandbag tied around his feet. (Benjamin D. Paul and William J. Demarest, "The Operation of a Death Squad in San Pedro la Laguna," in Carmack, 124)
55. Manz, 159.
56. Manz, 158-9.
57. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 111.
58. Zur, 101 and Manz, 165-6.
59. Manz, 159 and Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 111.
60. Sanford, 137.
61. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 104, Zur, 164, CEH, vol. 1, 198-9, and REMHI, vol. 2, 142-5.
62. Jennifer Schirmer, "Appropriating the Indigenous, Creating Complicity: the Guatemalan Military Project and the Sanctioned Maya," in *The Politics of Ethnicity: Indigenous Peoples in Latin American States*, ed. David Maybury-Lewis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 66.
63. Schirmer, "Appropriating the Indigenous, Creating Complicity," 64-5.
64. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 114-5.
65. Montejo, 62 and 84 and Green, 63.
66. Montejo, 63 and 89, Green, 64, and Simon 208. The message behind such military training was that cruelty was something to aspire to, as seen in the granting of prizes and promotions to those who displayed that quality. As the REMHI report states, military training was supposed to remove a soldier's inhibitions toward taking a life in any manner, and to imbue in the recruit a sense of what a "good soldier" was--one who had no regard for life or human rights and would follow orders without question. (REMHI, vol. 3, 166-7)
67. Quoted in Green, 64.
68. Montejo, 87-8 and Zur, 67.

69. Quoted in Simon, 82.
70. Montejo, 89.
71. See also Voices, 86-7 and Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 83-4.
72. CEH, vol. 3, 109.
73. Quoted in Montejo, 96.
74. Montejo, 89 and 63 and Sanford, 185.
75. Green, 64, Simon, 101, Montejo, 92.
76. Americas Watch, 75.
77. Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 93, Zur, 98-9 and 101 and Montejo, 67.
78. Quoted in Manz, 166. After the worst years of *la violencia* had passed, the army was able to use this as a point of reference to encourage the PACs to continue to perform their duties with enthusiasm. The army warned patrollers that they had to defend their villages against the guerrillas so that 1982, the height of Ríos Montt's scorched earth policy, did not happen again. After the Sandinista victory, the PACs were told that they had to cooperate with the army to prevent Guatemala from becoming Nicaragua where "[t]hey make pants for everyone, lots of them, and give them to the people, all the same color, olive green" and where "[y]ou cannot have a wife, no religion is allowed, all the harvests go to the state, you cannot own land, anything." (Manz, 165 and 168)
79. Remijnse, 128.
80. Sanford, 17 and 47 and Green, 71.
81. Zur, 218 and Sanford 17.
82. Zur, 296 and Sanford, 17 and 231.
83. CEH, vol. 3, 427, CEH, vol. 5, 42, and *Victimas de la Violencia*, vol. 4 of *Guatemala: Nunca Más, Informe Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI)*, Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG) (Guatemala City: Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, 1998), 488.
84. REMHI, vol. 3, 92-4.
85. *Casos Ilustrativos, Anexo I*, vol. 6 of *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) (Guatemala City: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1999), 137-144.
86. REMHI, vol. 1, x.
87. CEH, vol. 1, 82-97.
88. CEH, vol. 3, 242-3.
89. REMHI, vol. 1, 162.
90. CEH, vol. 3, 243 and 296.
91. CEH, vol. 3, 371.
92. CEH, vol. 3, 64.
93. CEH, vol. 3, 63: "A ustedes hay que exterminarlos a todos, desde el más grande hasta el más chiquito, hasta que no quede uno solo, para que la raíz no retoñe de nuevo."
94. Flores.
95. Falla, 2.
96. REMHI, vol. 1, xiv.

97. Sanford, 49, CEH, vol. 1, 199, and Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project*, 111.
98. CEH, vol. 2, 199.
99. See, for example, REMHI, vol. 2, 121.
100. CEH, vol. 3, 426.
101. CEH, vol. 3, 427 and REMHI, vol. 4, 488.
102. CEH, vol. 3, 428.
103. See, for example, REMHI, vol. 3, 175-7 and CEH, vol. 6, nos. 29, 32, 86, and 88, and *Casos Ilustrativos, Anexo I*, vol. 7 of *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) (Guatemala City: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1999), nos. 59, 97, and 110.
104. CEH, vol. 1, 80.
105. See, for example, CEH, vol. 5, 56.

### The Cenotaph

1. CEH, vol. 5, 60 and Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG). *Guatemala: Never Again!* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 86.
2. CEH, vol. 5, 60 and ODHAG, *Guatemala: Never Again!*, 86 and xxiii.
3. *Guatemala: Peace Agreements Digital Collection*.
4. CEH, vol. 5, 82.
5. CEH, vol. 5, 62-3 and 67-8.
6. CEH, vol. 1, 16.
7. CEH, vol. 5, 56.
8. CEH, vol. 5, 57.
9. CEH, vol. 4, 264.
10. CEH, vol. 2, 51-3, 55, and 208-9.
11. CEH, vol. 2, 182-3 and 197.
12. CEH, vol. 4, 204.
13. CEH, vol. 2, 70, 72-3, 75, and 48.
14. CEH, vol. 2, 200-1.
15. CEH, vol. 2, 204 and 209.
16. CEH, vol. 2, 209.
17. CEH, vol. 5, 27.
18. CEH, vol. 4, 264 and *Casos Presentados, Anexo II*, vol. 8 of *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*, Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) (Guatemala City: Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico, 1999), 205.
19. CEH, vol. 3, 63, 270 and CEH, vol. 4, 49.
20. CEH, vol. 2, 450 and 204.
21. See, for example, CEH, vol. 3, 29-32: “They raped the women, they put them one their hands and knees, then they shot them putting the gun in their rectum or vagina...,” “The soldier...was telling that when the women were dead they lifted their skirts and put poles in their vaginas...,” “They opened a pregnant woman’s belly and took out the baby and put a pole

through it until the pole came out the mouth,” “When they killed them, they left them with stakes ‘planted’ in their genitals.”

22. CEH, vol. 3, 29.

23. CEH, vol. 3, 23 and 38.

24. CEH, vol. 3, 23 and 34.

25. CEH, vol. 3, 21.

26. CEH, vol. 3, 54,

27. CEH, vol. 3, 52.

28. CEH, vol. 3, 187 and 59.

29. CEH, vol. 2, 381.

30. CEH, vol. 3, 371. See also CEH, vol. 3, 62 and 388: “They killed those children still breast feeding against the floor or walls...,” “Under the bed I find three children. They hadn’t died from the bullets. I lift one and see all of its face was destroyed, as if they had hit it with poles.... It no longer had teeth and the bones near the mouth were hanging. The three had died in the same manner, and the three were all very young...,” “There was a baby of scarcely eight months in one of the beds...a soldier took it in his arms and another put the barrel of his gun in the baby’s mouth, and with a shot took off the top of [the baby’s] head.”

31. CEH, vol. 3, 389.

32. CEH, vol. 3, 65.

33. CEH, vol. 3, 44.

34. CEH, vol. 3, 44.

35. CEH, vol. 3, 31.

36. CEH, vol. 3, 190: Lo mejor [para ellos era que]los indígenas se terminaran ... y por lo tanto matar indios era matar chuchos [perros], y por lo tanto no hay problemas, no eran humanos, sí prevaleció mucho esa idea...” See also CEH, vol. 3, 37 and 108.

37. CEH, vol. 3, 61, 275, and 342.

38. See, for example, CEH, vol. 3, 218, and 225: “...we know that the army’s plan is to catch and to kill, and to finish with [*acabar con*] all of our people,” “...their objective was to finish with [*acabar con*] us, to kill us....”

39. CEH, vol. 3, 205.

40. CEH, vol. 3, 209: “They assassinated the Mayan priests systematically...because they are leaders....By finishing with [*acabar con*] the Mayan priests they thought, I think, that it was finishing with the culture, since it is the Mayan priests...those who drive and guide. ... To finish with [the priests] is to finish with the culrute itself....”

41. CEH, vol. 3, 272: “Destrozaron nuestros lugares sagrados, destrozaron los sitios y nos ofendieron al matar a nuestros guías, a nuestro sacerdote, a nuestros ancianos.”

42. CEH, vol. 3, 187.

43. CEH, vol. 3, 199.

44. CEH, vol. 3, 332.

45. See, for example, CEH, vol. 3, 278, 286-7, and 372.

46. CEH, vol. 3, 270.

47. CEH, vol. 4, 84.

48. CEH, vol. 4, 33.
49. CEH, vol. 4, 28 and 101.
50. CEH, vol. 4, 29.
51. CEH, vol. 4, 101.
52. CEH, vol. 4, 68.
53. CEH, vol. 4, 59.
54. CEH, vol. 4, 46 and 71.
55. CEH, vol. 4, 20 and 193.
56. CEH, vol. 4, 22.
57. CEH, vol. 4, 239 and CEH, vol. 2, 471.
58. CEH, vol. 4, 71 and 201.
59. ODHAG, *Guatemala: Never Again!*, xxvii.
60. REMHI, vol. 1, xiv.
61. REMHI, vol. 1, xiii.
62. ODHAG, *Guatemala: Never Again!*, xxiv.
63. ODHAG, *Guatemala: Never Again!*, xxiv-v and xxvii.
64. ODHAG, *Guatemala: Never Again!*, xxv.
65. ODHAG, *Guatemala: Never Again!*, xxiii.
66. REMHI, vol. 4, 531-2.
67. REMHI, vol. 4, 537.
68. REMHI, vol. 4, 534-5.
69. REMHI, vol. 4, 540-2.
70. REMHI, vol. 1, xi.
71. REMHI, vol. 4, 538-9.
72. REMHI, vol. 1, xxxii.
73. REMHI, vol. 4, 531.
74. REMHI, vol. 4, 532.
75. REMHI, vol. 4, 533.
76. REMHI, vol. 4, 535.
77. REMHI, vol. 4, 535.
78. REMHI, vol. 1, 263, 271-2, 274-5, and 277.
79. REMHI, vol. 1, 296, 282, 263.
80. REMHI, vol. 1, 278-9, 281.
81. See, for example, REMHI, vol. 2, 169-70: "...they hung up, they called it 'The Suffering Christ' since they hung us and tied us up face down so you'd faint, fall, they hit us with a pole and hung us up again..."
82. REMHI, vol. 2, 124.
83. REMHI, vol. 2, 166.
84. See, for example, REMHI, vol. 2, 170-2.
85. REMHI, vol. 2, 220.
86. REMHI, vol. 2, 223.
87. See, for example, REMHI, vol. 2, 219 and 224.

88. REMHI, vol. 2, 224.
89. REMHI, vol. 2, 221.
90. REMHI, vol. 1, xiv
91. REMHI, vol. 1, 26 and 46.
92. REMHI, vol. 1, 46.
93. REMHI, vol. 1, 22.
94. REMHI, vol. 1, 21-2 and REMHI, vol. 2, 147.
95. REMHI, vol. 1, 45 and 86.
96. REMHI, vol. 1, 205, REMHI, vol. 2, 20, and REMHI, vol. 1, 179 and 273.
97. REMHI, vol. 1, 11 and 32.
98. REMHI, vol. 1, 30.
99. REMHI, vol. 2, 15-6.
100. REMHI, vol. 1, 21.
101. REMHI, vol. 1, 86.
102. REMHI, vol. 2, 170.
103. REMHI, vol. 2, 23.
104. REMHI, vol. 1, 206.
105. REMHI, vol. 2, 17.
106. REMHI, vol. 1, 81.
107. REMHI, vol. 1, 83.
108. REMHI, vol. 1, 17.
109. REMHI, vol. 1, 217-8.
110. REMHI, vol. 1, 99.
111. REMHI, vol. 1, 126.
112. REMHI, vol. 1, 38 and 283-5.
113. REMHI, vol. 1, 40.
114. REMHI, vol. 1, 42 and 263.
115. See, for example, REMHI, vol. 1, 175 and 288-9.
116. Charles L. Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1986): 691.
117. CEH, vol. 5, 60.

#### Melancholy Flowers of Forgetting

1. CEH, vol. 1, 49-50.
2. Kate Doyle, "Helping Guatemala Find the Truth," *New York Times*, 1 March 1999, A 21.
3. CEH, vol. 1, 51.
4. Paul Jeffrey, "Guatemala: Healing Through Remembering." *New Routes* 2, no. 3 (1997), <<http://www/life-peace.org/newroutes/newroutes1997/nr199703/guatemala.htm>> (8 June 2004), 2 and Remijnse, 269.
5. Quoted in Jeffrey, 2.



6. Mireya Navarro, "Guatemalan Army Waged 'Genocide' New Report Finds," *New York Times*, 26 April 1999, A 10, Greg Grandin, "Chronicles of a Guatemalan Genocide Foretold: Violence, Trauma, and the Limits of Historical Inquiry," *Napantla: Views From the South* 1, no. 2 (2000): 408, and *Prensa Libre*, 30 June 1999.

7. Remijnse, 270.

8. Three soldiers, Byron Lima Estrada, Byron Lima Oliva, and José Obdulio Villanueva (who was later killed), and one priest, Mario Orantes, were arrested two years later and convicted in 2001. The soldiers were sentenced to 30 years and Orantes to 25 years in prison. In 2002, a judge annulled the sentences and called for a new trial to be held. Finally, in March 2005, after the president of the Court of Appeals, who had acted to stall progress on the case, was removed, the soldiers' sentences were reduced to 20 years. Orantes' original sentence was maintained. (*El Periódico*, 18 February 2005 and 22 March 2005, *Prensa Libre*, 16 October 2004)

9. The national press reinforces this statistical knowledge in the articles that are published occasionally that mention either of the Reports. For example, one year after the *Memoria del Silencio* was presented to the public in a massive ceremony, *Prensa Libre's* reporting of the anniversary reminded readers of the death toll and then went on to discuss the absolute lack of compliance with the CEH's recommendations. (PL, Feb 25, 2000) *Nunca Más* has received similar treatment in the press. In a March 2005 article about the reunion between an Ixil family and the daughter that was disappeared during the conflict, the same newspaper reminded its readers only of the REMHI Project's findings regarding "The Numbers of the Conflict" and of nothing else contained in the Report's 1500 pages of testimony, history, and analysis. (*Prensa Libre*, 13 March 2005, see also, *El Periódico*, 19 December 2004, *La Hora*, 1 March 2004, *Siglo XXI*, 28 February 2005)

10. Gutman and Thompson, 26.

11. Martín Rodríguez, "Doctrina Militar Pasa la Prueba: Sociedad Civil y Minugua Avalan Teoría," *Prensa Libre*, 9 August 2004.

12. *Prensa Libre* and *El Periódico*, February -March 2005.

13. *Prensa Libre*, 26-27 February 2005.

14. Jan-Werner Müller, "Introduction," in *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: studies in the presence of the past*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33.

15. Gray and Oliver, 15.

16. Andrew Rigby. *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence*. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 2.

17. Christopher Kent, "History: the Discipline of Memory--and of Forgetting," *The Structurist* 37/38 (1997/1998): 39.

18. Quoted in Gross, 139.

19. Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980, 158.

20. Luis Ismatul, "Condenan a 5 por Discriminación," *Siglo XXI*, 5 April 2005, Kenia Reyes, "Menchú: Primera Victoria por Delito de Racismo," *El Periódico*, 5 April 2005, and Conié Reynoso, "Primera Condena por Discriminación," *Prensa Libre*, 5 April 2005. On 5 April

2005, the Guatemalan Courts found five members of Ríos Montt's political party, the FRG or the Guatemalan Republican Front, guilty of discrimination and public disorder. The charges had been brought against the 5 politicians, one of whom was Ríos Montt's nephew, by Rigoberta Menchú for comments they made on 9 October 2003 when they were all at Court addressing the issue of Ríos Montt's candidacy for the presidency. The 5 were sentenced to 3 years and 2 months in prison, or were required to pay Q75 per day to avoid serving the sentence. The Court also found that Menchú had suffered from post-traumatic stress as a result of the insults. In his decision, one of the judges referred to the Peace Accords' assertion that, in order to coexist peacefully and with respect, Guatemalans' attitudes and behaviors must change. Menchú stated that "we have written a page of history" and that the Court's ruling set a precedent so that "our sons with never be discriminated against in the future."

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-----*Guatemala: Nunca Más, Informe Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*. 4 vols. Guatemala City: Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, 1998.

The Reports are massive. The CEH's 12 volume *Memoria del Silencio* is over 4000 pages long and the Church's four volume *Nunca Más* approaches 1,500 pages. Both Reports are written in Spanish but also have short English summaries. The CEH's fifth volume, the conclusions and recommendations, has been translated for those who do not speak Spanish, or who have neither the time nor inclination to tackle the Spanish version. As for the REMHI Report, a summary of the four Spanish volumes has been compiled and published. While the majority of this thesis relies on the Spanish versions, the English has been used for translation purposes and, in the case of the Church Report, for the additional introductory remarks included in the abridged English version.

The Reports, except for the volumes which set the historical context, offer recommendations, and simply list the victims, offer the reader with a fairly equal mix of both primary testimony and the secondary analysis of the CEH and REMHI Project. While I have suggested that the Reports force the testimonies to fit into particular frameworks, the testimonies, nevertheless, do support the general conclusions laid out in the two Reports. In each of the topics addressed in the Reports (for example, military intelligence and familial consequences of *la violencia*), the findings of the two investigatory commissions are supported by numerous accounts of those who participated as perpetrators, suffered as victims, or have reliable information about the subject for some other reason.

#### Peace Accords

*Guatemala: Peace Agreements Digital Collection*, 1994. <[http://www.usip.org/library/pa/guatemala/pa\\_guatemala.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/guatemala/pa_guatemala.html)> (7 February 2005).

This collection includes those agreements signed by the government and the URNG between January 1994, when the two parties signed the "Framework Agreement for the resumption of the Negotiating Process," and 29 December 1996, when several agreements were signed, including the "Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace." The individual agreements

include those regarding human rights, the resettlement of uprooted people, the identity and rights of indigenous people, the agrarian situation, constitutional reforms, the legal integration of the URNG, the strengthening of democracy, the role of the military in a democratic society, the definitive ceasefire, the timetable for the implementation and verification of the Accords, and, most significantly for this thesis, the “Agreement on the Establishment of the Commission to clarify past human rights violations and acts of violence that have caused the Guatemalan population to suffer.”

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