

**Organizing Flight: The Roots and Moral Economy
of the Salvadoran *Guinda* System**

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ORGANIZING FLIGHT: THE ROOTS & MORAL ECONOMY OF THE SALVADORAN *GUINDA* SYSTEM

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Introduction: A Thin, Black Line?

Gladis Guardado remembers exactly when and how the civil war arrived to her home town of La Hacienda, in northern Chalatenango, El Salvador. It was mid-December 1979. The Salvadoran Army and National Guard, along with paramilitaries from ORDEN, began forcefully dislodging people from nearby villages, including La Laguna, El Jícaro, Las Vueltas, El Tichahuite and Conacaste. About 400 *campesinos*¹ from these and other villages descended on Gladis's town of La Hacienda, where they stayed for a few weeks before moving on to Las Aradas, a hamlet of perhaps a dozen houses located on the banks of the Sumpul River. Initially, Gladis and others from La Hacienda decided to stay home but, a few months later, a new wave of violence hit. "*La guardia* [the National Guard] came, shooting first and then ransacking houses and stores... They tore down the doors with machetes, killed the animals and the people who stayed in their houses... they pulled them outside at bayonet point and beat them."²

That was in March 1980. In late April, when *la guardia* started to kill, Gladis Guardado and many of her neighbors decided to leave La Hacienda. They, too, headed toward the hamlet of Las Aradas and, along the way, joined up with others from El Llano, Aldea Vieja, El Tamarindo, Los Guardados and other villages. By the time they reached their destination, the group had grown to over 500. In the days that followed, *campesinos* continued arriving to Las Aradas so that, by mid-May, the tiny village on the border with Honduras hosted nearly 1500 people.

Then, on May 14, 1980, as the *campesinos* at Las Aradas breakfasted on corn tortillas, the ambush began. Barely had someone yelled "Here comes *la guardia*!" when the ground troops

were upon them. The campesinos scattered, attempting to escape, but soldiers knocked them down with kicks and blows, bayonets and bullets. Witnesses later recounted the worst of what they saw: soldiers slicing open the bellies of pregnant women; fetuses and infants thrown into the air and bayoneted; genitals cut off of men and boys; girls and women raped. As these horrors occurred, many campesinos threw themselves into the river and tried to reach the opposite shore, only to be carried away by the swollen current or pegged mid-stream by machine-gun fire from the helicopters circling above. Those who made it to the other side were turned back by Honduran soldiers. “They started to push us back by force and to shoot,” recalled Gladis Guardado. “And then people ran back to the Salvadoran side, where they were massacred by the army.” By the time the “human carnage” slowed in mid-afternoon, along the banks of the Sumpul River between Santa Lucía and Las Aradas more than 600 people lay dead.³

This incident, which quickly came to be known as the Sumpul River Massacre (*la Masacre del Río Sumpul*), in many ways marked the beginning of a new era of El Salvador’s civil conflict. It was one of the first military operations that left visible evidence of the new counterinsurgency strategies adopted by the Salvadoran armed forces. The tactics, which included broad-scale ground sweeps through rural areas, placed civilian campesinos directly into the military’s gunsights. Between 1980 and 1984, in fact, massacres like the one at Sumpul became almost commonplace, leading the United Nations Truth Commission on El Salvador to the conclusion that the number of group executions “is so high and the reports are so thoroughly substantiated, the Commission rules out any possibility that these might have been isolated incidents... Everything points to the fact that these deaths formed a pattern of conduct, a deliberate strategy of eliminating or terrifying the peasant population.”⁴

The Sumpul River Massacre also sparked a new international focus on El Salvador’s civil conflict. This was the first time that the crisis had so obviously bled beyond national borders and, largely due to the efforts of priests and religious workers from the Honduran Catholic Diocese of Santa Rosa de Copán, news of the incident spread throughout the Americas and Europe. Journalists, governments and non-governmental organizations began exploring the

realities of the civil conflict with vigor; many focused in particular on state-sponsored terror and critiques of the Salvadoran government grew ever harsher as officials denied the events at Sumpul in spite of eyewitness testimonies and visual evidence obtained by Hondurans and foreigners alike.⁵

A third level on which the Sumpul River Massacre marked the start of a new era of El Salvador's civil conflict was that, although Salvadorans had been seeking refuge in Honduras for months, the ambush of May 1980 created the first group of internationally-recognized Salvadoran war refugees. Among them was Gladis Guardado. Amid the chaos of that day, she managed to escape to the Honduran town of Guarita. Gladis and others like her -- at Guarita, Telquite, Las Veguitas, San José, Santa Lucía, San Miguelito, Santa Rosa de Chiquín, Yurique, Corozal and other Honduran border towns -- first recounted their experiences to Honduran campesinos, priests and religious workers and, later, to international journalists. "There was an invasion of journalists, from all over the place," recalled a Honduran priest who spearheaded the Honduran Catholic Church's investigation into the massacre and its subsequent public condemnation of it. "The facts surrounding the massacre became the focal point of international attention. Journalists came from every country."⁶

International reporting on the plight of the Salvadoran refugees in Honduras attracted the attention of aid and solidarity groups, which then came to Honduras to lend assistance to the local organizations already working in the area. By January 1980, Médecins Sans Frontières, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision and many others were among those aiding the refugees. By mid-1981, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had begun to officially coordinate refugee relief efforts and a whole new humanitarian aid network began to take shape.

It cannot be denied that these organizations played a critical role in helping Salvadoran campesinos weather the civil war period. Without the food, shelter, clothing and medical attention provided by international agencies, many Salvadorans simply would not have lived to witness the signing of the Peace Accords in 1992. However, it is equally critical to recognize

that the international humanitarian aid system functioned on the basis of a number of assumptions which consequently colored views of and relations with Salvadoran campesinos.

First, the very foundation of the aid system was that the Salvadoran campesino-refugees were victims, swept up in the chaos and violence of war, driven from their homes against their will by forces beyond their control or comprehension. From this perspective, leaving one's home appears only as the result of frenzy, fear and panic; leaving one's country, an act of desperation. In other words, Salvadoran campesinos fled across the border suddenly, because they had no other choice.

Following this train of thought, arrival to Honduras symbolizes the consummate form of escape, illustrating not only the campesinos' desire to escape a military sweep or save their lives, but also their intention of finding greener grass and, simply, leaving the war behind. Scott Wright, a Catholic lay missionary from the United States, expressed this assumption clearly when he described Salvadoran border-crossers as "a people on the march, trying to survive, hoping to reach a promised land."⁷ Annette Wenzel, a nurse from West Germany, offered a similar interpretation; the first days were especially difficult for newly arrived refugees, she said, because "they had hoped that, by fleeing to Honduras, they would find better conditions... But, many times it wasn't like that. It was a huge shock for them."⁸ Such comments reveal how Wenzel, Wright and other internationals perceived the international border as a slim, black line on a political map. They assumed that, as Salvadorans stepped across that line, they moved into territory of an entirely different color. As we shall see, the political map looked quite different from the perspective of the campesinos themselves.

This essay problematizes the assumptions made by internationals by examining flight from the point of view of the Salvadorans who fled. Of course, it cannot be denied that a large part of why Salvadorans abandoned their homes and country was to escape violence and ensure their own survival. Yet, a closer look at campesino testimonies and interviews reveals that flight was not all chaos and desperation. Nor was arrival to Honduras as simple as stepping over a thin, black line. As the following pages will show, campesinos from El Salvador's northern

highlands developed a system of community security to respond to increasing violence. Within this system, mobility evolved as a key self-defense tactic. Placing the decision to abandon one's home within the broader context of community security allows us to shift our perspective and consider flight not as a random, spur-of-the-moment act but, rather, as a conscious and deliberate maneuver and part of a larger process or system.

Why flee? The Context of Rural Violence

The peasants... don't have the rights of Geneva. They are traitors to the country. What can the troops do? When they find them, they kill them.

-- Gen. José A. Medrano, Salvadoran Armed Forces⁹

Everyone left because you knew that if you stayed, you'd end up dead.

-- Domitila Ayala, Salvadoran campesina¹⁰

According to some observers, the 1980 agrarian reform marked the point at which El Salvador descended into civil war. "With the implementation of the reform," wrote James Dunkerley, "the crisis of the Salvadorean state took on a new character and the country entered civil war."¹¹ In a similar vein, Tommie Sue Montgomery referred to the same period as "the beginning of the end."¹² Other observers date the start of the civil war to 1980 because that is the year that a number of armed insurgent groups formally joined forces to form the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).

According to campesinos from northern El Salvador, however, the war actually began much earlier -- in the late 1960s. And it began, they argue, because campesino communities began to organize collectively, to make demands of local, regional and national officials. They formed small mutual aid groups and nation-wide peasant leagues like the Rural Workers Union (*Unión de Trabajadores del Campo* - UTC) and the Christian Federation of Salvadoran Campesinos (*Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños* - FECCAS). They allied with others, including students, laborers and, later, even insurgent groups to some extent. The levels

of peasant organization varied, of course, as did peoples' dedication to various struggles for land, labor rights and civil rights more generally. Despite the variations, their collective organizing and action drew the attention of the oligarchy and military leaders of the country, who responded with the proverbial iron fist.

Whereas in urban areas, the government's tactics continued to be somewhat selective, with specific labor activists and leftist political figures as special targets for assassination, in rural El Salvador -- and particularly in the northern departments of Chalatenango, Cabañas and Morazán -- wide-scale military sweeps resulted in massive destruction and high death tolls. Data gathered by both Salvadoran and international organizations indicated a phenomenal increase in civilian deaths between the late 1970s and early 1980s. Whereas in 1978, Salvadorans reported 147 politically-motivated murders, 1979 brought a total of 1030 assassinations. The following year, the number jumped to more than 8062 and, in 1981, more than 13,350 assassinations occurred. Campesinos accounted for more than 78 percent of the dead. The extent of the violence in rural regions is also evident in the fact that, of the more than 22,000 official complaints filed with the United Nations Truth Commission, 95% concerned incidents in rural areas of the country.¹³

Such an abrupt escalation in extra-judicial killings in the countryside prompted many observers, including Socorro Jurídico, the legal aid organization of the Catholic Archdiocese in San Salvador, to denounce the Salvadoran government's "policy of systematic extermination" of campesinos.¹⁴ Even some supporters of the Salvadoran government agreed that extermination was policy. For example, Lawrence Bailey, purported to have been a mercenary hired by wealthy Salvadorans to protect their property during the war, explained to a journalist in 1983 that "[a]ttacking the civilians is the game plan... Kill the sympathizers, and you win the war."¹⁵ Salvadoran officials themselves, while contending that they faithfully complied with international law, also made frequent references to "draining the sea [campesino civilians] to catch the fish [FMLN insurgents]."

If Salvadoran officials did intend to remove campesinos from the picture, they were, in one sense at least, successful: campesinos and their organizations have been largely wiped from the war's historical record. According to most accounts, El Salvador's descent into civil war forced all civil society organizations to either disband or move underground. Campesino organizations were no exception to this assumed rule. Campesino associations -- whether in the localized form of mutual aid groups, community councils or Christian Base Communities, or as national groups like the aforementioned UTC and FECCAS -- virtually disappear from scholarly accounts of the 1980s, as the FMLN and government forces become the primary focus of attention. At this point in the historical record, then, campesinos no longer appear as agents; instead, they become victims either manipulated by the FMLN or forced by government troops into the sad roles of internally displaced persons or international refugees.

When we examine the same period from the perspective of the campesinos themselves, however, an entirely different picture emerges. Testimonies and interviews collected both during the war and afterward indicate that for many campesinos from the country's northern highlands, violence -- and specifically state-sponsored violence -- served to strengthen rather than diminish their commitments to collective organization. To be sure, there were varying degrees of commitment to and involvement in the struggle. Some campesinos took on leadership roles, while others did not take any action until circumstances pushed them in one or another direction. In a similar vein, some campesinos chose to associate directly with the guerrilla forces of the FMLN; others did not. Through these variations, however, we can discern a general pattern. As violence in the rural north intensified, campesinos felt obliged to choose a path. Many of the less politically active individuals and families left the rural campo for urban zones, where violence was not as widespread and at least a measure of neutrality was possible. Many others chose to openly ally themselves with the government, through involvement with the rural vigilante squad ORDEN, for example, and relocated closer to military posts. Those who remained in the northern campo, then, tended to be *gente conciente*, people committed -- at least to some degree -- to the *lucha reivindicativa* (the campesino rights struggle). In the early years of the war, some

who remained were also either consciously neutral or *no decididos* (undecided). The December 1980 massacre of more than 1,000 purportedly neutral campesinos at El Mozote in northern Morazán department, however, made resoundingly clear the risks of inaction.¹⁶ According to many northerners, the pain and loss of indiscriminate attacks like the one at El Mozote prompted survivors to turn their energy against the Salvadoran government rather than ally with official forces.

Although the majority of campesinos who managed to survive the violence and who chose to remain in the campo saw themselves as mistreated and wronged by the Salvadoran government and military, they also emphasized the fact that they were not helpless victims. Indeed, they directly attributed their survival during the civil war to *la organización*. In the words of Domitila Ayala, a campesina from Chalatenango province, “to be able to get through these hard times, if we hadn’t organized ourselves we would not have survived, because if it had been every man for himself, no one would have been saved.”¹⁷ As we shall see, even as violence in the countryside became more indiscriminate, Salvadoran campesinos continued to organize and act collectively, although how they did so shifted dramatically through the course of the war.

The Campesinos Respond: *La guinda* as a Self-Defense Strategy

As government tactics increasingly targeted rural areas in the mid- and late 1970s, self-defense became paramount for communities in the northern highlands.¹⁸ Rural *directivas* (community councils) created new sub-committees specifically assigned to protection issues: intelligence gathering, mobile guard patrols and night watch stations, for example. As time passed and violence continued to increase, campesinos relied more heavily on mobility as a key defense strategy. The ability to move from one place to another was not a new thing in terms of campesino lifestyles, of course. For decades, economic survival for campesinos had depended upon migration -- between one’s home and various maize and bean plots; between one’s rural community and urban markets in El Salvador and Honduras; between one’s own subsistence

cultivation and wage labor at the coffee, cotton and sugar harvests across El Salvador and the fruit plantations on the north coast of Honduras. Campesinos also traveled both near and far to sell and obtain products, wares and services, including water, agricultural materials, education and health care. By the same token, Salvadoran government and military officials had long been aware of the importance of campesino mobility and the strengths and advantages it afforded the rural population. Fears of uprisings, along with economic and political exigencies, prompted national leaders to institute various restrictions and controls on rural movement: vagrancy laws, prohibitions on rural collective organizing, the creation of specialized rural security forces and requirements for identity and travel documentation.¹⁹

These efforts had limited effect, however. By the late 1960s, campesinos had already clearly tapped into the tradition of movement as a resource for general collective organizing initiatives. Information about campesino league meetings and protest actions, for example, continued to pass between individuals on rural footpaths, at markets and fairs, and at the rivers where people went to bathe and collect water for household use. By the early and mid-1970s, mobility had taken on new meanings and importance as a physical self-defense mechanism. It was around this time that campesinos from northern El Salvador coined the term *guinda* to denote the purposeful, temporary flight from one's home and community to evade government troops and violence.²⁰

Men were the first to voluntarily depart from their homes. In fact, by 1975 many men no longer slept in their own houses; before dusk, they headed into the mountains and woods surrounding their towns, where they were less likely to be caught by the military and paramilitary forces that targeted campesinos. At first it was primarily "the organized people" who left town at night. Eventually, however, all men left, regardless of whether or not they were "organizados" because "they took away whoever they found in the houses and they didn't come back, they were found dead."²¹ Many men banded together not only in the hills at night, but also during the workday. That is, rather than each man attending to his own crops independently, groups of men moved from one field to another, collectively working each others' land. In so

doing, men were able to look out for one another; in addition, work patterns and travel routes became less predictable and, consequently, they were more difficult to target.

While the men headed *al monte* (to the hills), most women initially stayed behind in the houses with the elderly and children. At first, their solitude was not especially noteworthy, given that, traditionally, men were often away, sometimes for days at a time, tending to the family's *milpas* (corn and bean fields).²² Thus, the security forces initially presumed women innocent and left them alone. The levels of harassment steadily increased, however, and eventually troops targeted women simply based on their blood lines to the men who were assumed to be guerrilla collaborators or soldiers. And so, women too began to move. Some joined their menfolk in the hills at night to sleep; others joined their mothers, sisters and aunts in nearby houses. Many campesinos recount the experiences of women who moved constantly to avoid harassment by national security forces. Félix Lara, for example, described his wife's situation: "They sought her out because she was my wife. They said she had to turn me in and if she didn't they would imprison her. So then she had to flee, moving from house to house through the neighborhood so she wouldn't be captured."²³

By 1976 and 1977, individuals and then whole families chose to abandon their hometowns. Those living in the smallest and most isolated *caseríos* (hamlets) were often the first to do so; concerned that it was too dangerous to remain secluded, they sought safety in larger population centers, including neighboring *cantones* (villages) and municipal capitals. This relocation process transformed many rural villages into virtual ghost towns, as occurred to the tiny caserío of Los Valles in Chalatenango, whose inhabitants all relocated to Portillo del Norte, a larger town nearby.²⁴ *Desierto* (deserted) and *vacío* (vacant) were common refrains among campesinos describing the rural north during the civil war.²⁵

By 1979, whole communities began taking to the hills on temporary escape journeys. These group flights ranged from a few hours and short distances, to multiple years and hundreds of kilometers throughout the departments of northern El Salvador and even beyond, into Honduras. Likewise, the size of groups ranged from a few families to several thousand

campesinos. Although reasons for joining both short- and long-term *guindas* varied, nearly all campesinos cited as an important factor the increase in military sweeps, alternately referred to as *operaciones de limpieza* (clean-up operations), *invasiones* (invasions) and *campañas de tierra arrasada* (scorched earth campaigns).

At the time of the first massive ground sweeps in the late 1970s, of course, campesinos did not yet have a defined response to them. Communities were taken by surprise; military forces suddenly arrived to town and, when the harassment and shooting commenced, people simply took to the hills without the planning and coordination of later years. Esperanza Ortega explained how, at first, “the organization was weak in the sense that we didn’t have any experience, and maybe we didn’t believe it, the point to which the government army was capable of killing whoever was in front of them, a child, a pregnant woman, an old man, defenseless people.”²⁶ In a similar vein, Rosa recalled how “at first... we were organized but what we didn’t have was a way to defend all the people.”²⁷

As people tend to do, however, they learned from experience and quickly adapted their strategies to the probability of additional such flights in the future. “[A]fter we saw the examples [of what the soldiers were capable of],” said Esperanza Ortega, “we had to look for other mechanisms.”²⁸ Therefore, upon returning to their villages, survivors began preparing for another sudden departure. They held community meetings to identify and ready new hiding places. From these assemblies arose the idea of utilizing the many natural caves scattered throughout the hills of northern El Salvador. Groups of men formed exploration commissions, which then scoured the countryside in search of caves and other sites to use as possible refuges in the event of another *guinda*. These teams found dozens of caves: some were quite small, offering shelter to only a few people, while others were much larger, holding 80 or 100 people. Depending on size and location, caves served for the remainder of the war as either temporary bomb shelters and hideouts from ground troops, or longer-term housing for campesinos whose own houses had been destroyed in the war. In testimonies collected during the early 1980s, Chalatecos and Cabañeros frequently noted having spent several weeks or months hiding out in

caves, while campesinos from Morazán told of living for a year or more in a series of caves in the border zone between El Salvador and Honduras.²⁹

Campesinos in Chalatenango and Cabañas also began to design and construct their own underground caves, called *tatús*, as early as 1980.³⁰ They were typically dug vertically into the ground about two or three meters deep, with a narrower opening and wider body. Bamboo rods strategically embedded in the earth around the *tatú* served as *respiraderos*, or air tunnels. Campesinos covered the entrance to their *tatús* with *tablas*, shallow wooden boxes filled with soil, stones, leaves and brush. When the *tabla* was in place, it was level with the surrounding land so that “There were times when the soldiers passed right over the top of you and they had no idea that they were stepping on you.”³¹

Campesinos not only constructed their *tatús* “calmly, with patience,” they also took great care in choosing their locations.³² According to Felipe Tovar, he and others from his town in Chalatenango divided into groups of two or three families and then, with the help of the Directiva, each group staked out a site for a *tatú*.³³ Only Directiva members knew the locations of all the town’s *tatús*; families did not share the location of one’s own *tatú* with other groups because, as Santiago Orellana explained, “Nobody knew if they would be captured by the enemy and then end up saying ‘There’s one.’”³⁴

Another important adaptation in campesino defense strategies at this time was the expansion of intelligence-gathering into the military realm. More specifically, campesinos collected information about Salvadoran military patterns; a better understanding of official patterns increased the probabilities for successful *guindas* because it meant that campesinos could predict what was to come and, therefore, respond accordingly. A typical military pattern consisted of a period of exploration followed by a bombing run and, finally, invasion by ground troops. “They did two hours of exploration, the small planes first,” explained Elías Menjívar. “They explored the terrain in the area where the guerrillas were. Then came the A37s -- the bombings, right? The indiscriminate bombings... Each plane threw 22 bombs, they were 250-

pound bombs.” Catalina Menjívar continued, “When you heard the helicopters, everyone left the houses.”³⁵

As the Menjívares’ comments indicate, campesinos became remarkably adept at identifying military patterns. They were able to tell the differences between various types of airplanes and helicopters by sound as well as sight. Likewise, campesinos could distinguish battalions not only by uniform insignia and types of helmet, but also by the sound of their guns, the boot prints and spent ammunition the soldiers left behind, and the graffiti and torture marks they inflicted on human bodies.³⁶ Such distinctions were crucial. Immediate reaction battalions like the Atlacatl and Bracamonte were of the few companies that attacked at night and they were known to be especially savage in their treatment of campesinos. In a similar vein, different aircraft served different purposes: some delivered 500-pound bombs, while others dropped 250-pounders; some carried troops, while others sprayed defoliants like white phosphorous and napalm. Identifying such specifics enabled campesinos to make better decisions regarding *guindas*: when to leave, how far to go, how long to stay away. As Amado Valle explained, “when there was an exploration, we had already figured out that... within three days, the military operation would hit. If we saw airplanes doing fly-overs, either in the day or at night, then we started *preparando las condiciones* (preparing the conditions).”³⁷

In many ways, *preparando las condiciones* grew easier with more experience. That is, with each flight cycle, campesinos acquired new tricks and strategies to facilitate survival and ease hardships en *guinda*. One of the earliest lessons, for example, emerged from experiences like that described in the introduction to this essay; when multiple thousands traveled together, the group drew attention more easily; moreover, attacks on these *hormigueros* (anthills) inevitably resulted in a higher number of casualties.³⁸ Thus, campesinos began traveling in much smaller groups, which facilitated quick, quiet movement and made detection more difficult. Estimates of the number of campesinos en *guinda* at any one time varied; yet, through the many different numbers, a general trend does emerge. When describing the first *guindas*, campesinos often offered numbers in the thousands or tens of thousands: 5,000 or 10,000 or even 60,000.

The same campesinos distinguished later guindas by the number of families who participated: ten, 20 or, perhaps, 100. We can attribute this reduction in the size of guindas at least in part to the utilization of tatús and caves for protection; after all, a finite number of people could fit into each space. José Guardado, who recalled his own community divided into groups of ten families -- about 100 people per group -- offered further explanation: “Only a few families, in small groups, to not have such a conglomeration of people because it was easier to defend a few people in many different places than to have a huge group of people in one single spot.”³⁹

Over time, from these kinds of lessons a system of *normas* (norms) emerged, which was then passed on from the more knowledgeable and organized campesinos to the less experienced via modeling, informal conversations and formal workshops or presentations known as *orientaciones* (orientations). Several individuals who facilitated these orientación workshops in Chalatenango and Cabañas recalled that the most difficult part of the task was to convince the more resistant individuals to join the guindas. The job was not easy, explained Esther, and people grew angry with her.⁴⁰

Most of the instruction in orientaciones, however, focused on guinda preparatory initiatives of benefit to the community as a whole, such as the design of exit strategies and additional security tactics. For example, in addition to securing sites of refuge, exploration commissions also defined specific escape routes so that “We already had figured out which way we’d get out.”⁴¹ Many also stashed water and food reserves in hidden locales along designated guinda routes and set up meeting points at which community members en guinda would convene after immediate dangers had passed.⁴² In addition, exploration commissions identified prime locations for *postas* (guard posts) on roads and paths leading into villages and high atop surrounding hills. The *postas* typically formed a wide circle around the town, thus ensuring that the community would receive forewarning of an attack, regardless of the direction from which government forces arrived.⁴³

Those who served at the guard posts (*hacer posta*) devised numerous ways to spread the word about approaching troops. At first, flares and rocket-like fireworks were most common;

when guards saw government soldiers coming in the direction of the town, they set off the *cohete* or distress signal, “and everyone knew that they had to leave because it was the signal that the soldiers were coming.” In later years, as survival in the highlands became even more precarious, guards relied more on *correos* (messengers). This tactic entailed a young boy of eight or ten years of age, who accompanied each adult male to their *posta*; “when they saw that [soldiers] were coming from over there, that little boy took off in a hurry to warn everyone else.”⁴⁴ Once the news reached town, it spread rapidly through an extended *correo* system. As Domitila Ayala explained, “If they told me, ‘Look, there come the soldiers,’ then I would grab one of my little brothers and I’d tell them, ‘Go tell Mr. So-and-so,’ and that Mr. So-and-so would then tell somebody else and that was the way we organized it.”⁴⁵

Campeños also learned through experience and from *orientaciones* how to prepare on an individual and family basis. Many tactics focused on food and food preparation. To avoid lugging the traditional *comal* (a large round pan made of thick clay, used for toasting the staple campesino meal of corn tortillas), campesinos made a sort of travel *comal* out of tin, which was much lighter and shatter-proof. They also learned how to prepare foods that would not spoil quickly. As Juana Alberto explained, “In the orientations, they taught us to make *tortilla dura*, a tortilla that lasts three months. For this tortilla, you toast it well on the *comal* until it’s a little porous. Then you toss the tortilla in sugar water and it turns out like a biscuit.”⁴⁶ Women also began to make enough tortillas for several days at a time rather than per meal, as traditionally done. They packaged together the extra tortillas with other easily transportable rations like crackers, candies, sugar and salt, and kept them accessible in case of an emergency departure. Similarly, many campesinos packed a few “overnight bags,” containing a couple changes of clothing, a thin hammock and some sort of blanket or covering. Many also collected medicinal herbs and prepared natural remedies to help them through the hardships of flight. Families kept all of these things at the ready for the next *guinda*; this way, even when taken by surprise, they could grab the essentials on their way out the door. Some families even assigned the task of collection to specific individuals.⁴⁷

That campesinos had time to prepare for departures is illustrated in drawings made by Salvadoran children during the war. An oral history collection edited by the “Pedro Arrupe” Jesuit Development Service, for example, contains several drawings depicting the crossing of the Lempa and Sumpul Rivers. In the sketches, soldiers and helicopters swarm as Salvadoran campesinos attempt to cross the rivers -- baskets balanced on their heads, bags and machetes in hand.⁴⁸ Photographs taken by internationals also show that campesinos had at least a bit of preparation prior to flight. One, taken by Arturo Robles, catches a small group of Salvadoran campesinos at the very moment of departure from a town in northern San Vicente province; one woman hefts a bag half her size as she begins to run.⁴⁹ Another photo, taken by Adam Kufeld, is even more illustrative. It shows a small group -- seven adults, four children and an infant -- on the eighth day of a ten-day *guinda* in northern Chalatenango province. They walk in a single file line on a dusty, uphill trail through scrub brush. The leader of the group is a young girl of perhaps eight years old; she is barefoot and balances a small bag on her head. An even younger girl, also barefoot, has a bag strung over her shoulder and a *pichinga* of water in her hands. An older woman in the group balances a large bag on her head and carries a basket in her arms. The men carry multiple bags and *corvos*. In short, everyone in this group carries at least one item.⁵⁰

In addition to the preparatory efforts just described, campesinos learned how to behave appropriately while on the move.⁵¹ Many of these *normas* entailed blending in with their environment as much as possible. For example, they learned where and how to travel in order to cover their tracks. For safety reasons, of course, campesinos en *guinda* preferred to move only under the cover of night. In addition, because government troops typically kept to higher ground, deep ravines offered substantial visual and auditory cover. Therefore, campesinos en *guinda* followed the “ravines, the deepest gulches” whenever possible.⁵² Water, too, helped campesinos cover their tracks and, so, campesinos often sought out “the ugliest routes,” the places where “soldiers wouldn’t go” -- or, in the words of Roberto Abrego, places where “you had to have balls” to get through.⁵³

Campesinos adopted many other tricks for safe travel. For example, they generally avoided using tarps as shelter during *guindas*; not only were their typically bright colors easily visible from a distance, but the plastic material made considerable noise when moved by wind or struck by rain. Likewise, because the smoke and flame from fires were easily visible from the air, one had to avoid lighting fires unless absolutely certain the situation was safe. In a similar vein, campesinos were to wear clothing *de color de monte* -- mountain colors, in shades of green and brown. If white or colorful clothing was all one had, Amado Valle explained, “what we did was to stain it with colors from the trees. For example, we would crush the peel of the *nance* fruit and use it to paint our clothes in order to camouflage them... Or we would grind up bits of the mountain and, with that, camouflage ourselves with green.”⁵⁴

Although white and other colors were not formally prohibited, campesinos used both formal and informal channels to encourage each other to maintain as low a color profile as possible. Many learned the importance of dressing *de color de monte* through the *orientaciones*. “Everyone did it,” noted Valle. “It was a defense orientation.”⁵⁵ Those who did not learn this particular strategy through formalized orientation workshops quickly picked it up while *en guinda*, as the more experienced campesinos did what they could to enforce this and other *normas*. Domitila Ayala explained, “If someone saw you with light-colored clothing, ‘Take it off!’ [they’d urge you].”⁵⁶ And one usually did so, for it became clear that lives depended on it. To this day, campesinos recite examples of individuals who refused to follow their companions’ instructions while *en guinda*. Sebastián Serrano remembered one woman who would neither hide from the airplanes nor take off her white shirt. “You guys are wimps,” she claimed and remained where she was. “And, look,” he pointed out, “they bombed us; they lit up the entire mountain.”⁵⁷

Serrano’s account, along with other similar stories, indicate that Salvadoran campesinos could harbor great resentment toward those who refused to follow the established *normas* and, consequently, drew negative attention to the communities *en guinda*. Indeed, to purposely not remove a bright shirt or to disregard other *normas* translated into a sort of moral transgression or

crime. Because following the normas “was part of the security and safety for yourself and for others,” if you didn’t comply “you were committing an offense against your own life and against the rest of the group.”⁵⁸

In a sense, then, the formalization of the *guinda* system further strengthened the northern campesinos’ sense of solidarity and collectivity. We can see this in the fact that, by the early 1980s, campesinos who remained in the north and participated in the *guindas* began to distinguish themselves from other campesinos. Elías Menjívar pointed out, for example, that he and his companions were *organizados*, whereas “the rest of the people who did not organize left for Chalatenango City, to San Salvador, to different places.”⁵⁹ Statements like this implicitly critiqued the campesinos who left the north for not committing to the campesino rights struggle. Those who stayed behind to *guindear*, in contrast, “resisted a bit.”⁶⁰ In a similar vein, a number of campesinos noted with pride how they had outsmarted the Salvadoran army by *jugando la mica*, or successfully playing a sort of cat and mouse game. Félix Lara put it perhaps most eloquently when he explained that the campesinos “knew perfectly well that we had come to the mountains to struggle, to work, to organize ourselves in every possible way in defense of our own *pueblo*.” Their decision, they knew, would prompt even harsher treatment by the national security forces and paramilitary groups. But the increased risk, Lara said, promoted stronger organization and deeper unity among campesinos.⁶¹

This intensification of solidarity consciousness was the result of the extremely narrow focus of collective organization that emerged in light of the *guindas*. Before, campesinos could choose to contribute (or not) to a variety of efforts, including agricultural perquisites, workplace improvements, access to resources -- in short, a broad range of campesino civil rights issues. During the *guindas*, however, the sole concentration was on survival, the fundamental right to life. To be sure, campesinos utilized different vocabularies to describe their experiences. Some were quite passive in their speech, as in “we were taken there” or “we were told to do this.” Others used much more dynamic speech. Campesinos in this latter group frequently referred to a common “enemy”; to defeat this enemy, one had to evade the military sweeps, survive the

bombings and return home alive. Regardless of a campesino's choice of words, however, to survive within the guinda context one had to think and act not only in terms of one's self and family, but also in terms of the group with which one traveled, as well as the broader campesino population in the area or region. To not do so could mean the difference between life and death - not only for one's self and family, but for the entire community.

This moral economy, to adapt E. P. Thompson's term, often forced individual campesinos to make major sacrifices for the good of the whole.⁶² One unfortunately common sacrifice was the asphyxiation of children. When campesinos found themselves in caves and tatús, hiding from government forces, the cries of hungry, scared and otherwise uncomfortable children could betray both the presence and the specific locations of campesino groups. Because silence was so essential to survival, adults frequently had to cover children's mouths to stifle their cries with the unintended result of smothering some children to death.

In later years, as international support networks expanded, campesinos acquired new resources to help them -- and their young children -- survive the guindas. A number of substances were used to release children into temporary sleep during times of extreme danger. Some campesinos referred to the "special drinks" given to children, probably containing some form of medication or liquor. Others recalled giving children a minuscule amount of diazepam, a sedative used to treat anxiety.⁶³ Still others, like Josefa Rivas, highlighted how medics or nurses "gave them an injection so they'd sleep -- who knows what it was, but they ended up sleeping like little angels."⁶⁴ The drugging of infants and children served dual purposes. Children who slept, of course, were spared much of the terror of military attacks. At the same time, the relative quiet of the sleeping children helped to relieve some of the adults' own anxieties about being discovered by government troops.

En guinda, however, resources were hard to come by -- and specialized and costly items like pills and injections even more so. Most campesinos, therefore, relied on other means to keep children quiet. "There were occasions, moments of danger," explained Felipe Tovar, "in which it was necessary to cover their mouths with a rag or hand." Tovar and every other

campesino who had spent time en guinda recalled instances when children “were smothered to death because mothers covered their mouths, their noses and the children suffocated.” Juana Alberto remembered how “[i]n just a short while where I was, three died. We were in the mountains hiding and in a really tough spot when the kids were crying and the enemy was coming closer. They covered their mouths and the children ended up dying right there.”⁶⁵

These incidents clearly devastated parents and had both immediate and long-term impacts. In testimonies and interviews collected during the 1980s, campesinos described what happened as a type of torture -- for child, understandably, but also for parent. As recently as 2003, inhabitants of rural communities in Chalatenango and Cabañas described mothers who *andaba loca* (were crazy) and fathers who were *mal de cabeza* (wrong in the head) as a result of losing a child in this way. Rather than ostracize these parents, the community tended to understand and support them or, in some cases, simply tolerate them as being different. Many campesinos rationalized alcoholism and other social ills in a similar vein. In short, during the war and to this day, those who lost sons or daughters to accidental suffocation received great empathy and respect, with both the absence of the children and the afflictions of the parents serving as a constant reminder that, “to save a ton of people,” they had made the ultimate sacrifice.⁶⁶

Another relatively common sacrifice for those hiding in caves and tatús was to forgo water or food so as to not risk drawing attention. Carmen Ortega, for example, recalled how she and her companions en guinda refused to venture out of their tatú for several days in a row -- despite great thirst and despite the fact that they could hear a stream or river not too far away. “If they saw us,” she explained, “they would look for everyone all over this part of the mountain.”⁶⁷ In other words, although it was likely that, with the help of their guards, they would have been able to get to the river and back without incident, the possibility of discovery -- and what that would mean for other groups hiding in the same area -- persuaded them to remain in hiding.

Other campesinos told similar stories of waiting out hunger and thirst. Some adults remembered squeezing water and sweat from their shirts to at least wet the children's mouths; others admitted drinking their own urine when the thirst became unbearable. A few, like Josefa Rivas, recalled not feeling any hunger when in the tatús: "You didn't get hungry," she said. "One could pass even eight days without eating a thing, surviving on fear alone."⁶⁸

Conditions within the tatús were often horrible, which heightened the sacrifices that campesinos made for the greater good. During the dry season, heat inside the tatús could become nearly unbearable. In interviews, campesinos described the sensation of being "fried" or "cooked alive" and having to strip down to their underwear in hopes of a bit of relief. In a similar vein, the wet season's constant rains caused many tatús to flood, submerging those inside for days on end in several inches, or even feet, of muddy water -- like hogs in a muddy pen, several people noted.⁶⁹

When campesinos eventually emerged from their tatús and caves, their bodies served as symbols of the sacrifices they had made while in hiding. The longer they remained hidden, of course, the deeper the lack of food, water, fresh air, and sunlight inscribed themselves into the flesh -- and the more arresting their appearance became to others. Domitila Ayala recalled how one family in particular looked after spending 15 days buried in an underground tatú: "The earth was already consuming them. Without spirit, they couldn't even get out of there; they were like walking dead. And the tiny children already with distended bellies, because they weren't eating. No energy -- nothing -- they kept fainting. It was terrible. The people looked like they were dead, their faces like cadavers."⁷⁰ Many others had observed similar scenes; a common refrain among campesinos was that, the longer you spent underground, the more the earth "robbed" you of energy, of life.⁷¹

These kinds of sacrifices clearly required tremendous dedication and commitment to one's campesino companions. Whereas some observers may consider such selfless actions a form of heroism, Salvadoran campesinos referred to them, along with the careful observation of

normas, to be *disciplina* (discipline) -- a strategy crucial to the guinda system. In the words of one campesino, "The principal weapon that we had for our own self-defense was discipline."⁷²

Just as discipline was crucial to the success of guindas, so too was leadership. Similar to the pre-flight period, individuals both volunteered and were chosen by others as leaders to address the community's needs and to make decisions based on the best interests of the group. These leaders, or *responsables*, often had previous experience with directivas, cooperatives and campesino leagues. They were typically quite extroverted and able to make a decision quickly and then calmly put it into action. Most often, responsables were male, single and without children. Many had at least some education; a few were literate. In general, those chosen for leadership positions were simply the most "despiertito" -- a phrase used to denote the most intelligent and capable as well as simply awake.⁷³

These leaders composed many of the committees that continued to operate even while groups were en guinda, although their precise roles shifted and evolved in response to changing circumstances. Regardless of the fact that each guinda may have had a different temporary directiva, the directivas "ordered us in what to do, told us how to defend ourselves" while en guinda.⁷⁴ Exploration committees also functioned continuously while en guinda. During the day, while the group took cover and rested, a few responsables would explore the surroundings and determine which direction to take the following night; they would then return to the group, pass the information on to other responsables who would lead the group as directed while the first responsables rested. Such a pattern continued each day and night for the length of the guinda, with multiple leaders sharing responsibility for exploring the terrain and guiding the group to safety.

As guindas lasted for longer periods of time and groups travelled farther distances, new tasks arose, such as food detail -- collecting supplies from the reserves they had previously hidden in the hills, finding water sources, and gathering mango, papaya, guineo and other fruits. Special commissions sometimes descended into towns in order to obtain supplies. On the rare occasions when the campesinos had a bit of money, these commissions would travel to towns

considered “friendly,” where they would purchase a few basic provisions. More often, however, the commissions went into towns to *requisar*. According to Abel Escalante López, “We saw ourselves forced to steal corn -- we called it ‘requisar’ at the time, to not say ‘rob,’ but it was the same thing.”⁷⁵ On requisition operations, commission members traveled into town under the cover of night; when they found a supply of rations such as corn or beans, they packed it up to take back to the community en guinda. Occasionally, they were able to requisar animals, including pigs and cows, to provide meat for those en guinda.

Security tactics also shifted in response to the exigencies of the lengthier guindas. For example, campesinos formed mobile guard units, known by many as *milicias civiles* (civilian militias), which accompanied the groups en guinda. These guards moved at a slight distance from and in a rough circle around the group; although they did carry weapons -- usually machetes, corvos and sticks, but a few small firearms as well -- defense typically meant quietly warning the group of approaching danger which would enable a shift in route.⁷⁶

Another kind of campesino guard functioned when the groups en guinda rested or remained in one location for an extended period of time. When a family or group fled to its designated cave or tatú, for instance, someone (again, usually an able-bodied male, often childless) remained outside the site to keep watch. Elías Menjivar explained:

One always stayed outside. In the case of some surprise, if they didn't kill him, he ran, but his family stayed there, protected. If he detected approaching soldiers, he quickly ran to tell his family: ‘Maintain your discipline because they're coming by here. I'm taking off, I'll be back later.’ They knew that when the soldiers leave, I come back again -- and that's the way it was -- so they could open the tatú: ‘The military is gone, it's clear, you can come out.’ I'd open the *tabla* and they would come out.⁷⁷

Sometimes a guard might allow only adults without children to emerge for a quick breath of fresh air; at other times, he might allow everyone to come out, with the warning to children that they should play silently. A guard was also responsible for erasing the group's tracks and camouflaging well the entrance to the hiding place, “because if I didn't, anyone who passed by would discover my refuge.”⁷⁸

If leadership and discipline were crucial to the guinda system, so too were alliances. Although many of the alliances that formal campesino organizations like UTC and FECCAS had

established with other groups fizzled with the increase in violence in the early 1980s, campesinos continued to ally themselves with others when possible and necessary. As we have just seen, for those who remained in the rural north, self-preservation took precedence; alliances that helped them in this endeavor grew in importance. It is within this context that the insurgent forces of the FMLN became a crucial support to campesinos.

It is important to highlight that the FMLN meant different things to different campesinos. Indeed, the FMLN was not one single entity but, rather, five different organizations with five distinct backgrounds, political philosophies and geographical areas of influence. And, of course, just as the FMLN was diverse, so too was the campesino population. Add to this mix the extreme volatility of war-time life in El Salvador and it is understandable that each community, family and individual held unique, ever-evolving relationships with the insurgents. For those who chose to stay in the rural north, association with the FMLN became a fact of life -- regardless of political opinion. But there were many different levels of association. Many spoke of the FMLN as a sort of big brother who provided support and protection. Others considered themselves and the FMLN as two parts of a greater whole -- *la organización* (the organization, referring to the broader Salvadoran popular movement). Very few people had completely negative opinions of the FMLN, although critiques of specific practices did exist -- forced recruitment, for example.

Regardless of the sentiments toward and levels of association with the FMLN, nearly all campesinos made a clear distinction between themselves as a civilian population and the FMLN as armed insurgents. Indeed, campesinos took pride in being unarmed and highlighted their nonviolence. A man known as “Cabañas” explained, for example, that although campesinos were part of the revolutionary movement, “we had no weapons; the weapon we had was our mouth, our ability to speak.”⁷⁹ Even community responsables focused on their defensive roles. Nurses, for example, noted that despite their dangerous position and role defending injured and ill civilians, they did not carry weapons. Those who did carry weapons -- guns in particular -- often deemphasized their importance. A member of the guard patrol, for example, might refer to

his *pistolita chiquita* (tiny little pistol) or he might highlight that there were only two guns to protect a group of 100 or more. Many who carried weapons further distinguished themselves from the armed insurgents by emphasizing how they simply did not use their weapons. Whereas the purpose of the regular guerrilla army “was exclusively to annihilate and recover weaponry from the [government] army,” one campesino explained, the popular militias “served... as defense for the communities... [T]hey served as the periphery without shooting.”^{80 81}

Puntos de refugio / Points of Refuge

As we have seen above, campesinos constantly adapted their strategies in response to the ever-changing contexts of the civil war. Just as they shifted what they did, how they did it and who they did it with, they also adjusted where they went. At first, they stuck to the caves and *tatús* described above. As military operations lasted for longer periods of time, campesinos traveled greater distances and stayed away from home for longer periods of time. Through the course of the early 1980s, these longer journeys resulted in the creation of a series of temporary resting points, known as *puntos de refugio* (refuge points) all along the border with Honduras.

These *puntos de refugio* served as sites of resistance against the Salvadoran government, a continuation or extension of the struggle for campesino revindication.⁸² By evading death and refusing to leave the northern highland communities, campesinos dealt one blow to the Salvadoran government. Establishing alliances with the FMLN and choosing to settle within conflicted zones or areas under FMLN control represented yet another strike against the Salvadoran government. Salvadoran campesinos dealt “official El Salvador” perhaps the strongest blow, however, by establishing *puntos de refugio* beyond the nation’s borders, in Honduras.

The Honduran refugee zones served as perhaps the most important strategic sites from which Salvadoran campesinos continued the struggle against repression and in favor of civil rights. This strategic positioning was, at first, largely accidental. That is, although Honduras and

the border zone in general quickly became integral to the guinda system, the first Salvadorans to be recognized as refugees in Honduras -- including Gladis Guardado, whose story introduced this essay -- did not intend for Honduran towns like Los Hernández, Mapulaca, Colomoncagua and La Virtud to become the crucial puntos de refugio that they ultimately became. These and other towns evolved in importance largely due to the attention and aid bestowed upon the Salvadorans, first by Honduran campesinos and local organizations and, later, from international entities. In other words, although the campesinos were initially in search of temporary respite from the dangers of counter-insurgency operations and military sweeps, the arrival to Honduras of international attention allowed campesinos yet another alliance and a new kind of stability.

The strategic importance of Honduras as a punto de refugio grew as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees established official refugee camps and the international aid network solidified. Campesinos still in El Salvador began consciously integrating Honduran puntos de refugio -- and the internationals who worked there -- into the guinda system.⁸³ Interviews reveal that, in contrast to the first arrivals, later arrivals to Honduras were often planned from the point of departure. “It was completely structured,” explained Manuel.⁸⁴

Campesinos “prepared the conditions” for guindas to Honduras in much the same way as for any other guinda. Some, however, chose to bury or sell their belongings rather than carry them en guinda or leave them behind unprotected. Interviewees also described how the men often accompanied their wives and children to refugee zones in Honduras, then returned home to northern El Salvador to guard their houses and fields or to collaborate more closely with the FMLN. Women offered similar stories about taking elderly mothers and fathers to the camps. Some campesinos described going to the refugee camps for a while, then returning to El Salvador.⁸⁵

The intentional arrival to Honduras is also visible through the campesinos’ use of the international network. Internal documents from several international organizations indicate that, on at least some occasions, fleeing campesinos were able to inform aid personnel of their imminent arrival to a specific town or landmark; an international presence at the designated site

afforded the refugees a layer of protection against harassment from Salvadoran and Honduran troops.⁸⁶ By about 1982, however, even those Salvadorans who left home with little preparation or planning integrated internationals into their *guindas*. They knew that internationals regularly scoured the border area in search of newly arrived refugees; indeed, the UNHCR designated a number of “roving officers” specifically for this purpose. The *campesinos*, therefore, penetrated as deeply as possible into *la zona fronteriza*, then waited in hiding for these officers to pass by, collect them and escort them to the official camps. The numbers frequently surprised internationals; one source noted how “they expected perhaps 50 and then 100 or 200 refugees emerge from hiding.”⁸⁷

By 1984 and 1985, the FMLN also began to actively promote the *puntos de refugio* in Honduras. FMLN representatives and collaborators planned mass departures and accompanied groups of *campesinos* to the border to be collected by international workers, who would then take them to the UN-sponsored camps in Honduras. Collaborators travelled through the region familiarizing people with the refugee camps and working to convince them to join the planned *guindas* headed in that direction. As Esther, a *campesina* who worked such rounds in northern Chalatenango, explained:

It was negotiated and everything because they [the FMLN commanders] saw that with a ton of people it was hard to move around. Okay, first because they had to be combating with the enemy, right? Attacks, confrontations -- that was one thing. Another was the question of food; it was really difficult to be able to plant food crops. So all of these things forced us to get the people out. That was it, yes, planned.⁸⁸

According to Esther, FMLN commanders “just sent me a note telling me how many people were coming... and that I should try coordinating them so they could cross to the other side.”

Meanwhile, commanders also made contact with internationals in Honduras, to let them know to expect the arrival of another group of refugees.⁸⁹

The extent to which these coordinated flights to Honduras were FMLN-driven or *campesino*-initiated is difficult to determine. Even the various FMLN affiliate organizations differ on this point. Those from the ERP (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo), for example, claimed that *campesino* flight to Honduras was purely an FMLN operation. Those from the FPL

(Fuerzas Populares de Liberación), in contrast, indicated that the FMLN simply educated campesinos about the flight option and then accompanied those who chose to go to Honduras. Differences of opinion existed within each group as well; some from the RN (Resistencia Nacional) claimed that the FMLN planned and directed every cross-border guinda, while others described mere accompaniment.⁹⁰

Regardless of who initiated the movement, it is important to recognize again that not everyone agreed to join the guindas. Campesino leaders and FMLN collaborators who encouraged people to depart for Honduras often encountered severe resistance and, sometimes, aroused hostility and anger. “Some of them ended up mad at me,” said Esther with a sad smile. She remembered one elderly woman in particular, who grew increasingly indignant. “I am not tired!” she yelled at Esther. “How can you even think that... I would throw myself into those places as if I were a hog in a pen?!”⁹¹

Campesinos were well aware that setting forth on a journey across the border brought uncertain futures. To begin, they knew that the border zone was risky and that crossing the border could be treacherous. Honduran and Salvadoran security forces controlled the entire length of the border; the two militaries worked in collaboration with each other and Salvadoran campesinos were often their targets. Newly arrived refugees and roving aid agency personnel frequently reported encountering corpses of campesinos in the border area. Although the exact number of dead and missing is impossible to ascertain, a few agency estimates provide important corroboration of refugee testimony. In the first six months of 1981 alone, for example, one aid agency reported finding 150 “atrociously mutilated corpses” along the Honduran side of the border; another source reported 172 corpses for the same time period. On the basis of such reports, Americas Watch calculated that more than 2,000 Salvadoran refugees had been assassinated along the border between January 1980 and July 1981, with several hundred others detained and disappeared.⁹²

The roads and paths into Honduran towns -- and to the official refugee camps -- were equally dangerous. As in El Salvador at the time, many Honduran border villages had some sort

of fixed military presence: a command office, barracks, or a simple guard post. Therefore, Salvadoran campesinos who descended from the mountains in search of relief in Honduran towns faced the probability of being intercepted by soldiers -- if not at a roadblock, then at a guard post at town entrances and exits. Without proper identification and migration documents, the incoming Salvadorans risked harassment, deportation, arrest and, as indicated by the numbers above, even death. It was for these reasons that aid agencies initially designated roving officers to make the rounds of the border zone. Annette Wenzel, the nurse from Germany, recalled that when she and her medical team colleagues heard that new refugees had crossed the Lempa River and entered the vicinity of La Virtud, "we went to look for them at the border, because the way to La Virtud was dangerous, because of the Honduran soldiers. We found them hiding in the mountains."⁹³

Those who sought refuge in Honduras during later years also were aware of the risks and dangers of life inside the refugee camps. Unlike the earliest refugees, they received news about the refugee zones and, therefore, knew that -- despite the growing levels of aid -- the situation in Honduras was less than ideal. It is worth noting that information traveled through campesinos, aid workers and the FMLN. On a near daily basis, campesinos chose to leave the camps and return to El Salvador. Family members visited their loved ones in the camps. The FMLN's correo system reached into the Honduran camps. And representatives of aid organizations moved through the border zone, interacting with campesinos and FMLN combatants and collaborators. Through all of these methods, campesinos in northern El Salvador learned about the harshness of life in the refugee camps of Honduras.

If arrival to Honduras did not promise better conditions, why did Salvadoran campesinos continue to decide to make the cross-border journey? There were several interrelated reasons. First, and perhaps most obviously, the campesinos were weary. Continuous assassination patrols and scorched earth repression had an impact. As the years passed and the war continued with no end in sight, the guinda cycle grew more and more difficult to sustain. There were fewer and fewer ways to produce or obtain enough food for survival, and napalm and other chemicals made

both food and shelter more difficult to find. The puntos de refugio in Honduras offered a new kind of protection and a relative sense of stability. Arrival to UN-sponsored refugee camps in Honduras meant that they could stop running for a while, rest and recuperate. This was especially important for children and the elderly, who comprised a large percentage of the refugee population and suffered the most during the extended guindas. To be sure, life in Honduras was not entirely safe. Yet by 1983, the dangers faced there were in many ways more predictable and, therefore, more manageable than those in El Salvador. Moreover, in Honduras, campesino refugees did not have to respond to the dangers alone; they had international accompaniment.

A second and until now unexplored reason why Salvadorans purposefully went to and remained in Honduras is a sense of campesino solidarity. Campesinos knew that there was a certain degree of both strength and safety in numbers. Although while en guinda they preferred to move in small groups, they also had experiences in which numbers tipped the scale in their favor. In interviews and testimonies, campesinos offered examples of group protests that spurred positive outcomes: a group of women gather at a military post to demand the release of a prisoner; dozens of children swarm around government soldiers, harassing them until they abandon the community. In such cases, “because there was a big block of 100 people, with that number, well, they didn’t kill us.”⁹⁴ Nearly every interview I conducted contained at least one example of this kind of group action. Thus, as reception centers in Honduras evolved into semi-permanent sites of refuge, and as the population of those sites grew, more campesinos were drawn across the border. The attraction of the refugee camps intensified through the mid-1980s, as the Salvadorans living there gained international recognition not only for their status as refugees but also for the strength of their organization and their successes in negotiating with international aid groups as well as the Honduran and Salvadoran governments.

There can be no doubt that the guinda system itself invigorated campesino collectivity. The magnitude of the possible consequences of a guinda -- life or death -- demanded that campesinos join forces for success. To successfully elude the “enemy” and to survive, one

simply had to trust and rely upon others without hesitation. The very nature of the *guindas*, then, required full participation of all involved -- regardless of political leanings prior to flight. At first, said José Guardado, “Whoever didn’t understand just went along enduring the war’s consequences.”⁹⁵ With time, however, came the recognition for many campesinos that the government’s tactics were cruel and unjustified; as they suffered alongside other campesinos, their feelings of companionship and solidarity intensified. Campesinos describe how they encouraged each other en *guinda*, how adults adopted abandoned or lost children along the way, how men helped exhausted women by carrying their bags or infants for a while, and how those who could swim helped others who could not to cross the Sumpul and Lempa Rivers.⁹⁶ In the words of Uberlinda Quintanilla, “One always felt happy alongside the people who were with you, suffering the same hardships as we were living. We all felt as one... We all know each other. We feel a sort of affection for the people... One grows fond of others.”⁹⁷

Conclusion: The Emergence of Citizen Refugees

There can be no doubt that the violence and war of the 1970s and 1980s brought immeasurable pain, suffering and loss to the campesinos of northern El Salvador. But theirs is not a simple story of victimhood. As this essay has illustrated, campesinos responded to the increasing levels of violence by adjusting their community security tactics. The temporary flights from home and hamlet that came to be known as *guindas* eventually -- and surprisingly quickly -- became a learned, conscious and planned strategy of survival and of resistance.

Campesinos never knew exactly when a military sweep would occur, yet they prepared themselves well for such an eventuality. They learned to interpret military patterns and predict attacks. They designed emergency exit routes, constructed *tatús* and other hiding places for people and supplies, prepared special foods and pre-packed items to facilitate survival while en *guinda*. Within the context of the *guinda* system, moreover, campesinos established strategic alliances with other campesinos, with collaborators and combatants of the Farabundo Martí

National Liberation Front and with internationals in Honduras. Taken together, this evidence directly counters the image of refugee flight thus far presented in the literature: rural Salvadorans fleeing their homes blindly and managing to survive only through sheer luck, God's intervention, or international assistance.

This paper also examined how there emerged a moral economy of war flight; that is, a system of norms of what had to be done or had to be accepted for the sake of preserving life and community. In times of maximum risk, this moral economy required absolute silence and extreme deprivation. It also necessitated the reversal of normal morals and values. We saw this with the campesinos en guinda who scavenged grains, livestock and other basic supplies from rural houses and communities, and with the parents who stifled noisy children even if it threatened their young lives. But guindas were, simply put, exceptional times and, as a result, new religious and ethical justifications emerged for behaviors that campesinos did not normally condone.

Campesinos carried this moral economy of war flight and survival with them into the refugee zones of Honduras where, through the years of exile, it continued to shift and evolve. One element remained constant, however: a deep sense of connection to El Salvador as a home, an origin, a *patria*. This connection entailed a commitment, an obligation to struggle for the good of the nation. The events of 1970s and 1980s El Salvador, then, and the emergence of the campesino guinda system in particular, generated a new sort of social group: citizen refugees. Many of the campesinos who abandoned their homes and villages in El Salvador's northern regions had struggled for years, if not decades, to place the *tierra olvidada* (forgotten land) on the political map. They joined campesino leagues and allied with other popular organizations; they participated in land occupations, protest marches and strikes; they demanded that the wealthy and powerful of El Salvador recognize their rights as laborers and as citizens. This struggle for revindication did not end when they chose to take flight to the mountains and the *bolsones* (disputed territories) between El Salvador and Honduras. Nor did it end when they settled for longer periods of time in the refugee zones on Honduran territory. Instead,

campesinos came to understand both the *guinda* and exile as resistance against tyranny, a move in defense of the people and the nation of El Salvador.

In short, these Salvadoran campesinos were not people displaced from a territorially-anchored understanding of community and national citizenship. If this had been the case, they simply would have cut ties with El Salvador upon settling in Honduras, shifting allegiance to their host country. This was not what occurred. Instead, Salvadorans carried their sense of community and citizenship with them both *en guinda* and into exile. Recall the words of Suyapa, who explained that she and her companions *en guinda* crossed into Honduras only for “temporary refuge” because, after all, “our roots, our culture, and our country is El Salvador.” And recall Gladis Guardado, whose story opened this chapter. After surviving the Sumpul River Massacre, Gladis sought refuge in Honduras, at the town of Guarita. Although her written record ends there, it is likely that from Guarita, she moved to the UN-sponsored refugee camp of Mesa Grande, a few dozen kilometers away. At Mesa Grande, she perhaps attended literacy classes, kept accounts for the mechanics, or served as a public health nurse. Whatever she did, it is certain that she did not forget the events of May 14, 1980, on the banks of the Sumpul. “That was a crime that never in history will we forget,” she said before the Guarita-Mesa Grande transfers began in late 1982. “We cannot allow that the blood of all those innocent campesinos be shed for nothing.”⁹⁸ Such a sentiment was common among Salvadoran campesinos in the Honduran refugee zones. Rather than weaken their commitment, the pain, suffering and loss of the *guindas* -- and of the war in general -- spurred an even deeper commitment to the campesino community and to El Salvador.

Notes

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¹ I prefer the Spanish term *campesino* over the usual English translation of *peasant*. Following Salvadoran usage, *campesino* refers to a poor rural dweller whose livelihood depends primarily upon agricultural activities. The term, which literally means “of the *campo*” or countryside, incorporates a wide range of agriculturalists, from small holders, to those who rent land from others (for cash or kind), to day laborers and permanent employees on medium or large properties.

² “Venían la guardia haciendo disparazos primero, después venían cateando las casas [y] las tiendas... Las puertas las macheteaban, a los animales los mataban, a la gente que quedaba en sus casas, ancianitos que no podían correr, las sacaban a punta de bayoneta y las golpeaban.” Gladis Guardado’s story can be found in Renato Camarda, *Traslado forzado: refugiados Salvadoreños en Honduras* (Tegucigalpa: Centro de Documentación de Honduras, 1987), 45–47.

³ “[E]mpezaron a devolvernos a la fuerza y a disparar. Y entonces la gente corría de regreso a tierra salvadoreña, donde eran masacrados por el ejército.” Camarda, *Traslado forzado*, 47. The exact number of campesinos killed by the Salvadoran armed forces in this incident has never been verified. The United Nations Truth Commission cited a minimum of 300, but investigations carried out by Hondurans immediately after the incident placed the number at more than 600. United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador* (San Salvador and New York: United Nations, 1993), 121; “Iglesia hondureña denuncia matanza de 600 salvadoreños,” *La Tribuna*, 24 June 1980; Father M. and Marta, Interview by author, 17 July 2003 (Copán, Honduras, 2003). The quote “human carnage” (*carnicería humana*, in its original Spanish) comes from Manuel Torres Calderón’s article “La Masacre del Sumpul traumatiza la frontera.” Originally published in the Honduran periodical *El Tiempo*, the article is reprinted in *Sumpul: una masacre contra refugiados salvadoreños* (San Francisco: Casa El Salvador “Farabundo Martí,” 1980).

⁴ United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *Truth Comission Report*, 126. Anthropologist Leigh Binford, using data obtained from the Human Rights Archives of the Human Rights Commission of Segundo Montes, concluded that between 1980 and 1982, a minimum of 20 massacres occurred in the northern sectors of Morazán alone, accounting for nearly 2,000 victims. Leigh Binford, *The El Mozote Massacre: Anthropology and Human Rights* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 102.

⁵ Salvadoran Defense Minister General José Guillermo García initially denied that anything took place at Sumpul. One year later, he admitted that a few civilians died in a clash between

government and insurgent forces but that the numbers had been exaggerated by the international press. In a similar vein, it took several months for Salvadoran President José Napoleón Duarte to publicly recognize that anything out of the ordinary had occurred on the banks of the Sumpul River. He, too, indicated that the international press had blown the situation out of proportion. Only around 300 people had died, he said, and they were all “communist guerrillas.” United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *Truth Comission Report*, 121–25.

⁶“Aquí había invasión de periodistas de todas partes... Eran hechos que estaban centrando la información mundial. De todos países venían periodistas.” M. and Marta, Interview by author, 17 July 2003, 2/582. The religious workers’ public denunciation of the Sumpul massacre is reprinted in “Iglesia hondureña denuncia matanza de 600 salvadoreños”. See also *Sumpul*. It is worth noting here that the Sumpul River Massacre was revisited on 31 May 1982 when, near the town of Los Amates, government troops attacked an estimated 2,000 Chalatecos, resulting in several hundred dead.

⁷Scott Wright, *Promised Land: Death and Life in El Salvador* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 8. This kind of Biblical reference was also very common among the Salvadoran campesinos I interviewed and I explore it in more detail in my dissertation.

⁸“Habían esperado que, al huir a Honduras, encontrarían condiciones mejores... Pero, muchas veces no fue así. El choque fue grande para ellos.” Camarda, *Traslado forzado*, 63.

⁹Cited in Allen Nairn, “Behind the Death Squads,” *The Progressive*, May 1984, 23.

¹⁰In Lou Keune, *Sobrevivimos la guerra: La historia de los pobladores de Arcatao y de San José Las Flores* (San Salvador: Adelina Editores, 1996), 28–29.

¹¹James Dunkerley, *The Long War: Dictatorship and Revolution in El Salvador* (London: Verso, 1982), 153. Most Europeans and many Canadians utilize the term “Salvadorean” whereas those from the United States tend to prefer “Salvadoran.”

¹²Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*, 2d ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 75. Enrique Baloyra cited the 1980 reform as the start of the civil war. Enrique Baloyra, *El Salvador in Transition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 102–04. Sara Gordon concluded that the agrarian reform itself was “el instrumento legal más importante con que contó la institución militar para reprimir a la población.” Sara Gordon, *Crisis política y guerra en El Salvador* (Mexico, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1989), 302.

¹³Socorro Jurídico, *El Salvador: Del genocidio de la junta militar a la esperanza de la lucha insurreccional* (San Salvador: Socorro Jurídico, Arzobispado de San Salvador, 1981), esp. 36–39; United Nations Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, *Truth Comission Report*, 43–44; and Michael McClintock, *The American Connection: State Terror and Popular Resistance in El Salvador* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1985), 303–05. McClintock based his numbers on estimates from Socorro Jurídico and Tutela Legal. It is important to note that because it was significantly more difficult to gain access to rural areas, human rights monitoring there was less systematic and, therefore, violations were underreported. To calculate the campesino percentage of dead, I drew from Charts 2 and 3 of the Socorro Jurídico report cited above, and used only the numbers of dead with known professions. If we include those whose professions were unknown, campesinos still accounted for a high proportion of the dead: 52 percent in 1979 and 67.5 percent in the first ten months of 1980. It is likely, however, that a large proportion of these “unknowns” were, in fact, campesinos.

¹⁴ Socorro Jurídico, *Del Genocidio a la Esperanza*. The report's introduction summarizes the main arguments that the Salvadoran security forces and paramilitaries had initiated a systematic and intentional campaign of elimination and extermination. The report continues on to support these conclusions with statistical data and concrete examples.

¹⁵ Quoted in McClintock, *The American Connection*, 305. The original source was Susan Ornstein, "El Salvador: A Mercenary's View," *Fort Myers' News Press*, 23 October 1983.

¹⁶ For more on El Mozote, consult Binford, *El Mozote Massacre*; Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) and Rufina Amaya, Mark Danner, and Carlos Henríquez Consalvi, *Luciérnagas en El Mozote* (San Salvador: Ediciones Museo de la Palabra, 1998).

¹⁷ "...poder pasar esa etapa dura, si no nos hubiéramos organizado no hubiéramos sobrevivido, porque si cada quien hubiera querido salvarse él solo, nadie se hubiera salvado." In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 195.

¹⁸ Unless otherwise noted, I base the following discussion primarily on interviews and conversations with campesinos from northern Cabañas and Chalatenango. Alejandro, Santiago and Esther were particularly helpful with regard to pre-flight security issues, while Rosa, Chepe and, again, Esther, provided helpful details about the guinda strategy. Another invaluable source was "Documentación Mesa Grande," a collection of 22 tapes containing the testimonies of dozens of campesinos. Their stories were recorded between 1982 and 1983 at the refugee camp of Mesa Grande in Honduras, and subsequently compiled by an international solidarity worker. I am especially indebted to Sarah Loose for bringing this collection to my attention. Reports released by international human rights groups during the early 1980s offered additional particulars and data, as did the brief glimpses of guindas contained in Jenny Pearce, *Promised Land: Peasant Rebellion in Chalatenango, El Salvador* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1986) and Keune, *Sobrevivimos*.

¹⁹ Consider, for example, Decree 60 and the 1962 modifications to the Penal Code.

²⁰ In colloquial Salvadoran Spanish, *la guinda* is a noun that is perhaps best translated as "the flight" and *guindear* is the related verb, as in "to run or flee." Such a utilization of the term is quite different from elsewhere in the Spanish-speaking world, yet the links are obvious. In the Caribbean, for example, *la guinda* refers literally to a heavily forested, vertical terrain that is difficult or impossible to access, while *las guindas* refers more figuratively to a remote or impossible place. According to the Real Academia Española, leading authority on the Spanish language, *echar guinda* is a colloquial expression used in reference to the difficulty or futility of a particular effort. Thus, while Salvadorans did not invent a new word, they certainly penned a new and unique definition particular to the experiences of Salvadoran campesinos. I am indebted to Francisco Scarano for discussions about the etymology of this term.

²¹ María Rubia Quintanilla: "[A]l que hallaban en las casas se lo llevaban y no regresaba, se hallaba ya muerto." Ovidio Antonio Dubón: "[Y]o salía a dormir al monte a cuidar unos animalitos, y venía a la casa a dejar el poquito de leche y salía, pero nos mantuvimos un poco de tiempo así huyendo." Juana Muñoz: "Ya cuando vimos que andaban asesinando gente que no debía nada, entonces tuvimos que salirnos porque no podíamos esperar a que nos mataran por gusto." In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 27, 31, 30.

²² Most campesino families did not have access to farmland in the immediate vicinity of their homes, so men and young boys often had to travel significant distances to tend to their crops.

The majority of the campesinos I interviewed, moreover, had long relied on multiple and dispersed small plots for subsistence. In these instances, males often worked a full day in one field, then spent the night there -- either in a rough hut constructed for such a purpose or with extended family in a nearby town. The next day, they moved on to another plot, worked it and slept there. In this fashion, they moved between their multiple fields and, therefore, were often away from their homes for long periods of time.

²³ “La perseguían porque era la esposa mía, y que ella tenía que entregarme a mi por fuerza, y si no la iban a llevar presa. Entonces ella tenía que andar huyendo de casa en casa dentro de la misma colonia, para no permitir que fuera capturada.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 19.

²⁴ Reyes Valle and Victoria Orellana Orellana, in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 39–40. Interviews conducted by the author in the area of Portillo del Norte between 2000 and 2003 corroborated this pattern. Los Valles (also referred to as El Valle, and Los Valle) was a town inhabited by one extended family, located in the department of Chalatenango between Portillo del Norte, San José Cancasque and El Alto. Although Los Valles itself was too small to merit a line in the 1961 national census, the nearby town of Portillo del Norte was home to just 398 individuals, and the entire municipality of San José Cancasque, to which both Portillo del Norte and Los Valles pertained, held only 1696 people. The abandonment of the tiny hamlet of Los Valles is just one example of a pattern that occurred throughout northern El Salvador.

²⁵ These terms and other similar words surfaced repeatedly in my interviews during the post-war period, as well as in interviews conducted by Carlos Martínez Lara.

²⁶ “[L]a organización fue débil en ese sentido en que no teníamos la experiencia, y quizás no lo creíamos, hasta donde era capaz el ejército gubernamental de matar a quien se le ponía por delante, una criatura, una mujer embarazada, un anciano, gente indefensa.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 185.

²⁷ “Al principio pues, que no teníamos -- organización teníamos pero lo que no teníamos era como defender a esa gente.” Rosa, Interview by author, 24 February 2003 (Chalatenango, El Salvador), 1/82.

²⁸ “[P]ero ya después que vimos los ejemplos, fue que tuvimos que buscar otros mecanismos.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 186. The description of preparations for subsequent departures draws especially from interviews with Esther and Rosa, as well as from Keune, *Sobrevivimos*.

²⁹ Consider, for example, “Documentación Mesa Grande,” Collection of recorded interviews and songs with Salvadoran refugees in Honduras, comp. Gisela Ursula Heinrich (Mesa Grande, Honduras, 1982–83), Cassettes 1 and 2 and Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo “Pedro Arrupe,” *Tiempo de recordar y tiempo de contar: Testimonios de comunidades repatriadas y reubicadas de El Salvador* (San Salvador: SJDPA, 1994), 52–53.

³⁰ It is probable that campesinos in northern Morazán also utilized tatús, although I have not yet been able to research this in detail. The following discussion on tatús draws especially from conversations with campesinos in the areas of Arcatao, Chalatenango, and Cinquera, Cabañas. Between 2000 and 2003, I had several opportunities to visit tatús in both regions. I am extremely indebted to my guides, both young and old, who not only put up with my comparatively slow hiking pace, but also shared with me their many experiences with the tatús. Among them are Chepe, Eloy, René and Reynaldo. These conversations were not recorded, so I rely for quotes on Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 130–38.

³¹ “Había veces que los soldados pasaron encima de uno y no imaginaban que estaban pateándolo a uno.” Epifanio Ortega, in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 133. Tatús could also be excavated

horizontally, into the side of a hill or ravine. In such cases, the body of the tatú would have a “zig zag” shape, to provide protection against bullets and flying shrapnel, in case the entrance were discovered. In areas where the earth was *pelado* (bald or bare), tatús were especially important given the lack of trees and other natural cover.

³² Angelina Martina Salazar: “El tatú se preparaba con calma, con paciencia.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 134.

³³ Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 133. Also corroborated in conversations with Tovar in 2003.

³⁴ “Nadie sabía si lo agarraba el enemigo a uno y podía decir: ‘Allá hay uno.’” Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 100.

³⁵ Elías Menjívar: “Hacían dos horas de exploración, las avionetas primero, exploraban el terreno, en la zona donde estaba la guerrilla, luego venían los A37, los bombardeos, verdad; hacían los bombardeos indiscriminados... Cada avión tiraba 22 bombas, eran de 250 libras.” Catalina Menjívar: “Cuando se oían los helicópteros salían de las casas.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 54, 59.

³⁶ In testimonies and interviews collected during the civil war, campesinos pointed to specific batallions as responsible for attacks, disappearances, killings and other such incidents. The aid workers, journalists and observers appeared to take the campesinos’ identification of perpetrators at face value; nowhere in the written historical record did I find any explanation of how campesinos were able to identify and distinguish the various batallions. Curious, I inquired about this during many conversations and interviews with campesinos and former FMLN soldiers. Especially helpful was a conversation in Arcatao, Chalatenango, with a one-armed FMLN veteran I know only as Abel. It is likely that the campesinos’ connections to FMLN combatants aided in these identification processes. It is also possible that those who were not active foot-soldiers learned details well after the specific incidents, through the work of forensic anthropologists and the UN Truth Commission, for example.

³⁷ “Cuando andaba una exploración, ya nosotros teníamos captado que... dentro de tres días venía un operativo. Si nosotros veíamos los aviones que sobrevolaban, tanto de día como de noche, ya íbamos preparando las condiciones.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 167. Particularly helpful in understanding pre-guinda preparations were Esther, Interview by author, 21 February 2003 (Chalatenango, El Salvador) and “Documentación Mesa Grande”.

³⁸ Carmelina Serrano, in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 58. Many women used this anthill analogy in my interviews as well. It was also common to liken campesinos en guinda to a (silent) herd of cattle.

³⁹ “Sólo pocas familias, en grupos pequeños, para no tener la aglomeración de gente, porque era mejor defender poca gente en los distintos lugares, que estar el montón de gente en un solo lugar.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 134. Corroborated in interviews with Esther and Rosa. The shift in guinda sizes is also visible in photographs from the period. Compare, for example, an April 1981 photo, attributed to CARECEN staff, to a picture taken by Adam Kufeld in 1985. The former shows hundreds (if not thousands) of scantily-clad campesinos crossing the Lempa River, fleeing a military operation in Cabañas province. In the latter, a small group of eleven trudges a guinda path in Chalatenango. Camarda, *Traslado forzado*, 59; Adam Kufeld, *El Salvador* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 104.

⁴⁰ Esther, Interview by author, 21 February 2003, 1/595. While some who worked the orientación rounds did so as FMLN collaborators, Rosa indicated that she led them as part of her duties as the Secretary of her town’s Directiva. Her Directiva, she explained, had relations

with other Directivas and campesino organizations throughout northern Chalatenango and they all worked in conjunction with one another with regard to the guindas. Rosa did note that connections eventually did exist between her Directiva and one sector of the FMLN, the FPL, but, she said, “we never knew it because they were so careful... They never told us that we belong to this or that group... For reasons of security, they were very careful.” Rosa, Interview by author, 24 February 2003, 1/237.

⁴¹ “Ya se tenía previsto para dónde íbamos a salir.” Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 167.

⁴² Modesto Ayala, for example, reported that “Siempre guardaba reserva de agua y de harina verdad, uno dejaba en lugares escondidos el agua y la harina.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 75.

⁴³ Interviews with Rosa, María, José, Esther and Dora were particularly informative with regard to preparatory and security measures. Also helpful were conversations René and Chepe and various interviews included in “Documentación Mesa Grande”.

⁴⁴ Domitila Ayala: “Para defendernos se ponían unos hombres en la altura, se compraban cohetes de esos que se revientan en la iglesia. y si venían los soldados los reventaban, y toda la gente sabía que tenía que salir, porque era una señal de que venían los soldados... Ya después según se fue poniendo más difícil la cosa, entonces eran correos. Donde estaban los hombres cuidando se llevaban un niño, cuando veían que venían por allá, salía aquel niño espantado a avisarle a la gente y otros le iban a avisar a los demás.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 167. This was corroborated in my interviews as well.

⁴⁵ [S]i a mi me decían: ‘Miren, ahí vienen los soldados’, entonces agarraba a alguno de mis hermanitos, y les decía: ‘Vaya a avisarle al señor Fulano’, y ese Fulano le iba a avisar a otro, y esa era la manera organizativa.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 167.

⁴⁶ “Nos habían orientado que hiciéramos tortilla dura, esa tortilla dura tres meses. Esa tortilla uno la tuesta bien en el comal hasta que queda porosita. Y esa tortilla se hecha en agua con azúcar y queda como galleta.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 60.

⁴⁷ Each of Juana Alberto’s children, for example, was responsible for a particular item. “Ya había un niño listo que sabía que eso [la tortilla dura] era lo que cargaba.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 60.

⁴⁸ Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo “Pedro Arrupe,” *Tiempo de Recordar*, 50, 56 and 65.

⁴⁹ Harry Mattison, Susan Meiselas, and Rubenstein Fae, eds., *El Salvador: Work of Thirty Photographers* (New York: Writers and Readers, 1983), 75.

⁵⁰ Kufeld, *El Salvador*, 104. *Pichinga* is a Salvadoran term for a plastic container used to transport liquids. A *corvo* is a kind of curved machete used by campesinos.

⁵¹ The following discussion of the guinda norms is based on interviews with Esther, Rosa, Santiago, René and Luis; conversations with Chepe, Reynaldo and María Chichilco; and testimonies included in “Documentación Mesa Grande.”; Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo “Pedro Arrupe,” *Tiempo de Recordar*; Keune, *Sobrevivimos*.

⁵² Guadalupe Orellana: “Puro monte, quebradas, se buscan las quebradas, los zonzones más hondos.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 62.

⁵³ Juana Alberto: “[E]n lo más feo no se metían [los soldados], ya que los fusiles... no caben en cualquier charral.” Roberto Abrego: “Ahí sí había que hecerle huevos, caminar por el agua.” Both cited in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 62.

⁵⁴ Amado Valle: “[L]o que hacíamos era mancharla con colores de los árboles, por ejemplo la cáscara de nance la machacábamos y con eso la pintábamos para camuflajearla de color de

- monte. O molíamos monte, y con eso camuflajeábamos de verde.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 179.
- ⁵⁵ “Y eso todo el mundo lo hacía, era una orientación para la defensa.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 179.
- ⁵⁶ Domitila Ayala: “Y si otra persona la miraba una ropa clara, ¡quitátela! porque eso era la salvación de uno.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 180.
- ⁵⁷ “[Ella] decía, ‘Ustedes son miedosos.’ Y mire nos hicieron un bombardeo, se prendió la montaña completamente.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 179. Interviews and conversations with María, Rosa, Esther, Abel and Chepe revealed multiple variations on this same theme.
- ⁵⁸ Roberto Abrego: “[P]orque ahí estaba parte de la seguridad de uno y del resto. Porque si no lo hacía, estaba atentando contra la misma vida y contra el resto de la gente.” Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 179. Abrego’s choice of the verb *atentar* is noteworthy, as it carries the weight of illegality. In a similar vein, according to the Real Academia Española, the noun *atendado* refers to either “an offense against a principle or order that is considered proper” or “an act of aggression against or disrespect of an authority.” This latter definition is especially significant in the Salvadoran guinda context, given its collective nature.
- ⁵⁹ “Y la demás gente que no se organizó se fue para Chalate, a San Salvador, a distintos lugares.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 43.
- ⁶⁰ Abel Escalante López: “Ya hacíamos alguna resistencia.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 37. It is worth noting that, as early as 1979 and 1980, Escalante participated in the popular *milicias*, which provided protection to those en guinda.
- ⁶¹ “Aquí en la montaña sabíamos perfectamente que veníamos a luchar, a trabajar, a organizarnos, verdad, en los aspectos necesarios en la defensa de nuestro propio pueblo. Sabiendo eso también tomamos en cuenta que íbamos a ser perseguidos por las fuerzas armadas; eso permitía que nosotros nos mantuviéramos más organizados para poder sobrevivir, porque nos tocaba de andar de un lugar hacia otro.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 51–52.
- ⁶² E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971): 76–136. For additional perspectives and critiques, consider James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976); Suzanne Desan, “Crowds, Community, and Ritual in the Work of E. P. Thompson and Natalie Davis,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 47–71 and Marc Edelman, “Bringing the Moral Economy Back in to the Study of 21st-Century Transnational Peasant Movements,” *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (September 2005): 331–45.
- ⁶³ Diazepam is an anti-anxiety agent (benzodiazepine) used primarily for short-term relief of mild to moderate anxiety and its associated behavioral effects. One of the most common brand names for diazepam is Valium. References to drugs like diazepam can be found throughout Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo “Pedro Arrupe,” *Tiempo de Recordar*; Charles Clements, *Witness to War: An American Doctor in El Salvador* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984); Keune, *Sobrevivimos*. Interviews and conversations with campesinos in northern El Salvador corroborated these written reports.
- ⁶⁴ “Les ponían una inyección para que se durmieran, a saber de que, pero pasaban dormiditos.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 179.
- ⁶⁵ Felipe Tovar: “Es que habían ocasiones, en momentos de peligro, que había que tapparles la boca, con un trapo o con la mano.” Juana Alberto: “Murieron ahogados porque las mamás les

- tapaban la boca, las narices y se ahogaban los niños. En un ratito donde yo estaba, murieron tres, en un monte grueso estábamos escondidos cuando lloraban los niños y venía el enemigo cerca, le tapaban la boca, allí quedaban muertos los niños.” Both in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 176.
- ⁶⁶ “Por salvar un montón de gente, tenían que ponerle un trapo en la boca a los niños.” Abel Alemán in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 176.
- ⁶⁷ “Porque si nos veían iban a buscar la gente por toda esa parte de ese monte. Todos los que estábamos refugiados en ese monte, nadie se salió.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 64–65.
- ⁶⁸ “No daba hambre, uno podía pasar hasta 8 días sin comer nada y solo con el miedo se mantenía.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 77.
- ⁶⁹ Depictions of life in the tatús can be found in nearly all of my interviews, as well as in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*; Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo “Pedro Arrupe,” *Tiempo de Recordar* and “Documentación Mesa Grande”. Of course, campesinos who chose to hide themselves in tatús knew that they ran the risk of being discovered by soldiers or, worse yet, getting hit by bombs. One woman described how the tatú in which she had been hiding was struck by a bomb, burying her alive. Other campesinos were able to dig her out after they saw the tips of her fingers poking through the dirt. “Nos aterró el tatú. Yo sacaba las puntas de dedos; se me alcanzaba a ver así para que pudieran sacar tierra para desenterrarme.” In “Documentación Mesa Grande,” Cassette 1.
- ⁷⁰ “La tierra los estaba consumiendo ya, sin valor, ya no se podían salir de allí, estaban como muertos y los niños chiquitillos hinchándose ya, porque ellos no comían. Sin valor ni nada, sólo desmayos les daban, eso era terrible; la gente así como muertos se miraban, la cara como cadaver.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 136.
- ⁷¹ The phrase “la tierra le roba a uno...” was common in the published oral history collections, in testimonies and interviews collected during the war, and in interviews conducted more than ten years after the war.
- ⁷² “La propia arma principal que teníamos para defensa propia era la disciplina.” Elías Menjivar in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 182. Every campesino had at least one story about what happened when people were *indisciplinados* (undisciplined) while en guinda. Sebastián Serrano, cited above, referred to the woman who refused to hide or to take off her white shirt as *indisciplinada* and claimed that the government’s attack on their location was “because of her lack of discipline.” When sharing this memory, Serrano repeatedly used variants on the term *indisciplina*, as in “Y mire, nos hicieron un bombardeo... por la indisciplina de ella.” Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 179. The following discussion on discipline and leadership draws especially from interviews and conversations with Esther, Dora and Rosa.
- ⁷³ Interviewees often used the term “despierto” to describe the guinda responsables. Many also used specific terms like “capable” and “intelligent.” Given the nature of the guindas and the frequency of injury, illness, and basic exhaustion, multiple individuals often cycled through leadership positions during a single guinda; thus, at any given time, a particular responsable might literally have been the least tired. See my interviews with Santiago, Esther, Rosa, Chepe and Alejandro. See also Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 163 and 190, for example.
- ⁷⁴ Sebastian Serrano: “[N]os ordenaba que hacer, que nos decía como defendernos.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 163.
- ⁷⁵ “Nos vimos obligados a robar elotes -- nosotros le decimos ‘requisar’ en ese tiempo, por no decir robar que sería lo mismo.” Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 97. The Spanish term *requisar* is often translated into English as “to requisition.” I prefer to maintain the original Spanish term,

however, in an effort to more fully embody the term's broader meanings and significance. Requisar has a strong military connotation in Spanish; soldiers often requisition items like cars or pack animals for military use. The Real Academia Española emphasizes the war-time or emergency aspect of the practice: "Said of military authorities, in times of war, or of civil authorities in the case of public catastrophe: To expropriate items, rights and services, with immediate effect and without following the ordinary procedures." ("Dicho de la autoridad militar, en tiempo de guerra, o de la autoridad civil, en caso de calamidad pública: Expropiar, con efecto inmediato y sin seguir el procedimiento ordinario, cosas, derechos y servicios.") It is worth noting here that FMLN combatants also practiced requisition and utilized the term *requisar*. It is possible that civilians first learned the tactic from FMLN soldiers who provided security during the early guinda years.

⁷⁶Members of the milicias explained that they received training from campesinos who had previously served with the government armed forces. Some members of the milicias noted that they had received training and weapons from FMLN combatants.

⁷⁷"Se mantenía uno siempre afuera. En caso de una sorpresa, si no lo mataban, se corría, pero la familia quedaba protegida allí. Si detectaba que venía el ejército, él rápidamente corría y le hablaba a la familia: 'Manténganse con disciplina que aquí ya van a pasar, yo me zafo de aquí, luego regreso.' Ellos sabían cuando los soldados se vayan, yo regreso de nuevo aquí -- y así era -- para que abrieran el tatú: 'Ya se fue el ejército de aquí, ya no hay nada, ya pueden salir.' Les abría la tabla y salían." Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 135.

⁷⁸"Porque si no, cualquiera que pase me detecta el refugio." Epifanio Ortega in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 181.

⁷⁹"[N]o teníamos armas, las armas que teníamos era la boca, la expresión." "Cabañas," Interview by Carlos B. Lara Martínez, 9 February 2002, transcript, Archivo General de la Nación (San Salvador), 2.

⁸⁰Félix Lara: "El ejército regular... era exclusivamente para aniquilar y recuperar armamento al ejército. Pero las milicias populares servían... como la defensa de las comunidades... servían como de periferia sin disparar." In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 37. The campesinos' accounts of security en guinda remind me of the protection of African American churches in the U.S. south during the civil rights era. Historian Timothy B. Tyson told the story of one black man, a follower of Dr. Martin Luther King, who served as a security guard in a North Carolina town. When asked how he protected the church, given that he was a proponent of nonviolence, he responded with a smile, "With my nonviolent .38 special." Timothy B. Tyson, personal communication (Madison, WI, 2006). See also Tyson's superb memoir *Blood Done Sign Thy Name* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004).

⁸¹Félix Lara in Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 37.

⁸²Compare with the Guatemalan Communities of People in Resistance (*Comunidades de Población en Resistencia* - CPRs).

⁸³In my dissertation, I examine precisely how campesino refugees utilized individual internationals and the international aid network in general.

⁸⁴"Todo estaba estructurado." Manuel, Interview by Carlos B. Lara Martínez, 9 February 2002, transcript, Archivo General de la Nación (San Salvador).

⁸⁵I am indebted to José, Rosa and Esther for their insights into the guindas to Honduras. The following sources were also helpful: "Documentación Mesa Grande.," Manuel, transcript;

Male (64 years old), interview by Carlos B. Lara Martínez, 16 March 2002, transcript, Archivo General de la Nación (San Salvador).

⁸⁶ Such communications often traveled through FMLN channels, but also the Salvadoran Red Cross and Honduran Green Cross.

⁸⁷ “Tal vez esperaban unos 50 y emergen de 100 a 200 refugiados.” Carlos Antonio García Carranza, “La problemática de los refugiados y la protección de la población civil en los conflictos armados,” Bachelor’s thesis (Tegucigalpa: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, 1985), 73. Accounts from internationals can be found in A.C. Zoller, “Summary of Report of International Delegation to Central America,” Summer 1981, Americas Watch El Salvador, Papers of David Holiday (San Salvador); “Documentación Mesa Grande.”; Yvonne Dilling, *In Search of Refuge* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984); Camarda, *Traslado forzado*; Wright, *Promised Land*.

⁸⁸ “Ya fue negociado y todo eso porque veían que [con] un montón de población era difícil andar. Bueno, primero porque había que estar enfrentando al enemigo, verdad: ataques, enfrentamientos. Eso era lo uno. Lo otro era por la cuestión de los alimentos; era muy difícil poder cosechar alimentos. Entonces todo eso nos obligó que había que sacar a la gente. Era eso, sí, planificado.” Esther, Interview by author, 21 February 2003, 1/573.

⁸⁹ “Solo me mandaban una nota diciéndome cuántas personas venían... y que tratara de ir coordinándolas para que fueran pasando para el otro lado.” Esther, Interview by author, 21 February 2003, 1/240.

⁹⁰ Members of the FMLN leadership who offered important details on this subject include Walter, José Luis, Facundo, Gustavo and Lupe. It will be fascinating to reassess the FMLN’s relations with the campesinos en guinda if and when the organization’s documentation becomes available to researchers.

⁹¹ “Unos de ellos me resultaban enojados... Yo no estoy cansada, me dijo. Como va a creer que me voy a refugiar, me dijo, me voy a meter a esos lugares me dijo como soy chancha en chiquero, me dijo.” Esther, Interview by author, 21 February 2003, 1/595.

⁹² Zoller, “Summary of Report of International Delegation to Central America,” 13–15 and 32–35. See also “Documentación Mesa Grande,” especially Cassettes One and Two; Dilling, *In Search of Refuge*; Camarda, *Traslado forzado*, 65; Wright, *Promised Land*.

⁹³ “[Í]bamos a buscarlos a la frontera, porque el camino a La Virtud era peligroso, por los soldados hondureños. Los encontrábamos escondidos en los montes.” Camarda, *Traslado forzado*, 64–5.

⁹⁴ Elías Menjívar: “Como iba un buen bloque de cien personas, con esa cantidad ya no los mataron pues.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 89. See also pages 23–24 and 30. For visual examples, see John Knoop, *Colomoncagua*, Video (San Francisco: South Bay Sanctuary and CODES, 1988).

⁹⁵ “Él que no entendía sólo iba aguantando las consecuencias de la guerra.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 90.

⁹⁶ Such examples can be found throughout Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo “Pedro Arrupe,” *Tiempo de Recordar*; Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, as well as in “Documentación Mesa Grande”; and my own interviews.

⁹⁷ “[U]no siempre se sentía alegre con la gente que andaba con uno sufriendo la misma pena que vivíamos. Todos nos sentíamos uno... [N]os conocemos todos. Sentimos un cariño por la gente... se encariña uno con la gente.” In Keune, *Sobrevivimos*, 134.

⁹⁸“Eso fue un crimen que jamás en la historia se nos va a olvidar, no se puede permitir que la sangre de todos esos campesinos inocentes se haya derramado por nada.” In Camarda, *Traslado forzado*, 45.

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