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The Regime of Religious Dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt, 1982-1983: A Phenomenon of Expediency

Anthony C. Armendáriz

In March of 1982, an enigmatic leader rose to power in Guatemala: retired Brigadier General José Efraín Ríos Montt. Chosen by junior officers to head the new government established by a coup d'état, Ríos Montt found the need to again be active in Guatemalan affairs following a profound religious conversion.¹ For seventeen months Ríos Montt ruled Guatemala, proving an un-stereotypical Latin American dictator. During the course of his rule he was called a fanatic, "the eccentric general," "Ayatollah Ríos Montt," and "Dios Montt."² He was described as a man with a "bizarre personality" and a "profound messiah complex." People even questioned his sanity.³ The paper examines four interrelated areas of the Ríos Montt period: Ríos Montt's rise to power, his principal programs, his ideological background, and his overthrow. The first issue is how and why did Ríos Montt come to power? Second, what were his goals and what was actually accomplished? Third, why did he pursue certain unconventional programs, and why did the military allow him to do so? And, finally, why and how was Ríos Montt overthrown?

The rise of Ríos Montt can be traced to deep economic, social, and political inequalities in Guatemala. The export agriculture of large estates has traditionally been the leading economic activity of Guatemala, often making up half the value of the nation's total exports in any given year. The estate owners, who make up 2% of the population but own over half of the cultivatable land, have historically been the most powerful members of soci-

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ety.⁴ Besides the landed elite, the interests of industrialists and the military also share substantial influence over the economy and government of the Nation.⁵ Guatemala's mostly Indian peasantry have virtually no voice in political and economic decision-making, while the smaller urban working classes and a miniscule middle class have a minor role.⁶

The military, although allied with the estate owners and to the status quo, had primarily a subservient role to the government until 1963. A military coup against President Ydígoras Fuentes in that year initiated unprecedented growth in the military's influence over the nation. As one political analyst expressed it: "this was the first time in the modern history of Guatemala that the estate owners were obliged to share control of the state machinery with a clique of uniformed parvenus." Throughout the 1960s power and privilege were shared in a balance of power between the civilian elites and the military. In the 1970s this civilian-military alliance had come to heavily favor the military.⁷

"The decade of the generals," as it has been called, was dominated by three military men: Carlos Arana Osorio (1970-74), Kjell Laugerud Gracia (1974-78), and Romeo Lucas García (1978-82). The role of the military expanded, becoming ever more autonomous and moving into both licit and illicit economic activities that brought it into greater competition with the civilian elites.⁸ By November, 1978, rifts were developing in the civilian-military alliance. In the national elections the party of the estate owners, the National Liberation Movement (MLN) offered an independent presidential candidate.⁹ The military countered with General Romeo Lucas García, who won the election.¹⁰ Lucas García's victory was won with support from other civilian elites. The support, however, was purchased by promises of political freedom, economic development, and suppression of leftist guerrillas. But the new president did not fulfill any of these promises. Instead, the Guatemalan situation grew worse:

Political conditions deteriorated rapidly under the combined force of . . . steadily increasing guerrilla operations—particularly in the rural areas—and [a] brutal wave of violence unleashed by the . . . regime against all political opposition, Marxist, moderate, even conservative.¹¹

For the national elections of March 7, 1982, the military clique planned to retain power through the candidacy of Defense Minister General Aníbal Guevara. But this endeavor had no support from the civilian elites, so the alliance collapsed. The civilians campaigned for their own parties, candidates, and platforms.¹² On election day it was clear that Aníbal Guevara had lost badly. Nevertheless, Lucas García declared Guevara president.¹³ The high command's fraud led to Guatemala's first coup de'état since 1963.¹⁴

The coup of March 23, 1982, was led by nineteen junior officers. Present-

ing themselves as reformers, they overthrew Lucas García in order to restore authentic democratic rule, purify the high command of corruption, and to promote social justice and equity—thus seeking to diffuse the leftist guerrilla movement.¹⁵ While the action of the young officers took the high command by surprise, outsiders indicated that it should have been foreseen. The *Miami Herald* reported that plotting had been going on since 1981.¹⁶ U.S. analysts were fully aware that junior officers were unhappy with the high command:

Bearing the brunt of the fighting against the guerrillas, the lieutenants, captains and majors had become increasingly bitter over the corruption of the Lucas García regime.¹⁷

It is clear that members of the civilian elite played an important role in planning and promoting members of the MLN, worked closely with junior officers before and after the coup.¹⁸ On the day of the coup, Sisniega was an official spokesman for the young officers on the government radio station. Later he claimed that, during the two weeks preceding the coup, he had checked on a number of generals who could potentially become a new head of state.¹⁹ Guatemala's other civilian political parties were clearly in favor of any new regime, although it appears that only the MLN collaborated with the young officers.²⁰

This search ended with the selection of Ríos Montt. The civilian elite and the junior officers agreed that changes were needed in Guatemala. But why did the junior officers ask Ríos Montt to assume leadership? Political scientist Robert L. Peterson observed that:

A new coalition of business, political, and military interest emerged rapidly in opposition to Guevara, but in the short period before the coup, produced no concrete, alternative solutions. The coup occurred, therefore, in a political vacuum.²¹

A coup was only a partial solution, there was still the issue of who would lead Guatemala. The civilian elites and the military—now represented by the junior officers—had to select a man acceptable to a cross-section of interests.

Retired General Ríos Montt fit the varied criteria: his prior political associations had been with civilians of politically moderate leanings; in the military, he was known as a strict disciplinarian; and, as a man reknown for his strong convictions, he might improve the nation's international image.

In the 1974 elections, General Ríos had been the candidate of a reformist political coalition which included the Christian Democrats (DC). He had actually won the elections of that year—a glimmer of legitimacy, but Kjell Laugerud was fraudulently declared the winner of the presidency.²² Within the military, General Ríos had a reputation for loyalty to the armed forces,

for honesty and for discipline. Some of the junior officers who led the coup had known Ríos Montt in the early 1970s, when they were students and he was the director of Guatemala's war college.²³ Since Ríos Montt was retired, some thought he would not harbor pretensions to personal power.²⁴ His selection also reflected the hope of an improved international image which might lead to a resumption of military aid from the U.S. Indiscriminate violence, as perpetrated by the military and right-wing death squads, had led the U.S. to cut off military aid to Guatemala in 1977. By 1982, however, Guatemala was again seeking military aid to fight a growing leftist insurgency. On the day after the coup the press reported that "the new government began unofficial inquiries through the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City about renewed aid."²⁵

If Guatemala's civilian elites sought a mediator or a figurehead to lead a temporary coalition, they must have been startled by Ríos Montt. Ríos Montt's earlier election experience, and a sharp disagreement with his civilian supporters, had left him embittered with politicians. In addition, although the junior officers outwardly agreed with civilian elites in calling for elections without delay, this was only a means of enlisting civilian support for the coup. The junior officers had a secret agenda.²⁶

These junior officers were most concerned with the leftist insurgency. Since they had been doing the fighting, they felt that Guatemala's crisis was much more serious than many admitted. The government had lost control of vast portions of the countryside. On February 7, 1982, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), and the Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT) had announced the unification of their forces in the war against the government under the banner of the Guatemalan National Unity (URNG).²⁷ The EGP, the strongest of the guerrilla forces, was already laying the plans for establishment of provisional governments in the countryside.²⁸

Guatemala's entire political, social, economic, and strategic situation fit into what David Galula, an expert on counterinsurgency warfare, has deemed the "hot revolutionary war." When an insurgency reaches this state the government must adopt special measures—like total military rule—in order to defeat the insurgents. This stage is characterized by strong threats and occupation by the enemy from without, and decay and confusion within the government itself.²⁹ Ríos Montt was to play a special role in defusing this crisis.

From the beginning, Ríos Montt proved a political maverick. On the first night of his leadership he threw away the speech prepared by the junior officers.³⁰ Instead, the General burst into a diatribe. He affirmed the noble intentions of the young officers in effecting the coup. He said they were motivated by their desire to demonstrate a "professional image," and to "recover their place of dignity with the people." Ríos Montt, a career man, believed in military virtues and ideals. This was possibly the main reason

that the young officers continued to firmly back his rule when many of the elites became disgruntled.

In his speech, Ríos Montt went on to state that the movement of young officers had a fundamental base of morality. "In the first place," Montt reassured, "I want to tell you that I am trusting in God, my Lord and King, that he may guide me, because only he gives and takes away authority." He believed that God had brought him to the forefront of the nation for a special purpose. He next spoke bitterly about election fraud: "Eight years ago I was defrauded, four years ago we were defrauded, and now only a few days ago, they also defrauded us." What most did not realize was that Ríos Montt felt that his present selection was God's recompense for the fraudulent 1974 election.³¹

Ríos Montt next moved to support human rights, while denying civil right in the same breath:

We are not suspending any human rights, we are guaranteeing human rights, but please, let us make of liberty the expression of a citizen's responsibility, but please let us make of liberty a way of life, and let us make of liberty a citizen's duty.

Political parties at this time have nothing to do, we are going to present them with the prevailing view and we are going to see if they are political parties, because they have been voting parties only: they have not been political parties which give political solutions to a people that needs political solutions. . . . We do not want anymore political intriguers, we do not want the same faces, we do not want them to come to us to congratulate us, nor to flatter us.

He blamed the politicians for the nation's troubles. Speaking as a military man, he expressed a profound bias against the civilian political sector.

Finally, the General spoke about the threat of the leftist insurgency:

If we do not have your support, the comrades [the communists] will come and put Guatemala back together again; and hear me well, the subversion should not continue, the political situation will be worked out and practiced under the political point of view. . . . Men of the subversion, please listen to the following: only the Army of Guatemala should have weapons, and you forsake your weapons, because if you do not forsake your weapons, we are going to take your weapons.³²

If what Ríos Montt said was surprising, the manner in which he said it was more so. One report described his message to the nation as:

. . . a fire-and-brimstone sermon . . . He played to the cameras with an almost ludicrous panoply of theatrical effects. Stabbing the air, raising and lowering his tenor voice, he alternately threatened pleaded and cajoled.³³

What soon became increasingly evident was that General Ríos Montt's speech was more than rhetoric: he believed what he said. In the ensuing months he evaluated the realization of his plans—what were often the military's plans—through both military and moralistic means, believing that he was doing what was best for Guatemala and what was the will of God. The General was a religious militarist.

Guatemala's civilian elites quickly became unhappy, for the coup had only resulted in a new military government with minimal civilian involvement. The junior officers had simply removed the high command's dominant clique. Still needing the support of the Old Guard, the junior officers formed a three-man junta of senior officers—with a pivotal role reserved for themselves, of course. Brigadier General Ríos Montt was junta leader and Minister of Defense; General Horacio Maldonado Schaad—who had ties to the MLN party—became Interior Minister; Colonel Francisco Gordillo became Minister of Communications.³⁴ In addition, six young officers who "remained a constant armed presence within the presidential palace" became special advisors to the junta.³⁵

On the day following the formation of the new government, the civilian leadership's worst fears were realized: the junta dissolved congress and suspended the constitution. By March 25, two of Guatemala's main political parties, the MLN and the DC, drafted an agreement calling for: one, elections in six months; two, a declaration by the junta that its rule was temporary; three, equal party representation on a new electoral commission; and, four, the revision of the electoral laws to guarantee free elections and prevent fraud. Their demands were ignored.³⁶

And yet, Ríos Montt began his rule as a chief executive, not a dictator. He continually cast himself in the role of paternal caretaker, disclaiming any intention of becoming president. He did, however, consolidate power: he named new cabinet members, installed trusted officers into key positions, and lectured other officers on the need to maintain discipline and restore the chain of command.³⁷ He believed that firm guidance was needed in the nation if genuine democracy was to exist in Guatemala. One of the General's relatives tried to allay fears about his intentions: "he definitely loves democracy, but he is so strict that his way of seeing democracy is undemocratic . . . He would probably be a good, benevolent dictator."³⁸

In the ensuing weeks the prospect that Ríos Montt might become a dictator became stronger. The General ended the three-man junta by dismissing Maldonado and Gordillo from the government. However, the junior officer's

special advisors remained ever a fixture while Ríos Montt was in power.³⁹ The General had become a very strong executive. Although disclaiming to the end, upon the insistence of the special advisors Ríos Montt assumed the presidency on June 9, 1982. At the ceremony, however, President Ríos Montt did not sound reluctant to take the position that he had once been denied:

Thank you God for giving me this opportunity to govern Guatemala . . . In this transcendental moment for Guatemala, I assume the weight of governing only on my shoulders.⁴⁰

The General's power and prestige had increased continually from the day he was chosen to head the junta. He went from junta leader—an executive role—to sole executive, to self-proclaimed president. But whether Ríos Montt was actually a dictator remained debatable; at least until the counterinsurgency campaign began.

In the *Plan Victoria '82* campaign, Ríos Montt firmly and loyally supported the soldiers. The junior officers apparently trusted General Ríos, for they undoubtedly understood that the military rule required to defeat the insurgents and stabilize the nation could easily be abused. In effect, Ríos Montt became an emergency dictator. The junior officers responsible for his rise to power had probably been preparing Guatemala for the counterinsurgency campaign all along. The military needed to effect their plan, otherwise the insurgents might win. For this reason, interference from the civilian sector could not be tolerated. It was easier to suppress civilian political institutions and rights altogether.

The counterinsurgency campaign was preceded by an amnesty offer to all guerrillas. Reports claim that two thousand people surrendered to the government and were then released without being charged, but this is an exaggerated number.⁴¹ On July 1, 1982, General Ríos Montt declared a state of siege in Guatemala. The decree had “the effect of legitimizing near-absolutist executive power.” Its specific measures included:

Under the decree, all fundamental civil rights were suspended; political meetings and activities, including labor-union functions, were prohibited . . . Strict press censorship was invoked and the media prohibited from reporting all news concerning guerrilla activities or military actions unless issued directly from the president's office.

Military dominance was clearly recognized and explicitly stated under the declaration of the state of siege. Specifically: “under the . . . provisions, the armed forces are empowered to arrest and hold suspects without charge and without the right of habeas corpus; the military can also temporarily take over private homes

and vehicles; government troops and police will be able to legally break into homes and offices at night."⁴²

The state of siege was renewed every thirty days for eight months. It functioned to set down a legal basis for the counterinsurgency campaign. In announcing the state of siege and the beginning of *Plan Victoria '82*, Ríos Montt told the nation:

Today we are going to begin a merciless struggle . . . to annihilate the subversives that have not understood the good intentions of the government.⁴³

Plan Victoria '82 was to be "a well coordinated and methodical military action employing the latest in counterinsurgency tactics and strategy." It involved the creation of civil patrols which mobilized Guatemalan Indians to act as an advance guard against guerrilla attacks. In return, they were paid for the work with food and medical supplies. This aspect of the campaign came to be known as the "beans and rifles" program. Its most important effect was to force Indian peasants to choose side in the war.

The Guatemalan military pitted about 20,000 soldiers against leftist guerrilla forces of about 3,500 and "an estimated 60,000 active and passive sympathizers." The military employed "search and destroy" and "scorched earth" tactics to target guerrillas, and to destroy Indian villages "sympathetic to the insurgents or suspected of aiding" them. Robert Peterson states that the effects of the campaign were borne principally by the Indian population:

Given the geographical locations and the rural Indian villages where the most intensive fighting was to take place, the government realized that to defeat the guerrillas, they had to engage in a class war with a large portion of the nation's population. In a widely quoted response to a question as to why the army needed to kill unarmed civilians, women, and children, Ríos Montt answered: 'Look the problem of the war is not just a question of shooting. For each one who is shooting there are ten working behind him.' The president's press secretary then amplified this statement: 'The guerrillas won over many Indian collaborators. Therefore, the Indians were subversives, right? . . . you had to kill Indians because they were collaboration with the subversion . . . they weren't innocent.'⁴⁴

Assessments of the overall effects of the *Plan Victoria '82* campaign vary. From 500 to 10,000 people—perhaps more—were killed. Hundreds of thousands were displaced and sought places of safety. Over 30,000 refugees fled into neighboring Mexico alone.⁴⁵

But for the Guatemalan military, *Plan Victoria '82* was a great success. Although some guerrillas continued to operate sporadically, the military had regained control of the countryside and had defused the leftist threat.⁴⁶ Absolute military rule (and the peak of Ríos Montt's power) came to an end on the anniversary of the 1982 coup. March 23, 1983 was designated the "Day of National Dignity."⁴⁷

Contrary to the conclusions of some writers, General Ríos did not actively help with the counterinsurgency campaign. It was former defense minister Benedicto Lucas García, the previous president's brother, who first implemented the tactics and strategy utilized in *Plan Victoria '82*. Although forced out of power with his brother in 1982, the plans for a counterinsurgency campaign were left intact for others to implement. Specifically, the army Special General Staff included the essentials of the campaign in its National Plan for Security and Development. This plan was submitted to the Ríos Montt government in April, 1982.⁴⁸ Much later, the Organization of American States blamed the Guatemalan army for the excesses of the military campaign.⁴⁹

President Ríos Montt did publicly advocate and defend the *Plan Victoria '82* campaign. As reports of massacres, human rights violations, and victimization of innocent civilians filled the international media with a storm of criticism, world attention focused on the President. Many wondered how a religious man could approve of such things. However, President Ríos and many of his supporters denied the veracity of the reports. At one point Ríos Montt asserted that:

It is all disinformation, world orchestrated and well funded—and very effective. . . . We do not have the money to pay for any kind of counteradvertising and cannot do anything to change Guatemala's image. But I am not very much interested in international opinion. I am more interested in the national opinion.⁵⁰

The international public image of Ríos Montt had at times been that of a stern moral reformer because of his morality campaigns. But the devastation caused by the counterinsurgency campaign tarnished that image. He took upon himself full responsibility for *Plan Victoria '82*, although he had not acted alone—the military high command and the junior officers were also responsible.

When Ríos Montt finally learned that innocent people had indeed been killed under his regime and that some of his programs were flawed, he prostrated himself on national television, saying:

I want to ask your forgiveness, for I am the one responsible for whatever I allow to happen. But listen to me. What can I do, for example, when I haven't been able to make a customs agent understand me? He could ignore me and still lie, or abuse.⁵¹

Ríos Montt's American supporters replied to this public humiliation by asserting that:

Working hard to promote long-term moral changes in his country, yet lacking the total and absolute control that would be necessary to thoroughly enforce such change, Ríos Montt struggled with an uneasy yoke.⁵²

Looking like a disillusioned victim of his own religious idealism, the zealous President took upon himself a self-inflicted martyrdom.

From the beginning of 1982 the Guatemalan military desired to carry out a counterinsurgency campaign. The junior officers assured that it was efficiently implemented by their coup. Ríos Montt, with patriotic and religious fervor, represented the concerns of the military before the nation and the world.

While faithfully fulfilling this role, General Ríos was not a mere puppet of the military establishment. In an often independent, but complementary manner, Ríos Montt implemented programs that were uniquely his own. The General's most important service to the military was his role as a religious propagator of a new unifying moral ideology within Guatemala—an emphasis that the U.S. government looked upon favorably. It was in this role that President Ríos puzzled many observers.

Ríos Montt's personal ideology had its roots in a particular brand of religious faith. Much of his enigmatic aura can be explained by an examination of this faith. He was Protestant, Evangelical, and Pentecostal; these terms reflect specific beliefs, emphasis, and practices which help explain how Ríos Montt understood his role as Guatemala's President.

Ríos Montt was a Protestant within Guatemala's Catholic majority (about 80% of the population).⁵³ One of the basic differences between Ríos Montt and Guatemala's Catholics arises from differing views concerning the basis of authority. While both are expressions of Christianity, Catholicism and Protestantism differ theologically on the essential issue of ultimate authority; which is a fundamental determinant of beliefs and practices.⁵⁴ A Catholic finds ultimate authority in the Christian Bible and the traditions of the Church; but more specifically, as they are interpreted by the Pope and Bishops in council.⁵⁵ This effectively centralizes authority within the Church's hierarchy.⁵⁶

Protestants also find ultimate authority for beliefs and practices in the Bible, but as interpreted by the individual believer.⁵⁷ This diffuses authority outside of the church structure, and has the further effect of making individual believers arbiters of belief and practice. For this reason, Ríos Montt could make confident assertions about what was or was not God's will; he felt he could use the Bible as his guide and justification.

But even within Protestantism there are many theologies: liberal, moder-

ate, conservative, and fundamentalist—those who take the Bible most literally.⁵⁸ Ríos Montt should be considered a fundamentalist. Indeed, he felt that the Bible legitimized his rule. When he spoke of God having brought him to power, he reflected upon the scriptures which state: “Let every person be subjected to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God.”⁵⁹

Ríos Montt was also evangelical; a born-again Christian. Evangelicalism emerges from a religious conversion experience where one suddenly gains personal knowledge of Christ.⁶⁰ Two corollaries of this experience are that one then develops a personal relationship with God, and that one must proselytize others. Ríos Montt often referred to his own conversion story, and his religious candidness was an attempt to “witness” for the faith—a passive form of proselytizing.

Finally, Ríos Montt was Pentecostal. Pentecostalism is a form of conservative evangelical Protestantism that highlights the miracles of the Bible; especially that miraculous healings and speaking in tongues (a phenomenon where one speaks in an unknown language during worship) are moral Christian experiences. Many Pentecostals are emotional, mystical, and overtly religious.⁶¹ Hence, Ríos Montt made constant references to God working in his life, and at times acted “unusual:” the miraculous was to him almost commonplace. As one newspaper reported:

The image of Montt praying in a circus tent in Guatemala, surrounded by the faithful talking in tongues, was familiar worldwide.⁶²

Ríos Montt’s faith provided the basis for a new ideology in Guatemalan politics. His doctrinaire program intended to move Guatemala with words and arguments, through the mobilization of individual conscience.⁶³ Some feared that Ríos Montt would attempt to impose his particular faith on the entire nation. But rather than pursue such a narrow course, he took a pragmatic approach: he made a broad ideological appeal to Guatemalans on the basis of a firm emphasis upon traditional Judeo-Christian values and morality, attempting to minimize sectarian differences, while emphasizing strict principles regulating personal behavior.

His approach was predictable since conservative Protestantism places a great emphasis on the individual’s behavior. The problems of a society are not solved at a structural level, but at the individual level. The individual’s religious salvation provides the basis for individual reform first, and social reform second. This means that a strategy of social reform requires a morality campaign to precede it. This is the characteristic approach of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America, and of the Religious Right in the United States.⁶⁴ The Ríos Montt regime even had the moral and, at times, financial support of various groups in the American Religious Right.⁶⁵

Thus, a religious and moralistic ideology became the basis of the Ríos Montt regime's programs and propaganda. In his very first speech, the General stated that:

The peace of Guatemala depends on you sir, on you lady, on you little boy, on you, little girl; yes, the peace of Guatemala is in your heart, once there is peace in your heart, there will be peace in your house and there will be peace in society; please not another drink or anything else, get to work, Guatemala needs work.⁶⁶

The ideology was that of Ríos Montt and his co-religionists; however, the need for programs and propaganda and their eventual conception was recognized and worked out by Ríos Montt, his co-religionist aides, and the junior officers.⁶⁷

Ríos Montt, as both religionist and militarist, provided the military with new opportunities to induce unity in Guatemala by legitimizing the military's complete control over the nation, and by providing a new ideological basis for Guatemalan nationalism. A blatant example of this legitimizing aspect was provided by General Ríos in an interview:

What makes a government legitimate? It may be through a process of election. We say, however, that a government's legitimacy develops as it tries to face reality and resolve the people's problems.⁶⁸

He also spoke of the concept of *Guatemalidad* (Guatemalanism), a direct appeal to nationalism. Ríos Montt said that many of Guatemala's problems were due to a national identity crisis, that Guatemalans too often sought foreign solutions to the nation's difficulties. He prescribed self-renunciation as the first step in developing a new patriotism.⁶⁹ The General also recognized the need to incorporate the Indian population into this new nationalism, for:

They make up 60 percent of the population. We must fortify and consolidate them in order to have a nation. We must create national identity in order to do anything.⁷⁰

Guatemalan nationalism and military control, legitimized if possible, were deemed necessary countermeasures to the growth of the leftist insurgency in the countryside. Ríos Montt, the junior officers, and many outside observers perceived the gains of the left as the result of polarization fostered by the civilian right-wing and the former general's clique.⁷¹ The Ríos Montt regime attempted to depolarize the Guatemalan political situation, if only temporarily.

The religious and moralistic ideology of the regime contributed to nationalism by pointing Guatemala's citizens to the path of self-renunciation in its terse, moralistic campaigns and programs. Ríos Montt and his coreligionists actually envisioned the development of a "new Guatemala." Their ideological contribution to the regime complemented the needs of the military for a time.

Ríos Montt began emphasizing personal morality from the beginning of his rule. He was responsible for instituting a new twelve-point code of conduct for the army, designed to "win the support of the people for the government and the army." Some of its instructions included:

verbatim

1. Take nothing from the civilian population, not even a pin.
2. Do not make sexual advance or take liberties with local women.
3. Protect and do not damage the crops.
4. Pay a fair price for what you purchase. If in doubt, pay a little more.

In urban areas such regulations were strictly followed, but in the countryside results were mixed, especially during the counterinsurgency campaign.⁷²

Following the General's first speech to the nation, he decided to begin his own weekly television show in order to propagate the ideology of his regime. Every Sunday night he delivered a short homily, usually preaching the virtues of home, family, honesty, hard work, and of course, faith in God.⁷³

In November, 1982, Ríos Montt began a moral crusade called Project David, after the Biblical King David. Its central objective was the elimination of government corruption. The press reported that on November 17 "nearly 1,000 Cabinet members, judges and other ranking government officials publicly pledged . . . that they would not steal, lie, or misuse power."⁷⁴ By December, Ríos Montt decided to make the "three-finger pledge" (those that swore to the pledge counted off their promises on their fingers as Ríos Montt did) mandatory for all top officials, both military and civilian. Top officials in turn required that officials under them do the same. There were also plans to require all government employees to wear name badges so that if any official was derelict in his duties, the public might know exactly whom to blame.⁷⁵

Finally, Ríos Montt also attempted to popularize the vague Christian Democratic concept of "communitarianism" as the solution to the national debate between Capitalism and Communism. He presented communitarianism in completely non-political terms, however, asserting that:

It is the life attitude of people who are not devoted to philosophy or political doctrines. It is an attitude in which one is worth more when he produces more, when he works more, when he dedicates himself more deeply.⁷⁶

In another press interview, he described communitarianism as “the human relation . . . that is of the family, the sharing of everything, the working for the community.” He looked to Fundamentalist missionaries for the financial assistance to help him establish “model villages” to serve as examples of how communitarianism was supposed to work.⁷⁷

Ríos Montt, and two other coreligionists brought into the government, were primarily responsible for adapting their ideology to meet national needs.⁷⁸ However, none of these men were theoreticians. Consequently, their ideas and programs lacked cohesion and consistency. In any case, the regime enjoyed some success in reducing tensions in Guatemala, especially among the urban working classes and the middle sectors.⁷⁹ The ideology of the Ríos Montt regime was often, at best, a series of *ad hoc* solutions, tactically successful in dealing with the Guatemalan left, but too demanding in the long run on the Guatemalan status quo. Moreover, it lacked an organized political base or expression.

For example, the essentially conservative religious ideology challenged the liberal, often left-leaning theology of liberation popular among many of Guatemala’s Catholics. Evangelical proselytism, vigorous under the Ríos Montt regime, began to make important inroads into the Guatemalan countryside—the bastion of *anti-status quo* liberation theology.⁸⁰ Rather than being taught about social and political action as prescribed by liberation theology, evangelical converts would be taught to obey the powers-that-be. Evangelical leaders would preach the “virtues of education, hard work, and individual self-help,” but politics was a matter for the country’s rulers, not the peasants.⁸¹

However, the regime’s religious ideology also had its liabilities. When Pope John Paul II visited Guatemala on his Central American tour in spring 1983, General Ríos handled the visit in a clumsy and discourteous fashion—exposing further his anti-Catholic bias.⁸² Additionally, the regime’s religious base eventually struck many Guatemalans as puritanical and sectarian, leading to an erosion of support.⁸³

The demise of the Ríos Montt regime can be traced to a combination of problems such as President Ríos’ unwavering commitment to his religious ideals, and his implementation of a number of unpopular economic reforms. But primarily, it was his failure to maintain judicious and effective control over the Guatemalan military which guaranteed his fall.

By early 1983, the regime faced a new crisis. In the wake of the resolved national emergency created by the threat of the Guatemalan left, national unity began to subside. The most traditionally influential sectors of Guatemala—the estate owners, other business interests, the Old Guard in the military, and the Catholic Church—once again began to vie for power. While their willingness to support or tolerate President Ríos began to disintegrate, he continued to pursue his “new Guatemala,” regardless of public desires.

Above all else, Ríos Montt was dedicated to his own ideals and goals,

which included the furthering of the Evangelical faith in Guatemala. During his rule, membership in the General's congregation grew from 800 members to over 3,500.⁸⁴ But this was not an isolated case. A Protestant religious revival preceded Ríos Montt's rise to power and continued during his regime, in which hundreds of thousands of converts were made to Evangelicalism.⁸⁵ The growth of conservative Protestantism and Ríos Montt's sectarianism contributed to the erosion of the regime's ecumenical base.⁸⁶

The General's religious ideology also blinded him to the necessities of effective political leadership, such as political compromise and party organization. Ríos Montt often dealt with political opposition, especially the MLN party, by suppressing it.⁸⁷ He was concerned only with what he thought best for Guatemala, not dissenting views or goals. The other widely-recognized error of President Ríos was that, while propagating his own ideology throughout the Nation, and, consequently, developing a potentially strong social base, he did not form a political party.⁸⁸ While having thousands of ideological sympathizers, Ríos Montt and his followers did not form a political organization to utilize them. Neither did they encourage the believers to join with the regime's silent allies, the Christian Democrats.⁸⁹ President Ríos, therefore, did not have a political base. He only developed an undeclared "missionary party": a party whose aim was only to win converts for its religious perspective, not popular suffrage or political leverage.⁹⁰

A less publicized but no less important aspect of the regime's collapse was its economic policies. The General inherited a difficult economic situation. In June 1982 *The Economist* gave this assessment of the Guatemalan economy:

The country faces a severe shortage of foreign exchange. Unemployment is around 42% and rising. Exports of coffee and cotton have been halved as a result of the violence in the countryside. Yields from staple gain crops have fallen drastically: serious food shortage seems certain later this year. Planting has stopped in the violent north-western provinces. Tourism, once Guatemala's third highest earner, has virtually disappeared. One glimmer of economic hope is that Guatemala may get American aid under President Reagan's Caribbean program.⁹¹

The regime made some attempts to stimulate the ailing economy. In the areas formerly under guerrilla control the Government initiated rural development programs.⁹² However, after their initial phases the programs became dependent on foreign aid.⁹³ Although the regime denied that it was contemplating agrarian reform throughout the latter half of 1982, the agrarian minister was a liberal with experience in the implementation of such programs. Ríos Montt himself stated that "We are planning changes in agricultural policy . . . in line with national reality." Some lands confiscated from

members of the previous regime were redistributed to peasants, and there were widespread, disruptive rumors that the Ríos Montt Government was planning to implement agrarian reform. Such a program never materialized, but one political analyst says that these rumors unsettled the estate owners, thus encouraging opposition to Ríos Montt.⁹⁴

During 1983, the General's monetary and fiscal policies led to more publicized opposition. He put controls on foreign exchange, began to restrict the flow of capital out of the country, and refused to accede to demands that the quetzal be devalued.⁹⁵ The announced implementation of a value-added tax, required by the world Bank for Guatemala to receive a \$120 million balance of payments credit, was temporarily postponed because it aroused such firm opposition from the business sector.⁹⁶ Ríos Montt also scolded business leaders for such offenses as tax evasion, economic inequity, and personal immorality.⁹⁷

By July 1983 the business sector was most dissatisfied with President Ríos. A *New York Times* report stated, "Merchants and industrialists are virtually unanimous in their opposition to the Government and their lack of confidence in the country's finance and economic ministries."⁹⁸ Unnamed wealthy businessmen were by this time approaching the military with offers to finance a coup.⁹⁹ If President Ríos had succeeded in obtaining sufficient amounts of aid money and loans he could have possibly offset his nation's economic troubles. Those who helped Ríos Montt assume power had hoped his stern, moralistic image might result in a better international image for Guatemala, thus bringing greater financial assistance from the U.S. This initial failure to secure increased aid signaled the political decline of the Ríos Montt regime. Besides his support among the junior officers, General Ríos' countervailing political leverage was this hoped for increase in financial assistance. The failure to secure such an increase made Ríos Montt politically expendable.

The Reagan administration, although quite concerned about the growth of leftist movements in Central America, responded cautiously to the new regime in the beginning; but a warming of U.S.-Guatemalan relations was soon underway.¹⁰⁰ By early August, 1982, State Department officials were reporting favorably on the progress of the Ríos Montt regime—especially in regard to what had been considered "The [previous] deplorable human rights situation. . . ."¹⁰¹

In October the U.S. issued a statement claiming that General Ríos had indeed improved the human rights situation in his country. It should be noted, however, that many human rights groups and congressional staff members disagreed with this assessment.¹⁰² There immediately followed a major change in U.S. policy toward Guatemala. The State Department recommended that the U.S. desist from obstructing loans to Guatemala. Administration officials, in fact, encouraged Guatemalan loans.¹⁰³ In late December, President Reagan told the press that General Ríos was receiving

a "bum rap" from human rights organizations.¹⁰⁴ The steady improvement in U.S.-Guatemalan relations was evident. Increases in financial assistance in the form of loans from the World Bank occurred in conjunction with this improvement.¹⁰⁵

The trend continued through early 1983. An embargo on armaments sales to Guatemala was lifted in January, allowing the military to buy spare parts for their helicopters.¹⁰⁶ Finally, the U.S. embassy in Guatemala revealed in March that important increases in financial assistance were scheduled to be given to the Guatemalan government. Aid for fiscal 1982 had been only \$21.2 million; \$55.4 million was now scheduled for Guatemala. The addition of loan guarantees to the aid package brought total U.S. assistance for fiscal 1983 to \$103 million. By contrast, 1981 U.S. assistance had only totaled \$16.6 million. There was, however, an important exclusion to the new aid package: there was to be no resumption of military aid until 1984, and that was to begin with only \$10 million.¹⁰⁷

While Ríos Montt was improving relations with the U.S., the military Old Guard was contributing to a renewal of tensions which would lead to his ruin. In early January, the military imprisoned a vacationing American businessman for alleged involvement in a guerrilla raid, although there seemed to be little evidence against him. This brought a protest from the U.S. State Department, and the man was soon released.¹⁰⁸ Then in February, a Guatemalan anthropologist—working for a U.S. sponsored aid project—and three companions—two of whom were employees of Guatemala's own Ministry of Education—disappeared in Huehuetenango province. When representatives of the development agency and the Ministry of Education questioned the military authorities of the province, they were stonewalled. Other inquiries on the case were made by visiting U.S. Representative Clarence D. Long (D. Md.) to Defense Minister Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores, resulting only in a "heated" exchange of words. Mr. Long was the head of an important subcommittee for aid legislation; consequently, he reiterated publicly his opposition to increased aid for Guatemala.

In early March, with U.S.-Guatemalan relations again strained and tensions high within the Guatemalan Government itself, the following explanation emerged:

. . . the Defense Ministry issued a statement saying the group had been picked up at a checkpoint but escaped and might have gone into hiding in the mountains or in Mexico. Four days later the same ministry said that Ortiz Maldonado [the anthropologist] and the rest were killed "while trying to escape" on a bridge and fell into the stream. The same statement also said Ortiz Maldonado was spending his time, "especially weekends" training "a group of subversive delinquents" in the area and was picked up because of that.¹⁰⁹

In response to this revelation, President Reagan excluded Guatemala from a \$298 million military and economic aid package for Central America. In addition, most of the financial assistance package previously designated for Guatemala—much of it for rural development—was placed under reconsideration. Furthermore, aid would remain suspended until “proper judicial action in the case of the murders of the AID contractors” should be made. Days later, the U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala was temporarily recalled to Washington as a further sign of U.S. displeasure.¹¹⁰

No satisfactory explanations or convictions were forthcoming. General Ríos, unable to control the Old Guard within the military, lost substantial economic assistance. Consequently, when Guatemala’s continuous state of siege was lifted on March 23, he no longer had this economic bargaining chip in his favor. As Ríos Montt continued trying to implement his programs for Guatemala, it was increasingly his own intransigence which became the national and international focus of attention.

The most pressing issue was returning Guatemala to democracy. The clamor for immediate elections had subsided shortly after the 1982 coup when General Ríos had stated that there were to be no elections for at least two-and-a-half years.¹¹¹ The day after the Reagan administration lifted the arms embargo, Guatemala’s Foreign Minister to the U.S. stated that General Ríos would allow an elected government to assume power in 1985.¹¹² Although Ríos Montt had specific political plans for a new Guatemala, his timetable was too long and vague for Guatemala’s political parties to accept.¹¹³

When the state of siege was lifted, allowing political party activities, President Ríos reiterated that he would eventually turn power over to an elected government, but, again, set no specific date for elections. Instead, he issued laws establishing an electoral tribunal which would be charged with organizing and overseeing the electoral process. It was also revealed that General Ríos was planning for a series of elections: first, for officials who were to participate in writing a new constitution; then, later were to follow elections for president and a new legislature.

Civilian officials of Guatemala’s two top political parties did not respond favorably to either the announced plans or the lack of a specific date for elections. Mario Sandoval of the MLN party said that the President’s plans were a farce, and the Ríos Montt was trying to prolong his rule. Even Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo of the DC party—the party most sympathetic to the President—stated that the actions did not go far enough.¹¹⁴

President José Efraín Ríos Montt insured the alienation of virtually every faction or supporter in May, 1983. In concluding his Sunday night sermon, after preaching about “patriotism, morality, local politics and the revelations of divine wisdom,” Ríos Montt stated that Guatemala was not yet “prepared” for democratic elections. He explained that more time was required to ensure the veracity of the Nation’s voter roles, and that political

parties needed more time to organize.¹¹⁵ Voter roles had indeed been falsified by previous rulers. Political parties needed more time to organize because he had issued a law lowering the required number of members for legal registration of a political party to 4,000, from the previously established figure of 50,000 set by the 1964 constitution. The lower limit was designed to broaden participation to include many opposition parties, including many left-wing parties which previous Guatemalan governments had rejected. Established right-wing parties therefore were vehemently opposed to this.¹¹⁶

President Ríos' announcement drew protests from all sectors of Guatemalan society. Furthermore, he seems to have been unaware that his support from Washington was beginning to dissipate. While U.S. policy was supporting a return to democratic government in Central America—especially in El Salvador and Nicaragua—Ríos Montt was set on his own independent course and timetable.¹¹⁷

Increased conflict within Ríos Montt's military government soon brought more pressure to bear on the President. In early June, the commander of a garrison in Queszaltenango refused to carry out orders from the military high command to bombard a village only recently fallen under guerrilla control. Other garrison commanders soon lent moral support to their comrade. Senior officers of the Old Guard were incensed at this show of insubordination. The Old Guard decided it was again time to challenge the situation which enabled younger officers to break with the military hierarchy—the assumption of power by the junior officers faction and General Ríos Montt.¹¹⁸

General Guillermo Echevarría Vielman was the senior officer who led the challenge of Montt. Appearing on a popular television show on the evening of June 5, he read a letter calling for an end to military rule, for Ríos Montt to schedule elections, and he accused the President of being biased against the Catholic Church.¹¹⁹ This challenge to Ríos Montt's authority was made in broad enough terms to garner popular support from the nation. Although President Ríos successfully withstood the challenge by discharging General Echevarría, mounting pressure forced a new promise for national elections in 1984.¹²⁰

However, the election issue was too important for General Ríos to put off any longer. It became the unifying issue around which all his opponents could agree. Not that everyone was interested in popular democracy; but rather, religious, economic, political, and military tensions were vented, one after another, by aggrieved leaders of Guatemala's status quo. Rumors of an impending military coup circulated but were denied. President Ríos responded to the tensions and public criticism of his rule and policies by calling a state of alert and imposing restrictions on the press.¹²¹

Finally, in the last week of June, representatives of the military Old Guard approached President Ríos with five demands: one, that he establish the electoral tribunal before mentioned and set an early date for elections; two, that his six junior officer special advisors resign; three, that his two coreligionists

advisors resign; four, that the proposed, unpopular value-added tax be cancelled; and, five, the removal of army officials employed as government bureaucrats. With the presentation of these demands, troops from five military bases outside Guatemala City threatened military maneuvers.¹²²

In the ensuing days General Ríos Montt acceded to most of the demands. Curiously, he gave in on the demands of power politics in an attempt to preserve his paternalistic reform strategy, and for the sake of loyalty to his two coreligionists.

Perhaps thinking only to appease the concerns of the Old Guard about preserving obedience to the chain of command, Ríos Montt complied with the demand forcing junior officers on his advisory council to resign on June 29.¹²³ Whatever his logic, it seems to have been a poor tactical decision: the junior officers were the mainstay of the Ríos Montt regime. Their dismissal left him vulnerable to a coup. On June 30, President Ríos' government swore in the demanded electoral tribunal. However, he disregarded the demand that he set an early date for elections. The choosing of a constituent assembly was set for March 23, 1984; and, only at that time would he formally call elections for July 29, 1984.¹²⁴ On July 1, President Ríos dismissed 50 Army officers employed in high-level government positions. On July 2, he postponed implementation of the value-added tax until the following year.¹²⁵

General Ríos steadfastly refused to dismiss his two personal advisors. He told the senior officers that he would not dismiss them unless he too resigned—and he did offer to resign, but still had enough support among the more moderate officers so that this was deemed undesirable at the time.¹²⁶ It is also possible that the senior officers were hoping to manipulate the now weakened leader. An assessment of Ríos Montt's political strength, appearing on July 4, stated that he seemed "to have weathered the latest of more than a dozen serious challenges to his leadership for the time being."¹²⁷

President Ríos Montt's concessions may have been a sign of political weakness, but he had not yet been rendered weak enough to satisfy many of his opponents. Rumors that Leonel Sisniega Otero of the MLN was planning to launch his own coup against the President prompted the military to act first. With Defense Minister General Mejía Victores and General Lopez Fuentes leading the military, the following occurred:

On Aug. 6, virtually all the commanders of the country's armed forces gathered at the Guatemala City barracks of the Guardia de Honor, an elite army garrison. There were impassioned arguments for and against ousting Ríos Montt, but gradually the plotters won. . . . On the morning of Aug. 8, the commanders again assembled at the Guardia de Honor barracks. Ríos Montt was asked to stop by. When the President entered the hall, he got the bad news: resign or be ousted. Ríos Montt listened and argued for 20 minutes, then agreed to quit. All he wanted to do,

he told the officers, was return to the presidential mansion to tidy up his affairs.¹²⁸

Contrary to the image attributed to him by his supporters in this coup, President Ríos did not relinquish power too passively:

As soon as he arrived at his office, however, he began calling army and security force units he thought were still loyal to him. The rebellious officers decided to be more persuasive. Planes and helicopters buzzed the presidential palace. Soldiers surrounding the building exchanged gunfire with members of Ríos Montt's 1,000-man presidential guard. After a stalemate of about two hours, Ríos Montt realized his cause was lost and surrendered his post.¹²⁹

Ríos Montt had failed to fully control his own military and Guatemala's traditional elites. But, more importantly, they had never been able to fully control him. Guatemala's elites were not alone in their frustration with General Ríos Montt. Only days before the coup Ríos Montt, who was ever concerned with domestic programs, practically accused the United States and the Soviet Union of only being concerned with realpolitik in Central America; the superpowers only "want geographical positions, strategic positions, positions for combat. . . [they] do not want to help us."¹³⁰

The exact role of the U.S. in the fall of Ríos Montt is unclear. He alienated enough of his supporters to be responsible for his own downfall. But curious circumstances surrounded the coup. The day before the coup, the defense ministers of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, had attended a meeting with the U.S. Southern Command aboard the U.S. aircraft carrier *Ranger* just off the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. A U.S. defense attache was accidentally photographed "speaking into a walkie-talkie from the national palace during the coup." U.S.-Guatemalan relations warmed much more quickly after this coup than following the Montt takeover. Frederic L. Chapin, the U.S. Ambassador, greeted General Mejía the day following the coup, whereas the same protocol did not occur for weeks in the case of General Ríos. In addition, while Ríos Montt tended to shun Washington's regional concern about the political left in Central America, General Mejía immediately attacked Nicaragua's Sandinista government as a threat to peace. Mejía added that "The United States is the only country that can help to combat the guerrillas in the region." Perhaps Vinicio Cerezo was correct in estimating that the U.S. gave tacit approval to the coup.¹³¹

The only support that General Ríos maintained as his regime came to a close, and even afterwards, was among his coreligionists.¹³² Indeed, the second Sunday following his overthrow Ríos Montt returned to his congregation where he was greeted as a "hero of the faith."¹³³

General Ríos Montt rose to power because of internal and external threats. While the Guatemalan government faced a serious external challenge from leftist insurgents in the countryside, the military elite had created internal conflict within the Guatemalan power structure that brought the nation's most powerful civilian elites and dissatisfied junior officers together to depose the military high command. Once accomplished, it was urgent that a satisfactory new government be formed to meet the insurgents' challenge. The selection of Ríos Montt as junta leader pleased the civilian elites, the remnants of the military elite, and most importantly, the junior officers. It was also thought that Ríos Montt's image would be a boon to relations with the U.S. The exigency created by the insurgents demanded a united response from Guatemala's elites. Their interests and the nation's immediate needs converged in the person of Ríos Montt. His selection as the new head of state was a matter of expediency.

To effectively deal with the insurgents and at the behest of the junior officers, Ríos Montt was allowed to assume broad powers over the nation. His role changed from titular executive to real executive, and finally to military dictator during the counterinsurgency campaign. The assumption of power by Ríos Montt and the junior officers led to moderate treatment of Guatemala's middle and working class urbanites, thus relieving, at least temporarily, the danger of alienating the urban populace. The religious ideology of General Ríos infused the regime's programs with a complimentary propaganda.

However, General Ríos Montt and his coreligionists also saw their newfound role in the nation expedient for the fulfillment of their own objectives: ultimately, the realization of the envisioned "new Guatemala." Ríos Montt, the religious ideologue, had by early 1983 outlasted his usefulness.¹³⁴ He began to alienate those who had allowed him to assume control. Therefore, his power waned. He again became only a titular executive, but he continued to seek the implementation of the reforms he believed would create the "new Guatemala." Guatemala's elites, both military and civilian, split with Ríos Montt over the purpose of his rule. General Ríos cried he still had much to do, but Guatemala's elites decided that his work was over. By sacrificing the interests of junior and other officers for the sake of preserving his paternal guidance over the nation, General Ríos ultimately undermined the last pinions of his power base.

Besides serving as a lightning rod for international criticism during the counterinsurgency campaign, perhaps the reformist character of the Ríos Montt regime served to demonstrate that there is much sentiment for political and social reforms in Guatemala. However, on the pivotal issue of land reform there was, and is, little hope for change. Furthermore, the Ríos Montt

regime was a watershed for the nation's military institutions. If the military were to have continued to support Ríos Montt, while modifying the sectarian impulses of his ideology, the potential cohesion between a united military and a supportive middle sector could have allowed Guatemalan militarism to be transformed into fascism, therefore providing the justification for the military elite to establish a corporate, military state. Instead, the self-seeking splintering of Guatemala's military elites indicates that the military institution is essentially praetorian in character.¹³⁵ The recent election of Cincio Cerezo Arévalo, the first civilian president in nearly two decades, only indicates that the Guatemalan military is retreating from outright dominance of the nation.¹³⁶ The military is merely returning to a latent, more subtle form of praetorianism.

NOTES

¹Joseph Anfuso and David Sczepanski, *He Gives—He Takes Away: The True Story of Guatemala's Former President Efraín Ríos Montt* (Eureka, Ca.: Radiance Publications, 1983), 117. The perspective of Ríos Montt's life and rule as presented by his coreligionists. Based on interviews, primary and secondary sources. Contains a bibliography, but no footnotes.

²*New York Times* (NYT), 11 August 1983; Reprinted in *Information Services on Latin America* (ISLA), item #647; *Washington Post* (WP), 6 April 1982: ISLA #1758; Anfuso, 169.

³NYT, 11 August 1983; ISLA #647; WP, 6 April 1982: ISLA #1758; Piero Gleijeses, "Guatemala: Crisis and Response" in Richard Fagan and Olga Pellicer, eds., *The Future of Central America: Policy Choices for the United States and Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 206.

⁴Shelton H. David, "State Violence and Agrarian Crisis in Guatemala: The Roots of the Indian-Peasant Rebellion," in Martin Diskin, ed., *Trouble in Our Backyard: Central America and the United States in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon Books, Random House, 1984), 159-160; *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America: Natural Resources, 1983 Report* (Washington D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, 1983), 390-91.

⁵Daniel L. Premo, "Guatemala," in Robert Wesson, ed., *Communism in Central America and the Caribbean* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), 76.

⁶George Black, Milton Jamail and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, *Garrison Guatemala* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 43. Although unabashedly on the left, this work contains useful and usually well documented information. In the appendices there is reprinted what are reportedly the actual general plans of the Ríos Montt regime's counterinsurgency campaign.

⁷Julio Castellanos Cambranes, "Guatemala," in Steven Ropp and James A Morris, eds., *Central America: Crisis and Adaptation* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 143, 146.

⁸Black, 26, 52-53.

⁹Robert L. Peterson, "Guatemala," in Jack W. Hopkins, ed., *Latin America and Caribbean Contemporary Record*, vol. II, 1982-1983 (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1984), 499. By far the most balanced and incisive analysis of the Ríos Montt period.

¹⁰Lars Schoultz, "Guatemala: Social Change and Political Conflict," in Diskin, 184.

¹¹Peterson, 499.

¹²Schoultz, 184-85.

¹³Gleijeses, 204.

¹⁴Castellanos, 146; Peterson, 499.

¹⁵*Miami Herald* (MH), 28 March 1982: ISLA #1110; *Manchester Guardian / Le Monde* (MGM), 4 April 1982: ISLA #1752.

¹⁶MH, 28 March 1982: ISLA #1110.

¹⁷*Time*, 5 April 1982, 29.

¹⁸Castellanos, 146.

¹⁹*MH*, 28 March 1982: *ISLA* #1110.

²⁰*MH*, 28 March 1982: *ISLA* #1115.

²¹Peterson, 499.

²²Black, 33; Anfuso, 62-66; Gleijeses, 205.

²³*MH*, 28 March 1982: *ISLA* #1115; Anfuso, 115.

²⁴*Time*, 5 April 1982, 29.

²⁵*MH*, 28 March 1982: *ISLA* #1115; *Time*, 5 April 1982, 28-30; Thomas R. Melville, "The Catholic Church in Guatemala," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (Spring, 1983), 26-27.

²⁶Anfuso, 66-68, 80.

²⁷Jonathan L. Fried, et al., *Guatemala in Rebellion: Unfinished History* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), 331. A collection of documents presenting the case of the Guatemalan Left.

²⁸Jim Handy, *Gift of the Devil* (Boston, Ma.: South End Press, 1984), 256. A most detailed exposition and analysis of the Ríos Montt period in the last chapter. Handy also presents much inside information on the military.

²⁹David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964) 70-71.

³⁰*Time*, 5 April 1982, 30.

³¹Anfuso, 119.

³²José Efraín Ríos Montt, television broadcast transcript (copy), 23 March 1982 (Translated into English by the author).

³³*Time*, 5 April 1982, 30.

³⁴*Time*, 5 April 1982, 30.

³⁵*WP*, 26 March 1982: *ISLA* #1105.

³⁶Anfuso, 121; *Time*, 5 April 1982, 29; *WP*, 26 March 1982: *ISLA* #1105.

³⁷*WP*, 26 March 1982: *ISLA* #1105.

³⁸*WP*, 26 March 1982: *ISLA* #1105.

³⁹Anfuso, 124.

⁴⁰*Los Angeles Times (LAT)*, 30 March 1983: *ISLA* #1106; Anfuso, 124; *NYT*, 10 June 1982: *ISLA* #2678.

⁴¹Anfuso, 130; Handy, 265.

⁴²Peterson, 500.

⁴³Castellanos, 148; Black, 132; Handy, 258; Beatriz Manz, "Guatemalan Refugees: Violence, Displacement, and Survival," *Cultural Survival Quarterly (CSQ)*, (Spring, 1983): 42; *NYT*, 6 October 1982: *ISLA* #1341; *MGM*, 9 January 1983: *ISLA* #62.

⁴⁴*LAT*, 8 June 1985; Handy, 276-77.

⁴⁵Peterson, 500.

⁴⁶Black, 128, 134-35; *NYT*, 14 March 1982: *ISLA* #1090; Handy, 260.

⁴⁷*WP*, 13 October 1983: *ISLA* #1772.

⁴⁸Anfuso, 130-132.

⁴⁹*NYT*, 21 March 1983: *ISLA* #1023; Anfuso, 132, 137-38.

⁵⁰Anfuso, 137.

⁵¹Wilton M. Nelson, *Protestantism in Central America* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Erdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 72.

⁵²Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publish. Co., 1962, 18th ed., 1979), 89; Dagoberto D. Runes, *Dictionary of Philosophy* (New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1962), 83-84. Ríos Montt was formerly Catholic. See note 134.

⁵³Concilio Vaticano II: *Documentos Completos* (Mexico D.F.: Liberia Parroquial, 1966, 1982 ed.), 42-44; Pedro Sembrador, *Las 3 Partes de la Doctrina Catolica, Estudio Doctrinal E.V.C. No. 1*, folleto No. 101 (Mexico D.F.: Sociedad E.V.C., 1931, reprint ed., 1953), 9-10.

⁵⁴Ludwig Ott, *Manuel de Teologia Dogmatica* (Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 1958), 424-25, 432.

⁵⁷Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Baker Book House, 1970), 1, 289.

⁵⁸William E. Hordern, *A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1955), 52-53, 73-75, 111-12. 59 Romans 13:1, NASB 1960.

⁶⁰Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965, 1981 ed.), 78.

⁶¹Martin E. Marty, *A Nation of Behavers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 107-114.

⁶²MH, 4 September 1983: ISLA #1281.

⁶³Donald R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 2.

⁶⁴Stephen D. Glazier, *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Case Studies From the Caribbean and Latin America* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1980), 4; Gabriel Fackre, *The Religious Right and Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), x.

⁶⁵*Christian Century* (CC), 16 June 1982, 688; 16 March 1983, 240; LAT, 23 October 1982: ISLA #1771.

⁶⁶Ríos Montt, television broadcast transcript, 23 March 1982.

⁶⁷Black, 128.

⁶⁸William Conrad, "An Interview with Guatemala's President," *Moody Monthly* (April 1983): 117-118.

⁶⁹Ríos Montt, television broadcast transcripts, 18 April 1982; 30 May 1982.

⁷⁰Conrad, 117-118; Black, 131.

⁷¹Handy, 256; Anfuso, 125-27; Black, 125.

⁷²Anfuso, 127; Black 180; NYT, 15 July 1982: ISLA #38.

⁷³NYT, 15 July 1983: ISLA #59.

⁷⁴MH, 18 November 1982: ISLA #1753; Anfuso, 151.

⁷⁵LAT, 17 December 1982: ISLA #88.

⁷⁶Conrad, 117-118.

⁷⁷NYT, 20 May 1982: IDLA #2225.

⁷⁸LAT, 30 September 1982: ISLA #922; Anfuso, 158.

⁷⁹Black, 125; Anfuso, 123, 139; NYT, 27 October 1982: ISLA #1351.

⁸⁰MH, 4 June 1983: ISLA #2727; MGM, 9 January 1983: ISLA #65; Beverly Treumann, "Fulfilling God's Mandate in Guatemala: A Righteous General, A Frightened People," *Christianity and Crisis* (7 October 1982): 281. For an excellent article on the teachings of liberation theology and its political implications, see James V. Schall, "Central America and Politicized Religion," *World Affairs* Vol. 144, no.2 (Fall 1981): 126-149.

⁸¹MGM, 9 January 1983: ISLA #65.

⁸²NYT, 17 March 1983: ISLA #574; *Time*, 7 March 1983, 10-11; Linda Drucker, "The Pope and 'Holy War': Confrontation with Ríos Montt," *Commonweal* (22 April 1983): 230-232.

⁸³*Wall Street Journal* (WSJ), 12 August 1983: ISLA #649; WP, 9 August 1983: ISLA #639.

⁸⁴Handy, 270.

⁸⁵MH, 4 June 1983: ISLA #2727; NYT Magazine, 7 Nov. 1982, 47; LAT, 30 September 1982: ISLA #922. See also *Christianity Today*, 23 April 1982, 34.

⁸⁶*Financial Times of London*, 10 August 1983: ISLA #645.

⁸⁷WP, 17 August 1982: ISLA \$441; MH, 15 June 1983: ISLA #2730; MH, 16 June 1983: ISLA #2731.

⁸⁸WSJ, 12 August 1983: ISLA #659.

⁸⁹Handy, 271.

⁹⁰Austin Ranney, *Governing: An Introduction to Political Science* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971; third ed., CBS College Publishing, 1982), 197-527.

⁹¹*The Economist*, 19 June 1982, 28.

⁹²Stephen W. Bosworth, "Situation in Guatemala," *Department of State Bulletin* (Nov. 1982): 64.

⁹³Black, 141, see also note 77.

⁹⁴Handy, 269-270.

⁹⁵Handy, 268-269; *NYT*, 15 July 1983: *ISLA* #59.

⁹⁶*WP*, 4 July 1983: *ISLA* #56.

⁹⁷*Christian Science Monitor* (CSM), 23 February 1983: *ISLA* #568; Handy, 268; *LAT*, 1 August 1982: *ISLA* #436.

⁹⁸*NYT*, 15 July 1983: *ISLA* #59.

⁹⁹*WP*, 4 July 1983: *ISLA* #56.

¹⁰⁰*WP*, 25 March 1982: *ISLA* 102.

¹⁰¹Bosworth, 63.

¹⁰²*MH*, 1 October 1982: *ISLA* #1352.

¹⁰³*NYT*, 10 October 1982: *ISLA* #1356.

¹⁰⁴*CSM*, 6 January 1983: *ISLA* #54.

¹⁰⁵Handy, 268.

¹⁰⁶*NYT*, 8 January 1983: *ISLA* #58.

¹⁰⁷*LAT*, 12 March 1983: *ISLA* #1025.

¹⁰⁸*WP*, 12 26 January 1983: *ISLA* #72; *MH*, 28 January 1983: *ISLA* #73.

¹⁰⁹*WP*, 12 March 1983: *ISLA* #1026. The company under contract to the Agency for International Development was Interamerica Incorporated. Ortiz Maldonado was a bilingual specialist working with Indian youth.

¹¹⁰*MH*, 13 March 1983: *ISLA* #1027; *NYT*, 15 March 1983: *ISLA* #1028.

¹¹¹*MH*, 22 June 1982: *ISLA* #2681.

¹¹²*NYT*, 10 January 1983: *ISLA* #57.

¹¹³Anfuso, 162.

¹¹⁴*NYT*, 24 March 1983: *ISLA* #1020.

¹¹⁵*Time*, 23 May 1983, 35.

¹¹⁶Handy, 272; Anfuso, 165; *WP*, 4 July 1983: *ISLA* #56.

¹¹⁷*NYT*, 13 August 1983: *ISLA* #653; *LAT*, 14 August 1983: *ISLA* #553.

¹¹⁸Handy, 274.

¹¹⁹*MH*, 8 June 1983: *ISLA* #2739.

¹²⁰*NYT*, 14 June 1983: *ISLA* #2739.

¹²¹*NYT*, 15 July 1983: *ISLA* #59; *NYT* 20 June 1983: *ISLA* #2732.

¹²²Anfuso, 165; *Time*, 22 August 1983, 37. This seems to have occurred on June 28.

¹²³*WP*, 30 June 1983: *ISLA* #2723.

¹²⁴*NYT*, 1 July 1983: *ISLA* #54.

¹²⁵*WP*, 2 July 1983: *ISLA* #55; *WP*, 4 July 1983: #56.

¹²⁶Anfuso, 165-66.

¹²⁷*WP*, 4 July 1983: *ISLA* #56.

¹²⁸Handy, 274.

¹²⁹*Time*, 22 August 1983, 37. Compare this account with that of Anfuso, 167.

¹³⁰*NYT*, 7 August 1983: *ISLA* #636.

¹³¹*NYT*, 7 August 1983: *ISLA* #636; *NYT*, 13 August 1983: *ISLA* #653; On this whole matter see also Handy, 274; *WSJ*, 12 August 1983: *ISLA* #649; *LAT*, 10 August 1983: *ISLA* #642; *NYT*, 9 August 1983: *ISLA* #641; *NYT*, 10 August 1983: *ISLA* #642.

¹³²*WSJ*, 12 August 1983: *ISLA* #649.

¹³³Anfuso, 172.

¹³⁴Note on the religious conversion of Ríos Montt: he seemed to have made his conversion to Evangelical Protestant Pentecostalism in either late 1978 or 1979; formerly, he was a Roman Catholic (his brother was a Catholic Bishop during this period) and he has characterized himself as always having been a religious man. See Anfuso, 86; *CT*, 23 April 1982, 33.

¹³⁵David C. Rapoport, "A Comparative Theory of Military and Political Types," in Samuel

P. Huntington, et al., *Changing Patterns of Military Politics* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe Inc., 1962), 72-73.

¹³⁶LAT, 9 December 1985, 16.