

THE AFTERMATH OF THE MAYAN REBELLION OF 1847
IN THE PUUC REGION OF YUCATAN

By

Barbara A. Angel

A dissertation

presented to the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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BARBARA A. ANGEL

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

In 1847, Mayan peasants under the leadership of their traditional caciques rose up against the creole authorities of the state of Yucatán, Mexico. This rebellion, known to contemporaries and later historians as the Caste War, has been described as the most prolonged and bloody resistance on the part of an indigenous group in the Americas since the Spanish conquest. The existing scholarly literature has primarily dealt with this conflict in terms of the dichotomy between "civilization" and "barbarism," without serious attention to the complex relations and transactions between various individuals and groups in Yucatecan society before, during, and after the rebellion.

This study addresses that complexity by focusing on a twenty-year period in the history of the partido of Tekax, located in the central region (commonly known as the Puuc) of the peninsula, between government-controlled territory in the northwestern part of the peninsula and the rebel-controlled southeast. The villages along this military "frontier" played a pivotal role in the conflict between government troops and rebel forces, yet in the literature to date, the inhabitants of these communities have been consistently portrayed as victims of rebel violence rather than victims of government counter-insurgency campaigns or potential collaborators with the guerrillas.

The dissertation assesses the results of the government's pacification policy by analyzing demographic data, examines the migration and flight of peasants into zones of refuge, and discusses the responses of residents to the military occupation of the

region. Relationships between the people of the Puuc and the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz and the Pacificos, rebels who signed a separate peace in 1853, form a major part of the study. The work also examines the impact of various political upheavals at both the national and state levels on the reconstruction of the central region in the aftermath of the uprising.

In the wake of the rebellion, the people who remained in the militarized zone had to invent a new way of existing "in between" competing zones of power. Despite the inevitable polarization inherent in such a situation, a substantial number of peasants managed to negotiate their survival by continuing to exercise freedom of movement and by refusing to accept the identities ascribed to them by the antagonistic forces surrounding them.

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INTRODUCTION

THE ROOTS OF RURAL REBELLION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY YUCATAN

The nineteenth century in Mexican history has been characterized by recent historians as a century of escalating rural violence bracketed by the wars of independence and the revolution of 1910. Historians have long been aware of the chaotic political history of the period, yet only recently has serious attention been paid to the social and economic aspects of this lengthy period of agrarian upheaval.¹ In looking for explanations of this period of chronic instability, some scholars have focused mainly upon the external pressures which prevented Mexico from consolidating its political system and establishing a strong and independent economy.² The impact of the expanding world economy has been singled out as a major cause of Mexico's weakness, yet, as John Tutino has argued in From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico, the timing is wrong: "the dislocations of the late-nineteenth century Díaz era . . . developed too late to explain the emergence of mass agrarian violence."³ While the emphasis upon external factors is no doubt justified by mid-century events such as the US invasion of Mexico and the French Intervention, there were internal forces of disintegration at work which in the long run may have been more significant.

Mexico emerged from the struggle for independence as a deeply divided and weakened society. The euphoria of political reconciliation which had served temporarily to mask these divisions soon disappeared in the turbulent aftermath of Agustín de Iturbide's brief empire.⁴ Two conflicting and contradictory visions of society dominated the political discourse of the first decades of Mexico's existence as

an independent country. On the one hand, a desire for a strong central authority based on the institutions which, it was felt, could guarantee social peace, namely the Church and the Army, came to be identified with the Conservative or centralist camp. On the other hand, a desire for regional or state control of economic and fiscal policy, as well as a decentralization of political authority and the fostering of local government institutions represented the Liberal, or federalist position. The struggles between republicans and monarchists, liberals and conservatives, and federalists and centralists plunged Mexico into several decades of anarchy, punctuated by foreign invasions and military pronunciamientos. Yucatán experienced its share of these troubles, but as a region on the periphery of the country, it consistently chose to align itself with the federalist camp throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, a posture which exacerbated internal social and political divisions and provided an opening for discontented elements to rebel.

Among these elements were a group of Mayan caciques, who took advantage of the chaos engendered by creole factionalism to call upon their followers to rise up and drive the Dzul into the sea.* The precise nature of this Indian rebellion, known to contemporary and later historians as the Caste War, has been much debated. While contemporary creole (white Hispanic) elites and some Mayan leaders stressed the racial or ethnic aspects of the uprising, subsequent historians, paying more attention to

* Cacique was the title given to the indigenous leader of each Mayan community who governed his people under a system of indirect rule developed during the colonial period for the separate but dependent administration of Indian local governments known as repúblicas de Indios. Dzul is the Mayan term for foreigner.

the economic and social conditions at the time of the outbreak, have classified it as a peasant rebellion, or even as a social revolution.⁵

Early work on the period by Howard Cline and Nelson Reed emphasized the significance of the Caste War as a concrete example of social conflict arising from the process of economic modernization. The classic statement of this interpretation may be found in Reed's The Caste War of Yucatan in which he describes the impact of nineteenth century economic liberalism on the Mayan peasants of the southeastern portion of the peninsula as a "forced march from one world to another."⁶ In the more recent historiography a preoccupation with the development of agrarian capitalism during the henequen boom of the late nineteenth century has focused the debate on whether or not the rebellion hastened or retarded the transformation of the peninsula from a pre-capitalist agrarian society to a fully-developed plantation economy tied to world markets.⁷ The underlying assumption of this approach is that the real significance of the Mayan rebellion lies in the way in which it contributed to the incorporation of Yucatecan society into the world capitalist system. However, such an interpretation ignores the possibility that the consequences of the rebellion were uneven, and that regional differences may have exerted an influence upon the course of events which made such an outcome less than inevitable. As Joel Migdal has argued in Strong Societies and Weak States, "the assumed inevitability of this powerful dynamic leading societies from lower stages to higher ones, or from traditional patterns to modern ones, obviated the need for scholars to analyze closely

those forces of resistance that would, in any case, fall by the wayside. Such resistance, they implied, was crumbling."⁸

Even an emphasis on aspects of resistance has led to conclusions about the significance of the Caste War which may not bear scrutiny from a local or regional perspective. For example, the Mayan rebellion has been singled out by some historians as a prototype of the peasant wars of the twentieth century as described by Eric Wolf, or, less heroically, as one of Eric Hobsbawm's "archaic forms of social movements."⁹ Locating the Caste War in the literature of theories of peasant revolution, however, has proven unsatisfactory because of the troubling question of ethnicity. Whether one emphasizes the agrarian roots of the uprising or the undercurrents of racial antagonism which surfaced during the course of the war, the task of unravelling ethnic and class conflict is formidable. For example, Leticia Reina argues that there is no doubt that "the Mayan rebellion was not a Caste War. The rebellion was undertaken by an indigenous sector which refused to submit itself to the dominant system. If at times this sector manifested a desire to exterminate the white race, it was because of the identification of whites as exploiters."¹⁰ However, other scholars such as Miguel Bartolomé have argued that the rebellion was a "war of ethnic liberation" on the part of the Maya, a manifestation of their determination to survive as a distinct ethnic group.¹¹ Wherever rebellions have occurred within a colonial or neocolonial context, questions of class and ethnicity are closely intertwined, not only because the most heavily exploited classes usually belong to the conquered ethnic or

racial group and as such, are visibly and readily identified as enemies of elite interests, but also because racial antagonism is often the basis for continuing exploitation.¹²

In nineteenth century Mexico, the colonial classification of social classes into castas** still carried considerable weight among creole elites, despite their attraction to liberal notions of equality. The granting of formal citizenship to Indians at the time of Mexican independence had not altered their status as an inferior group, for what was still in place was a "caste" system reinforced by racial categories.¹³ In the case of the Maya, over three centuries of domination by the Spanish and creole elite had failed to obliterate their cultural and racial distinctiveness.¹⁴ While the growing presence of a mestizo population testified to the reality, if not the social acceptability of interracial union, the countryside was still overwhelmingly Indian in character and customs. In the pueblos the Mayan language was spoken by most inhabitants, including mestizos and whites, and local government still reflected (albeit weakly) the colonial division of civil society between the two "republics" of Spaniards and Indians. Ethnicity was definitely an important consideration in determining the position of the Mayan population within Yucatecan society.

However, we cannot be so certain about class position. Not all of the Maya were peasants, nor were they totally isolated from creole society in terms of economic, political, and social structures. As Carol Smith writes with reference to Guatemala,

** Casta refers to the classification of social groups by race and/or racial mixture. In eighteenth century New Spain, an elaborate system of social stratification was developed on the basis of racial origin. In Yucatán, the term denoted someone of mixed racial ancestry (Farriss, Maya Society, p. 540).

"class relations cannot be considered apart from other relations equally salient: those of ethnicity, those of community, and those created by the dialectic between community and state."¹⁵ Although Mayan rebels were clearly not fighting an abstraction called "the state" any more than they were consciously opposed to the advance of agrarian capitalism, the conflict in its broadest sense may be seen as resistance to the attempts of the state to assert hegemony in rural communities which had hitherto enjoyed a fair amount of autonomy. Whether this resistance was primarily based on class or ethnic solidarity, or a combination of both, has yet to be established. Therefore, one of the aims of the present study is to arrive at a clearer understanding of the relationship between class and ethnicity in rural society at the time of the rebellion in order to assess what impact the war had upon the social structure of Mayan communities during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Some broad generalizations have emerged in the historiography about regional differences among Mayan groups. It was noted at the time of the rebellion that most of the leaders came from eastern communities on the so-called "frontier" of civilization and that the majority of their followers were from the apparently unpopulated regions of the south and east of the peninsula. The nineteenth century literature asserts that the conflict was a struggle between "civilization" and "barbarism" and that the Mayan rebellion represented a desperate effort to halt the settlement of the "wilderness," much in the same way as the Indian Wars of the US frontier were last-ditch attempts to defend a way of life that was anachronistic. It is commonly stressed in the nineteenth century histories of the Caste War that the more hispanicized Mayan

population of the northwestern part of the peninsula loyally supported the government in its struggle against the rebels, even to the point of enlisting voluntarily in the state militia.¹⁶

Modern scholars have reinforced this interpretation, notably Howard Cline, Nelson Reed, and Enrique Montalvo Ortega, all of whom stress the dualistic structure of Yucatecan society and the regional origins of the rebellion.¹⁷ Such an interpretation not only adopts the language of the creole elite which represents the Mayan rebels as savage "Others," but also ignores the evidence that many of the rebels came from long-settled regions of the peninsula, including the hinterlands of Campeche, Mérida, Valladolid, and Tekax. As Montalvo Ortega admits, very little is actually known about the "precise social composition of the rebel groups."¹⁸ In order to address this question critically, I have chosen to focus my analysis on the Mayan population in the "frontier" communities and their contacts with various rebel groups during the guerrilla phase of the rebellion.

The most cogent way to study the Caste War from a regional perspective is to examine the particular role of the communities in the districts of Tekax, Sotuta, and Peto, along the so-called linea del sur, the defensive line of the creole armies. The southern boundary of this region marked the limits of effective Spanish occupation during much of the colonial period, while the entire area was of strategic importance to both government and rebel forces throughout the rebellion.¹⁹ In conditions of guerrilla warfare, as Timothy Wickham Crowley notes, there is often a very deep social and geographical overlap between the guerrilla support system (food, supplies,

recruits, and military intelligence) and the civilian population.²⁰ The region of Yucatán in which this overlap was most evident was the area located between government-controlled territory in the northwestern part of the peninsula, and the rebel-controlled southeast. The villages along this military "frontier" played a pivotal role in the conflict between government troops and rebel forces, yet in the literature to date, the inhabitants of these communities have been consistently portrayed as victims of rebel violence rather than victims of government violence or potential allies of the guerrillas.

In the recent literature about guerrilla warfare in Guatemala and El Salvador, the terms "zone of refuge, "zone of conflict," and "zone of control" or "zone of security" have become common currency. These terms are often used in the context of government campaigns to re-establish sovereignty over disputed territory and authority over a population perceived as being out of control; in other words, they have become part of the language of counter-insurgency. Government officials have often justified a campaign of terror against peasants on the grounds that "they have become heretics, not from the church militant but the body politic. The sheer number of guerrillas and the depth of their support by the peasants . . . have made them something more: a 'cancer' in the body politic, something to be rooted out and destroyed through a kind of 'surgical' terror."²¹ In a similar vein, military commanders in Vietnam and Guatemala spoke of "cleansing" the countryside, as though rebellion were a form of disease that could be eradicated only by wholesale obliteration. Although these terms appropriately belong to the literature on guerrilla

warfare in the twentieth century, the conceptual framework to which they give expression is not a recent phenomenon in Latin American history.

In Maya Society Under Colonial Rule Nancy Farriss notes that in the mid-seventeenth century, the colonial frontier had contracted to a line curving from below Champotón (in the present state of Campeche) up to the Puuc hills, across to Peto and Tihosuco, and then angling northeast to the Caribbean along a line now marking the boundary between the present states of Yucatán and Quintana Roo. (The state of Campeche was created out of Yucatán's jurisdiction in 1858, and the territory, now the state, of Quintana Roo, in 1902.) Significantly, "the territory beyond that frontier was officially referred to as despoblado, or uninhabited. In fact, it became the home of large numbers of refugees who fled colonial rule to form independent settlements of their own or to join their unconquered cousins."²² The existence of these autonomous communities, Farriss believes, was a cultural, political, and economic factor in the lives of even the great majority of Maya who did not flee, because these "zones of refuge were an ever-present and familiar option rather than a frightening unknown" when life in government-controlled areas became too oppressive or dangerous. It is my contention that similar conditions obtained during the guerrilla phase of the Mayan rebellion, and that the weakness of government control was reflected in the "leakage" of population to the south and east of the peninsula. Some attempt will be made to "track" this population in order to determine the significance of migration as a form of resistance.²³ Migration is a persistent theme in the

demographic literature and is perhaps one of the most striking continuities linking the colonial and post-independence history of Yucatan.²⁴

Continuities may be discovered, also, in the measures adopted by government authorities to recover and resettle the dispersed population during times of upheaval. In the wake of the heaviest fighting of the Caste War, church officials were called in to participate in a pacification program to reestablish refugees in their communities and restore economic and social order. Like the earlier congregación programs undertaken by the Franciscans in the colonial period, the purpose of this rounding up of the dispersed population was to control labour supply, as well as to isolate rebel groups from potential civilian supporters. Military garrisons were established in key villages where soldiers took on an economic as well as military function in the community, ensuring that crops were planted and harvested and transportation routes kept open. The program was not unlike the "strategic hamlet" model adopted by US military advisers in Vietnam and Guatemala.

In the context of nineteenth century Yucatan, however, the reimposition of control over a rebellious population also took on aspects of a colonial entrada, in the sense that Mayan fugitives captured by government forces were considered fair game for reintegration into a creole-dominated system of forced labour akin to slavery.^{***}

This practice affected women and children as well as captured rebel soldiers. As

^{***} The term entrada was used to describe the periodic military expeditions conducted by the Spaniards against unconquered and fugitive Indians in the early colonial period. Their imprisonment and subsequent transportation as slaves for the mines on Spanish Caribbean islands was justified on the grounds that they were pagans or lapsed Christians.

Wickham-Crowley remarks in his study of terrorism against peasant populations in contemporary Latin America, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants often becomes blurred under conditions of guerrilla warfare. During the Caste War, the distinction between civilians and fighters was routinely ignored, with women and children constituting the great majority of prisoners of war captured by government forces. The fate of those prisoners who survived the forced marches, starvation, and imprisonment was frequently indentured labour in creole households or worse yet, exile and slavery in Cuba. From a twentieth century perspective, such harsh measures seem almost to be a form of genocide, yet forced labour in exile was a typical punishment for indigenous rebels in nineteenth century Mexico, notably in the Díaz' government's campaign against the Yaqui of Sonora.²⁵ Because of the racial overtones of Indian uprisings, government forces often judged the loyalty of civilian populations on racial grounds alone. Yet the labour of Mayan peasants was clearly necessary for the economic recovery of the peninsula after the uprising. Thus the government was confronted with a dilemma as old as the conquest--the necessity of balancing coercion and persuasion in an effort to secure the labour and productivity of the Mayan masses.

Evidence suggests that levels of coercion reached new heights in the aftermath of the rebellion, which may be one reason why the mounting unrest which preceded the Mexican Revolution of 1910 seems to have left the peninsula virtually untouched. As several historians of modern Yucatan have observed, when Yucatecans speak of "the revolution" they are usually not referring to 1910, but rather to the Caste War, as

though after that great upheaval there was no will left for further resistance as the region gradually found itself caught up in the transition to agrarian capitalism during the henequen boom. However, since creole authorities were clearly unable to transform the entire peninsula into a militarized labour camp, it is likely that some resistance continued among Mayan villagers especially on the periphery of the henequen zone and that communities maintained some level of autonomy as long as they had access to the human and material resources necessary for survival. As James Scott points out in Moral Economy of the Peasant, the paths of survival and non-revolt are more characteristic expressions of peasant politics than open rebellion: "To speak of rebellion is to focus on those extraordinary moments when peasants seek to restore or remake their world by force. It is to forget that the peasant is more often a helpless victim of violence than its initiator."²⁶

The primary focus of this study, then, will be on the rather unspectacular means by which Mayan society reconstituted itself in the wake of the rebellion--the path of survival: "It is especially at the level of culture that a defeated or intimidated peasantry may nurture its stubborn moral dissent from an elite-created social order. This symbolic refuge is not simply a source of solace in a precarious life, not simply an escape. It represents an alternative moral universe in embryo--a dissident subculture, an existentially true and just one, which helps unite its members as a human community and as a community of values."²⁷

That Mayan communities did survive is a historical fact. Under what conditions and how is less well-known. The sources of such a study are, of necessity,

official documents which contain only brief and often enigmatic references to everyday life in rural communities. In his groundbreaking work on peasant rebellions in India, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India, Ranajit Guha makes a strong case for the use of sources such as police files, militia reports, records of court cases, administrative accounts, minutes of governmental departments, and so on, as a base upon which to reconstruct the fabric of rural society.²⁸ Although most of this evidence is elitist in origin, Guha claims that it is possible to use this "discourse of counter-insurgency" as a means of gaining access to a peasant "discourse of resistance" embedded in the official documents themselves. Since one of the primary intentions of this study is to treat the Maya as "the conscious subjects and, in a real sense, the makers of their own history," it is imperative that some effort be made to go beyond the literal reportage of official documents.²⁹ Mayan subjects, then, make their appearance in these documents in a variety of ways: in lists of prisoners of war, on tax rolls, as signatories to petitions penned by escribanos or parish priests, and occasionally in letters to the governor, but primarily in the isolated acts of defiance which local authorities reported to their superiors in an effort to demonstrate that they still had control over the countryside. Guha maintains that this "official eavesdropping" can serve as a primary source for a historiography not totally dominated by elite discourse. Care must be taken in the use of these materials so as to avoid adopting the language and point of view of counter-insurgency. Nonetheless, without the possibility of conducting oral history interviews about events which occurred almost a hundred and fifty years ago, these documents remain the primary

sources available for an investigation of Mayan rural society in the aftermath of the rebellion.

The dissertation is divided into six chapters, with the first serving as a brief introduction to the region and its people on the eve of the Caste War, as well as a narrative overview of the early stages of the rebellion. The second chapter, "Pacification and Counter-Insurgency," describes the course of the military campaign to recover the central region of the peninsula, and analyses the pacification programme which followed in its wake. The core of the thesis is contained in the third chapter, "The Reconstruction of Rural Society," which presents a detailed analysis of the social, economic, and political structure of the Puuc region in the aftermath of the rebellion. Questions such as resettlement and population patterns are examined, as well as the uneven distribution of wealth and property among creole and Mayan inhabitants of the partido of Tekax. Profiles of several members of the creole elite are included in this chapter, as well as a general discussion of the condition of the peasantry in the aftermath of the rebellion.

Chapter Four looks at how the involvement of creole elites in the secessionist movement of Campeche undermined the ability of the militia to defend the Puuc from rebel attacks. It also examines how the division of the peninsula between Yucatán and Campeche affected the political and economic future of the region. The fifth chapter takes a detailed look at the ambivalent role played by the pacífico communities of the south; on the one hand, serving as allies of the creole governments of Yucatán and Campeche in their campaigns against the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz, while on the

other, functioning as zones of refuge for runaway peasants and deserters from creole armies. Chapter Six examines how the brief interlude known as the French Intervention affected the people of the Puuc, and demonstrates that they continued to maintain an independent posture in the face of overwhelming enthusiasm for the empire of Maximilian in the rest of Yucatán. The conclusion summarizes the narrow range of options which inhabitants of the region faced in the aftermath of the rebellion, and suggests that many people actually managed to rebuild their lives, despite their struggle for survival under conditions of severe economic and political instability.

Like many visitors before me, I became interested in the history of nineteenth century Yucatán as a result of an extended visit to the peninsula, which included travel through the Puuc region south of Mérida. In preparation for that trip, I read the classic works in English on Yucatán, including John Stephen's Incidents of Travel in Yucatán, Nelson Reed's The Caste War of Yucatán, and Robert Redfield's The Folk Culture of Yucatán. While these works opened up to me a largely unknown and fascinating world, I was drawn less by their portrayal of Mayan "otherness" than I was by the universal themes of subsistence livelihood and the survival strategies which people on the land have always adopted in order to get through hard times, including wars, epidemics, and environmental disasters. I discovered a vast and complex literature on the Maya of Chan Santa Cruz, or the Cruzob as they are often called, but I also noted the absence of any substantial work on the people caught in the middle of

that protracted rebellion, the people who stayed behind, decided to return, or migrated back and forth between the territories controlled by government forces and rebels.

Perhaps their resistance was not heroic enough to attract literary attention, nor did it fit any of the prevailing historical models of peasant rebellion, being more a kind of dogged survival in the face of overwhelming odds. Nonetheless, I found in the people of the Puuc an independence of outlook which bespoke a tradition of remaining attached to their way of life, their families, and communities, which had somehow survived the vast upheavals of the past century and a half. So, I set out to discover what had happened to this region during the Mayan rebellion and its aftermath, where its people stood on the great issues of the day, and, in the spirit of Luis González's San José de Gracia, to write a microhistoria, not of one village, but of a whole region.

Fortunately, many people were willing to help. First of all, I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to my thesis advisor, Professor Timothy E. Anna. His own love of writing and enthusiasm for Mexican history has been a constant source of inspiration throughout the project and I would never have ventured into this unfamiliar world without his guidance. Secondly, I would like to thank the many friends and colleagues who have supported me along the way, including Renee Fossett, Ron Harpelle, Terry Rugeley, Wade Derkson, Doug Langrell, Jackie Martin, Jill Meyer, Karen Morrow, and Mae Kawata. Several professors from my earliest days of graduate studies also deserve thanks, especially Professor John Brierley who never doubted that I could still write and think analytically despite having spent several

years outside the university environment, and Professor Richard Lobdell who ignored my lack of formal training in economics and encouraged me to plunge headfirst into the murky waters of Caribbean economic history. Professor Jennifer Brown introduced me to ethnohistorical methods and reawakened my interest in archival research through long hours in the Hudson's Bay Archives, while Professor Doug Sprague supervised my first ventures into quantitative methods for rural history and forced me to look at my writing critically. Further along, Professor Tom Vadney tried to complete the work begun by Professor Sprague in developing clarity of expression, while Professor Jack Bumsted taught me to respect deadlines. All in all, they have been a formidable group of scholars to emulate, and I hope that my work will be in a small way a tribute to their excellence.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to the many Mexican friends who smoothed the way during the course of my research in Mérida. First and foremost, I want to thank Doctor Susy Peniche Rivero, who first became my friend, and then Director of the Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán. Without her concrete assistance and unwavering support, I would have found the process much more time-consuming and difficult. The archival staff, especially Andrea Vergara Medina and Candy Flota de Burgos, were always ready to assist with my bizarre requests, and after spending a total of eight months together in two different locations, I became part of their family. My hosts, Dionisio and Leticia Gaytán Chacon, and my friends and neighbours, Alberto and Alejandro Cáceres, were always there in emergencies large and small, and I truly would not have survived without their

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Four years of my doctoral studies were supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Without this tangible assistance, research trips to Yucatán and Texas would have been beyond my resources, and I am truly grateful for the Council's confidence in the viability of my project. Librarians at the University of Manitoba, the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection in Austin, and the Special Collections Department at the University of Texas, Arlington were especially helpful in all stages of my research. Ed Pachanak of the University of Manitoba Geography Department produced the maps from my rudimentary sketches.

Finally, I want to thank my husband Michael for accompanying me on this long journey which at times seemed to have no end. He has always shared my enthusiasm for travel and my passion for total immersion in the history and culture of other peoples, along with an intellectual curiosity which has yet to be dulled. My children, Eric, Jeannette, and Colin, have given me strong emotional support when it was needed, and the courage to keep on with a project to the end--I'm sure they derived a special pleasure from having to give me a motivational "pep" talk from time to time. And a special hug for my cats, Cuthbert and Mathilda, whose idea of quality time is sitting on my lap at the computer.

NOTES

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CHAPTER ONE
THE MAYAN REBELLION OF 1847

The Impact of Geography on the History of Yucatán

The distinctive geographical features of the Yucatán peninsula have been noted by many observers ever since the conquest and permanent occupation of the region by Spanish conquistadores led by Francisco de Montejo in 1526. The conquerors of Yucatán anticipated great wealth, on the scale of the Aztec empire of central Mexico, and were disappointed to find little of value in minerals or agricultural products that they could readily identify as a basis for creating a flourishing colony.¹ Instead, they encountered a dry, flat, limestone peninsula whose inhabitants lived by the shifting cultivation of corn, beans, and squash, and whose most valuable trade goods were salt, honey, slaves, and cloth woven from native cotton.² Yet in the pre-contact period Yucatán was an integral part of a trading network which extended from Honduras to the south, north along the coast to Tampico, overland to Guatemala and Chiapas, and inland to central Mexico.³ This was the land of the Maya, a classical civilization in an advanced stage of decay, according to archeologists, but nonetheless a populous and thriving part of Mesoamerica.⁴

The most important physical characteristic of the Yucatán peninsula is aridity, a condition created partially by the lack of relief features, and the fact that the peninsula is composed of limestone karst, which in practical terms means that when rain falls, it does not collect on the surface, but drains immediately into porous rock. The thin topsoils of the peninsula, while volcanic and fertile, are subject to erosion during the

heavy rains of summer. Rainfall and vegetation increase from the northwest to the southeast, with slight variations caused by a region of low hills (the Puuc hills) separating the coastal plain of Campeche from the rest of the peninsula. More intensive cultivation is possible in the fertile valleys and slopes of this hilly region.

The implications of Yucatán's unique climatic and soil conditions for agriculture are enormous. The timing of seeding and cultivation of crops is crucial, since a premature planting without subsequent rain can mean the loss of an entire year's harvest. Moreover, the limited fertility of the soil means that crops can only be planted for two years in succession in one location. The indigenous system of swidden agriculture utilizes a long cycle of crop rotation (fifteen to twenty years) in order to restore soil fertility by allowing the jungle to grow back over previously cultivated plots. This practice encourages dispersed settlement patterns and seasonal migration to temporary locations (milpas) for the purpose of cultivating and harvesting crops.⁵ Mayan agriculturalists have developed, over the course of several thousand years, several varieties of corn, as well as many vegetable and tree crops which flourish under these conditions and are adapted to the minute variations of climate and soil found in the peninsula. The existence of numerous micro-climates contributes to the great variety of agricultural products.⁶

At the time of contact, the population density of the peninsula, while relatively high, was still lower than the plateau region of central Mexico. A large percentage of the population may have perished due to European diseases, which spread into Yucatán even before Montejo and his small force invaded the peninsula. Disease and

famine had taken their toll, and pre-conquest settlement patterns must have been modified by these disasters. The major areas of human occupation were in the northwest region, an area of thin soils and low rainfall. Most of the population lived in villages and towns built around cenotes or cisterns, where a steady supply of water was guaranteed.

According to Sherburne Cook and Woodrow Borah, the process of congregación in the peninsula was more thorough and involved a far more drastic relocation of the indigenous population than did similar policies implemented in central Mexico.⁷ However, Spanish penetration of the interior was effectively limited to an area similar to that of the agricultural frontier in the nineteenth century. Despite the existence of an independent Maya kingdom at Lake Petén until the end of the seventeenth century, the area southeast of Peto and Valladolid was officially referred to as despoblado, or uninhabited. Farriss argues, however, that this region was continually occupied by large numbers of Maya from the more settled regions of the peninsula.⁸ Our knowledge, therefore, of the distribution and density of the Indian population during most of the colonial period is limited to those Maya who remained in settled villages under Spanish control long enough to be counted in parish registries and tribute censuses.

The existence of an open frontier provided the Maya with a zone of refuge in times of famine, epidemic, or civil unrest. Although little is known about the spatial and temporal patterns of migration, Farriss speculates that internal migration may have affected as much as one-third of the adult population.⁹ Such a high degree of

mobility may partially explain the late development of the hacienda in colonial Yucatán, as well as the subsequent resistance of the Maya to settling down as a resident work force on plantations. An equally important demographic factor in the late emergence of the hacienda, however, was the low population of Spanish and creole settlers in Yucatán. The number of non-Indians entering the region was proportionately so much less than in central Mexico that Indian stock predominated throughout the colonial period and most of the nineteenth century.¹⁰

What accounts for the pervasive lack of interest in the settlement and development of Yucatán during most of the colonial period? In addition to the absence of precious metals and Yucatán's isolated location on the geographical periphery of the Spanish empire, the only commercial activity likely to attract European settlement was agriculture, but even in this area, the absence of export markets and the relative self-sufficiency of the Indian economy meant that there was little potential for profits. For Spaniards, the only road to wealth in the colony was through skimming off the surplus of peasant production.

Faced with the difficulty of transferring techniques and practices, not to mention crops and livestock, to a new and hostile environment, the early Spanish colonists left intact the indigenous system of agriculture and began to exploit what they saw as the only source of wealth in the region--the people. Yucatán's first exports under Spanish rule were slaves for the mines of Hispaniola.¹¹ When the mines failed and slavery was outlawed by royal decree in 1542, the colonists turned to other means of livelihood, and, as in other regions of Mexico, agriculture became the

mainstay of the economy, but it was a form of agriculture dominated by peasant production.¹² As Nancy Farriss points out, the Spanish empire contained many such economically marginal regions. However, in Yucatán, as in highland Chiapas, "the combination of a dearth of natural resources with a relative abundance of human resources" meant that Indian tribute remained the region's most important source of revenue.¹³ For this reason the encomienda (a system of collecting tribute and organising labour) assumed much greater importance here than in other parts of the empire, surviving as the dominant feature of rural society until the Bourbon reforms of 1786.

Moreover, the control and manipulation of the labour force became the primary means of preserving Spanish dominance within the colonial social structure, whose main features endured well into the post-colonial period. While this is not meant to be an argument for environmental determinism, it is clear that the nature of the society which emerged from the conquest and occupation of Yucatán by the Spaniards was strongly influenced by the specific geographical characteristics of the region.

A Region within a Region

A focus on the region as a legitimate category for historical investigation is a comparatively recent phenomenon in Mexican historiography.¹⁴ Such a level of analysis is particularly appropriate for the early nineteenth century when Mexico as a country was only tentatively moving toward national integration. However, there are many different ways of employing the concept of "region" as a category of analysis.

A region can be defined not only according to physical, socio-economic and cultural characteristics, but also by its dynamic relationship with other regions, both larger and smaller. Attention to the internal characteristics of a region sometimes leads to a static or essentialist view of regional identity, while an emphasis on how a region functions within a larger entity implies a greater emphasis on the shifting geopolitical aspects of regional identity.¹⁵ Most historians use the term in a political sense to refer to an area defined by administrative boundaries. In this sense, the term "region" is often used interchangeably with "state" or "province."¹⁶ It is possible to conceptualize a region in many different ways, depending upon the focus of the investigation.

Beginning, then, with a political definition of region, the province of Yucatán for most of the colonial period was considered to include all of the territory east of Tabasco to the British settlements in Belize. In 1787, the governor of Yucatán acquired the additional title of intendant, with fiscal authority over Yucatán itself, Laguna de Términos, and Tabasco.¹⁷ After independence, under the Constitution of 1824, Campeche and Yucatán together became one of the states comprising the new federal republic of Mexico, but within two decades regional differences began to assert themselves, leading eventually to a separation of the peninsula into two states (Yucatán and Campeche, 1858) and a territory (Quintana Roo, 1902).

While it can probably be argued that the Yucatán peninsula has long constituted a region sharing many characteristics in common, including relief, climate, and a high degree of linguistic and ethnic homogeneity, the peninsula has seldom

functioned as a homogeneous political unit. Before the Spaniards arrived, the peninsula was home to sixteen cacicazgos (city-states), whose boundaries were frequently disputed, and whose dynastic ruling families were frequently at war with one another.¹⁸ The conquerors used the historic rivalry between the Tutul Xiu of Maní and the Cocomes of Sotuta in order to overcome opposition to their occupation of the peninsula.

After the Spaniards completed the conquest of the northwest and central area of the peninsula in 1547, the territory under their control was divided into encomiendas administered by the conquistadores and their descendants. The encomienda system was primarily designed as a means of collecting tribute for the support of the Spanish colonists and the civil and religious administration. While encomenderos seldom resided in the villages whose tribute had been assigned to them, in practice the encomienda system functioned as an instrument for the political and economic domination of the indigenous population.¹⁹ Local government was left in the hands of caciques appointed by the governor to collect tribute and maintain control at the village level, while the Church set up a parallel structure of cabeceras and visitas which ministered to the spiritual needs of the Indians.²⁰

In the first century after the conquest, new villages, often on the site of old Mayan centres, were created under the direction of the Franciscans. Congregación, or the forcible resettlement of dispersed indigenous populations, had both secular and religious purposes. Spanish authorities, conscious of their small numbers, needed to maintain control of the population and to collect tribute effectively, while the

missionaries hoped to prevent a reversion to pagan ways on the part of their new converts. It has been suggested that the process of congregación created in Mayan peasants an enduring sense of loyalty to a specific community which is apparent even in the nineteenth century. However, Farriss has argued that the establishment of a system of indirect rule by which the indigenous communities remained under the control of their own hereditary leaders who continued to enforce many of the laws and customs from the pre-Hispanic era is a more compelling explanation for the continuity of regional and local identities.²¹

At the time of the Bourbon Reforms of 1786, the Intendancy of Yucatán was divided into thirteen administrative districts, called partidos or subdelegaciones, each of which was assigned to a deputy of the governor/intendant, known as a subdelegado.²² This system of administration continued to coexist alongside Indian community government headed by caciques. When Mexico became a republic in 1824, Yucatán retained the partido system of local government, although there was an intermediate level called a distrito, or alternatively, prefectura, which grouped certain partidos together but had little or no jurisdictional meaning. A state decree issued on July 26, 1824 reconfirmed the existence of the repúblicas de Indígenas, with caciques made responsible for the collection of the personal contribution, a form of head tax which replaced the colonial system of tribute.²³

The political unit which had the most significance for the vast majority of the population was the village and its satellite communities. The Spanish conquest may have removed the indigenous rulers of empires and city-states, but "the land-based

communities were more resilient. . . . They were not crushed and swept aside, nor did they endure only in remote areas of refuge."²⁴ The survival of indigenous culture in Yucatán, as in many parts of rural Spanish America, was based upon the pueblo (village) whose inhabitants thought of themselves as members of an enduring community with a conscious identity and a prescribed set of social obligations embodied in tradition and history.

Not all of the inhabitants of the peninsula, however, lived in villages or towns under Spanish domination. Civil and religious authorities struggled in vain against the continuous drift of migrants away from settled areas. Mayan peasants resisted efforts of civil and religious authorities to impose stability, and continued to migrate through their territories as they had previously done in search of fertile lands, or to escape Spanish domination. Large areas of the peninsula became "zones of refuge" for fugitives from famine, taxes, or labour obligations.²⁵ Beginning in the eighteenth century, the settlement of British loggers and merchants in Belize served as a magnet to attract fugitives and as an alternative source of arms and other merchandise forbidden legal entry into the country. Communities along the southeastern limits of Spanish control began to develop clandestine trading relationships with the British, weakening the control exerted by the colonial administrative centre of Mérida.

During much of the colonial period, the city of Mérida held a position of preeminence in the region because it was the largest urban centre and the colonial administrative capital of a vast area isolated from the rest of New Spain. Other urban centres such as Valladolid in the east and the port of Campeche in the west exerted

some influence over their respective hinterlands, but all political decision-making was centralized in the capital. Historians such as Marta Espejo-Ponce de Hunt have suggested that the gradual diffusion of Hispanic culture into the rural areas had a significant impact on the development of other sub-regional urban centres during the colonial era.²⁶ With the coming of independence and the weakening of central authority in the country as a whole, various sub-regions within the peninsula began to develop their own regional identities based on specific economic interests. According to historian Howard Cline, the emergence of competing regional centres and their corresponding political agendas was not only the major cause of creole factionalism in mid-nineteenth century Yucatán, but led directly to the Mayan rebellion of 1847.²⁷

In "Regionalism and Society in Yucatán, 1825-1847," Cline divided the peninsula into four regions on the basis of social and economic factors, including population distribution, ethnic composition, agrarian structure, and economic growth. His four regions are "Old Colonial," centred around Mérida; "West Coast," around Campeche; "East Colonial," around Valladolid; and the "Borderlands," which included the partidos of Tekax, Sotuta, Peto, and Bacalar.²⁸ For Cline, the key region during the period leading up to the outbreak of the Caste War was the frontier zone, or "Borderlands" region, where a new "spirit of enterprise" exacerbated long-standing social and economic inequalities and challenged the traditional way of life in Mayan villages.²⁹

Cline's regional framework is an adaptation of the American frontier thesis, which has little relevance to the history of nineteenth century Yucatán.³⁰ As

historian David Weber remarks, the notion of the frontier as a line representing the inexorable "advance of civilization into the wilderness" may still hold sway in the popular imagination, "but serious students no longer see frontiers in such ethnocentric terms. Frontiers have at least two sides, so that an expanding frontier invariably edges onto someone else's frontier. Rather than see them as lines, frontiers seem best understood as zones of interaction between two different cultures--as places where the cultures of the invader and of the invaded contend with one another and with their physical environment to produce a dynamic that is unique to that time and place."³¹ The southeast did become a military frontier during the course of the war, when rebel and government forces struggled for control of the human and material resources of the region, but to characterize the rebellion as a frontier war between western progress and tradition-bound indigenous culture is to perpetuate the nineteenth-century dichotomy between "civilization" and "barbarism."³² A closer examination of the region that Cline describes as a frontier zone suggests that a significant part of the southeastern "frontier" had always been densely populated and had been regarded as a distinct region within Yucatán, with specific geographical features, a unique historical tradition, and a particular economic role within the peninsula.

The Puuc or Sierra, as it was known in colonial and nineteenth century creole documents, refers specifically to a group of large villages located along the base of the northern slopes of the Puuc hills, as well as the more sparsely settled area south of the hills. Coincidentally, the boundaries of this region corresponded closely to the pre-conquest Mayan province of Maní. At the time of conquest, the province of Maní or

Tutul-Xiu was one of the largest, wealthiest, and most populous of Mayan political units.³³ The Tutul-Xiu family exercised jurisdiction over a large area extending from Ticul in the northwest to Peto in the southeast. The capital of this region was the town of Maní, but there were several other large (1000 - 5000) population centres scattered throughout the area, including Tekit, Muna, Teabo, Ticul, Pustunich, Oxkutzcab, Xul, Pencuyut, Tekax, Tixmeuac, Tzucacab, and Peto. All of these communities still existed in the nineteenth century, although their relative size and importance had changed considerably over the years.

Shortly after the conquest the Franciscan order was made responsible for the conversion of the region and for this purpose established conventos in several of the larger towns including Maní, Teabo, Tekax, Oxkutzcab, Ticul, and Muna.³⁴ After the reorganisation of rural communities begun by the Franciscans in 1547 (the process called congregación) migration for agricultural purposes was proscribed because it led to long absences away from the home village and interfered with religious duties. According to most authorities, such prohibitions were routinely ignored. Mayan villages in the Sierra continued to utilize agricultural lands on the plateau south of the Sierra even in the nineteenth century.³⁵

During most of the colonial period, the northern part of the former Mayan province of Maní was known as the Sierra Baja, while the southern part was called the Sierra Alta. The southeastern part of the region formed part of an administrative district called the Beneficios Altos, whose major town was Ichmul. Under the Bourbon administrative reforms these districts were reorganised into partidos. During

the early nineteenth century, Tekax and Peto emerged as major population centres and were designated cabeceras, or administrative capitals of their respective partidos.

The most striking characteristic of the Puuc region in the first half of the nineteenth century is that its villages were still relatively intact, both in terms of population base and landholdings. Haciendas were expanding and encroaching upon village lands, but in this area privately-owned rural establishments were less numerous and less influential than in the district around the capital city of Mérida.³⁶ Because of the fertility of the soil and abundant labour force, the Puuc was known as the "breadbasket" of the peninsula. It was the primary source of maize for the growing urban market in Mérida and other large centres, but its role as agricultural hinterland was limited by poor roads and inadequate storage facilities for surplus harvests; bad weather could still result in periodic famines in isolated communities. The partido of Tekax was also the centre of a burgeoning sugar industry which supplied local and regional markets with sugar and aguardiente (a powerful liquor made from sugar cane). Cline sees the changing economic function of the region as a significant factor in the discontent leading up to the rebellion.³⁷

Despite the difficulties of communication with other areas of the peninsula, the largest town of the region, Tekax, occupied a strategic position in the peninsula as a whole. Because of its southern location, it was influenced strongly by the politics of Campeche and therefore, somewhat ambivalent in its relations with Mérida. In the unstable political climate of post-independence Yucatán, the residents of Tekax had a reputation for radical and unpredictable behaviour.³⁸ Within the region, Tekax had

close ties with Ticul to the northwest and Peto to the southeast, sharing many overlapping political and economic interests with these towns. Because Tekax was also gateway to the sparsely populated areas to the south, some of its citizens were engaged in contraband trade with the merchants of Belize. Many of the important events of the Caste War took place in the region, with Tekax playing a strategic role during the rebellion and its aftermath. This study will therefore place a major emphasis upon the partido of Tekax and its cabecera, the town of Tekax.

Rural Society on the Eve of the Rebellion

The pace of change in Yucatán had been slow in the three hundred years since the Spanish conquest. Late eighteenth century Bourbon administrators, anxious to implement reforms according to their modern theories of rational, enlightened government, found the peninsula to be a sleepy backwater whose inhabitants, Indian and Spaniard alike, had grown accustomed to a tranquil, unhurried mode of existence.³⁹ Paradoxically, liberal ideas about political reform took root earlier there among some of the creole elite than in other regions of Spanish America. The participation of Yucatecan representatives in the 1812 Cortes of Cádiz had been significant, and names such as Andrés Quintana Roo and Lorenzo Zavala were to achieve fame and notoriety in the national politics of the post-independence period. Yet the social structure of the rural areas showed little evidence of the sweeping changes which both Bourbon and liberal reformers had in mind for the inhabitants of the peninsula.

In the Mayan communities of the region, the system of indirect rule and the social structure upon which it was based continued to function well into the nineteenth century. Mayan subjects of the Crown had been divided loosely into two groups derived from the pre-conquest division of society, lords and commoners, or to use the local terms, batabob and macehuales. Nancy Farriss finds evidence throughout most of the colonial period for the continued importance of hereditary leaders who, because they were legitimate local officials, controlled the lives and labour of the majority of Mayan commoners.⁴⁰ Caciques had traditionally been held responsible for the collection of tribute, the administration of justice, the maintenance of law and order, labour obligations of community members, the administration of cofradías, sponsorship of religious festivals, and most importantly, the allocation of communal lands for agriculture.⁴¹

In the late eighteenth century the creation of the new office of subdelegado who took over responsibility for the collection of tribute in each partido, along with the appointment of jueces españoles (local magistrates) in every community, meant that indigenous leaders began to lose fiscal and legal power over their people. These administrative changes came about at the same time as the ecclesiastical authorities attempted to privatize the cofradía estates which had provided revenue for community festivals and famine relief.⁴² Local Indian officials continued to control the distribution of usufructary rights to communal lands and to organize labour drafts, but their traditional powers were definitely being undermined. Nonetheless, because community leaders had the opportunity to acquire personal wealth through their office,

a certain amount of social stratification remained even after the customary powers of the caciques had been reduced by the Bourbon administrative reforms.

The Constitution of Cádiz in 1812 tried to eradicate the distinction between indigenous and creole subjects of the Crown, by declaring that Indians had the same rights and privileges as other citizens. The parallel structure of Indian government was abolished, along with personal services and punishments such as whipping. However, the Constitution was short-lived and had little impact on the reality of life in rural areas. Shortly after independence, the state government reinstated the repúblicas de Indígenas in order to facilitate the collection of taxes, avoid excessive population dispersal and keep the Mayan peasants working; there was a great fear that too much liberty would result in the total breakdown of the social and economic structure of the peninsula. The centuries-old law that every adult male head of a household was required to cultivate sixty mecates (approximately 6.5 acres or 2.6 hectares) of maize per year was resurrected, and caciques continued to be held responsible for labour drafts from their respective villages.⁴³ Theoretically the creation of new structures of local government should have opened up more opportunities for Mayan participation, but the 1825 State Constitution established literacy and property qualifications for voting and holding office which effectively barred the vast majority of Mayan and mestizo inhabitants from political involvement even on a local scale. Political influence continued to be exercised through a network of patron-client relations which linked creole elites and some members of the Mayan elite in the systematic exploitation of the underclasses.

The role of the clergy and the Church in the region during the decades following independence needs more study. With the secularization of the majority of Franciscan parishes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the power and wealth of the Church as an institution was diminished. However, since the secular priests who replaced the Franciscans were recruited mostly from wealthy creole families, it has been suggested that the transition to diocesan clergy simply consolidated the power of the regional elite.⁴⁴ Many priests were landowners in their own right and exercised considerable influence over their parishioners in the economic as well as religious spheres.⁴⁵ Parish priests owned property and continued to administer *cofradía* funds where such institutions still existed.⁴⁶

However, there are some instances of parish priests functioning as mediators in disputes among landowners, local government officials and Mayan villagers. Many of these disputes centred around the control of labour and the performance of duties owed to the community and the Church. It is difficult to say whether Mayan peasants were caught in the middle of these arguments, or were on rare occasions able to take advantage of the fragmentation of authority on the local level.⁴⁷

It is important to distinguish between the role of the Church as an institution and the place of religious belief in the daily lives of members of the community. The diminishing power and prestige of the Church was demonstrated by the successful attack mounted by Yucatecan liberals on church revenue (obvenciones) and property in the 1840s. However, it is clear that the role of priests as spiritual brokers was still significant enough to make the performance of religious duties an important issue for

Mayan leaders during the rebellion. Priests were often called upon to say mass and perform other ceremonies for rebel armies and were threatened with death if they did not comply.⁴⁸ Both the hierarchy and individual members of the clergy played a key role in the aftermath of the rebellion, which suggests that religion was not a spent force in the countryside, nor was it entirely identified with creole economic and political domination.

Mayan religion was a syncretic mixture of pre-contact and Christian beliefs and practices which operated on an informal level alongside the outward observance of the sacraments that marked the life cycle of every person. Because there were never enough priests for every village in the peninsula, Mayan maestros cantores were delegated to perform some ceremonies and teach catechism in the rural areas. They were taught the basic prayers of the Church in Latin and were responsible for the training of local children in music, liturgy, reading and writing. They were regarded as deputies of the cura in the village, and as such, functioned as religious intermediaries for the entire community.⁴⁹

The religious life of the community revolved around the special fiestas dedicated to the cult of the saints.⁵⁰ As in pre-Hispanic times, certain villages became centres of pilgrimage, with Christian icons taking the place of pagan idols. Sacred objects such as the Virgin of Tabi and the image of San Antonio Xocneceh were fought over during the Mayan rebellion, perhaps because they were believed to confer power on whichever side gained possession of them. On a humbler level, the everyday folk beliefs of the peasants included special prayers and sacrifices performed

in the milpa at the time of planting, to ensure the rains necessary for a bountiful harvest. Maize continued to be an object of veneration as well as a necessity of life in the Mayan communities of the peninsula.⁵¹ The survival of pre-Christian religious rituals and beliefs was a matter of serious concern to creole authorities and was frequently advanced as an argument for more effective control of the rural population.⁵² But as long as Spanish and creole authorities were unable to maintain more than a token presence in the countryside, little could be done about the persistent adherence of the peasants to the old pagan gods of the soil and of nature.

Throughout most of the colonial period the Spanish presence in the Sierra was confined to the few large towns in the region with major Franciscan establishments. During the late eighteenth century towns such as Ticul and Oxkutzcab became centres of creole economic activity, with a permanent landowning elite becoming established on haciendas in the surrounding rural areas.⁵³ Following independence, regional elites, for the most part large landowners, clergy, and local merchants, extended their interests into the southeastern region along the Tekax-Peto axis. They settled in the larger towns, occupied government and militia posts, and played the dominant role in a social structure which reinforced their economic and political control.

Historians who have studied changes in the agrarian structure of the peninsula during the late colonial period have noted the gradual expansion of the hacienda in the late eighteenth century.⁵⁴ Prior to this period, village-based production of maize was sufficient to feed the total population. However, a growing population, periodic harvest failures and famines, and the subsequent importation of corn from New

Orleans encouraged local entrepreneurs to move into an area of production previously dominated by Mayan peasants. Land which had been used for grazing cattle was developed for maize, and landowners tried to attract a sedentary labour force in order to expand their production. According to Robert Patch, debt peonage was weak in most parts of Yucatán prior to the nineteenth century, and the system of social controls was neither efficient nor repressive enough to guarantee a permanent labour force for haciendas.⁵⁵ Rather, landowners had to entice workers by means of incentives such as free land and water in return for one day's work per week (luneros), or undertake to pay tribute on their behalf in order to secure their services on a more permanent basis. The labour system which evolved under these conditions was complex and varied greatly from district to district. However, as population increased and land resources shrank, more and more luneros were transformed into debt peons.⁵⁶ The region most affected by this process was the northwest, in the area around Mérida, where the hacienda evolved into a social and economic unit of major importance in the rural landscape and became a competitor for land and labour with the Mayan villages.

Such competition was muted, however, in the Puuc region until the sugar industry began to expand after independence. The break in relations with Spain interrupted trade with Cuba, Yucatán's customary supplier of sugar, and local entrepreneurs moved in to fill the gap. Tekax became the centre of a commercial sugar industry which spread rapidly into the south towards Xul and Becanchén and southeast to Peto and beyond. According to Howard Cline, sugar cultivation not only

led to improvements in the regional transportation system, but helped to develop a common political outlook among the elite of the region.⁵⁷

It has not been clearly established, however, what impact this expansion of commercial agriculture had upon the Mayan communities of the region. No systematic study has been made of land alienation affecting villages, although it is known that the number of privately-owned establishments increased substantially.⁵⁸ It is equally difficult to determine how many residents of villages elected to become permanently attached to haciendas. At the beginning of the nineteenth century less than 25 percent of the Mayan population of the southeast lived on privately-owned estates. However, population figures for 1846 indicate that of the 93,163 residents of the partidos of Tekax and Peto, 56,592 lived in towns, villages, and rancherías, while 36,571 lived on haciendas, ranchos and sitios.⁵⁹ In other words, about 40 percent of the total population had become residents of haciendas and ranchos. Since there is no ethnic breakdown available for the 1846 figures, it is impossible to determine whether the increase in peones acasillados was caused by the movement of local Mayan villagers onto privately-owned estates or by an influx of migrants from the northwest.

The majority of the inhabitants of the Puuc continued to be free campesinos who supported themselves by cultivating communal lands allocated by pueblo officials and maintaining their extensive kitchen gardens in house plots within the village. In addition, some villagers owned land as freeholders, while others rented land from local landowners in return for labour services, while still others simply expanded their agricultural activities into unoccupied and unclaimed lands some distance from their

home villages. Cash income could be earned through the sale of surplus corn and other agricultural products at regional fairs and to grain merchants from urban centres.⁶⁰ While peasants had little need for cash during the colonial era when tribute was collected in goods, the shift to a money economy after independence, especially for the payment of taxes, increased the demand for cash income. For many, the only source of income was a loan from a member of the local elite, and the only means of repayment was through their own labour.

The transformation of the rural economy which became apparent in the decades after independence did not introduce ideas about money, markets, and private property into the region, but accelerated a process which had begun in the final decades of the Bourbon regime. While the surface texture of rural life showed little evidence of upheaval, rural society was in the midst of a profound structural change which threatened to deprive Mayan peasants of access to land and control over their own labour.

Demographic Change and the Mayan Revolt

As we have seen in the previous section, the relationship between creole elites and the landholding villages of the Puuc on the eve of the rebellion was in transition, with several processes at work which threatened peasant control of the subsistence economy: an increase in the people-to-land ratio caused by rapid population growth in the late eighteenth century, the monetization of the rural economy, and a shift to market-oriented commercial agriculture, accompanied by a corresponding loss of

power and prestige among peasant elites who could no longer benefit from the surpluses generated by peasant agriculture.

Demographic expansion is the first and most fundamental issue. In a recent work, Viviane Brachet de Marquez outlines some of the difficulties inherent in the collection of data for the historical demography of Mexico in the nineteenth century: local struggles between rival caudillos, foreign invasions, the weakness of central government and the constant territorial changes caused by regional conflicts and revolts.⁶¹ Such conditions make analysis particularly difficult in the case of Yucatán, because churches and municipal buildings where records were archived were often the target of attacks during the rebellion. Nonetheless, demographic change has been advanced by historians Howard Cline and Lawrence Remmers as one of the underlying causes of the Mayan rebellion.⁶²

Two aspects of demographic change are at issue in the pre-war period: net increases in the size of the population, and the distribution of the population. Most sources agree that the total population of the peninsula was increasing rapidly towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁶³ Humboldt's figure of 465,800 for 1803 is usually employed as a base line in discussions of population growth for the nineteenth century. The last figures for the colonial period are 500,406 in 1813 but there are only estimates between that date and the next census attempted in 1837 which yielded a figure of 582,363.⁶⁴ In 1846, the Secretary General of Yucatán reported a total of only 504,635 persons, attributing the decrease to civil discord and the cholera

epidemic of 1832-33.⁶⁵ The data for this census had been gathered by local government officials in the eighteen partidos of the peninsula.

José Regil and Alonso Peon challenged the 1846 figures in an 1853 article in the Boletín de la sociedad mexicana de geografía y estadística, arguing that the peninsula had continued to experience moderate growth. They estimated the population to be 575,361, based on the matriculos de obvenciones, the lists drawn up for religious contributions in 1842.⁶⁶ Recent calculations by Brachet de Marquez, based on the same data source, but employing lineal regression, yield a total of 593,483 for 1846.⁶⁷ Contemporaries thought that the population averaged around 600,000 in the 1840s, but it was also acknowledged that there were serious difficulties in arriving at a precise figure.⁶⁸ Not only was the system of civil registration at an early stage of development, the records kept by parish priests were beginning to be less reliable because of the abolition of traditional methods of collecting church taxes.

The most serious limitation on the reliability of population data, however, was the perennial problem of migration between villages, from villages to unpopulated areas, and between rural and urban areas. In the absence of reliable data it seems futile to speculate on numbers or even percentage increases. However, it appears that population growth had slowed down in the decades immediately preceding the rebellion, after the rapid increases of the late eighteenth century. According to Lawrence Remmers, the annual increase between 1794 and 1813 was 2.08 percent, whereas that between 1813 and 1846 was 0.58 percent.⁶⁹

Cline initially argued that, given the environmental constraints upon agriculture in Yucatán, simple population expansion in a "limited habitat" may have exerted serious pressure on subsistence agriculture in the pre-war period.⁷⁰ Cline's adaptation of the frontier model, however, focuses attention upon another aspect of demographic change which may have had a more direct bearing upon the stability of rural society; a change in the way in which that population was distributed throughout the peninsula.

A shift in population distribution may well have created tensions over the short term, particularly if newcomers did not adopt the customary land usage and agricultural practices of existing communities. Lawrence Remmers's discovery that the spatial distribution of the population changed considerably between 1821 and 1846 lends weight to Cline's notion that population expansion in the southeastern frontier provoked the uprising because of competition for scarce resources between local Mayan communities and creole "settlers."

Prior to 1821, 48.16 percent of the total population lived in the northwest region, while 38.7 percent lived in the southeast; in the intervening years, the balance had shifted to the east and southeast, which by 1846 contained 51.08 percent while the northeast contained only 37.75 percent.⁷¹ While the total population figures in the partido of Tekax show little change from 1794 to 1846, there are significant changes in the distribution within the partido from north to south (for example, between Oxkutzcab and Xul).⁷² The southeastern partido of Peto and the northeastern partidos of Valladolid, Tizimin and Espita also registered increases of 125-180 percent.⁷³

There is also abundant impressionistic evidence for an influx of newcomers into the southeastern region during this period, although it is impossible to identify where these "settlers" came from, or even what their ethnic background might have been.⁷⁴ However, it cannot be clearly established that the increasing population of the southeast was a result of the expansion of the sugar industry or the colonization policies of successive liberal governments, as Cline and Remmers have argued. These authors have concentrated almost exclusively on the pull factors involved in population redistribution, but push factors may have been of equal, if not greater importance.

Migration was a widespread phenomenon among Mayan inhabitants of the peninsula during much of the colonial era as well as during the decades following independence. In an article entitled "Nucleation versus Dispersal: the Dynamics of Population Movement in Colonial Yucatán," Nancy Farriss argues that settlement patterns throughout the history of Yucatán have depended on a balance between sociocultural forces favouring nucleation and the pull of the physical environment towards dispersal.⁷⁵ Whenever the forces of integration weakened, scattered settlements were the preferred pattern because they were the most suited to traditional agricultural methods.

Farriss finds evidence for three forms of migration in colonial documents-- flight, drift, and dispersal. Famines caused by climatic disasters such as hurricanes, failure of rains, or plagues of locusts were responsible for the temporary displacement of entire communities into the monte where people survived on wild game, roots, and berries. Such migration was short-term and communities were quickly re-established

once the crisis was over. The second type of migration, however, was long-term and permanent. This may have involved both individuals and their families who drifted away from their original villages and took up residence in areas outside of the purview of civil and religious authorities. These settlements, when they were found, were regarded by the authorities as centres of recidivism into a pagan, uncivilized mode of existence. Finally, with the increase in population identified in the late colonial period, there was a tendency toward dispersal; communities, once they reached a certain size, hived off and formed new settlements in areas where milpas had previously been established.⁷⁶

The pressures behind this phenomenon of migration changed over time. During the colonial period, motives for migration included a desire to escape community labour and tribute obligations, flight from indebtedness, or limited access to communal lands close to their original villages. While it appears that the establishment of clandestine settlements had always been a problem for local authorities, the relaxation of central authority following independence may well have encouraged migration into areas that were outside civil jurisdiction.

After 1821, an added pressure on adult males could have been recruitment into the local militia or national guard. Mayan participation in the military engagements of the period was substantial and there is evidence of unwillingness on the part of conscripts to serve long distances away from their homes.⁷⁷ The increasingly onerous burden of taxation may have also been an incentive for residents to leave their

home villages, particularly when the state government's acute shortage of funds made collection of taxes an urgent necessity.

South of the Puuc there was a vast expanse of unsettled wilderness extending all the way to Belize and the Petén region of Guatemala. Engineers surveying the route for a proposed road between Champotón and Bacalar in 1841 reported that there were a large number of indigenous rancherías scattered throughout the bush. People living in these settlements survived as independent producers, free from civil taxes and religious contributions, which they regarded with "implacable hatred." The government appointed a special commissioner to identify these settlements and even offered temporary tax exemptions in order to persuade residents to accept civil authority, with little success. In 1844, a tax collector complained that the lack of roads made his task impossible because he was forced to spend all of his time wandering through the bush in search of potential taxpayers.⁷⁸

In sum, while the reasons for migration may have changed over time, the movement of population from one region to another was an ongoing phenomenon in the history of the peninsula and cannot be singled out as a primary cause of the rebellion. Similarly, while long term demographic growth may have increased the pressure of population on limited resources in specific regions such as the northwest, it cannot be blamed for creating the conditions which led to the uprising of 1847. The shift in population distribution towards the southeast may be regarded as a remote cause of the uprising, in that it brought large numbers of people into a region where changes in the agrarian structure were proceeding at a rapid pace. In that atmosphere

of "boom and bust" landless agricultural workers had few resources to fall back on when their seasonal employment ended, while their presence posed a threat to the diminishing resources of the landholding villages.

The Agrarian Question

In the modern historiography of the pre-war decades, many authors have laid considerable stress upon the importance of liberal economic reforms in changing the social and political "rules of the game" which governed relations between the creole elite and Mayan peasants and their leaders.⁷⁹ State legislation was enacted soon after independence (Ley de Colonización, December 2, 1825) lifting the restrictions on the sale of property by corporations and encouraging the development of terrenos baldíos* by purchasers who were required to establish a factory or commercial agricultural enterprise in return for the opportunity to acquire land at low prices with generous terms for payment.⁸⁰ As Robert Patch points out, such measures were part of the liberal agenda for modernizing rural society; Yucatecan politicians believed that economic freedom would favour a more efficient use of resources and thus benefit all citizens.⁸¹

However, the lifting of restrictions on the sale of land to private citizens did not result immediately in a rush to open up the interior. Between 1825 and 1839, "the interests of the old elite were protected by cautious interpretations of the Ley de Colonización, which at times was even suspended." The situation changed radically in

* Terrenos baldíos were vacant communal and national lands.

1841, following Yucatan's unilateral declaration of independence from Mexico. At that time, the state government, finding an empty treasury and unpaid soldiers on its hands, enacted a new Ley de colonización (April 5, 1841) which opened up for private purchase all lands outside of the village ejidos (common lands), which extended one league (5.6 kilometres) in every direction from the centre of the village, or four square leagues. In the following year, another piece of legislation affecting land tenure was enacted, granting one quarter square league to soldiers serving in the campaign against the central government; in other words, land in lieu of wages (premios de campaña).⁸²

The government also raised money by issuing bonds secured by state-owned land. When money was not available for the redemption of these bonds, the government simply paid its creditors in land. Two years later, the government tried to solve its chronic liquidity problem by imposing a tax of one real for every ten mecatres of cultivated crop land outside the ejidos and also required pueblos to use community funds to pay surveyors charged with the task of identifying boundaries between ejidos and terrenos baldíos.⁸³

The combined effect of these measures was to increase the pressure on the limited resources available to peasant agriculturalists and to magnify their indebtedness to landowners and speculators willing to lend money in exchange for labour services. The dispossession of the campesinos went hand in hand with their increasing dependence on landlords for the right to cultivate lands to which they had formerly had free access. Cline has appropriately compared this process to the enclosure

movement in Great Britain which resulted in the loss of the "commons" by Scottish crofters and English smallholders.⁸⁴

In Yucatán, therefore, liberal emphasis on private ownership of land represented a radical departure from customary attitudes toward communal ownership and the usufructary rights of members of a community. Farriss maintains that during the colonial period, Spanish officials tacitly respected the Mayan practice by which each town, the basic land-owning unit, claimed all the territory up to the boundary of the next town.⁸⁵ Village lands were not limited to ejidos but, in practice, extended to the boundaries of the neighbouring village. All heads of households in the community had usufructary rights, assigned on a rotating basis by an official of the local *república de Indígenas*. The liberal programme of alienation was a serious threat to peasant agriculture precisely because villages were accustomed to having access to extensive lands not officially recognized as communal property but used as such. The concept of state ownership of *terrenos baldíos* had no meaning within such a system of land use. Therefore, when villages were required to hire surveyors to delineate the boundaries between ejidos and *terrenos baldíos*, and to promote the commercial development of these lands, such measures flew in the face of traditional land use patterns, patterns dictated by environmental realities and centuries of customary agricultural practices. Moreover, the imposition of a tax on land used for growing basic food crops not only entrenched the notion of private property, but threatened the rights of all members of the community to subsistence.

Some communities tried to lessen the impact of the new agrarian laws by applying for grants under the new scheme. Patch has identified a few cases in which village corporations successfully applied for and received grants from the terrenos baldíos program which enabled them to protect the land base of their communities. Still others initiated legal suits against individuals claiming public lands on the grounds that local campesinos had used the lands desde tiempo inmemorial. In a few cases village leaders were successful in defending their rights, provided the local jefe político supported their claim. A number of Mayan individuals, including two caciques, applied for and received grants under the new law. On August 10, 1846, Jacinto Pat, one of the future leaders of the rebellion, laid claim to one-half of a square league of land located close to Tihosuco, where he was cacique.⁸⁶

One of the goals of nineteenth century liberal agrarian policy was to increase the number of landowners and widen the base of political participation among the populace. The granting of land to veterans who were not members of the old landowning families could have accomplished this aim, but liberal agrarian policy did not succeed in stimulating the growth of a class of small proprietors. Class distinctions continued to prevail; evidence for this is apparent in the notarial archives which indicate that two-thirds of the land adjudicated was acquired by individuals whose surname was preceded by the honorific title of "Don." Patch describes a case in which land in the Puuc region south of Muna was claimed as a premio de campaña by four officers and four common soldiers, who ceded their rights to a certain Coronel José Cosgaya. After claiming both this land and the quarter league to which he was

entitled, Cosgaya sold the entire parcel of 4000 hectares to Felipe Peon, owner of a nearby hacienda and a member of one of the big landowning families of Yucatán. Examples such as these lead Patch to conclude that "the big winners in the contest ended up being members of the elite, since not only did they obtain the largest amount of land, they were also able to get the most fertile tracts, those located in the south."⁸⁷ While the goal of government policy may simply have been, as Cline and Remmers suggest, to create a favourable climate for entrepreneurial activity, the policy also increased conflict between individuals and communities over land, a struggle which in its initial phases was pursued in the courts but later turned into a violent uprising.

The Political Background of the Rebellion

The agrarian question was only one of the problems Yucatecan society was struggling with in the decade preceding the outbreak of the rebellion. Although the landowning and mercantile elements were in basic agreement about the need to transform Yucatán from an isolated backwater into a booming economy, there was considerable disagreement about the political means. To a limited extent, Yucatán reflected the growing conflict between centralist and federalist options on the national scene, but regional politics developed some variations on that theme, with inter-city and interpersonal rivalry added to the debate.

Under the stimulation of the Bourbon reforms, the region around Mérida had developed strong economic ties with Cuba and New Orleans. Campeche, on the other

hand, with its historic salt trade with the Gulf ports and a growing sugar industry, was more interested in maintaining close connections with Mexico. These divisions did not lead to serious trouble in the first fifteen years after independence, since Yucatán followed a federalist path consistent with its regional interests. As Mexico gravitated towards a strong central government under General Antonio López de Santa Anna, politicians in Yucatán began to toy with the idea of independence. Despite Campeche's interest in maintaining good relations with the rest of Mexico, politicians of that city turned against the central government after Santa Anna's abolition of protective tariffs ruined shipping and threatened the sugar industry. Opposition to the central government was increased by the war against Texas in 1836 and the French blockade of Vera Cruz in 1838.⁸⁸

In May 1838, Santiago Imán, a state militia captain with liberal inclinations, initiated a revolt against centralism in the northeastern district of Tizimin. Beginning with the war against Texas, Mayan draftees in the state militia had been required to serve outside of the peninsula. Iman gathered support on the basis of his opposition to the distant use of state militia and also promised that if the Maya would join his campaign against the central government, he would advocate the abolition of the religious contribution. At the head of several thousand Indian and mestizo troops, Iman captured Valladolid, and gathering more support as he marched westward, drove the last of the Mexican troops from Campeche in 1840. Although Iman's uprising was populist in nature and he himself was apparently regarded as an upstart, his actions were supported by many of the prominent creole politicians of the time. Yucatán

declared its independence and elected a civilian government under the leadership of Governor Santiago Méndez and Vice Governor Miguel Barbachano.

In 1841 Santa Anna sent the respected Yucatecan senator, Andrés Quintana Roo, to negotiate Yucatán's reunification with Mexico. Although a tentative agreement was later repudiated by the Mexican government, the talks resulted in a division of Yucatán's creole community into two parties; one led by Governor Méndez, who represented the interests of Campeche, the other led by Vice-Governor Barbachano, who represented Mérida. This rupture in Yucatecan leadership had no immediate consequences, however, for when Santa Anna declared war on Yucatán, Méndez resigned in favour of Barbachano and returned to Campeche to help defend his city against an imminent Mexican invasion. The new governor promised land grants under the 1841 Ley de Colonización to anyone who joined the army for the defence of the independence of Yucatán. Several thousand Maya again responded to the call, including Cecilio Chi, cacique of Ichmul, in the partido of Peto. Barbachano also promised to excuse all those who bore arms from both civil and religious taxes. However, as soon as the crisis passed, the militias were disbanded without the promised compensation.⁸⁹

Although Mexico was unable to defeat Yucatecan forces in battle, a compromise solution was reached in 1843 which reincorporated the region into the Mexican polity. Yucatán retained control of state affairs, a state militia with no foreign service for its soldiers, revenue from import-export duties, and free entry for its products to all ports in the republic. However, after two months the economic

provisions of the treaty were overturned by Santa Anna, and once again, Yucatán seceded. The outbreak of the Mexican-American war in 1846 convinced Santa Anna that the support of Yucatán was desirable on any terms, so he offered to reinstate the conditions of the 1843 agreement, as well as a return to the original federal constitution of 1824. Barbachano accepted this offer and a state-wide referendum was held to support his decision to bring Yucatán back into union with Mexico.

A major problem remained, however, with the presence of the American fleet at Isla del Carmen. Under pressure of blockade the mercantile interests of Campeche decided that an independent and neutral Yucatán would have a better chance of emerging from this latest adventure unscathed, so they raised the standard of revolt against Mérida and Governor Barbachano. Although there were adherents to both causes in the southeastern region along the Tekax-Tihosuco road, a small force under the command of Antonio Trujeque, the jefe político of Peto, declared itself in support of Campeche and separation, and laid siege to the eastern city of Valladolid. After capturing the city on January 15, 1847, the troops massacred several of the leading citizenry, raising the spectre of a race war in the minds of the creole elite of Yucatán. Governor Barbachano resigned in favour of Domingo Barrett who represented Campechano interests.

Since the Campeche faction had emerged victorious in the struggle against Mérida, the new rulers of Yucatán were unwilling to punish the troops involved in the sack of Valladolid. However, there was renewed vigilance on the part of creole authorities who feared that Mayan leaders might take advantage of dissension among

factions. At this point, a revolt in favour of the restoration of Barbachano was initiated in Tizimin by a Colonel Cetina who had returned from Havana with money and weapons. Although no written records have been found which link Cetina with the Mayan leaders, Reed claims that Manuel Antonio Ay, cacique of Chichimila, was enlisted as a supporter of Barbachano, along with other Mayan caciques of the southeastern region.⁹⁰

From Civil War to Caste War

Reed speculates that at this point the Mayan leaders decided not to wait for Cetina's plans to mature, and began to plan their own insurrection. Bonifacio Novelo, a mestizo leader who had been involved in the attack on Valladolid, went to Belize to buy arms from the English. Supplies were assembled at the hacienda of Culumpich, owned by Jacinto Pat, near Tihosuco. Plans for the uprising were discovered late in July, through the interception of a letter to Manuel Antonio Ay. Although Cline and Reed dismiss this evidence as fabricated by creole authorities in order to find a scapegoat for the massacre of Valladolid, subsequent research into the extensive correspondence among Mayan leaders corroborates the existence of a conspiracy linking several leaders of Mayan communities throughout the peninsula.⁹¹

During the trial of Ay, a mestizo informer charged that Ay, Cecilio Chi, Jacinto Pat, and Bonifacio Novelo were planning a revolution to reduce the tax burden on rural communities. Ay was executed, and a militia unit under Colonel Trujeque was sent to arrest Chi and Pat. Neither man could be found, so Trujeque's troops looted

and burned Chi's ranch near Tepich. In retaliation, Chi led a small force of Maya against the town of Tepich, killing several creole families.⁹² This attack which occurred on July 30, 1847, was considered by many contemporary observers to be motivated simply by revenge for Trujeque's raid on Chi's property. Later creole historians would identify this incident as the opening round of the Caste War, although it is clear that the rebellion had much deeper roots, including a series of specific economic and political measures undertaken by state governments during the 1840s.

Early in 1841 the separatist leaders of the peninsula had written a new constitution, proclaiming freedom of religion, abolishing the fueros**, making the support of religious institutions and the clergy the responsibility of the state, and granting full citizenship to all inhabitants, including the Mayan majority. Property qualifications, however, limited the participation of the lower elements in society, effectively excluding most Maya from voting or holding office in local government bodies. The powers of the traditional office of cacique were abolished and communities were required to form ayuntamientos (municipal councils) which reflected the growing presence of creole merchants and landowners in the countryside. Effective political power in rural communities was wielded by the jueces de paz (magistrates) nominated by the jefe político of each partido, who reported directly to the governor. The preoccupation of the legislators with questions of equality of all

** Fueros allowed members of the clergy and the army to be tried by their own courts and certain other privileges defined by colonial law. Liberal reformers wanted to abolish the fueros because they contradicted a basic liberal principal of equality before the law.

citizens before the courts and the fostering of local government institutions reflected some of the perennial concerns of nineteenth century Mexican liberal politicians, but should not be considered a blueprint for the creation of an egalitarian society.

The role of the Mayan leadership and peasantry was ill-defined in the new society envisioned by the reformers. While all inhabitants of the peninsula were supposedly regarded as ciudadanos, in practice indigenous leaders were still required to recruit their followers for community labour projects (faginas) and collect the personal contribution from the members of their community. The imposition of taxes on the products of peasant agriculture as well as the shift to a money economy no doubt increased the incidence of rural debt and further eroded the autonomy of the Mayan communities. The grafting of liberal economic and political legislation onto an archaic social structure has been seen by most authors as a fundamental contradiction in the liberal programme.⁹³

There is some evidence that a few Mayan leaders tried to adapt to the new conditions and sought a place in the new order. Jacinto Pat's petitioning for a land grant under the programme to open up terrenos baldíos for private exploitation may be interpreted as one such attempt to find a secure place in the new scheme of things. However, Mayan leaders such as Cecilio Chi had also taken an active part in Yucatán's struggle against domination by the central government, but received little encouragement to participate as equals in a society dominated by white politicians. The outbreak of factional quarrels among creole politicians and the use of Mayan troops on both sides in these disputes provided an opening for Mayan leaders to

develop an autonomous outlook and confidence in their capacity to lead their own people in a military campaign.

It seems virtually impossible to sort out the mix of ethnic and class interests in the early stages of the rebellion. The lack of clarity arises partly from a failure in most of the literature to distinguish between leaders and followers, between the wealthier caciques and their supporters, for the most part ordinary peasants, but also prominent mestizos such as Bonifacio Novelo and José Maria Barrera. It must also be recognized, however, that the period was a time of transition during which social boundaries were being challenged and old categories were being overturned. Liberal political reforms which could have led to a relaxation of the distinctions of caste and class resulted in a hardening and polarization of class and ethnic divisions.

There is a growing consensus that the remote origins of the Caste War are to be found in the erosion of Mayan autonomy which began in the final decades of the eighteenth century. This loss of autonomy occurred almost simultaneously in political, economic, and social spheres. The acceleration of these trends in the 1840s eventually tore apart the fragile compromise that had enabled Spanish colonial authorities to rule Yucatán through the collaboration of native elites. The creation of new institutions and a corresponding loss of power and status on the part of traditional leaders may have provided the impetus for caciques to take up the path of rebellion, but only a deep sense of outrage can explain the overwhelming support they initially received from the rank and file. Historian Terry Rugeley sees in this temporary convergence of the interests of elites and masses the flash point of the rebellion. In his words, the

caciques "had to choose between the erratic patronage of officialdom and a peasant support base which was at once popular and radical. Not all chose the same way, but enough would opt for popular support to lend the war a temporary solidarity between rich and poor peasant."⁹⁴

The Early Stages of the Rebellion

The military clashes between Yucatecan and Mexican forces during the 1840s had been, for the most part, bloodless affairs. Manoeuvres were executed, sieges were mounted, random clashes occurred, but there were few casualties. With the shift in emphasis to internal enemies, a new level of violence became the norm. At some point during the early stages of the rebellion, the conflict changed from a civil war between supporters of the Mérida and Campeche factions into a concerted effort by Mayan leaders to capture and occupy or destroy all of the creole towns and haciendas southeast of Mérida. Nonetheless, it took some time before the creole elites of Yucatán managed to sort out their differences and put all of their resources into the defense of their privileged way of life.

Shortly after the raid on Tepich, the state government instituted a general draft of all creole males between the ages of sixteen and sixty, and barred indios puros from serving in the state militia. On August 27, taxes were reimposed at a level of 1.5 reales per month, as well as one real per month to support the clergy and church (the latter costs had been assumed by the government in 1843). Many members of the Yucatecan elite felt that recent events proved that the Indians did not possess the

necessary aptitude to continue enjoying the rights granted to citizens by the Constitution of 1841.⁹⁵ This was the rationale behind the reinstatement of las antiguas leyes from the colonial period which treated the Indians as minors in need of careful supervision. Mayan communities were once again to be governed indirectly by caciques chosen by the governor and jueces de paz appointed by the local jefe político.

But the attempts of creole politicians to put their house in order were stymied by the continuing rivalry between Méndez and Barbachano. In an election held early in September 1847 Santiago Méndez was elected Governor of Yucatán and charged with the responsibility of putting an end to the rebellion. Shortly afterwards, Colonel Cetina successfully stormed the citadel of San Benito in Mérida, overthrowing the government of Méndez in favour of Barbachano, who was still in exile in Cuba. Officers and troops supporting Méndez were withdrawn from Tihosuco and other southeastern villages, allowing Mayan forces to gain strength and occupy Tixcacalcupul, Tihosuco, Sacalaca and Saban. Cetina withdrew to Izamal, once again leaving the capital city in the hands of the Mendecistas.

In the meantime Mayan forces were gaining the advantage in the field. After several days of assault, Ichmul was abandoned by the small creole garrison which withdrew to Peto. Then, in December, the villages in the partido of Sotuta rose up in favour of the rebels, killing local officials and landowners in the area. Early in the new year (1848) Jacinto Pat captured Peto, the capital of the southeastern partido of the same name, while Cecilio Chi began a siege of Valladolid, which ended in favour of the rebels when troops and civilians withdrew to Espita. Governor Méndez, fearing

that the rapid advance of rebel troops threatened the capital city, moved his government westwards to Maxcanú on the road to Campeche. At this point, on February 15, 1848, Méndez decided to end his quarrel with Barbachano, naming him head of a peace commission delegated to propose negotiations with Jacinto Pat. Although this initiative did not bear fruit until rebel armies had captured still more territory, correspondence between several Mayan leaders and Father Canuto Vela convinced the government to suspend both personal and religious contributions in an effort to persuade the rebels to lay down their arms. Finally, the southern group of rebels under the leadership of Pat agreed to negotiate. This decision ended the first phase of the rebellion.

NOTES

1. Robert W. Patch, "A Colonial Regime: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatán." (PhD. diss., Princeton University, 1979), 12.
2. Ralph L. Roys, The Indian Background of Colonial Yucatán (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1943), 53.
3. Farriss, Maya Society, 153.
4. Many writers have struggled with the apparent contradiction between the barren nature of the region (as the Spaniards saw it) and the ability of the peninsula to support a large and prosperous population which may have exceeded two million in the immediate pre-conquest period. Nancy Farriss, in Maya Society, p. 57, suggests 2.3 million as an acceptable estimate for the population of Yucatán on the eve of conquest. Part of the answer seems to be that the pre-contact Maya may not have depended exclusively on agriculture for their livelihood, but also on trade in luxury items such as feathers and cacao. The wealth of the Maya in the late post-classic period is thought to have been largely derived from their trading activities. For a recent discussion of this period of Mayan history, see Piedad Peniche Rivero, Sacerdotes y comerciantes: el poder de los Mayas (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990).
5. Milpa is the term used in Mexico and Central America for a plot of maize or corn.
6. Peter T. Ewell, Intensification of Peasant Agriculture in Yucatán, Cornell/International Agricultural Economics Study (Ithaca, N.Y.: Department of Agricultural Economics, Cornell University, 1984), 51 ff.
7. Sherburne F. Cook and Woodrow Borah, Essays in Population History: Mexico and the Caribbean, vol. 2 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 177.
8. Farriss, Maya Society, 16.
9. Farriss, "Indians in Colonial Yucatán: Three Perspectives," in Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica, eds. Murdo J. MacLeod and Robert Wasserstrom (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 22.
10. Cook and Borah, Essays in Population History, 176.
11. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 6-8.

12. Patch, "A Colonial Regime," 20. "The lack of a major export economy resulted in the Spaniards having a vested interest in the continuation of peasant society, for it was the latter that provided the conquerors and their descendants with an income."
13. Farriss, "Indians in Colonial Yucatán," 7.
14. For a full discussion of the variety of theoretical approaches to studying Mexican regions, see Eric Van Young, "Introduction: Are Regions Good to Think?", in Mexico's Regions: Comparative History and Development, ed. Eric Van Young (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1992), 1-36.
15. Viviane Brachet de Márquez, La población de los estados mexicanos en el siglo XIX (1824-1895) (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1976), 10.
16. Mark Wasserman, Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911 (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3-6.
17. Peter F. Gerhard, The Southeast Frontier of New Spain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 20 and 54.
18. Roys, The Indian Background of Colonial Yucatán, 22.
19. Manuela Cristina García Bernal, Yucatán: población y encomienda bajo los Austrias (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1978) provides the most complete description of the importance and unique features of the encomienda in Yucatán.
20. During the colonial period the cabecera was the principal town of a parish, as in Tekax. By the nineteenth century, the term meant district or regional capital. Visitass were the auxiliary or subordinate villages in each parish.
21. Farriss, Maya Society, 187-192.
22. Gerhard, Southeast Frontier, 19-20.
23. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 55.
24. William B. Taylor, Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1979), 1.
25. Gerhard, Southeast Frontier, 8-9; García Bernal, Yucatán: población y encomienda, 54, 65-67; and Farriss, Maya Society, 72-79.

26. Marta Espejo-Ponce de Hunt, "Colonial Yucatán: Town and Region in the seventeenth century" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1974), 572.
27. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 163.
28. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 165, 277.
29. Ibid., 277.
30. Cline, "The War of the Castes and its Consequences," in Related Studies in Nineteenth Century Social History, Pt. 2, Microfilm Collection of Manuscripts on Middle American Cultural Anthropology, #32 (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 1950), 74-75; and "Regionalism and Society," 157-158. In the latter work, Cline defines the frontier as "an incidental product of migration, and [which] designates an area with somewhat indefinite boundaries which gets its special character from the alarms, excursions, and rapid changes incident to the invasion and settlement of a new population in a relatively vacant or sparsely settled territory." A major part (Tekax) of the area which he includes as part of the "Borderlands" was, historically, and continued to be, the most densely populated region of Yucatán from the beginning of the colonial period into the nineteenth century. Hence, I find it inappropriate to refer to the region as a frontier.
31. David J. Weber, The Spanish Frontier in North America (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 11.
32. Farriss, Maya Society, 160. Farriss characterizes the attitude toward nature shared by Spanish secular and religious officials in the following passage: "Settlement formed part of a dyadic code, in which the world was divided into two opposing parts, town and forest. The town represented Christianity, civilization, and indeed all that was human life, in contrast with the forest, where wild beasts lurked and where man risked being overwhelmed morally as well as physically by the untamed forces of nature."
33. Ralph L. Roys, Political Geography of the Yucatán Maya (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1957), 66.
34. Gerhard, Southeast Frontier, 128-129.
35. Roys, Political Geography, 61.
36. Patch, "A Colonial Regime," 257.
37. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 335-355.
38. John L. Stephens, Incidents of Travel in Yucatan, Vol. II (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), 160-161.

39. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 32.
40. Farriss, Maya Society, 187-189, 236-237, 244.
41. Manuela Cristina García Bernal, La sociedad de Yucatán, 1700-1750 (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1972), 94.
42. Farriss, Maya Society, 356-366.
43. González Navarro, Raza y Tierra, 55.
44. Patch, "A Colonial Regime," 372.
45. Patch, "A Colonial Regime," 316-317.
46. Terry Rugeley, "Official Cult and Peasant Protocol: the Cofradía of San Antonio Xocneceh," (Unpublished paper, 1992), 9.
47. Farriss, Maya Society, 284-285.
48. Reed, The Caste War, 106.
49. Anne C. Collins, "The Maestros Cantores in Yucatán," in Anthropology and History in Yucatán ed. Grant Jones (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1977), 234-235; and Farriss, Maya Society, 335-336, 341-343.
50. Farriss, Maya Society, 320-333.
51. Eric S. Thompson, Maya History and Religion (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 163-164, 193.
52. Farriss, Maya Society, 213-214.
53. Patch, "A Colonial Regime," 445.
54. Robert W. Patch, "Agrarian Change in Eighteenth-Century Yucatán," Hispanic American Historical Review 65:1 (January 1985), 21-49, provides the most concise overview of this topic, although Patch's thesis is also primarily concerned with rural society in the late colonial period.
55. Patch, "A Colonial Regime," 217.
56. Patch, "Agrarian Change," 41-44.
57. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 369-370, 521.
58. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 92.

59. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 91.
60. Patch, "A Colonial Regime," 314-320; and Rugeley, "Official Cult and Peasant Protocol," 14.
61. Brachet de Márquez, La población de los estados mexicanos, 13.
62. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 89; Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 133.
63. Farriss, Maya Society, 59, table 2.1.; García Bernal, Yucatán: población y encomienda, 163, table 11; Patch, "A Colonial Regime," 222; and Patch, "La formación de estancias y haciendas en Yucatán durante la colonia" in Cuatro ensayos antropológicos (Mérida: Ediciones de la Universidad de Yucatán, 1979), 19; Cook and Borah, Essays in Population History, vol. 2, 96-122.
64. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 84.
65. Salvador Rodríguez Losa, Geografía política de Yucatán, vol. 2 (Mérida: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, 1989), 187.
66. José M. Regil y Alonso Manuel Peon, "Estadística de Yucatán" Boletín de la sociedad mexicana de geografía y estadística 1:3 (January 1853): 289. These authors estimated the ethnic breakdown of the population to be 431,520 Indians and 143,841 whites and mestizos.
67. Brachet de Márquez, La población de los estados mexicanos, 97.
68. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 83.
69. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 85.
70. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 89.
71. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 93.
72. Rugeley, "Official Cult and Peasant Protocol," 19a.
73. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 95.
74. Regil y Peon, "Estadística," 255. According to Regil and Peon, Tekax normally had a population of around 4,348 but the sugar boom had created an upsurge in numbers: "Situated approximately 25 leagues from Mérida, in a south-easterly direction, its population which is normally around 4,348, being energetic and entrepreneurial in nature, politically volatile, transformed [the town] into a veritable heart from which flowed the social, administrative and industrial life of the district.

When the floating population from the numerous sugar cane establishments came to town in search of financing or provisions . . . the town possessed an air of vitality about it which is rarely found in our sleepy little towns."

75. Farriss, "Nucleation versus Dispersal: the Dynamics of Population Movement in Colonial Yucatán" Hispanic American Historical Review 58:2 (1978): 188.

76. Farriss, "Nucleation versus Dispersal," 203-209.

77. Reed, The Caste War, 27.

78. Patch, "Descolonización, el problema agrario y los orígenes de la guerra de castas, 1812-1847," in Sociedad, estructura agraria y estado en Yucatán, ed. Othón Baños Ramírez (Mérida: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, 1990), 58. Patch bases this story upon a succession of reports from local government officials in Tekax, Maní, and Peto during the 1840s.

79. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 60-70; Patch, "Descolonización," 45.

80. According to Terry Rugeley, "since the days of the Hapsburgs there had theoretically been a rent owed to the crown for the use of this property. But in actual practice the policy was ignored. Unless a private title existed, land was baldío and remained under control of the first peasant to measure it for milpa and declare it his own." Rugeley, Men of Audacity: Yucatán's Maya Peasantry and the Origins of the Caste War, 1800-1847 (Austin: University of Texas Press, forthcoming), 71-72.

81. Patch, "Descolonización," 50-51.

82. Patch, "Descolonización," 52.

83. Patch, "Descolonización," 53.

84. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 171.

85. Farriss, "Nucleation versus Dispersal," 201.

86. Patch, "Descolonización," 78.

87. Patch, "Descolonización," 76-77.

88. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 68.

89. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 71-72. In the turbulent years of the 1840s, successive creole leaders made promises to guarantee land in return for the support of troops raised by Mayan captains. Cline sees the failure to honour these promises as contributing to the erosion of Mayan confidence in creole politicians, although the

issue was not raised in the negotiations or correspondence of the leaders of the rebellion.

90. Reed, The Caste War, 55.

91. Cline, "Regionalism and Society," 648; Laura Caso Barrera, "Una visión indígena de la guerra de castas," Por Esto, Mérida, June 23, 1991, 14-17.

92. Reed, The Caste War, 59.

93. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 61; Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 57.

94. Terry Rugeley, Men of Audacity, 285.

95. "Ley restableciendo y reglamentando las Antiguas Leyes para el Régimen de Indios" del 27 de agosto de 1847, in Colección de leyes decretos, ordenos o acuerdos de tendencia general, del poder legislativo del estado libre y soberano de Yucatán, vol. 3, ed. Alonso Aznar Pérez (Mérida: Imprenta del editor, 1849-1851).

CHAPTER TWO

PACIFICATION AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY: 1848-1853

Introduction

By the spring of 1848, the rebellion had spread across the peninsula to engulf more than three quarters of the territory and half the centres of population before either side made any move toward a peace settlement. The rapid escalation of the struggle made it very difficult for the belligerents to call a halt until the military situation stabilized. With the fall of Valladolid on March 14, Bacalar on April 19, and the spread of the war into the Chênes region southeast of Campeche, it became apparent that the rebel leaders had mobilized large numbers of armed men. Their armies were fighting on three fronts simultaneously, and it was reported that there were 12,000 to 15,000 troops involved in the siege of Valladolid in February and March.¹ When rebel leaders began presenting a consistent set of demands, backed up by force of arms, the necessity of taking steps toward a negotiated settlement became urgent. During the next six years many attempts were made to negotiate a firm and lasting peace, but until 1853 all efforts resulted in failure. This chapter will begin by examining the strategies adopted by both sides in the conflict, to determine why a peaceful resolution proved so elusive.

The failure of the peace process was only part of the story. While negotiations continued, the authorities gradually attempted to restore order in the countryside, a goal which could only be achieved by military occupation and the forced resettlement of thousands of refugees. Beneath the surface agenda of proposals, counter-proposals

and bungled meetings, the government was engaged in the process of mounting a counter-insurgency campaign. While the main targets of this campaign were the rebel forces and their local adherents, the very nature of the war meant that everyone of Mayan identity was under suspicion. This chapter, therefore, will also examine the impact of the pacification programme on the civilian population in the disputed zone, with reference to other regions of the peninsula for purposes of comparison.

In the attempt to make peace, each side in the conflict started from very different assumptions. The goals of the rebels, despite creole propaganda about their plan to exterminate or expel all the whites from Yucatán, were limited and specific. They wanted taxes reduced or abolished, an end to creole land-grabbing in areas which were predominantly inhabited by Mayan villagers who believed that their traditional usufructary rights over communal lands were unassailable, and justice against local government officials and clergy who abused their power. Some of the rebel leaders, notably Jacinto Pat and José María Barrera, wanted to negotiate a settlement that would guarantee these conditions. Because they were bargaining from a position of strength they believed they could expect concessions in return for promises to end hostilities. The goals of the creole elite as represented by the government were, however, much broader and all-encompassing. They wanted an unconditional end to the rebellion, a restoration of the "status quo ante bellum," and guarantees that their control of economic and political power could not be effectively challenged in the future. Above all, they assumed that their vision of the economic and political future

of Yucatán was not only possible but was in harmony with what they believed to be the dominant historical process of the time, modernization or "progress."

While it is not entirely clear that the rebel leaders had a common strategy for achieving their goals, it is likely that they believed they could use their superiority in the field to gain the same kind of concessions that Colonel Santiago Imán's successful revolt had promised in 1841; that is, a reduction in the personal contribution and the abolition of church taxes.² The government, on the other hand, appeared to be using negotiations to gain time, while resources could be marshalled in order to reverse the military situation. In other words, the rebels fought in order to win concessions, while the government negotiated in order to pursue its real agenda, which was pacification.³

First Attempts at Peace

For the first five months, the government proceeded as though it would be a simple task to restore order, using the familiar tactics of the colonial period, including executions, floggings, imprisonment, and deportation. During the early stages of the war, creole officials played up the racial aspect of the conflict, treating all Indios* as potential enemies, and portraying them as members of a homogeneous, hostile enemy within their midst. Although the uprising had started in the partidos of Valladolid and Peto, and its most prominent leaders were caciques from eastern and southeastern communities, a number of Mayan officials in the heartland of creole culture, including two caciques from the Santiago barrio of Mérida and the nearby town of Uman, were

* Term of contempt employed by creole elites for Mayan or indigenous people, despite the liberal notion that they should all be regarded as "citizens."

arrested and executed for conspiracy. Several of their alleged accomplices were deported or imprisoned. According to historian Eligio Ancona, no written evidence was ever found of the correspondence alleged to have taken place among the Mayan leaders, but public outcry demanded the death penalty.⁴

During August 1847, more than two hundred Maya were arrested, including the caciques of Chicxulub, Motul and Acanceh, all within a twenty-five kilometre radius of Mérida. One hundred and eight of these were sent to prison in Campeche and fourteen to Veracruz. Scaffolds were built in many towns for the flogging of Indians suspected of sympathizing with the rebels. According to an interview with one of the prisoners reported in the Campeche newspaper, El Amigo del Pueblo, Alejandro Tzab, cacique of Tixpehual, was arrested and taken to the nearby town of Tixkokob where he witnessed the brutal punishment of several of his compañeros and then was beaten himself because he refused to plead guilty to conspiracy.⁵ Caciques seem to have been singled out for punishment, whether or not there was concrete evidence of their involvement, since the government's purpose at this point was to prevent the rebellion from spreading. According to nineteenth century historian Serapio Baqueiro, who was an eyewitness to many of the events he describes, the harsh repression had the opposite effect, causing the rebels to gain willing recruits as they advanced westwards.⁶

The harshness of the creole response may have succeeded in convincing some Indian leaders within creole-controlled zones, even though rebel armies continued to gain adherents. One region of the peninsula where the government could count on the

support of the indigenous leadership was in the city of Campeche. On January 1, 1848 the government newspaper La Union published a letter reportedly written by the caciques of the barrios of San Francisco, Santa Lucia, Santa Anna and San Roman, all located in Campeche, denouncing the activities of the rebels and disassociating themselves and their people from "the absurd and scandalous uprising of the eastern Indians, created to discredit and shame our noble race, and anxious to prove, by means of a clear and public manifestation, the sincerity of our sentiments in an issue of such vital importance for the state, and of such serious implications for the good name and reputation of the meek, good-natured, peaceful and calm Indians of Yucatán."⁷ The original was dated December 21, 1847. The declaration included four resolutions affirming loyalty, submission, and offering their assistance to put down the rebellion. This declaration was followed on January 11 by several other letters, known as cartas de adhesión, written by caciques from two large towns, Hecelchakán and Izamal, and eight smaller villages. Whether this should be regarded as an example of the degree to which the Maya of the northwest had become hispanicized or acculturated or as an indication of the level of repression in the area still controlled by government forces is impossible to determine. A further complication exists in the fact that Campeche was the power base of Governor Santiago Méndez, and it was still not entirely clear even to contemporaries whether or not the conflict was another episode in the civil war between supporters of Méndez and Barbachano, or an Indian rebellion.⁸ Nonetheless, creole leaders were quick to seize upon the opportunity to persuade some Mayan

elements, through their leaders, to remain loyal, and to convince others to support the government of Méndez in its efforts to quell the uprising by force.

On January 14, 1848 the legislative council of Yucatán granted Governor Méndez "extraordinary powers" to use all of the resources at his disposal to end the rebellion. There followed a series of decrees aimed at attracting the support of the Maya in areas still controlled by the government. All who enlisted voluntarily in the army were to be granted the title of hidalgo (honourary nobility) and their personal contribution suspended for the duration of their service. They or their dependents would also be entitled to pensions if they were wounded or died during the course of the war. A special battalion was created in the partido of Hecelchakán under the leadership of Juan Crisostomo Chi, and this group took an active part in the military campaign to pacify the Chênes region south of the Puuc. More commonly, however, Mayan recruits served as auxiliaries to the regular forces, clearing roads, hauling food and ammunition, and performing menial tasks around the camps established by the various brigades. According to González Navarro, there were between 9,000 and 10,000 hidalgos assisting creole forces by the summer of 1848.⁹

A second thrust of government policy at this time was to try to exploit potential divisions among rebel leaders and to drive a wedge between the leadership and the rank and file. Accordingly, an amnesty was proclaimed on February 6 which offered full pardon for any caciques who turned themselves over to the authorities along with fifty followers. Individuals who had committed crimes deserving the death penalty were to have their sentences commuted to three years of prison or forced

labour. However, rebels who did not surrender within the time period allowed, if caught with weapons in hand, or civilians who had been living among them voluntarily, if it were proven that they had been leaders or had committed atrocities, would suffer the death penalty.¹⁰ Since prominent rebel leaders such as Cecilio Chi and Bonifacio Novelo had already been accused of atrocities in the creole press, it seems that this amnesty was not intended to be a full pardon for all of the rebels, but rather an attempt to undermine the unity of the rebel movement. The offer, however, was premature and there was little response while rebel forces continued to advance toward the capital city. Since October the government had been temporarily located in Maxcanú, on the road between Mérida and Campeche, and plans were underway for the evacuation of Mérida. Clearly, another strategy had to be attempted. At this point the Church hierarchy became actively involved in mediation.

During the early stages of the uprising two priests had been murdered in the pueblo of Tixcacalcupul, a small community southwest of Valladolid. The Bishop of Mérida, José María Guerra, wrote a pastoral letter early in February condemning the actions of the rebels and calling for an end to the violence and a return of his children to the obedience which they owed to God and the civil authorities. Three priests were appointed to an ecclesiastical peace commission under the leadership of Father José Canuto Vela, a priest known for his close ties to both Miguel Barbachano and Jacinto Pat. The decision to appoint Father Vela reveals how desperately Governor Méndez wanted to achieve a reconciliation between himself and his bitter rival Barbachano, whom he had deposed and sent into exile. Méndez had also attempted to win over

Barbachano's adherents in Peto by appointing Felipe Rosado as jefe político and giving him a commission in the militia. But these conciliatory measures had little effect on bringing the rebels to the negotiating table. Finally, Governor Méndez recalled Barbachano from Cuba, appointed him head of the government peace commission and sent him to Tekax with Father Vela in order to make contact with Jacinto Pat. In this way, creole authorities hoped to maintain the impression of unity in the face of what they were beginning to realize was a very serious threat to their entire way of life. In the meantime, rebel troops besieging Valladolid had also asked for negotiations, so it appeared likely that some progress could be made if face-to-face meetings could be arranged.

Tekax became a temporary centre of operations for the negotiating team appointed by Méndez, but events quickly overtook the plans of the governor. On February 17, 1848 both Barbachano and Vela wrote letters to Jacinto Pat and other caciques. Mayan leaders gathered at the village of Tabí in the partido of Sotuta were first to reply; they would consider ending the rebellion if the arms confiscated in the early stages of the uprising were returned, if the personal contribution was abolished and the fees for baptism and marriage were set at three and ten reales.¹¹ Jacinto Pat's reply a few days later echoed the demands of the other leaders for the abolition of the personal contribution and the regulation of fees for religious ceremonies.¹²

Since creole resources were stretched to their limits, Governor Méndez had little alternative but to accede to these demands. Although the Spanish authorities in Havana had offered support in the form of arms and ammunition, these supplies had

not yet arrived. On March 1, he issued a decree suspending the personal contribution and assuming financial responsibility for the support of the Church and clergy. The decree was printed in both Spanish and Mayan languages and widely distributed to the entire population. Nonetheless, this measure did not succeed in bringing the rebel leaders to the table. There were further delays until it became apparent that the rebels would not negotiate until Méndez handed over the governorship to Barbachano.¹³

While Ancona says that the rebels were simply trying to gain time by sowing discord among their enemies, it is also possible that they really did not trust Méndez and felt that they were more likely to gain concessions from Barbachano. Ancona also maintains that since Father Vela was a close friend and supporter of Barbachano, the priest himself may have suggested to Pat that the rebels refuse to negotiate until Méndez turned over the reins of government.¹⁴ In a diary entry for March 3, 1848, Vela refers to correspondence received from Bonifacio Novelo and Florentine Chan, leaders of the eastern Mayan forces engaged in besieging Valladolid, in which "they make the same demands as Jacinto Pat; but they add that if Don Miguel Barbachano complies with the offers they have made, they would make him Teniente Rey, because they no longer want a Governor. Other caudillos from the same region have written in a similar vein. May God get us safely out of this labyrinth in which we find ourselves!"¹⁵ Thus, the supporters of Barbachano were able to gain indirectly through the Mayan rebellion what they had not been able to achieve through the pronunciamientos of Cetina--the restoration of Miguel Barbachano to the governor's palace, and the ascendancy of Mérida in peninsular politics. It was, nonetheless, a

Pyrrhic victory, for the restored governor now had to come up with a plan for dealing with the rebels which proved to be every bit as difficult for Barbachano as it had been for Barret and Méndez.

The first attempt at serious negotiations took place under the auspices of the ecclesiastical peace commission at Tzucacab, early in April. The path to negotiations was long and tortuous, and reveals how little trust remained after nine months of open warfare. A hint that at least one of the rebel leaders was willing to restore trust is contained in a letter from Jacinto Pat to Felipe Rosado, Barbachano's new jefe politico for Peto, requesting salt for the troops under his command.¹⁶ Pat's forces had occupied most of the villages in the area surrounding Peto and had advanced to within a few miles of Tekax. Cecilio Chi had just completed the successful siege of Valladolid and was preparing to consolidate his hold on the entire region surrounding that city. The region in between, the Sotuta-Yaxcaba area, had been in open revolt since December 1847, so that very little of the east and southeast was under government control. Isolated pockets of creole residents remained in some of the villages and outlying rural establishments, but the rebels clearly had the upper hand. Until now, creole factionalism had benefited the rebels, but now it was the turn of the creole elite to attempt to manipulate the divergent goals and interests of rebel leaders in order to regain the advantage.

The document signed on April 19 at first seemed to be an acceptable compromise for both sides. Father Vela returned to Barbachano's headquarters in Ticul celebrating his success in achieving an agreement which basically gave the

rebels most of what they had asked for, but also guaranteed an end to their attacks on creole property and lives. There are many divergent views on the significance of this agreement. Ancona feels that Vela was duped into believing that the rebels really wanted to end the war, while they, in turn, were simply talking in order to hide their true objective, which was a war of extermination against the white race. On the other hand, Justo Sierra O'Reilly, Governor Méndez's envoy to Washington, dismissed the settlement as simply a ruse to gain time while the government reorganized its limited resources and waited for reinforcements from abroad.¹⁷ Subsequent events would seem to support the latter interpretation.

Barbachano sent Jacinto Pat a lavishly decorated banner proclaiming his new title as Gran Cacique de Yucatán, along with a staff of office and a promise to return the thousands of weapons (used by peasants for hunting) that had been collected in the previous months in an attempt to prevent the rebellion from spreading. Upon hearing of this public recognition of Pat's elevated status, Cecilio Chi despatched one of his officers, Raimundo Chi, at the head of 1,500 troops to Tzucacab where he destroyed the symbols of office and persuaded Pat to continue fighting until all of the rebel leaders agreed on negotiations. It is not clear what Chi's objectives were at this point, apart from the fact that he obviously felt that Pat had been bought off and the rebels could gain still more concessions if they continued their military campaign. The treaty of Tzucacab was also very unpopular among the rank and file of Pat's army, perhaps because they had been gaining ground rapidly and were confident of further victories. In the short run, the government's strategy of trying to sow discord among the rebel

leaders had been defeated by the quick action of Cecilio Chi; nonetheless, it was an effective strategy, and would be attempted many more times in the future, with varying degrees of success. A consistent theme among the rebels was their distrust and disapproval of any single leader gaining precedence over others. But the failure of the treaty of Tzucacab also marked a key turning point in the war. It was no longer possible to imagine that the Mayan rebellion was simply a new phase in the ongoing dispute between creole factions; the nature of the conflict had been clarified as an indigenous uprising against the creole elites as a class.

The Military Option

The treaty of Tzucacab was broken dramatically by Chi's attack on the pueblo of Maní, which was not expecting an attack in the midst of a ceasefire and was therefore totally unprepared. Not content with humiliating Pat in the presence of his followers, Chi made certain that the government understood his intentions by raiding this pueblo close to the town where Barbachano and his advisors awaited the outcome of Vela's mission. A priest who escaped the massacre of two hundred residents who had taken refuge in the church fled to Oxkutzcab and alerted the militia who quickly informed the governor and his entourage in Ticul. Barbachano and his commander-in-chief, General López de Llergo withdrew to Mérida to attend to the defence of the capital, which appeared to be in imminent danger from attack by rebel forces advancing from both the south and the east. According to contemporary eyewitnesses, the scene in the capital was one of despair. Refugees tried to sell their valuables in order to pay their passage out of the country, while property values plummeted,

especially in the agricultural regions already occupied by the rebels. The bishop of Mérida, José María Guerra, took ship for Havana, and government officials began dismantling the bureaucracy.

After Chi's rejection of the settlement and Pat's decision to continue fighting, the government had little choice but to fall back on its limited military resources. The capital city had to be protected and an attempt made to defend some of the communities in the surrounding districts so as to deny the rebels logistical support if they mounted a lengthy siege of Mérida. Chi and his men had turned north after their attack on Maní and had occupied the important creole town of Izamal to the northeast of Mérida, while in the south the rebel army under Pat began their occupation of the region north of the Puuc. Earlier, while Vela was negotiating in Tzucacab, rebel forces surrounding Tekax had appeared on the verge of laying siege to the town. López de Llergo who was in Tekax at the time decided to withdraw the First Division to Oxkutzcab and Ticul; he considered Tekax indefensible because of the presence of large numbers of rebels in the Puuc hills overlooking the town. One by one, the communities at the base of the Puuc hills were left undefended as López de Llergo pulled back his troops for a defense of the capital. The remains of the First Division withdrew from Oxkutzcab to Ticul, where they were reinforced by small scattered groups of militia gathered from the various pueblos of the district.

After the government troops withdrew, Tekax was occupied by two thousand rebel soldiers, under the command of Pat and his son, Marcelo. Witnesses reported that these occupying forces were reinforced by hacienda workers from the surrounding

sugar estates caught up in the general euphoria of rebellion. The remainder of Pat's forces occupied all the major towns and villages in the region. After rebel troops overwhelmed the small garrison at Muna the main rebel army began its siege of Ticul. After five days of fierce fighting the town was abandoned by government troops on May 26, 1848 and the survivors prepared to make a last stand at Hacienda Uayalceh, twenty-seven kilometers (seventeen miles) south of Mérida.¹⁸

Barbachano and López de Llergo had already begun replacing some military commanders whom they judged to have been ineffectual in the face of the rebel advance. It is important to realize that at this time Yucatán was still separate from México and therefore had no federal troops in the peninsula. The core of the government and even the rebel armies were local militia units which had defeated Mexican troops at the time of Yucatán's secession in 1843, and had since been involved in various factional disputes within the peninsula. Some of López de Llergo's new divisional commanders were replacements for officers who had supported the previous governor, Santiago Méndez. Colonel José Dolores Cetina, who had led two cuartelazos in favour of Barbachano, assumed command of the First Division at Ticul, while Juan José Méndez replaced José del Carmen Bello at Izamal, after Bello had withdrawn without offering any opposition to Cecilio Chi. But even Barbachanista officers had experienced little success in holding back the rebel advance on Mérida.

At this point the rebel juggernaut ground to a halt. The question of why the rebel armies failed to press their advantage when they were so close to the capital is

still unanswered. A variety of reasons have been set forth, including the awareness among the peasant rank and file that there was only a limited time available for planting due to the seasonal nature of the rains, a shortage of munitions, a high number of casualties who could not be replaced by recruits from outside their home communities, a divided leadership with each cacique commanding only the loyalty of his own followers, and finally, a belief that the creole strongholds of Campeche and Mérida were better defended than they really were.¹⁹ In any event, the drifting away of substantial numbers of peasant fighters during the month of June 1848 allowed creole troops to begin the slow process of recovering lost ground and regaining control of the towns in the Sierra. Rebel military strategy seldom included the permanent occupation of the towns and villages they captured. For the most part, they laid siege, looted and burned, then withdrew. A likely explanation for this difference in strategy may be that as the rebels entered the northwestern region of the peninsula they found themselves at a severe disadvantage with respect to ammunition and other material support. In other words, they had overstretched their supply lines from the major source, Belize.

At the height of rebel military success, the fortunes of the government took a turn for the better. Early in June Yucatán had resolved its differences with México, and for the first time since the outbreak of the war, the state received substantial aid from outside the peninsula. As a result of negotiations undertaken by Barbachano's two envoys who arrived in Mexico City on the heels of the departing US troops, the federal government promised the state 150,000 pesos worth of material support over

the next six months. Ironically, this timely aid for Yucatán came from a three million dollar cash settlement included in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as compensation from the United States for a substantial portion of northern Mexico.²⁰ Rifles were purchased at Vera Cruz from the US army of occupation, and in mid-July, five ships landed at Campeche from Vera Cruz, delivering money, rifles, bullets, and gunpowder.

In the meantime, Colonel Méndez had discovered that Cecilio Chi's troops had withdrawn after looting and burning the town of Izamal, so he was able to reoccupy this important centre without encountering serious resistance. Ancona suggests that one of the major factors in the declining fortunes of the rebels was the "lack of sympathy the Indians of Mérida and its environs, including those of the partidos of Motul, Izamal, Tecoh and Maxcanú felt towards the rebels."²¹ He cites as proof the fact that the Boletín Oficial contained numerous declarations of loyalty from caciques in these areas; however, he fails to note that these cartas de adhesión appeared in the wake of harsh repression by the government in the early months of the rebellion. A more likely reason for the withdrawal of Chi's troops after their successful occupation of Izamal was the fact that many of his followers were compelled by necessity to return to their communities in the region around Valladolid in order to plant their crops before the rainy season began in mid-June.

The same factor played an important part in a number of minor victories experienced by the troops of the First Division operating south of Mérida. On June 7, only twelve days after rebel troops had moved into Ticul, Colonel Cetina led a frontal

attack on the town which temporarily dislodged the rebels from their positions, while his second-in-command, Pablo Antonio González, led a small force into Chapab, causing the rebels occupying that town to flee in the direction of Muna and Maní. In Chapab, González burned a large store of provisions to prevent them from being used by the enemy and then withdrew. Cetina's men did not attempt to occupy Ticul, because it had been sacked and burned, but established a new base camp at Sacalum, to the northwest. The successful recapture of the rest of the region between Ticul and the Puuc hills was achieved over the next few months, more or less one village at a time.

Despite the losses experienced by Pat's forces in these skirmishes, the rebels maintained control of the countryside and harrassed government troops whenever they attempted to establish a permanent presence in the villages they reoccupied. After Muna was recovered, the local militia was constantly under attack by rebel bands operating in the high ground overlooking that village. It was believed that the rebels were getting most of their support from the pueblo of Santa Elena within the Puuc hills. Cetina decided to lead a major force against that community on July 8, 1848. His men experienced considerable harassment from snipers on the trails leading into the hills, but finally succeeded in occupying Santa Elena, where they filled up the wells and burned the few houses still standing so that the village could not be used as a base for raids. Smaller patrols raided some haciendas in the vicinity and burned whatever food they could not carry with them. As the nature of the conflict changed into something resembling guerrilla warfare, non-combatants who had not fled in time

or who came out of hiding too early often fell victim to the revenge of government troops who had suffered at the hands of the rebels and had begun to define the enemy in racial terms. Thus, in Muna, contemporary historians record that civilians (children and the elderly) were killed by creole soldiers.²² Both sides accused each other of atrocities, and while it may be assumed that some of these reports were exaggerated, both clergy and higher military officials made frequent pronouncements against the killing of non-combatants, indicating that it was a widespread practice.

Over the next two months--June to August--government troops belonging to the First and Second Divisions gradually drove the rebels from the area around Ticul back to Tekax. After a direct attack on Colonel Cetina's headquarters at Sacalum failed on July 23, Pat withdrew, first to Yotholim, then Oxkutzcab, and finally Tekax, although the rebels left two observation posts on the main roads leading to Tekax, at Akil and Hacienda San Bernardo. Both of these outposts were captured by government forces on August 15, 1848. On the morning of August 19, the attack on Tekax proper began. It was defended by a high stone wall which the rebels had erected around the entire town. The surrounding landscape had been cleared so as to give the defenders a clear line of fire. Despite these preparations, the attacking government troops succeeded in entering the town by twelve noon, dealing only with a rearguard left to cover the rebel retreat to Ticum, a community further south along the road to Peto. Colonel Cetina, the commander of the First Division, estimated that there had been ten to twelve thousand rebel troops in Tekax before their retreat. Prisoners were taken and executed on the spot.²³

In the meantime, Pablo Antonio González, who had shared responsibility under Cetina for the First Division, was given command of the regrouped Second Division late in July. The previous commander, Agustín Leon, had been sent to Hecelchakán to head the newly-formed Sixth Division which was to focus its efforts on the recovery of the Chênes region. González and his troops began their advance toward the central region of the partido of Tekax by attacking the villages of Tekit and Mama. The first was easily recaptured, but the second village fell only after a fierce fight during which the rebels experienced high losses. They repeatedly tried to recapture Mama but were repulsed.²⁴ Then, on August 19, the same day that Cetina entered Tekax, González occupied Teabo. Thus, the major villages to the north of Tekax were also back in government hands by the third week in August.

Once Tekax was reoccupied, various patrols of the First Division attempted to retake the villages located south of Tekax in the Puuc hills. As in the case of Santa Elena, the pueblo of Xul was strategically situated to serve as a base from which the rebels could raid Tekax and other communities north of the hills. Before the war, Xul had been one of the fastest-growing centres south of Tekax, but like most of the settlements south of the Puuc it suffered from a shortage of water. Deep wells (300-400 feet) were the only source of water; the village was therefore not well-situated to withstand a lengthy siege. One of Cetina's subordinate officers, Gumersindo Ruiz, was given the task of recapturing Xul. Initially successful, he was not able to hold on to this important centre in the face of a renewed offensive led by Marcelo Pat and José María Barrera early in September. Colonel Cetina had been relieved of his

command of the First Division because of illness, and the rebels apparently took advantage of this temporary halt in the creole advance to go back on the offensive. They had also received fresh supplies of ammunition from Belize.²⁵

The rebels began a determined effort to recapture the settlements of the Puuc which had been occupied by the army. They began by retaking Tixcuytún, then Ticum, as well as setting up patrols and ambushes in the hills around Tekax. An attack on Ticum led by Colonel Felipe Pren did not deter them. The following day, October 7, 1848, Pren returned to the attack on Ticum and managed to fight his way into the centre of the village, but did not have a large enough force to hold the place, so withdrew to Tekax. As Ancona relates, "all of these skirmishes did little more than exasperate the rebels. Firm in their resolution to force the withdrawal of the First Division, they began their attack on Tekax on the morning of October 10, setting up barricades on the roads leading towards Ticum, Tixcuytún, Xaya, and Pencuyut, and in the hills which overlooked the city."²⁶ The government forces were seriously outnumbered (five to one; the rebel forces involved in this phase of the campaign numbered four to five thousand while a division, at least on paper, contained up to one thousand) and it appeared as though Tekax might once again be occupied by the rebel army of the south.

Tekax was saved by the sudden appearance of the Sixth Division to the south of the city. Colonel Agustín Leon and his men, operating out of Hecelchakán, had recaptured all of the major centres in the Chênes region and were now in the process of driving the rebels out of the village of Xul. Pat and Barrera responded to this

threat to their strategically important flank by moving a large number of troops from those besieging Tekax to the outskirts of Xul. Leon had occupied Xul on the morning of October 23; by the following day, the town was surrounded by several thousand rebels. Despite a temporary respite gained with the help of a small relief force from Tekax, Leon and the Sixth Division were pinned down by the rebels for almost two weeks, and eventually fought their way through the besieging army to refuge in Oskutzcab. Then the rebel army renewed its attack on Tekax for the remainder of the month of November, as well as attempting to overwhelm the smaller garrison at Oskutzcab. Both of these efforts were unsuccessful, probably because of a shortage of ammunition, and by November 26, 1848 the rebels commanded by Barrera had pulled back to their stronghold in the southeast. Marcelo Pat, one of Jacinto's sons, had been mortally wounded in the final assault on Oskutzcab, and this may have also been a factor in the rebel withdrawal.²⁷

General López de Llergo had been in Tekax from the early part of November, planning the assault on Peto and Tihosuco, operations which the military believed would break the back of the resistance. Once it became apparent that the rebels were no longer on the offensive, López de Llergo quickly marshalled the five divisions strung out between Tekax and Yaxcaba into a three-pronged attack on Peto. The third and fourth divisions, commanded by Colonel Eulogio Rosado, occupied the pueblo of Tahdziu on November 29 and were outside Peto on November 30. The second group, comprised of the second and sixth divisions, left Teabo on the twenty-eighth, and after a slight delay at Tixmeuac, also arrived at Peto on the thirtieth. The first division

under Cetina left Tekax on the twenty-eighth, but encountered stiff opposition at Tzucacab where José María Barrera held them up for two days. Jacinto Pat, still grieving over his son's death, fled Peto with his family on the twenty-ninth for Tihosuco. Felipe Pren, leading the vanguard of the first division, was the first to enter the town, which by then was only lightly defended by less than a hundred rebels--the rest had withdrawn south.²⁸

With the recapture of Peto it appeared that the rebellion had finally been crushed. A confident state government had issued a decree on 6 November 1848, expelling from Yucatán all rebels captured with arms, in an effort to encourage non-combatants caught up in the rebel withdrawal to surrender. Rumours of the death of Cecilio Chi were confirmed in the final weeks of 1848 and on December 20, El Fénix speculated that the end of the war was in sight.²⁹ The Campechano newspaper reported that the bulk of the rebel armies had retreated into the southeastern jungles, or had drifted back to their respective communities to harvest whatever maize they had been able to plant in the midst of the fighting. It was, however, only a temporary respite, as new leaders soon emerged to take the place of Chi as leader of the eastern rebels.

Contemporary sources hailed the reoccupation of Peto as a major accomplishment for the "cause of civilization." Barbachano's decision to exile captured prisoners of war was applauded by the liberal newspaper of Campeche, El Fénix: "We applaud this step and wish that such measures had been taken much earlier. This proves we are finally beginning to realize the necessity of distinguishing

our interests from those of the Indians. The indigenous race cannot be integrated with any other group of people. They must be judged severely and even thrown out of the country, if that were possible. There is no more room for mercy; their ferocious instincts, revealed in these distressing times, need to be suppressed with a strong hand. Humanity, civilization demands it!"³⁰

With the recovery of Peto, a large number of citizens, both creole and Maya, emerged from hiding. Among the first to come forward were two priests who had apparently been held captive by the rebels from the beginning of the rebellion, Fathers Vadillo and Mezo Vales. The former cacique of Peto, Macedonio Dzul, also reappeared, protesting that he had never made common cause with the rebels; when the cacique form of government was restored Dzul was reinstated as a reward for his loyalty. When the town had first been deserted by government troops (mostly supporters of Santiago Méndez) early in January 1848, it was thought by many residents of Peto that Jacinto Pat was fighting primarily to restore Miguel Barbachano to the governorship. However, when the rebellion continued despite Barbachano's assumption of the governorship, many people went into hiding to await the outcome of the struggle. Ancona claims that in the first week alone 1,500 refugees (one third of the prewar population of Peto) turned themselves in to government troops.

As they had previously done, the government troops used the newly recaptured town of Peto as a base from which to mount smaller patrols into the surrounding districts. Ichmul, Xcabil, and Tihosuco were recovered in this manner, but the countryside could not be held without challenge. Two outpost garrisons were

established at Chikindzonot and Saban, as far into rebel-held territory as government troops were able to advance. However, within weeks of this offensive, the garrisons at both Saban and Tihosuco once again found themselves under attack by large numbers of rebels, attacks which settled over the next eight months into protracted sieges. Ancona describes the military situation around Tihosuco and Saban in the following manner: "It is true that the troops frequently went out to fight the rebels, and succeeded in dislodging them from their barricades; but the enemy, after he had buried his dead and left his wounded in the hands of the healers, returned within one or two days to reoccupy the positions from which he had been expelled."³¹ The government forces were seriously outnumbered in these engagements, often eight to one. Every time they left the safety of their garrisoned towns or villages, they were cut to shreds. Losses on both sides were excessive, and the cost of maintaining an army of five divisions on active duty rapidly used up the 150,000 pesos of aid provided by the federal government.

At this point, Governor Barbachano came up with a unique way of financing the state's war effort. He invited Cuban labour contractors to recruit Mayan prisoners of war as indentured labourers for Cuban plantations, paying the government of Yucatán a compensatory fee which varied according to the age and sex of the worker. One hundred and forty Mayan prisoners and their dependents boarded the Spanish ship Cetro on March 5, 1849, followed by an additional one hundred and ninety-five in May. In reply to a reprimand from the federal government, Barbachano justified the sale of Mayan prisoners on the following terms: "They are freely signing up to go to

the island of Cuba, in return for a monthly salary and for a fixed amount of time which is stipulated in the contract, written in their own language and signed before witnesses and a secretary . . . the voluntary donation of twenty-five pesos which is accepted by the treasury for every Indian who signs a contract can hardly be called the price of slavery; and, it will be an effective way to deal with the rebels who are a threat to civilization."³² The governor was wrong--the threat of forced labour and exile in Cuba did not end the rebellion, not while the rebel leaders still commanded the loyalty of their followers and could rely on a steady supply of arms and ammunition from their contacts in Belize. It is very likely that Barbachano and his advisers were well aware of the limited effect of such measures, for they continued to pursue more direct means to end the rebellion.

Barbachano used the revenue thus gained to finance an expeditionary force under Colonel Cetina to recapture Bacalar. Given the failure of government forces to achieve a definitive victory over the rebels once they were in familiar territory, creole strategists had determined that the real key to defeating the rebels once and for all was to cut off the supply of arms and ammunition from the British in Belize. While Cetina succeeded in recapturing Bacalar in May 1849, he and his men soon became bogged down in yet another siege mounted by four thousand rebel troops under the command of José María Tzuc, a lieutenant of Jacinto Pat. Moreover, the capture of Bacalar did not interrupt the trade in munitions carried on at Agua Blanca, farther inland along the Hondo River. This trade, however, chiefly benefitted the rebel groups around Chichanhá who were allies of Pat but not necessarily willing to contribute their

resources to his campaign. It was reported that the troops besieging Tihosuco and Saban were short of ammunition and conducted raids on government patrols specifically to replenish their supply of arms and ammunition, as well as pack animals.³³ On August 7, 1849 the rebels launched an all-out attack on Tihosuco but were unsuccessful. In the wake of this failure, Pat's leadership began to be questioned and whatever solidarity there had been among the rebel leaders began to disintegrate.

New caudillos had emerged among the rebels after the death of Cecilio Chi at the end of 1848. Among them, Venancio Pec, Crescencio Poot, and Florentino Chan took the lead in opposing Jacinto Pat's plan to impose a head tax on the rebel rank and file. In addition, there were questions about Pat's autocratic methods of discipline, including the practice of flogging insubordinate officers. On September 3, 1849, Pec and his associates circulated a letter among the widely dispersed rebel captains explaining their opposition to Pat's new tax, and complaining of his leadership. This action was followed up by the assassination of Pat at Holchen where he had fled, presumably in an effort either to join forces with José María Tzuc engaged in the siege of Bacalar, surrender to Colonel Cetina, or as was widely suspected, seek asylum in the British colony of Belize. Ancona explains the assassination of Pat in the following passage:

The campaign had dragged on too long, and the resources of the caudillo began to be exhausted by the middle of the year [1849]. It was necessary to replace the immense amount of powder and shot expended in the campaign, and there was no money left to purchase supplies from

. . . Belize. In 1847 and 1848, supplies had been bought or traded for the booty which rebel troops had pillaged from the communities they had occupied. But now that they were pinned down in the jungle, plunder was no longer available and thus the rebellion had lost its principle source of revenue. Then Jacinto Pat conceived the idea of imposing a head tax on his followers, which would be used to purchase arms. It was the first time that the rebels had tried to tap this resource during the struggle, and the disastrous consequences of this proposal demonstrated how sensitive the Indians were on this issue.³⁴

The fragmented nature of leadership among the rebels was both the strength and the weakness of their movement. On the one hand, it meant that they could not muster enough fighters in one place at the same time to make a successful assault, for example at Tihosuco in August 1849. A hoarding of scarce resources for the benefit of one's own community, rather than a pooling of those resources under a central command, was an understandable strategy, given the fact that a substantial portion of whole villages had gone into exile in the wake of rebel withdrawal and creole counter-insurgency. As Reed notes, "these village groups were not small. Pedro José Ix . . . reported in December 1849 that he had led many of the former inhabitants of Oxkutzcab to safety at the rancho of Dzibilum, somewhere in the [south]eastern forest; the people under his command numbered close to 4,000."³⁵ On the other hand, the dispersed nature of the rebel settlements meant that government forces could never locate and destroy the entire leadership, and thus with one stroke put down the

rebellion. As the assassination of Pat had demonstrated, "the native commanders ruled with certainty only the small units of their home villages, and their control over others depended upon personality and success."³⁶

The assassination of Pat also brought to the forefront the interests of the British, in their role as mediators between the rebels whom they regarded as clients, if not allies, and the government of Yucatán. Before his death, Pat had actively sought British mediation to end the war.³⁷ Although the Mexican government was deeply suspicious of the motives of the British in this affair, they nevertheless agreed at least to explore the idea of British mediation. The government of Yucatán was vehemently opposed to this intervention because they were convinced that the arms trade, fuelled by Yucatecan exiles in Belize as well as British timber merchants, was the main reason for their failure to crush the rebellion. Notwithstanding Yucatecan opposition, the Mexican and British governments agreed that Superintendent Charles Fancourt of Belize would enter into talks with the rebels, providing he keep the government of Yucatán informed. Accordingly Fancourt arranged a meeting with Venancio Pec and Florentino Chan at the Bahía de la Ascensión on the eastern coast of Yucatán on November 22, 1848.

This meeting accomplished little, even though it provided an opportunity for the rebel leaders to present their proposals directly for an independent territory which would be governed by themselves under British protection. Fancourt submitted a report to Governor Barbachano about the meeting, summarizing the statements of the Mayan caudillos, and reassuring the Governor that his government was not interested

in establishing a protectorate over the eastern portion of Yucatán, despite the apparent desire of the rebels for this resolution to the conflict. The text of this letter underlines the consistency with which the rebels expressed their grievances throughout the uprising:

The origin of the quarrel was that the contributions which the Indians were required to pay were too heavy for them and that they bore upon them unequally and unjustly. . . . When asked if they would be contented if they were guaranteed the same rights as the white population enjoyed, they answered that they had no faith in the promises of the government, . . . that they had once before taken up arms for the purpose of assisting the Government of Mérida in its struggle with the Supreme Government, and that promises were then held out to them which had been subsequently broken. . . . What they wanted was a portion of the country, extending from Bacalar towards the north as far as the Gulf of Mexico and permanent exemption from all contributions to the state government. They added that they had no objections to Spaniards residing within the territory which they sought to obtain but that they would never consent to their exercising authority where they resided.³⁸

Neither the Mexican nor Yucatecan government were interested in a settlement which challenged the territorial integrity of the country, while it must be admitted that the British were hardly neutral bystanders in the conflict.

There was a widespread belief among the Mayan rebels that the British were interested in maintaining and even fostering stronger ties with rebel communities outside the effective jurisdiction of the government of Yucatán. While the Yucatecan government was undoubtedly paranoid on this issue, two fragments of evidence support this interpretation. Father Canuto Vela reported from Tekax early in November 1849 that prisoners taken by troops attempting to recapture Becanchén said they did not respond to the latest government amnesty because, "at Christmas, the English were going to divide Yucatán."³⁹ Vela also transcribed the following excerpt of a letter intercepted from Pedro José Ix, leader of a community composed primarily of refugees from Oxkutzcab, to the rebel leaders in the east:

I have prepared . . . a census of the inhabitants of the pueblo of Oxkutzcab which I govern and who live here at rancho Dzibilum and in the surrounding area. I have given an account of how many there are, three thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine souls. This is a complete report of married men, women, widowers, widows, bachelors, and even the tiniest children, because this is what the English have requested of me. Dzibilum, December 1849.⁴⁰

This census of a rebel community established in the wake of the rebellion supports Reina's contention that the involvement of the English as mediators came from their interests in the rebels as a potential labour force for logwood and mahogany contractors. Reina suggests that the government of Yucatán took as a serious possibility the proposal to establish an independent Mayan state under British

protection. As Reina comments, "this situation signified for the Yucatecans not only the loss of political power over the indigenous population, but what was more important, economic domination. That is, they would lose their agricultural labour force."⁴¹ Yucatecan creoles were beginning to realize that they were in danger of losing substantial numbers of the labour force if peace were not at least partially restored. Prominent Yucatecan liberals such as Justo Sierra O'Reilly publicly questioned the Barbachano government's reliance on military measures to suppress the rebellion.⁴²

In June 1849, Barbachano had petitioned the central government to increase its support for a military solution to the rebellion: "Troops and money: without this assistance, Yucatán will perish, and to put it bluntly, perish for lack of resources, because we have exhausted all of the resources on which we depend."⁴³ His pleas were only partially answered; early in 1850, the federal government sent General Manuel Micheltorena to take over command of the state militia, newly re-organized into units of the National Guard: "Great expectations were in the air that he would give the ultimate blow to the rebels in the Peninsula, not only because of his reputation as an Indian fighter on the northern frontier, but also because it was believed that the government of Mexico would send regular troops under his command so as to ensure the success of the mission which had been entrusted to him."⁴⁴ But only three hundred extra troops arrived to relieve the exhausted veterans of three years struggle. As for money, the federal government promised a monthly subsidy of 16,000 pesos.

In the meantime, the state government continued its efforts to win over the adherence of those Maya who were inclined toward peace. On September 24, 1849 a new amnesty was proclaimed giving the rebels a ninety-day period in which to surrender, without penalties. This was followed up in November by the appointment of a second Ecclesiastical Peace Commission empowered to negotiate directly with the rebels and to seek out refugees and persuade them to return to their home communities. Once again, Father Canuto Vela took the lead in the commission's efforts, assisted by Fathers José Antonio García and Manuel Antonio Sierra of Valladolid. With the establishment of the peace commission, the government ordered its troops to remain on the defensive so that the commissioners could send messengers out with news of the amnesty and encourage people to resettle their villages. But there was an inherent contradiction in this situation; because the army was not properly provisioned, the soldiers had to conduct operations in rebel-held territory simply to secure their food supplies. The inevitable clashes which resulted from these incursions made a mockery of the efforts of the peace commissioners.

In Iturbide, south of Tekax, rebel captain José María Cocom told one of Vela's ambassadors that "they would return to their settlements when the government troops went back to their respective homes; if they did not withdraw, they would suffer the consequences, because it was not the Indians but the military who were keeping the conflict going with the damage they were inflicting upon the people."⁴⁵ A letter from the Mayan residents of the village of Xmacancheakal to Captain Pedro Reyes illustrates the feelings of the peasants about the situation:

And also I tell you that you [the soldiers] should not wander about stealing our supplies of corn, because you have no idea of the work it takes to produce them. If you could only manage to stay quietly in your own villages, things would go well; this I say to you, because we do not wish to judge your actions, but when we say something, it is so-- we do not lie! . . . How poor you must be, that you go about harvesting our fields, but you will no longer be able to eat when you die of a bullet; if you come to us politely asking for charity, we will freely give it to you; but no, you only come to rob; how can we get along in this manner?⁴⁶

The battle for subsistence became the primary focus of both sides of the struggle during this period of military stalemate. In the Boletín Oficial published by the government there were several reports of food shortages among both rebel and government forces, and skirmishes at various haciendas and ranchos over crops ready for harvest: "Yesterday, at two o'clock in the afternoon a patrol of one hundred men returned from harvesting maize at rancho San Antonio. The commander, Captain Leocadio Espinosa, informed me that upon arriving at the settlement, his troops were fired upon by the rebels, but they succeeded in driving them away; and after a reconnaissance of the fields, and finding some Indians harvesting one of them, he [Espinosa] ordered a small patrol to disperse them, and having done so, the soldiers completed the harvesting of those fields and loaded thirty-three mules with maize, which I have set aside to feed this garrison."⁴⁷

Civilians encountered by the troops were sometimes treated with compassion, but they were also taken prisoner and brought back to the military cantons to serve under conditions of forced labour if they were not killed outright. In the Chênes region, Coronel Cirilo Baqueiro reported that one of his small patrols had captured five women hiding with their children in the forest, who when questioned declared that their husbands, upon seeing the troops, had fled; Baqueiro, complying with a directive from the general command, set them at liberty, so they could go and tell their husbands of the humane treatment they had received and of the intentions of the government to give them refuge. This incident was reported in the Boletín Oficial, so it may well have been more of an attempt to answer critics of the government's pacification policy, than an illustration of the typical behaviour of government troops.⁴⁸

After the arrival of General Micheltorena in February 1850, the government declared yet another amnesty. The new peace initiative reflected an attempt to respond to some of the demands contained in the extensive correspondence between rebel leaders and clergy and was clearly directed at the large numbers of rebel forces and internal refugees still at large in the monte. In a document entitled "Instructions to the ecclesiastical commissioners in their negotiations with the rebels on behalf of the government" dated February 4, 1850, the terms of reference of the commission and the conditions for a peaceful settlement were outlined in some detail. The main points reiterated previous assurances that those who acknowledged the sovereignty of the government of Yucatán would be allowed to return to their respective pueblos where

they would be received "con amor y cariño" and would be allowed to occupy their former homes and houseplots. Rebel leaders who willingly returned to their communities would not suffer retribution at the hands of local authorities, nor would those authorities have the right to intervene in those areas of justice which traditionally belonged within the jurisdiction of the caciques of the repúblicas de Indios. They would no longer be required to pay the head tax but a religious tax would still be levied to support the church and clergy. Those who owned private property would be restored to the full rights of ownership, and all citizens would be free to travel from one community to another for the purpose of buying and selling goods. All of these guarantees were to apply equally to "blancos y vecinos" who had taken part in the rebellion and still remained alienated from the government. Prisoners currently held by government forces were to be released and allowed to return to their respective villages where they would be reunited with their families.⁴⁹

Armed with these generous assurances, Father Vela and his associates applied themselves with renewed vigour to the task of arranging meetings with various groups of rebels. Vela concentrated his efforts on persuading Jacinto Pat's former lieutenant, José María Barrera, to agree to a formal meeting on May 4, 1850 at Kampocolché. In a letter written on April 7, 1850, Barrera reminded Vela that the government had never lived up to the promises of the Treaty of Tzucacab, and that genuine peace could only be built on those terms: "If you agree with these demands, we will have peace; if not, we will continue our struggle until we reach our goal . . . even though we have to struggle for another ten years, if you do not fulfill the promises, because

that is what we are fighting for; either we will destroy everyone, or we will all perish."⁵⁰ Despite Barrera's fatalist acceptance of the inevitability of conflict, Vela thought that he had succeeded in persuading the rebel leader to meet with him and Colonel Rosado at Kampocolché.

In the meantime, Florentino Chan had intercepted a letter between the commander of the garrison at Valladolid and one of his subordinates which implied that the clergy were simply being used as bait to bring the rebel leaders together so they could be captured.⁵¹ Chan's warning was taken seriously by the southern rebels. When Barrera and his associates failed to show up on the appointed day, government troops attacked the remnants of rebel forces remaining in the area. Even before the collapse of negotiations, it appears that Micheltorena had given orders to his field commanders to destroy the rebels wherever they could be found, to force them to surrender.⁵² Rebel leaders broke off negotiations and refused to entertain any more peace proposals from the government at this time. Barrera and his followers, along with most of the rebel leadership, retreated further into the southeastern jungles of the peninsula.

On May 25, 1850 General Micheltorena wrote to the Minister of War and the Navy regretting the failure of the ecclesiastical peace commission, but his comments must be taken with a degree of scepticism. Most sources make it clear that the two-track policy of the government was doomed to failure from the beginning. Both Baqueiro and Ancona, who held somewhat different views on the role of the clergy in these negotiations, imply that military victory was still the main thrust of the

government's strategy for ending the rebellion. Although Baqueiro admired the bravery of the clergy in the face of real danger, he admits that "the commissioners were seriously compromised in their mission of pacification. . . . It was a strange way to extend the olive branch; heavily armed patrols were sent out to scour the countryside for provisions, while in front of each of these patrols was a missionary, vested in clerical robes or habit, brandishing the documents which contained the [latest] amnesty offered by the government."⁵³ At the village of Nohbecan one of Vela's emissaries had been killed by the rebels for attempting to persuade dissidents to turn themselves in to government troops. Ancona is more contemptuous of the clergy's efforts than Baqueiro, stating that the priests were naive in their expectations that a negotiated peace could be achieved: "As had been foreseen by those who knew the Indians well, such were the results obtained by the ecclesiastical commissioners in their efforts at pacification. These efforts had been undertaken at the most inopportune time, because it appeared that all that was required was one final blow in order to destroy the rebels once and for all; the rebels pretended to accept the peace commissioners in order to ask for a ceasefire so they could take advantage of some breathing space in which to reconcile their internal differences."⁵⁴

González Navarro, however, implies that the peace commissioners were willing collaborators in the government's duplicity: "Appearances condemned Vela; among other reasons, Father Burgos had shown such joy in the capture of Pedro Pech, that even Father Sierra wrote in a Campechano newspaper that his words sounded more like those of a victorious military commander than a missionary animated by the spirit

of the gospel, whose only weapon should be charity."⁵⁵ Although the role of the clergy was not without ambiguity, their failure to achieve a negotiated settlement should not be attributed to naivete or hypocrisy; the situation was much more complicated than either of these judgements imply. Neither side had yet admitted defeat, nor even arrived at a realistic evaluation of their future prospects.

Micheltorena was still determined that more money and more soldiers would break the stalemate, while the emergence of the cult of the talking Cross in 1850 injected a new spirit of resistance into the rebel cause.

Sometime in the latter part of 1850, Barrera led his people to an uninhabited cenote sixty-four kilometers southeast of Sabán. There he discovered the image of a cross engraved in the trunk of a tree. The Maya took this as a sign that they continued to have divine protection and that this location was a safe place for them to remain. A village grew up around the site, known as Chan Santa Cruz, and despite being destroyed a number of times by government troops, it became the focal point of Mayan resistance for several decades. After Barrera's death, the cult of the Talking Cross was elaborated by subsequent rebel leaders as a powerful means of focusing the loyalty and devotion of the rebels.⁵⁶

Micheltorena's strategy had been one of advancing farther and farther into the southeastern region, establishing outposts as the soldiers advanced, in an attempt to limit the territory and resources available to the enemy. But in the midst of this gradual expansion of the army's field of operations, there was a rebel raid on Tekax on the morning of November 4, 1850, which occurred without warning and resulted in

the loss of all the ammunition of the garrison. Since this was a raid, not a protracted siege, there were few casualties, but it demonstrated that Tekax, even though it was now deep within government-held territory, could not defend itself with only a small garrison of militia (150 men). A few days later, the outpost at Xul was completely destroyed.⁵⁷ Even the military canton of Kampocolché, which had been repopulated with around ninety families and a sizable garrison, was attacked by a large rebel force on January 4, 1851. Incidents such as these led to a reevaluation of the approach adopted by Micheltorena, as it became obvious that the rebels, with their superior knowledge of the terrain and routes from the south, were able to conduct raids with impunity, particularly on settlements whose potential defenders were serving elsewhere in the campaign.

The growing discontent among the military was reflected in a long list of complaints submitted to the central government by Colonel Eulogio Rosado, Micheltorena's field commander. Rosado pointed out that at one time the forces assembled to put down the rebellion had exceeded 16,000. These numbers had been cut in half through casualties, desertion, and illness. Because the subsidies from both levels of government were inadequate, the soldiers were reduced to stealing maize and livestock from the peasants. After three years of almost continuous fighting, their uniforms were in tatters, they had no boots, and the rate of self-demobilization was increasing rapidly. The entire army was badly in need of reinforcements, and above all, they required extraordinary powers to bring the war to a successful conclusion.⁵⁸

These statements were met with alarm by the press of the federal capital, and the army was accused of insubordination and pronunciamiento.

Meanwhile, Micheltorena had requested a special committee composed of government officials and wealthy proprietors to raise a special levy of 304,000 pesos monthly, promising that with this amount he would be able to put an end to the rebellion in four months. Ancona comments that "the enormity of this sum . . . was equivalent to asking the impossible."⁵⁹ Instead, the junta promised the General a loan of 70,000 pesos, which was supposed to supplement the monthly subsidy of 16,000 voted by Congress during the previous year. At the same time, Micheltorena once again requested more troops from the federal government, but his appeal fell upon deaf ears. In Yucatán, Barbachano attempted to deal with the recruitment problem by issuing a new decree on February 27, 1851, requiring all non-Mayan males between the ages of sixteen and fifty-five to register for the National Guard and to pay a fine if they were unable to perform the required service.⁶⁰ Although resident employees of haciendas and ranchos were exempt from service in the National Guard, the government still faced stiff opposition from landowners who depended upon the same scarce pool of labour as did the army. In the face of federal indifference and local defiance of the latest attempt to raise money and recruit men, General Micheltorena resigned his commission, stating that he had no desire to sacrifice his military reputation in a campaign for which he had been denied the basic means of support.⁶¹

The resignation of Micheltorena came at the climax of a lengthy debate among the military and civilian authorities over the best strategy to pursue now that the rebels had been more or less driven out of those areas of the peninsula of vital importance to creole survival. While the continuing existence of large numbers of Mayan peasants outside the pale of government control constituted an affront to Yucatecan sovereignty, the fact that the centres of resistance were located far from the capital meant that the military stalemate was perceived with less urgency. Micheltorena's strategy of extending the area of operations far into enemy territory was costly in both men and materials, and moreover, ineffectual in controlling rebel raids on settlements within government-controlled territory. Critics reasoned that if the rebels could not be defeated with full mobilization, that is, the 16,000 men under arms in 1848, it was futile to aim for total victory when the state no longer had the resources to maintain an army of even half that size in the field over an extended period of time. The continuing shortage of manpower in the civilian sectors of the economy meant that post-war recovery was out of reach unless more human resources could be devoted to agriculture. Finally, the increasingly high rate of desertion and even mutinies indicated the extent of war-weariness among the troops, some of whom had not seen their homes and families for over three years.⁶² A new approach was advocated, one which concentrated on the defense of those communities most vulnerable to rebel attack, along the so-called *linea del defensa* or frontier. However, the debate did not address two serious problems: the fluid nature of the frontier and the continuing hostility of the civilian population.

From Extermination to Pacification

In April 1851, General Romulo Díaz de la Vega, who replaced Micheltoarena as military commander of Yucatán, was given broad powers to reorganize the army and more money to feed and equip the troops. After Díaz de la Vega arrived in Mérida on May 29, one of his first actions was to reorganize the army into three brigades and a flying column and send the rest of the troops home. Until then the state had had approximately 16,000 men under arms, at least on paper. Díaz de la Vega demobilized a significant number of these troops and sent them home as members of a reserve army called the "Sedentaria." In addition, strong measures were instituted to halt desertion and minimize abuses in the countryside: "the government hopes, that by paying the troops regularly, there will be no need to confiscate the food supplies of the peasantry, hounding them and driving them to seek refuge in the monte . . . [and] when they realize that they no longer have to give up their harvests, they will return to live in society. With this object in mind, after the troops have been reorganized and provision made for their subsistence, the soldiers must be forbidden to take anything from the Indians, and priests should [once again] be commissioned to persuade them to return to a civilized life."⁶³ Although Reina claims that this new policy represented a significant change of attitude on the part of the government toward the Mayan peasantry, from a policy of extermination to one of pacification, in implementation it differed little from previous attempts to try and persuade fugitives from the war to resettle in their former communities.⁶⁴ Patrols operating out of Tekax continued to confiscate or destroy food supplies and round up civilian prisoners.

However, the practice of sending resettled refugees to persuade family members still living in rebel communities to return to their villages began to be more widely implemented by local officials. Governor Barbachano decreed another ninety-day amnesty on April 1, 1851.⁶⁵ Non-combatants, primarily women, were allowed, indeed encouraged, to go and seek out family members still living in rebel-held territory and persuade them to return to their respective communities, without the threat of retribution.⁶⁶ Creole authorities based this strategy on intelligence gathered from returning refugees and captured fugitives who reported a widespread and "positive desire among the eastern rebels to return to allegiance to the government, primarily because of food shortages among them . . . but they are prevented from surrendering by their leaders, Bonifacio Novelo and Florentino Chan, who have taken strong measures to neutralize this possibility."⁶⁷ The main thrust of the pacification campaign at this time, therefore, was to try to detach rank and file from their leaders in order to resettle the villages in the disputed zone with small garrisons to protect them--similar to the strategic hamlet approach adopted by US forces in Vietnam.

In September 1851, a peace treaty was arranged with one group of rebels at Chichanhá, one of the main centres of contact with British lumber merchants from Belize. The Guatemalan corregidor of Petén, Modesto Méndez, was instrumental in convincing Angelino Itza, cacique of Chichanhá, to sign a peace treaty. Méndez was accused by Father Vela of meddling in the internal affairs of Yucatán, even though he had, according to Ancona, been requested to do so by Colonel Cirilo Baqueiro, then stationed in the Chênes region south of the Puuc.⁶⁸ This tentative agreement was

destroyed by a group of Chan Santa Cruz rebels led by José María Barrera who attacked Chichanhá the following month, burning the village and taking pacifico Mayan leaders into captivity. Around the same time Father Felipe Jesús Rodríguez, a priest who had remained at Chichanhá throughout the rebellion, was killed near Lochhá by rebel leaders opposed to the efforts of the ecclesiastical commission to negotiate a settlement (September 1851).⁶⁹

The struggle between the rebels and the government for the allegiance and support of those Maya who remained outside of the territory within the línea del defensa continued unabated throughout 1851 and 1852. Díaz de la Vega's policy of lenient treatment for those who gave themselves up to the authorities, while undoubtedly unpopular among many Yucatecan creoles who had lost family members during the uprising, was nonetheless grudgingly implemented by some local authorities. On November 19, 1851, the juez primero of Chikindzonot reported the surrender of two indigenous fugitives, Marcos Kauil and Apolinario Euan, both former residents of Ekpes, a village close to Peto. Kauil and Euan stated that they had not turned themselves in previously for fear of punishment. However, since their wives and children had been rounded up by government troops and taken to Valladolid, they had decided to come and ask permission to go to that city and look for their families. Although witnesses claimed that Kauil had been one of the main rebel captains in his village, the jefe político of Sotuta still granted him a passport to travel to Valladolid. The jefe político also admonished the juez de paz of Chikindzonot to treat former rebels with consideration, expressing the hope that such behaviour "would inspire

confidence among those who still remained in the rebel camps . . . and encourage them to surrender voluntarily and thus the war would end."⁷⁰

The policy of leniency achieved some success in the northeastern part of the peninsula, where one of the members of Vela's peace commission, Father José Antonio García, persuaded over sixty former residents of the pueblo of Xcan to resettle with their families under the governance of their own cacique and protected from rebel reprisals by creole troops occupying the region.⁷¹ The level of security afforded by the presence of government troops, however, was minimal, and, in the long run, illusory. In December of 1854 the principales of the village of Tekom in the partido of Valladolid complained to the governor that the undefended state of their village had proven an open invitation to rebels, who had made off with the few possessions of the poorest inhabitants, leaving their homes in ashes, and stealing their agricultural implements. The price of loyalty, of firm adherence to the government, was high; the leaders of the village felt that they were particularly vulnerable to attack because of their decision to accept resettlement; for this reason, they felt they deserved an exemption from payment of the personal contribution.⁷²

For the region south and east of the Puuc, Díaz de la Vega's policy of encouraging peaceful surrender had limited success. After the amnesty had been extended several months beyond the initial three-month period, during which only a few hundred presentados showed up, a campaign to round up the inhabitants of rebel communities in the vicinity of Lochhá was launched in the spring of 1852, organized and carried out by Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz of Tekax. The story of this counter-

insurgency operation needs to be told in full, because it illustrates the way in which the policy of pacification was implemented by military authorities at the local level.

Early in January 1852, the jefe político of Tekax, Francisco Galera, reported that the passports which he had issued in November and December to various women to return to rebel territory to look for family members had borne fruit. Three had returned, along with their husbands. In addition, four other refugee families from Pencuyut had surrendered to the canton at Xcobil (Xcabil), bearing with them the information that there were still at least one hundred unarmed Mayan families living in and around Lochhá. Contrary to reports of starvation, there was an abundance of corn, beans, and peppers growing in various newly-established milpa in the region. The returnees claimed that many of the refugees wanted to return to their home communities, but were prevented from doing so by their captains, Raimundo Chi, Juan Cauich, and Pedro Cantó.⁷³ This story corroborates the earlier report that there was a widespread desire on the part of the rank and file to accept the government amnesty. This may have been wishful thinking on the part of the military since the news was not followed by a flood of returning refugees.

However, by this time, military commanders had lost patience and decided to settle the issue by force. As part of a general campaign aimed at carrying the conflict into rebel territory, Colonel Ruiz and his men invaded the settlement of Lochhá and its satellite communities, meeting only scattered resistance but taking a significant number of prisoners, for the most part women and children. A lengthy despatch written by Colonel Ruiz and forwarded to Governor Barbachano by General López de Llergo,

commander of the reserve units, describes this counter-insurgency operation in detail as follows:

I wish to inform your excellency of the successful operation carried out by a force which left headquarters under my command on the 6th of last month [March 1852]. In our first engagement we defeated the enemy at Rancho Yakalsul and captured several weapons, leaving three dead in the rebel ambush, and suffering no casualties ourselves. On the 11th day of the same month, I despatched sixty men under the command of Captain Laureano Perez, to search for provisions for the garrison; in Rancho Gajam he took some prisoners who stated that the Indians were gathered at Chanchumhuas [Chunhuas] under the leadership of the rebel captain Encalada, in order to attack the garrison at Peto. Immediately he organized his troops for a march on Chanchumhuas, where he found that the enemy had completely disappeared--fleeing in a most cowardly manner and leaving in their haste seventeen rifles, some ammunition, and eight prisoners, who informed him that there is a priest named Trujillo who lives in Aguablanca [Belize] and it is he who manages the contract with the English and arranges for powder and other ammunition to be given to the rebels in exchange for payment in wood. On that day the captains of Macanche, Yakalzul, Nohkantemo [Kantemo] and other settlements had collected their people to go and

cut wood, and according to these same prisoners, there is discontent among them because of having to sell their labour.

On the 1st of the current month, I sent fifty men under the command of Lieutenant Don Tomas Miguel Méndez in order to make a thorough search for the stored food supplies of the rebels, and on the 4th when he returned to this town [Lochhá] he informed me that after having travelled through a multitude of small settlements where he collected several families . . . on the 3rd in Rancho Balché in an ambush he captured two Indians who declared that a quarter of a league away from Balché, they had left twenty-three of their companeros, armed and hiding in a milpa, preparing to ambush the troops along the route on which they planned to march. Officer Mendez offered them their liberty if they would lead a small party of our force to surprise them--upon agreeing with this proposition, the previously mentioned officer, Méndez, taking advantage of the full moon, sent a small patrol under the command of Sublieutenant Bobachilla . . . and armed only with machetes they fell upon the rebels around eleven o'clock at night, killing eight and capturing eleven rifles and seven regulation weapons, taking the rest as prisoners, most of them badly wounded. They also found fifteen boxes of cartridges, along with other ammunition, without having lost a single one of their own men.

On the 6th, Lieutenant Tomas Miguel Méndez went off on patrol again with sixty men and on the 7th he returned with a woman picked up from the rebel camp, who reported that the surprise attack during the night of April 3rd had persuaded the captains to gather all of the families for a retreat to the village of Macanche, nine leagues away from this canton, where the main body of rebels remain, armed and under the leadership of Zacarias May.⁷⁴

The prisoners taken in these raids south of Tekax were, for the most part (70 percent) from the villages of the Puuc. Of the seventy-four prisoners collected at Lochhá in April, 1852 and reported by Gumersindo Ruiz, 34 were from the partido of Tekax, 19 from Ticul, 13 from Peto, 4 from Sotuta, and 4 from other regions of the peninsula.⁷⁵ Similar lists of prisoners collected by patrols operating out of Peto and its advanced garrisons indicate that the majority of prisoners taken in the raids on Chan Santa Cruz and its satellite settlements were from villages in the partidos of Peto and Sotuta. This suggests that when the rebels regrouped and formed new communities in the aftermath of their retreat they continued to identify with particular communities or regions, rather than a centralized rebel command. The implications of this pattern for developing a strategy for pacification were significant. If various groups could be isolated and either eliminated or forced into a peaceful settlement, then the government had an opportunity for settling the conflict, or at least lowering the intensity of military clashes so as to lessen the drain on resources needed to maintain an army in the field.

What happened to the prisoners taken during the course of the extensive campaign of 1851-52 mounted by Díaz de la Vega? Guidelines for the treatment of prisoners as outlined by both the ecclesiastical peace commission and senior army officials were swept aside during this counter-insurgency operation. Although Díaz de la Vega had revived the instructions issued by his predecessor, General Micheltorena, for the humane treatment of prisoners, particularly women and children, and the state legislature had passed a decree forbidding the exile of orphans to other parts of Mexico and Cuba, these provisions were not adhered to by many authorities. Under conditions of war, local commanders probably found it impossible to distinguish between rebels and refugees, between guerrilla fighters and non-combatants, particularly when the rebels had been generally identified as Mayan peasants. It is not surprising that anyone caught living outside of authorized settlements was considered fair game for the counter-insurgency campaign. Many unfortunate families were caught up in the countryside sweeps made by small patrols, in incidents similar to those described above, and a few were resettled in the occupied villages. On April 21, 1852, the jefe político of Peto reported that the juez de paz of Sacalaca, Gregorio Jimenez, had freed a number of families found living in the rebel camps, "offering them assistance and protection."⁷⁶

Many more, however, found themselves on forced marches, short of food and water and generally in poor condition by the time they reached the larger towns. Baqueiro reports that one such raid in the Chênes campaign resulted in an influx of more than three hundred prisoners who "flooded the streets and plazas of Hopelchén,

the regional capital . . . without any visible means of support. Almost naked, these wretched ones were thin and emaciated, dying of hunger and exhaustion, and, saddest of all, perishing in the places where they had been dumped, with hardly a morsel of bread in their stomachs. Their poor children were abandoned under the most cruel circumstances until citizens of the town took them into their households, or they were rounded up and sent in groups to Mérida or Campeche."⁷⁷

As we have already seen, local governments had few resources to support the troops, let alone the prisoners who were left rotting in the jails and garrisons of regional capitals such as Tekax, Peto, Hopelchén, and Valladolid before they were transported to Mérida. Governor Barbachano had maintained all along that the state government lacked the resources to deal with prisoners on a scale that the rebellion had engendered; exile was more humane than execution. This was supposedly one of his major arguments for allowing Cuban labour contractors to get involved in the recruitment of prisoners of war as indentured labourers. But cries of outrage from federal politicians and the national press over the sale of prisoners forced the Yucatán government to put a temporary halt to this traffic in bodies in 1849 and hundreds of prisoners, for the most part women and children, were thrown on the mercy of the local authorities.

The prisoners gathered by Colonel Ruiz and his men were sent on to Tekax, where the subdelegado, Domingo Tenreyro, informed the governor that since the state authorities had not provided the army with extra funds for the maintenance of prisoners, he was going to deduct their daily expenses from the treasury of the

ayuntamiento: "Prisoners, both male and female, proceeding from the rebel camps, are continually arriving from the various military outposts and as the Sr. Comandante Militar of this garrison has informed me that it is not his responsibility to maintain these prisoners, he has requested me to supply funds from the local [subdelegado] budget of which I am presently acting treasurer, assuring me that Your Excellency will give the order to the Treasury to cover these costs . . . including those incurred in Oxkutzcab when the prisoners pass through that village."⁷⁸

Five months later, the jefe político of Tekax, Francisco Coello, wrote to the governor asking permission to allow the twelve indigenous prisoners still remaining in custody in the local jail to be assigned as agricultural labourers to various individual hacendados. Since municipal authorities had not yet received any funds for previous expenses incurred for the maintenance of prisoners, it seemed reasonable to the members of the ayuntamiento that the earnings of these prisoners be turned over to the municipal treasury as compensation for their upkeep. According to Coello, this idea had originated from Gumersindo Ruiz, commander of the local militia unit, and a local landowner himself.⁷⁹ As González Navarro comments, "the military commanders had discovered that putting prisoners to work in the garrisons and providing female prisoners as domestic servants for the elite households of Mérida and Campeche was good business. Likewise, orphans had become precious commodities; it was reported that one officer had collected as many as twenty children, using the profits from this enterprise to finance his diversions during lulls in the campaign. In other cases the fate of prisoners was immediate; after hanging them, the soldiers dragged their bodies

around the camps. The Indians resisted with a stoicism which the creoles dismissed as stupidity."⁸⁰

The Peace Treaty of 1853

Early in 1853, a combination of factors led eventually to a more concentrated effort at a negotiated peace settlement. The death of José María Barrera in December 1852, one of the few remaining caudillos of the original rebel leadership, caused yet another power struggle at Chan Santa Cruz, while an epidemic of cholera, spreading from Cuba in 1850, made serious inroads into manpower on both sides of the conflict. A Mayan resident of Tiholop who managed to escape from Chan Santa Cruz after having been abducted during a raid, reported that while he was held prisoner by the rebels, upwards of 30 to 50 people a day were dying of cholera.⁸¹ By this time, the epidemic was widespread over the entire peninsula, recognizing no distinction in its victims between creole and Mayan, rich or poor. One of the victims of cholera, ironically, was Colonel Eulogio Rosado, Barrera's antagonist at the siege of Kamocolché in 1850.⁸² With some of the major actors removed from the scene, the stage was set for a fresh approach to solving the conflict.

General Díaz de la Vega, who had achieved some impressive but temporary military victories against the rebels during the course of the lengthy campaign of 1852, was elevated to the governorship directly as a result of Santa Anna's final term in office as president of Mexico, which began on April 20, 1853. Although Barbachano had tried to reassure the dictator that he would not oppose the latest centralist regime, Santa Anna preferred to rely upon military figures to take over the administration of

government at the state level, and Díaz de la Vega was a logical choice for Yucatán. He was in office for only fifteen months--from August 7, 1853 to November 22, 1854. Nonetheless, he accomplished something for which Yucatecans had been striving for six years. He managed to negotiate a treaty with a diverse group of rebels who later became known as the Pacificos del Sur.

Most observers record that the rebel movement, despite its ideological reinvigoration, had been running out of steam ever since Barrera's failure to recapture Kamocolché in 1851. Díaz de la Vega's strategy of separating followers from leaders may have undermined the unqualified support which Mayan peasants gave their leaders in the initial stages of the rebellion. But internal dissension (the alleged murder of Barrera at the end of 1852 was a symptom of this) probably had a greater impact on the decision of some rebel leaders once again to approach the British colonial authorities in Belize to act as mediators in negotiating a truce. In May 1853, José María Tzuc, who as a former lieutenant of Jacinto Pat had led the assault on Bacalar in 1849, asked Superintendant Fancourt to get in touch with the government of Yucatán. Reed says that Tzuc had become cacique of Chichanhá after the defeat of Angelino Itza by Barrera and his men in September 1851. Therefore, Tzuc was presumably still allied with the Chan Santa Cruz movement at that time. Sometime between then and the spring of 1853, Tzuc threw in his lot with the rebel communities of Macanche, Lochhá, Mesapich, and other small settlements located south of the Puuc, and it was this group of leaders who indicated their willingness to negotiate.

Díaz de la Vega, whom Marie Lapointe characterizes as an astute and pragmatic politician, responded quickly to this initiative by appointing Gregorio Cantón and Eduardo López as commissioners.⁸³ They arrived in Belize in September 1853, armed with secret instructions which gave them ample powers to negotiate a settlement granting the rebels virtually all that they had been demanding since 1848, provided they recognize the sovereignty of Yucatán over the region which they occupied. In a sense, it was a final offer of amnesty, which guaranteed the security of anyone who wished to return to their pueblos of origin, yet at the same time recognized the right of the independent communities to exist outside of the region defined by the *linea del defensa* established by government forces. Leaders of the autonomous communities were to allow missionaries to live among them and trade to be revived. The commissioners were even empowered to allow each householder to keep his own weapon for hunting. The rebels were to be offered an exemption from the head tax for four years, but if they did not accept this condition, then the commissioners were authorized to grant them an indefinite exemption, providing they were willing to pay fees for the support of the church in their communities. Rebel leaders were expected to communicate the terms of the agreement to all of their followers, giving assurances that they would not be punished or subjected to forced labour for any deeds they had committed in the course of the rebellion. Indeed, the past was to be obliterated, "as though a veil had been drawn entirely over it."⁸⁴

Tzuc and his fellow captains accepted most of the terms of the agreement, but were less enthusiastic about encouraging their followers to return to their communities

of origin. They also refused outright to pay the head tax, stating that this had been one of the principle forms of exploitation inflicted on them by tax collectors and subdelegados. While they agreed to recognize Yucatecan sovereignty over the region, they upheld their right to continue to live in the new villages they had established in the aftermath of the rebellion. Cantón and López recommended that a census of these settlements be undertaken as soon as possible so as to determine the number of rebels who had agreed to the truce. This issue was fundamental since it was clear that Tzuc did not speak for all of the Mayan rebels, and the government officials were not sure how many fighters the pacífico captains controlled. As it turned out, the pacífico communities represented only about one fifth of the rebels, with the remainder still firmly under the control of the leadership at Chan Santa Cruz. The settlement which Cantón and López negotiated was therefore limited, both in its scope and in its results.

The treaty with the Pacificos was signed on September 16, 1853. In a letter written the following day from Belize, Cantón and López reveal nothing of the limited nature of the treaty. As far as they were concerned, José María Tzuc represented "all of the Indians of the South," not simply a splinter group. They were relieved to discover that the British did not support the rebels' territorial claims which had been a condition of the previous negotiations at the Bahía de la Ascención. Moreover, they were satisfied with the compromise reached regarding the payment of religious fees, which they felt would make up for the losses in tax revenue from refusal to pay a head tax. But in one important aspect, the commissioners were not successful. The agreement did not result in an immediate repatriation of former rebels and refugees

who had fled the partidos of Peto, Sotuta, and Tekax where most of the fighting had occurred. Many of Tzuc's followers preferred to stay away from the established villages controlled by government appointees, choosing instead to remain in remote and tiny settlements in the southern jungles, governed by their own captains, and free to engage in economic and social relations with the British or the Yucatecan residents of neighbouring partidos. As Ancona comments, the relationship of the Pacificos with the government of Yucatán was an "anomalous and precarious" one which continued to threaten the security of the villages along the military linea del defensa for several years.⁸⁵

Soon after the signing of the treaty with the Pacificos, Yucatecans also discovered just how limited its impact would be, because of the large number of rebels who had remained aloof from the process. According to Lapointe, in 1855 there were still as many as 40,000 Maya who recognized Chan Santa Cruz as the political and cultural centre of their continuing resistance to creole domination.⁸⁶ They became known as the People of the Cross or Cruzob, because of their devotion to the shrine established by José María Barrera in 1850. Their capacity to defend themselves and conduct periodic raids on villages within the zone of conflict was seemingly unaffected by the schism of Tzuc, but, more significantly, they were able to take advantage of the recurring power struggles among creole elites which reflected, in part, the conflicts of the country as a whole.

During the first few months of his governorship, Díaz de la Vega was faced with a rebellion led by junior officers of the militia, Sebastien Molas and Manuel

Cepeda Peraza. Molas was executed and his fellow conspirator, Cepeda Peraza, went into exile in New Orleans, to re-emerge as a champion of liberal federalism during the Wars of the Reform and the French Intervention. In order to put down the rebellion (really a mutiny or cuartelazo) Díaz de la Vega recalled troops from the garrisons of Peto and other frontier communities. Despite the confusion over leadership in the aftermath of Barrera's death and the loss of support from those who had made a separate peace, the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz took advantage of the withdrawal of troops from the southeast to penetrate into the central region of the peninsula, conducting successful raids on the towns of Tihosuco, Ichmul, Dzonotchel, Saban and Sacalaca in the partido of Peto, as well as Tacchibichen, Tixcaltuyu, Yaxcaba, and other pueblos in the partido of Sotuta. This was to become a familiar pattern over the next several years. Whenever Yucatecan creole politicians began to lose themselves in power struggles or were caught up in the larger issues of Mexican politics, the communities of central Yucatan were left undefended and the rebel communities of the southeast were able to replenish their wealth and population with booty and captives from successful raids.

At the end of 1853, according to González Navarro, the Maya of Yucatán could be divided into three main groups: 1) the Pacificos in the south, independent, but pacified; 2) the Cruzob in the east, independent, and still rebellious; 3) the peasants of the northwest who were the majority, dependent and faithful. The image of dependent, faithful Maya was a necessary fantasy for the creole rulers of Yucatán, held onto as a way of maintaining their dominance over that part of the peninsula

which they controlled by force of arms. In the region in between, the zone of conflict, Mayan peasants resisted the attempts of creole landowners to reimpose the agrarian structure of pre-war Yucatán, in its full ramifications, and exercised as much autonomy as they dared in the contested middle ground between guerrillas and government forces.

NOTES

1. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 80.
2. Baqueiro, Ensayo histórico, vol. 1, 31. Imán was supported by many indigenous people in 1840, according to Baqueiro, because one of his strategies was "to spread the rumour among the indigenous classes that they would no longer have to pay obvenciones to their priests, that his movement was going to abolish or at least diminish the head tax, and finally that they would redistribute enough land for everyone to support themselves."
3. Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 378. Reina suggests that creole leaders initially pursued a policy of extermination until the arrival of General Rómulo Díaz de la Vega in April, 1851 when the policy became more one of forced surrender. I fail to see the difference, apart from the fact that during the second phase of the war, people who resisted were not killed as a matter of course but were taken as prisoners of war, which amounted to the same thing for most of them, over the long run.
4. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 44-45 and Appendix, Document 1, "Prosecutor's summary in the trial against Francisco Uc and his accomplices," 403-408. According to Cline, Uc was denounced by a nephew who coveted his property-- Uc was a wealthy and respected citizen of Mérida who had many friends among the creole elite; despite numerous appeals on his behalf, he was executed on September 22, 1847. While Ancona believes there was no doubt that Uc was guilty, he also admits that in many other cases "the authorities . . . exceeded the limits of justice and the rights of the accused. This indiscreet zeal, this desire to punish the Indians through a reign of terror, probably brought to the scaffold many who did not deserve it, and caused the full force of an arbitrary and circumstantial law to weigh upon the heads of many innocent people."
5. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 80. Baqueiro reports the testimony of the cacique to the newspaper El Amigo del Pueblo, in Ensayo histórico, vol. 1, 273.
6. Baqueiro, Ensayo histórico, vol. 1, 272.
7. La Unión (Mérida), January 1, 1848, as quoted in Leticia Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 393, 397.
8. According to Eligio Ancona, supporters of Miguel Barbachano, including Colonel Cetina who had led the pronunciamiento and occupied the citadel of San Benito on October 6, 1847, made overtures to Pat and other rebel leaders, in order to gain support for the reinstatement of Barbachano as governor. Ancona accuses rebel leaders of pretending to accept this alliance only for the purposes of encouraging the

- continuing divisions in creole society so as to pursue their own objective, which was the extermination of all whites. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 59.
9. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 88. The author does not indicate where he gets this figure. Ancona says that 2,000 hidalgos were serving with the militia, and this does seem more likely, given the fact that there were only 16,000 troops mobilized at the height of the conflict, and the government would have been reluctant to have a majority of Mayan soldiers among their troops. Moreover, Maya were specifically excluded from recruitment, when the state militia was organized into units of the National Guard.
10. Santiago Méndez, "Decreto," January 14, 1848, as quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 398.
11. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 310.
12. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 82; Reed, The Caste War, 88.
13. Agustín Yáñez, Don Justo Sierra: su vida, sus ideas y su obra (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1962), 12. According to the government decree announcing Méndez' resignation on March 25, 1848, "the insurgent Indians repeatedly stated that they would only enter into negotiations with an administration headed by Miguel Barbachano, first speaker of the executive council, thus confirming that if a peace agreement could be made with him, it would be adhered to and sustained."
14. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 103.
15. As quoted in Baqueiro, Ensayo histórico, vol. 1, 384.
16. Biblioteca Dávalos Hurtado, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, microfilm roll 38, La Guerra de Castas, Letter from Jacinto Pat to Felipe Rosado, Peto, April 2, 1848, as quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 399.
17. Reed, The Caste War, 89.
18. Reed, The Caste War, 93.
19. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 88.
20. The irony arises from the circumstances under which the rebellion broke out--it had been the American blockade of the port of Campeche which had led Barret and his supporters to overthrow Barbachano and thus provide an opening for the Mayan rebels to issue their call to arms in 1847.
21. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán. vol. 4, 131.

22. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 89.
23. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 143-147.
24. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 148.
25. Reed, The Caste War, 106.
26. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 178-180.
27. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 184.
28. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 187.
29. El Fénix (Campeche), December 20, 1848. As quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 369.
30. El Fénix (Campeche), November 15, 1848. As quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 369.
31. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 241.
32. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 118-119.
33. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 245.
34. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 253.
35. Reed, The Caste War, 122. See also, Reina's quote from the letter intercepted and translated by Father Vela which refers to the interest of los señores ingleses in a census of Mayan refugees in the southern jungle. Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 383.
36. Reed, The Caste War, 104.
37. Lorena Careaga Viliesid, Lecturas básicas para la historia de Quintana Roo, vol. 4, 44; Angel Eduardo Cal, "Anglo Maya Contact in Northern Belize: a study of British policy toward the Maya during the Caste War of Yucatán, 1847-1872." (M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1983), 53-55.
38. Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán (hereafter cited as AGEY), Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 36, Superintendent Fancourt to Governor Barbachano, December 10, 1849.
39. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 93.
40. As quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 383, fn. 70.

41. Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 372.
42. In December 1850, Sierra lamented the population losses caused by the war and the effect they would have on economic development. He wrote, "we are deeply concerned that without them [Mayan workers] nothing can be achieved in the area of agriculture, nor will the wealth of the country ever be developed." (El Fénix, 10 December 1850).
43. During the spring of 1849 the National Congress had debated without resolution the assistance requested by Barbachano. In the end, the Minister of Finance had ordered the suspension of aid promised by the President unless Yucatán ceased to engage in the contracting of Mayan prisoners of war as indentured labourers. Careaga Viliesid, Lecturas básicas para la historia de Quintana Roo, vol. 4, 43.
44. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 286.
45. As quoted in Gonzalez Navarro, Raza y tierra, 92.
46. As quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 376. Unsigned letter to Captain Pedro Reyes, Xmacancheakal, August 28, 1850.
47. Boletín Oficial (Mérida), December 19, 1849. Dispatch from the garrison of Bolonchenticul, December 12, 1849.
48. Boletín Oficial (Mérida), December 4, 1849.
49. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 37, "Instrucciones para que las comisiones eclesiasiticas se sujeten en los convenios que pueden celebrar en nombre del Gobierno con los sublevados, siempre que se reduscan a su obediencia, como unicas que puede concederles," Mérida, February 4, 1850.
50. As quoted in Reina, Rebeliones Campesinas, 374.
51. Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 375.
52. As quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 375. Letter from Eulogio Rosado to Canuto Vela, Saban, April 24, 1850.
53. Baqueiro, Ensayo histórico, vol. 2, 232.
54. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 283.
55. As quoted in González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 94.
56. Reed, The Caste War, 135-138.

57. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 301.
58. Remarks attributed to Eulogio Rosado, Comandante General del estado de Yucatán, January 1851, as quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 377.
59. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 309.
60. Eligio Ancona, ed., Colección de leyes, decretos, ordenes y demas disposiciones de tendencia general expedidas por el poder legislativo del estado de Yucatán, vol. 1, December 31, 1850 to September 30, 1858 (Mérida: Imprenta de "El Eco del Comercio," 1882), 22-28.
61. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 309.
62. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 310.
63. Rómulo Díaz de la Vega, Instruccionnes del nuevo comandante general de Yucatán, April 16, 1851, as quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 378.
64. Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 378.
65. Ancona, ed., Colección de leyes, decretos, vol. 1, 54.
66. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Galera to Governor Barbachano, January 14, 1852.
67. Rómulo Díaz de la Vega to the Ministry of War, "Informe sobre la situacion que guarda la guerra," May 6, 1851, as quoted in Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, 379.
68. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 37, Letter to the Governor of Yucatán from Modesto Mendez, Corregidor, Distrito del Petén, Guatemala, Dec. 9, 1850.
69. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Iglesia, Caja 52, Canuto Vela to Governor Barbachano, July 27, 1852. Vela's letter accompanies a petition from Rodriguez's mother for a pension since her son had been killed in the service of the government. Ancona places Rodriguez in Chichanhá (vol. 4, 312) but the letter written by Father Vela states that although he was held responsible by rebels for the peace settlement in Chichanhá, he was killed at Chakán Varquez, a rancho near Lochhá.
70. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 46, Jefatura Política de Sotuta, Pascual Espejo to Governor Barbachano, November 21, 1851.
71. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 46, Ecclesiastical Commission in Tihosuco, Canuto Vela to Governor Barbachano, December 19, 1851.

72. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 59, "Solicitud" from the principales of Tekom, Partido of Valladolid, December 19, 1854.
73. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Galera to Governor Barbachano, January 14, 1852.
74. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 49, López de Llergo to Governor Barbachano, April 24, 1852.
75. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 49, Milicia--Peto and Tekax, Gumersindo Ruiz to Governor Barbachano, April 11 and June 20, 1852.
76. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Peto, Felipe Rosado to Governor Barbachano, April 21, 1852.
77. Serapio Baquero, Ensayo histórico, vol. 2, 427.
78. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Domingo Tenreyro to Governor Barbachano, May 12, 1852.
79. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Coello to Governor Barbachano, October 2, 1852.
80. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 97. These practices apparently continued despite an executive order of March 22, 1851, which forbade the capture and deportation of orphans outside the peninsula and imposed a fine of 10 - 50 pesos or an equal number of days in prison on those persons charged with such an offence. Ancona, ed. Colección de leyes, decretos, vol. 1, 33.
81. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 54, Jefatura Política de Sotuta, José María Esquivel to General Díaz de la Vega, November 16, 1853.
82. Reed, The Caste War, 151.
83. Marie Lapointe, Los Mayas rebeldes de Yucatán, (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 1983), 107.
84. "Instrucciones privadas para la seducción de los sublevados," Mérida, July 12, 1853, Biblioteca Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona, Mss. Collection, 349 (hereafter cited as BCCA Mss.).
85. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 4, 349.
86. Lapointe, Los Mayas rebeldes, 76.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF RURAL SOCIETY: 1853-1857

Introduction

When news of the peace accord of September 16, 1853 finally reached Mérida, Yucatecan creole society heaved a collective sigh of relief and returned to the business of repairing the damage caused by the war and the excitement of partisan politics. In Mexico City, Santa Anna maintained his grip on the reins of power for two more years through a judicious use of bribery and intimidation of potential rivals, while the opposition developed an alternative programme which emerged as the Plan of Ayutla. Events on the national stage, however, had little impact on peninsular politics, apart from a change of governors. In November 1854, General Díaz de la Vega was recalled to the capital, despite his relative success in handling the Mayan rebellion. He was temporarily replaced by José Cadenas, commander of the military forces in Yucatán, while Santa Anna decided which general among the many who were jockeying for power around him to send into exile as governor of Yucatán. In the end, General Pedro de Ampudia was chosen to replace Díaz de la Vega, but his term in office lasted only a few months, until the liberals under Ignacio Comonfort and Benito Juárez ushered in the age of La Reforma.

On the level of state politics, the Liberal victory in the country as a whole meant a return to the electoral process for choosing a governor. Although Barbachano had been imprisoned in the fortress of San Juan de Ulúa at Vera Cruz by Díaz de la Vega, who suspected him of encouraging the mutiny of Molas and Cepeda Peraza, he

was not even considered for the position. He had made the mistake of accepting, during the last days of Santa Anna's regime, an honorary appointment from the dictator, and was thus discredited in the eyes of Yucatecan liberals. Instead, Santiago Méndez was elected for another term in office in November 1855. Under his leadership, the state government preoccupied itself with questions of post-war economic recovery, including fiscal reform and agricultural development.¹ Méndez is credited with restoring good financial management to state government, and laying the foundation for future decades of economic prosperity by his encouragement of the henequen industry and a shifting of focus away from the economic potential of the central region to the northwest.²

By 1855, the limited nature of the peace agreement with the Mayan rebels was apparent, yet Yucatecan creoles chose to ignore the continuing raids on communities in the partidos of Peto, Sotuta, and Tekax. Díaz de la Vega's practice of maintaining only a small force of approximately 2,000 active soldiers in the field, divided into two "flying columns" commanded by Colonels José María Novelo and Pablo Antonio Gonzáles, was continued throughout this period, while small garrisons of militia were scattered sparsely among the smaller settlements along the military frontier. From 1855 on, Nelson Reed says that the creole elite unilaterally declared the rebellion over, despite the fact that "there had been no victory, and there would be fighting for years to come . . . If it could not be suppressed, Yucatecan pride decreed that it should be ignored."³ Nonetheless, scarce resources still continued to be diverted for defence and although the intensity of the conflict subsided, the presence of the Pacificos to the

south of Tekax introduced a new element into the complex swirl of economic and political interests which dominated the process of reconstruction in the central and southern regions of the state.

In the zone of conflict between the northwest controlled by the government of Mérida and the southeast controlled by the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz, local and regional elites struggled to reassert their economic and political dominance over Mayan peasants who had until very recently been engaged in open rebellion against their landlords and political bosses. The process of reconciliation was painfully slow, as refugees continued to trickle back to their former pueblos and shoulder the task of rebuilding homes and resuming their agricultural labours. New caciques were chosen from among Mayan hidalgos who had supposedly proven their loyalty by assisting government troops against the rebels. New jefes políticos were appointed from among the creole militia officers who had proven their bravery in battle and deserved a reward for their service in the various campaigns against the enemy. The emergence of new regional elites who had gained wealth and power as a result of their connections with Díaz de la Vega complicated the political situation following the overthrow of Santa Anna.

Added to this volatile mixture was the continuing decline of Campeche as a seaport and the resurgence of Mérida as the economic and political hub of the peninsula. The creole elites of the partidos of Peto and Tekax found themselves in a difficult position as a result of this realignment of economic forces. On the eve of the rebellion, sugar had been the engine of the regional economy, attracting a growing

population of migrant workers and small scale entrepreneurs who settled in the towns and new communities south of Tekax. Sugar surpluses were exported through the port of Campeche, and sugar growers in Tekax and Peto frequently aligned themselves with the interests of that port city. In the aftermath of the war the population of Tekax partido had dropped to less than one-quarter its pre-war size, while the majority of sugar ranchos and haciendas had been destroyed in the course of the conflict.

Nonetheless, some members of the regional elite continued to hold on to the pre-war dream of prosperity through sugar and the old ties with Campeche. While most of the landowners of the region south of the Puuc had fled permanently because of the lack of security in that area, many of the creole hacendados around Tekax returned to their properties and began the process of restoration. For several years after the rebellion, owners of property in the partidos of Peto and Tekax devoted their efforts to rebuilding the sugar economy, despite the continuing threat of rebel incursions and the serious lack of manpower.

The importance of sugar in the pre-war economy was partly due to its potential earnings as an export crop, but in the aftermath of the rebellion it took several years for sugar production to return to a level sufficient to satisfy even the domestic market.⁴ Much of the locally-produced sugar was refined and distilled into aguardiente, used by landlords as a means of securing a labour force through debt. Aguardiente was used extensively in village fiestas, and flowed freely at the regional markets held in conjunction with patronal feast days in communities throughout the peninsula.⁵ In the fragile economy of the post-war period, local elites, desperate to

generate income and not yet oriented to the crop of the future, henequen, attempted to revive the sugar industry in the region, for which they needed the cooperation of the state authorities in Mérida. This eventually embroiled them in renewed commercial and political rivalry between Campeche and Mérida, which erupted into open conflict following the election of Pantaleón Barrera, who succeeded Méndez as governor on July 26, 1857.

Chapter Three will explore the interweaving of a complex narrative with themes of resettlement, reconstruction, and economic recovery. The overall issue to be addressed is how local elites went about the task of reconstructing rural society in the Puuc, and how peasants responded to attempts of the authorities to reestablish economic and political dominance in this contested region.

Resettlement

The rebellion had uprooted tens of thousands of people. While the majority of creole families fled west to Mérida and Campeche, Mayan peasants went in the opposite direction, often in the wake of the retreating rebel armies. Approximately fourteen thousand refugees, both creole and Mayan, ended up in Belize, where they were encouraged to settle permanently in areas that had previously been sparsely occupied.⁶ The number of rebels still paying allegiance to Chan Santa Cruz in the 1850s has been estimated variously from forty to sixty thousand, while the population of the pacifico communities numbered around twelve thousand. Another several thousand had fled the peninsula altogether, settling in such diverse places as Cuba, Tabasco, and Vera Cruz. Like the thousand or so residents of Peto who turned

themselves over to the military authorities after the recovery of the town in 1848, many residents of villages had simply melted into the surrounding countryside to await the outcome of local skirmishes between rebel and government troops. The juez de paz of the village of Dzan reported in May 1848 that "all of the inhabitants of that village had abandoned their homes, leaving behind maize, beans, and other necessities."⁷ As many historians have noted, Mayan peasants had a repertoire of survival strategies in times of war, plague, or famine; the dispersal of the population into small settlements scattered throughout the monte was a time-honoured practice.⁸

After the acute phase of the rebellion was over, small groups of refugees began trickling back to their home villages, but by 1854, the population of the partido of Tekax was still only one quarter of its pre-war size (it dropped from 42,538 to 9,249; see Table 1).⁹ While these figures gradually improved over the next decade, this region, once the most densely populated of the peninsula, did not reach the numbers reported in the pre-rebellion census of 1846 until well into the twentieth century.¹⁰ For reasons of security, as well as economic recovery, successive state governments encouraged the repopulation of this region, but there were serious impediments to a successful resettlement policy, over and above the continuing threat of rebel raids. Not only were Mayan peasants reluctant to submit themselves to what amounted to military occupation, landlords were waiting to collect old debts, and local authorities were eager to requisition community labour for the reconstruction of damaged public buildings and roads. But, there were definite limits to the amount of pressure that could be exerted to persuade people to return and stay in one place. The reimposition

of the forced labour services, the contribución personal, or obvenciones religiosas, could easily persuade villagers to seek refuge among the pacifico or rebel communities of the south.

Table 1 ¹¹	
POPULATION TRENDS IN THE PARTIDO OF TEKAX	
1794	41,576
1833	39,200*
1837	34,858
1846	42,538
1854	9,249
1862	11,802
1867	11,783
1881	13,395
1895	18,489
1900	19,757

On October 14, 1852, the state government issued the first of many decrees requiring those who had "emigrated for fear of the barbarians to return to their home communities."¹² Local officials were charged with the responsibility of returning migrants in their communities to their place of origin unless they had already re-

*Estimate: In his 1978 article "Población y Guerra de Castas" Salvador Rodriguez Losa reports 52,000 estimated deaths from the cholera epidemic of 1833-35 for the whole peninsula. According to Lawrence Remmers (1981: 90) the partido of Tekax contained 8.35% of the total population of Yucatan. I have therefore calculated 8.35% of 52,000 to estimate the approximate number of cholera deaths in the partido. This figure of 4,342 has then been added to the census figures of 1837 to estimate the probable population for 1833.

established themselves and were able to support their families by some "honest mode of subsistence."¹³ Many communities in the south were resettled, including Saban, Sacalaca, and Ichmul, by presentados and refugees from other villages in the region, whose homes had been destroyed during the course of the war. They were persuaded to settle in these garrisoned outposts deep in rebel territory as a means of maintaining the fiction of government presence in that region. Priests were reassigned to some of these communities, and an attempt was made to restore an atmosphere of normalcy by reappointing the caciques and other officials of the repúblicas de Indios.

But these villages were military cantons, defended by troops and resettled by peasants whose loyalty was questionable, at least as far as the military and civil authorities were concerned. And despite the important role that some of the clergy had played in the pacification process, the old quarrels which had divided civil and religious authorities in the decades before the rebellion still simmered just below the surface. In September 1852, the jefe político of Peto reported a conflict in Ichmul which had developed between the juez de paz and the cura, Father José Encarnación Urruña, over his relationship with the cacique of the república, Matias Canul. Canul had apparently told the creole judge that he had been advised by Father Urruña that he did not have to obey the civilian or military authorities of the community, and that the local Indian government still had jurisdiction over their own people in matters which they had traditionally controlled. The jefe complained to the governor that "the doctrines which this priest is continually feeding to the cacique are highly prejudicial to the maintenance of public order, since they are undermining all of the directives

and circulars issued by your office . . . We must cut off this abuse at its origin, for the longer it is tolerated, the more likely it will lead to irremediable evil . . . This priest is always straying far afield from his sacred duties, as all of the vecinos of that pueblo will testify, meddling in political issues, fomenting the germ of discord, and keeping the community stirred up in a constant state of agitation . . . for this reason he must be replaced."¹⁴

While there is no way of telling how many refugees and former rebels were actually resettled in their communities of origin, there are some references to petitions from small landowners to reoccupy lands abandoned in the course of the rebellion. On May 6, 1850, Pascual Espejo, jefe político of the partido of Sotuta, wrote a letter accompanying a petition from two vecinos, former residents of Tacchibichén, requesting permission to resettle there. Espejo recommended that their petition be ignored, given the fact that the village where they wished to settle was not garrisoned, on a route which gave easy access to rebel bands on their way to attack the regional capital; moreover, the jefe charged that one of the signatories to the petition, Vicente Ruiz, had left his son among the rebels and had returned simply to see if a milpa which belonged to him had been burned in preparation for planting. Espejo also reminded the governor that the inhabitants of Tacchibichén, even though they were not Mayan, had taken an active part in support of the rebels, harassing government troops whenever they had attempted to occupy the village and distinguishing themselves in various attacks on the town of Yaxcaba in the uprisings of 1847 and 1848.¹⁵ The other petitioner, Anastasio Puc, had been identified by informants as "one of the most

ardent supporters of the rebel cause." For all of these reasons, Espejo urged the governor to deny the petition; Barbachano agreed with the recommendation of his deputy.¹⁶ Neither of these petitioners appear in the Censo de fincas rústicas of 1856, so it may be assumed that they did not get permission to return and take possession of their lands.¹⁷

Reluctance to authorize the resettlement of former rebels reveals the extent to which local officials were preoccupied with problems of security and the threat of rebel infiltration. Both military and civilian officials attempted to keep track of the inhabitants under their jurisdiction, but the use of passports to control population movements was a rather blunt instrument, and proved largely ineffectual because it was difficult to separate those who had legitimate reasons for travel from those who had other purposes in mind. On January 4, 1854 the Díaz government issued an order exempting both "Indios presos" and "arrieros," responsible for supplying the towns with food, from the law requiring passports.¹⁸ Muleteers were notorious for their role in spreading news and information, and no doubt frequently acted as spies. As Farriss has observed, the frontier between "civilization" and "barbarism" had always been permeable, and as the intensity of fighting diminished, traffic began to flow between the regions controlled by the rebels and government troops.¹⁹

Control of population movements was made more difficult by Mayan agricultural practices which required the periodic search for new milpa lands since old plots began to lose fertility after two years of successive plantings. In addition, the emergence of secondary growth and the increased labour time needed for weeding

encouraged peasants to abandon old plots and clear new ones. Seasonal migration for agricultural purposes based on ecological conditions was deeply embedded within the culture.²⁰ Travel for commercial and religious purposes was also a widespread feature of village life.²¹ Keeping track of the movements of Mayan peasants between village and milpa, from one community to another, or during religious festivals, was probably a hopeless task. Despite the surveillance of local militia officers, peasants continued to travel to and from the rebel communities in the south. Because of the illegal nature of these activities, it is difficult to determine how frequent or widespread contact was, but there are enough reports to indicate that it was a problem for the authorities.

In August 1853, the juez de paz of the pueblo of Chikindzonot reported a typical incident. The local cacique had apprehended and turned over to the authorities Calletano Chan, his wife Juana María Sulub and their son Jose María Chan, along with Francisco Mis of Tihosuco. The four admitted to having made five trips between Chikindzonot and various other pueblos in the area for the purpose of buying salt and other articles to resell in rebel communities, according to an agreement with rebel captains. On their way to the district cabecera, Chan escaped, leaving his wife and the others prisoners. The jefe sent her back under escort to her original community with instructions to collect the rest of her family (two sons and an elderly woman) who had been left in the monte south of the Puuc.²² Not only does this incident illustrate the difficulties faced by local authorities in controlling the civilian population under their jurisdiction, but it suggests that one important reason for contact with the rebel communities was commercial.

The resettlement of abandoned villages and ranchos was not simply a question of issuing government decrees and expecting local officials or militia officers to enforce them. Fairly quickly on, officials who had to deal with the problem on the spot made it clear that incentives had to be offered to induce the population to return to their homes. As early as November 1851, the jueces of that same pueblo, Chikindzonot, "in order to revitalize the spirits of the population" requested a licence to celebrate the fiesta of the community's patron saint on December 15. The feast day was appropriately honoured with a bull fight and village fair, and most likely, ample distribution of that other spirit, aguardiente.²³

The government had to maintain a delicate balance between coercion and persuasion to induce peasants to return to their villages. And there were more than a few blunders along the way. Various amnesties had promised the abolition of the personal contribution for those who peacefully turned themselves in to authorities, the so-called presentados. However, the chronic shortage of revenue experienced by the state government led to the abandonment of this promise as early as 1852. In a directive issued June 1, the government reinstated the head tax for indigenas presentados on the grounds that it was not fair to exempt former rebels, while taxing those who had always been loyal supporters of the cause of "civilization."²⁴ Some local officials, however, did not agree with this measure, fearing that if the detested head tax were reimposed, the Mayan peasants would be so angry they would go off again and live among their own people in the rebel camps.²⁵ After the liberal victory in 1855, the inhabitants of many of the pueblos along the linea del defensa were

granted an exemption from the head tax, in recognition of the hardships they endured by living under the constant threat of rebel incursions.²⁶

The contribución religiosa also continued to be a matter of contention. Many peasants had been persuaded to return to their communities with the understanding that they were exempt from paying taxes so long as they agreed to resettle and to obey the authorities. But this left the local clergy without income to carry out their duties, and the state government, with most of its revenue going towards defence expenditures and finding it impossible to support the activities of the Church as well, authorized the reimposition of the religious tax. In February 1852, the cura of Tixmeuac had complained to Governor Barbachano that his parishioners, many of whom were Indios presentados, were refusing to pay their contribution, because they had already donated their labour to the community to repair the damage to buildings incurred during the rebellion. The jefe político of Tekax issued a directive to the jueces de paz of the village, instructing them to cooperate with the priest and assist in the collection of the tax, without allowing any exemptions to any individual, or shielding anyone from their obligation to pay.²⁷ What this dispute reflects is the continual struggle among various creole officials, civilian as well as military, with the clergy for control over the labour services of the peasants. The problem manifested itself in many ways, but usually revolved around some local work project which the municipal authorities had in mind for the community. The scarcity of manpower was particularly acute in the villages of the Sierra because of the high population losses caused by war, disease, and famine.

If population figures are used as an indicator of the success or failure of government policy, the resettlement programme was a resounding failure. Many of the communities in the partido of Tekax still recorded population losses in excess of 50 percent, more than a decade after the acute phase of the rebellion (Table 2).

Table 2 ²⁸			
CHANGES IN URBAN POPULATION IN TEKAX PARTIDO			
Community	1846	1862	% Loss
Tekax	4,384	2,341	-47%
Teabo	2,118	1,334	-37%
Oxkutzcab	4,000	1,277	-68%
Tixmeuac	1,451	779	-46%
Ticum	807	228	-72%
Chumayel	521	606	+16%
Akil	1,339	457	-66%
Pencuyut	2,000	371	-81%
Xaya	440	283	-36%
Tixcuytún	294	158	-46%
San José	591	208	-65%
Xul	2,200	183	-92%
Becanchén	591	0	-100%

The extent of depopulation in the countryside is less easy to arrive at, because the figures for residents of rural establishments are not available for individual communities in the 1846 Census. Nonetheless, an attempt has been made to estimate the decline in rural population for five communities (Table 3) on the basis of documents from the ecclesiastical archives which contain the numbers of residents of

Table 3			
POPULATION CHANGES IN FIVE COMMUNITIES			
Community/Date	1821 [#]	1846 [*]	1867 ^{**}
Tekax			
Urban	4,335	4,384	2,341
Rural	876	1,050	623
Tixmeuac			
Urban	1,559	1,451	779
Rural	435	1,376	822
Ticum			
Urban	284	807	228
Rural	411	480	433
Community/Date	1828	1846	1862
Akil			
Urban	2,324	1,339	457
Rural	43	161	163
Pencuyut			
Urban	2,186	2,000	371
Rural	276	322	90

[#] Archivo de la Mitra, Padrones, Tekax, Tixmeuac, and Ticum, 1821; Pencuyut and Akil, 1828.

^{*} Estimates for rural populations in 1846 are based on the number of rural properties listed in Regil and Peon (1853: Appendices) multiplied by the average population of rural estates: large >80; medium >20<80; and <20.

^{**} Censo de 1862, figures for individual communities, listing the population residing en poblado and en campo.

the various haciendas, sitios, and ranchos in the districts surrounding these communities.²⁹ Although it is impossible to identify the causes of such high losses for each community, the fact that only a few of the major battles of the rebellion (Xul and Becanchén) took place in the Puuc region suggests that the drop in population reflects migration (and the cholera epidemic of 1853) as well as casualties directly caused by the fighting.

The difficulty of establishing a climate of trust in which refugees or former rebels could return without fear of reprisals was probably insurmountable, except in rare cases where a patron-client relationship could be re-established with a powerful intermediary such as the parish priest or local hacendado. Of the five communities (Tekax, Tixmeuac, Ticum, Akil, and Pencuyut) for which I have continuous data over a forty-year period, Tixmeuac experienced the most successful population recovery (Table 3). By 1862 it had recovered fifty-four percent of its prewar population. This relatively high resettlement rate may have been due to the influence of Father Manuel Mezo Vales, one of the few remaining priests in the region who actively defended his parishioners against mistreatment at the hands of the military.³⁰ Mezo Vales was an efficient shepherd of his flock--Tixmeuac had the second highest percentage of Mayan residents in the partido of Tekax. Land ownership in this community was more widely distributed than other villages in the partido, and several Mayan and mestizo residents of the village owned small properties. However, larger landowners in this municipality also benefited from resettlement. According to the 1862 census,

Tixmeuac had by far the largest number of rural residents in the partido, which meant that local landlords were also successful in attracting a resident labour force (Table 4).

In Ticum, where large haciendas dominated the countryside, the rural population remained relatively stable (Table 3). Except for a low point in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, landowners were able to attract and retain labourers in sufficient numbers to reestablish their agricultural operations.³¹ Many of these peones acasillados were mestizo, not Mayan, and this suggests that haciendas had become places of refuge from compulsory service in the militia and later, the National Guard.³² The pueblo of Ticum continued to lose population, however. By 1862, this tiny community had only recovered approximately twenty-eight percent of its pre-war population.

The villages of Akil and Pencuyut had already experienced population losses in the period before the rebellion, part of a general trend in the partido for landholding villages with Mayan majorities (Table 3). It is possible that many residents of these villages participated in the rebellion and suffered high casualty rates or remained among the rebel and pacifico communities of the south. In both villages, several parcels of land belonging to rebels who had not surrendered were turned over to militia officers as a reward for their service during the creole counter-offensive. It is very likely that these lands belonged to rebel captains Gregorio Ceh and Leonardo Yah, neither of whom reappear in later documents referring to these communities.³³

An interesting anomaly in the partido is the pueblo of Chuyamel, which actually experienced a slight increase in population after the rebellion (Table 2). This

community had only one medium-size rural estate, Hacienda Santa María, owned by Colonel José María Novelo, one of the more important military figures in the region during the rebellion and its aftermath. Other rural properties were small, three of them owned by Mayan widows.³⁴ In 1857, after the liberal victory at both the federal and state levels, Mayan officials of Chumayel's república de Indios successfully defended their rights to village lands which had been willed to their community by a Mayan widow, Petrona Dzib, in the 1840s.³⁵ Perhaps Mayan peasants were attracted to Chumayel because the pueblo still had some control over its own resources and the local república officials were still capable of acting as brokers on behalf of their people with one of the more powerful patrons in the region. As for the regional capital of Tekax, it never recovered its status as the bustling entrepot described in the 1840s by the American traveller, John Stevens.³⁶

Table 2 also illustrates the impact of the rebellion on settlement patterns in the partido. During the decades of rapid expansion in the sugar industry in the region around Xul and Becanchén, population had shifted from the northern to the southern half of the partido. Communities such as Xul had experienced rapid population growth on the eve of the rebellion, while predominantly Mayan villages such as Akil and Pencuyut were discharging surplus populations to new settlements in the south. After the collapse of the rebel offensive in the southern Puuc in 1848, repeated attempts were made to reestablish Xul and Becanchén under the protection of military garrisons, but the region remained vulnerable to rebel raids and was unable to attract many permanent residents. By 1862, the Mayan population in the partido of Tekax

had returned to an older settlement pattern of medium and small pueblos nestled at the foot of the northern slopes of the Puuc hills, while the larger commercial centres of Tekax and Oxkutzcab remained strongholds of creole commercial interests as well as serving as town residences for the majority of the region's hacendados (Tables 4 and 5).

TOTAL POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY COMMUNITY TEKAX PARTIDO - 1862				
COMMUNITY	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
Tekax	2,341	623	2,964	25.3%
Teabo	1,334	791	2,125	18.1%
Oxkutzcab	1,277	404	1,681	14.3%
Tixmeuac	779	822	1,601	13.6%
Ticum	228	433	661	5.6%
Chumayel	606	29	635	5.4%
Akil	457	163	620	5.3%
Pencuyut	371	90	461	3.9%
Xaya	283	32	315	2.7%
Tixcuytún	158	111	269	2.3%
San José	208	0	208	1.8%
Xul	183	0	183	1.6%
Total	8,225	3,498	11,723	99.9%

According to the 1862 census, 70 percent of the residents of the partido lived in towns and villages, compared to 49 percent in 1846 and 80 percent in 1821. This reversal of the pre-war trend towards an increase in the number of residents of

privately-owned rural estates indicates the extent to which the uprising destroyed the agricultural prosperity of the region, which had been based not only upon ownership of land but control of the labour force. As the figures for population losses indicate, approximately 75 percent of that labour force had evaporated as a result of the rebellion. Nonetheless, land ownership and thus the potential for creating wealth remained firmly in the hands of the creole elites. Economic recovery took several decades, and was no longer based exclusively upon sugar, but in the aftermath of the rebellion some members of the landowning classes emerged stronger than before, particularly militia officers who had taken advantage of their powerful role in the post-war period to expand their estates with confiscated rebel lands and their control over labour supply.

In order to counteract the influence of the rebels and because of limited military resources, the government had to rely upon these local elites to maintain order, primarily by recreating patronage ties with the local peasantry. Some historians have suggested that this process led inevitably to the growth of private estates at the expense of the communal villages.³⁸ I would argue that even though fewer peasants lived in the landholding Indian villages of the region after the rebellion, this does not mean that peasants therefore saw no alternative but to accept the domination of the local landlord. As in the pre-war period, their choices involved a combination of options, including temporary work on estates while maintaining their residency in landholding villages. Because government policy was inconsistent and elites were divided by factional disputes, peasants had space in which to adopt a variety of

survival strategies. Despite the continuing attempts of creole authorities to reassert control over village residents there is considerable evidence for the persistence of autonomous peasant behaviour in the aftermath of the rebellion.

Table 5 ³⁹				
DISTRIBUTION OF URBAN/RURAL PROPERTY VALUES BY COMMUNITY - 1856				
COMMUNITY	\$ URBAN PROPERTY	\$ RURAL PROPERTY	TOTAL VALUE IN PESOS	% OF TOTAL
Tekax	32,290	7,617	39,907	50.3%
Teabo	1,486	9,554	11,040	14.0%
Oxkutzcab	5,979	2,709	8,688	11.0%
Tixmeuac	1,655	2,560	4,215	5.0%
Ticum	93	6,985	7,078	9.0%
Chumayel	520	842	1,362	1.7%
Akil	264	3,215	3,479	4.4%
Pencuyut	484	1,405	1,889	2.4%
Xaya	262	127	389	0.5%
Tixcuytún	214	570	784	1.0%
San José	0	250	250	0.3%
Xul	267	0	267	0.4%
Total	43,514	35,834	79,348	100%

The Shape of Regional Society

In describing regional society in the aftermath of the rebellion, I want to avoid the conventional dichotomy between hacienda and pueblo, the quasi-feudal relationship between lord and peasant which characterizes so much of the writing on rural Mexico. There were, of course, large landowners whose properties surrounded each village and whose command of the best arable land and their coercive powers over labour gave them almost total control of the forces of production. But the pattern varied from village to village, and the insecurity of life in the contested regions of the frontier meant that coercion had to be tempered with common sense and continual negotiation. Statistics alone revealing the extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of a few powerful individuals do not give a complete picture. There were frequent disputes among those individuals, and there were countervailing forces limiting their control. In this delicate balancing act, the local clergy, and even the remote government of Mérida could be appealed to for protection and intervention when all else failed.

I would like to begin this discussion of post-war agrarian structure with an examination of the patterns of landholding for the partido of Tekax. In this undertaking, the discovery of a tax roll or assessment list for the year 1856 has proven invaluable. During his final term in office, as part of an extensive reform of government finances, Governor Santiago Méndez directed that a comprehensive census of property be undertaken in the territory then controlled by government forces.⁴⁰ The Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas was completed in 1856 and copies were deposited in the government archive.⁴¹ Although these documents lack the precision

of cadastral surveys, they nevertheless allow us to find out who owned property, what it was worth, where it was located, and some indication of the distribution of wealth among creole and Mayan residents of the partido. The Censo includes an estimated value of each property, along with the name of the owner, organized alphabetically by pueblo. Rural properties are listed according to the municipal jurisdiction to which they belonged. While these tax rolls are available for most of the settled regions of the peninsula, I have chosen to concentrate on the partido of Tekax, while using the lists from Peto and Sotuta for information on individuals and their place in the regional political and economic structure. Property values are useful primarily as a means of measuring relative economic status, not as a true indicator of the value of post-war real estate, which appears in some districts to have dropped to as low as 25 percent of its pre-war value. These documents allow us to make a preliminary analysis of the agrarian structure of the partido in the aftermath of the rebellion.

According to the 1856 Censo, there were approximately 1288 privately owned properties in the partido of Tekax. Since the total population of the partido was somewhere between ten and twelve thousand (there was no detailed census until 1862), approximately ten percent of the population owned property, or one in every ten residents was a property owner. According to the 1862 Census, the ethnic breakdown of the population of 11,723 was 47 percent Creole and mestizo (who were collectively designated blancos) and 53 percent Mayan (Table 6). Creoles and mestizos owned 95 percent of the total value of property in the partido, while Mayan proprietors owned 5 percent (Table 7).

Table 6⁴²

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION IN THE PARTIDO OF TEKAX - 1862

COMMUNITY	CREOLE/ MESTIZO	%	MAYA	%
Tekax	2,081	70.2%	883	29.8%
Teabo	637	30.0%	1,488	70.0%
Oxkutzcab	1,151	68.5%	530	31.5%
Tixmeuac	401	22.9%	1,200	77.1%
Ticum	434	65.7%	227	34.3%
Chumayel	203	32.0%	432	68.0%
Akil	200	32.4%	420	67.6%
Pencuyut	187	40.6%	274	59.4%
Xaya	18	5.7%	297	94.3%
Tixcuytún	93	34.6%	176	65.4%
San José	49	23.6%	159	76.4%
Xul	106	57.9%	77	42.1%
Total	5,560	47.4%	6,163	52.6%

The distribution of wealth and property was clearly in favour of the creole elites of these communities, with the highest concentration of creole wealth found in Tekax, Teabo, Oxkutzcab, and Ticum. Both Tekax and Oxkutzcab were creole and mestizo towns whose commercial role in the region was reflected in the high value of urban property owned by their inhabitants. The prosperity of Teabo and Ticum, on the other hand, was based upon some of the most valuable rural estates in the partido. The predominantly Mayan villages of the partido, however, reflected a different relationship between population and wealth. Mayan landowners owned

Table 7 ⁴³				
ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY IN THE PARTIDO OF TEKAX - 1856				
COMMUNITY	CREOLE/ MESTIZO	% OF TOTAL	MAYAN	% OF TOTAL
Tekax	\$38,817	97.3%	\$1,090	2.7%
Teabo	\$10,516	95.3%	\$524	4.7%
Oxkutzcab	\$8,397	96.7%	\$291	3.3%
Tixmeuac	\$3,759	89.2%	\$456	10.8%
Ticum	\$6,988	98.7%	\$90	1.3%
Chumayel	\$1,012	74.3%	\$350	25.7%
Akil	\$3,176	91.3%	\$303	8.7%
Pencuyut	\$1,540	81.5%	\$349	18.5%
Xaya *****	\$76	19.5%	\$313	80.5%
Tixcuytún	\$629	80.2%	\$155	19.8%
San José	\$250	100.0%	0	0.0%
Xul	\$211	79.1%	\$56	20.9%
Total	\$75,371	95%	\$3,977	5.0%

more than 10 per cent of the total value of all property only in those communities where they formed an absolute majority of the population--Tixmeuac, Chumayel, Pencuyut, Xaya, and Tixcuytún. Moreover, all of these communities were among the poorest in the partido, representing collectively around fifteen percent of the total value of assessed property.

***** This seeming disparity in data is explained by the fact that there were no hacendados in Xaya and only two creole small landowners, along with four mid-level Mayan proprietors.

Tables 8 and 9 summarize other information contained in the Censo.

Differences in gender among property owners was a more significant factor among creole property owners than among Mayan property owners. While this may reflect the fact that Mayan males lost property because of their participation in the rebellion, it also indicates that there was a more egalitarian distribution of wealth in Mayan communities. Females of both groups, however, were less likely to own

Table 8 ⁴⁴				
GENDER AND WEALTH AMONG RURAL PROPERTY OWNERS BY PROPERTY VALUE				
VILLAGE	FEMALE		MALE	
	CREOLE/ MESTIZA	MAYAN	CREOLE/ MESTIZO	MAYAN
Tekax	756	0	6,631	230
Teabo	1,446	12	7,991	105
Oxkutzcab	0	0	2,584	125
Tixmeuac	100	0	2,445	15
Ticum	0	0	6,925	60
Chumayel	0	42	780	20
Akil	0	0	3,025	190
Pencuyut	38	100	1,215	52
Xaya	10	30	20	67
Tixcuytún	0	24	534	12
San José	0	0	250	0
Xul	0	0	0	0
Total	\$2,350	\$208	\$32,400	\$876
Percentage	6.6%	0.6%	90.4%	2.4%

Table 9⁴⁵

GENDER AND WEALTH AMONG URBAN PROPERTY OWNERS BY PROPERTY VALUE				
VILLAGE	FEMALE		MALE	
	CREOLE/ MESTIZA	MAYAN	CREOLE/ MESTIZO	MAYAN
Tekax	9,499	253	21,931	607
Teabo	57	173	1,022	234
Oxkutzcab	1,255	0	4,558	166
Tixmeuac	201	169	1,013	272
Ticum	19	0	44	30
Chumayel	44	82	188	206
Akil	26	27	125	86
Pencuyut	111	48	176	149
Xaya	0	43	46	173
Tixcuytún	4	4	91	115
San José*****	0	0	0	0
Xul	23	1	188	55
Total	\$11,239	\$799	\$29,382	\$2,093
Percentage	25.8%	1.9%	67.5%	4.8%

property in rural areas than in towns and villages. While a few prominent women such as Gregoria González, Nicolasa Trujillo, and Amanda Suárez owned a significant amount of property, both in the countryside and in Tekax, they were the exception.

Most creole women owned only the houses they lived in, in the larger communities of

***** The village of San José was located on the property belonging to the local hacendado.

the partido. Similarly, while there were a few Mayan women among the middle-level property owners of Chumayel and Pencuyut, they were few and far between. By far the largest number of Mayan women were simple householders, owning houses worth only a few pesos, located in one of the smaller villages of the district.

Table 10 summarizes the class structure among creole and mestizo and Mayan communities, insofar as it can be deduced from the property assessment for individuals in each community. It is very likely that much of the wealth of the commercial centres, in particular Tekax, would have been tied up in merchandise such as bolts of cloth, tools, household goods, tobacco, and aguardiente, while the wealth of urban households may have been partially invested in jewelry, sacred images, and other precious belongings. As for rural establishments, livestock, sugar-refining equipment, and stored maize would also have constituted some of the net wealth of the landowners. The tax roll based on property is, at best, a crude indicator of the way in which the economic assets of the community were divided, but it provides a somewhat more concrete picture than other forms of evidence such as the descriptive anecdotes of foreign travellers.⁴⁶

Table 10		
COMPARISON OF CLASS STRUCTURE		
CREOLE AND MESTIZO PROPERTY OWNERS		
Under \$50	\$50 - \$500	Over \$500
77.8%	17.7%	4.5%
MAYAN PROPERTY OWNERS		
Under \$50	\$50 - \$500	Over \$500
98.6%	1.2%	.2%

The Creole Elite

Most of the property in the region was controlled by a small, interconnected group of twenty-five landowners who resided in the urban centres of Tekax or Peto, and derived their wealth primarily from agricultural activities, including the sale of maize, the distillation of aguardiente, rents from lands and mortgages, and an undisclosed amount of illegal activities involving smuggling of British goods from the colony of Belize. The top twenty-five were all assessed for property worth more than one thousand pesos, and between them, owned approximately two thirds of the property in the partidos of Tekax and Peto (Table 11). Only three of these individuals may be classified as absentee landlords, with the majority taking an active part in the economic and political life of the region.

The wealthiest individual in the district was Domingo Tenreyro, the subdelegado of Tekax, responsible for the collection of state taxes and procurador, the fiscal and legal watchdog of the partido throughout the period under study. He owned a large hacienda (San Antonio) in the jurisdiction of Ticum, as well as a townhouse in Tekax. Following close behind was Colonel Juan María Novelo, who owned two haciendas outside of Teabo and Chumayel and rural property in the neighbouring partido of Ticul, as well as a distillery in Peto.⁴⁷ Vicente Escalante was also in the business of manufacturing aguardiente in Tekax, as well as owning an hacienda on the outskirts of Tekax and property in Peto. Before the war he had lived in Peto and was an associate of Colonel Felipe Rosado, who as a supporter of Barbachano had abandoned Peto to the rebel forces under Jacinto Pat in 1848.

Table 11⁴⁸

PROPERTY OWNERS IN THE PARTIDOS OF TEKAX AND PETO			
NAME OF OWNER	RURAL	URBAN	VALUE
Tenreyro, Domingo	Ticum	Tekax	\$4,832
Novelo, Juan María	Teabo	Peto	\$4,550
	Chumayel		
	Peto		
	Mama(Ticul)		
Escalante, Vicente	Tekax	Tekax (2)	\$3,946
	Peto	Peto	
Escalante, Jacinto	Tekax	Tekax	\$3,270
Ruiz, Gumersindo	Teabo	Tekax	\$3,076
	Akil		
	Mama(Ticul)		
González, Gregoria	Peto	Tekax (2)	\$2,602
Sosa, José Eufemio	Tixmeuac	Tekax	\$2,410
Andrade, Diego Crisanto	Ychmul	Peto	\$2,200
Duarte, Marcos	Tzucacab	Peto	\$2,100
Montalvo, Manuel María	Peto	Peto	\$2,050
Avila, José María	Oxkutzcab	Oxkutzcab	\$2,040
	Peto	Peto	
Sosa, José Domingo	Ticum	Tekax	\$2,000
Caceres, Narciso		Tekax	\$1,725
Arjona, José Atanasio	Peto	Peto	\$1,675
Peon, Alonso	Teabo		\$1,600
	Mama		
Trujillo, Nicolasa		Tekax	\$1,570

Table 11⁴⁸

PROPERTY OWNERS IN THE PARTIDOS OF TEKAX AND PETO			
España, Andres María	Akil		\$1,500
Paz, Manuel Anselmo	Ticum	Tekax	\$1,475
	Tixcuytún		
Méndez, Josefa	Tekax	Tekax	\$1,369
Castillo, Manuel Jesús	Tekax	Tekax	\$1,256
Suárez, Amanda	Tekax	Tekax	\$1,212
Camara, Candelaria	Teabo		\$1,200
Gongora, José Gregorio	Tixcuytún	Tekax	\$1,084
	Tekax		
Ortiz, Bernardo	Ticum	Ticum	\$1,014
	Tekax		
Sanchez, Francisco	Tekax		\$1,000

Escalante was an eyewitness to the events of the rebellion and obviously a "survivor" who was able to respond to whatever political wind blew strongest. The Escalantes, whose names figure prominently in the political and economic documents of the day, had spread their tentacles throughout the region in the pre-rebellion period. The family included Lizarro Jacinto, Dario, and the brothers Jacinto and José Dolores Escalante, all of whom owned property in the community of Tekax and took turns serving as local government officials.

Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz provides the best example of someone who built a fortune on the basis of his military record during these turbulent times. As a junior officer he was involved in the retaking of the Puuc under the leadership of Colonel

Cetina, and was promoted to the rank of Colonel by General Díaz de la Vega sometime in the early 1850s. Ruiz was also rewarded for his services by a grant of rebel-owned lands near the pueblo of Akil; by 1856 these properties had been consolidated into an hacienda worth four hundred pesos.⁴⁹ Ruiz also served as prefectura política of Tekax under the governorship of Díaz in 1855 and later as jefe político under the civilian governments of various liberal governors in the early 1860s.

Ruiz exemplifies a process that González Navarro identifies as the "transfer of power in the pueblos from the priests and subdelegados to the military comandantes, whose abuses of power had been prophesied by General Sebastián López de Llergo, when he said that the rebels had done very little damage compared to the lieutenant-colonels and colonels who had emerged as a result of the war."⁵⁰ While Ruiz undoubtedly benefited from his ability to wield coercive power over civilian officials and peasants of the district, when he tried to resign from his commission because of the liberal victory in 1855 (retiring, like Santa Anna, to his rural estate) he was the subject of numerous petitions from members of the ayuntamiento of Tekax who wanted him to continue as military commander of the linea del defensa del sur.⁵¹ Either he had enormous personal influence over many individuals among the creole elite, or he was perceived as indispensable because of his role in organizing the defense of that vulnerable region.

It is difficult to place Ruiz in the political currents of the day. On the one hand he was a military man, loyal to Díaz de la Vega, and by extension Santa Anna, which is probably why he attempted to surrender his commission after the victory of

Comonfort and Juarez. But he obviously commanded respect and wielded a considerable amount of power in Tekax and was sure enough of his regional power base to serve as a military and later civilian official under governments representing various and seemingly contradictory political interests. In 1857 he even managed to borrow money from the State Treasury by taking out a mortgage on one of his haciendas, San Rafael Ucum, near Tekax!⁵² And it was during his absence on a recruiting trip for the state militia in September 1857, that the Chan Santa Cruz rebels successfully carried out a surprise attack on Tekax resulting in heavy losses in lives and property.

The wealthiest woman in the region, Gregoria González, was the widow of Pablo Lujan, jefe político of Tekax at the time of the rebellion, an appointee of Governor Domingo Barret, and a supporter of the Campeche faction in 1847. Doña Gregoria was the owner of hacienda Catmís, a famous and historic rural property identified as an hacienda ganado on a 1748 map, located southwest of Peto in the Puuc hills. She also owned two valuable pieces of urban property in Tekax as well as a smaller piece of rural property in the vicinity of Peto. In 1853 she was named by some vecinos of Peto in a legal dispute over the ownership of terrenos baldíos in the district.⁵³ Like many a pious creole woman, she invested some of her wealth in a capellanía to provide income for a priest, Father José Silveira. This particular endowment was financed by a thousand peso mortgage on Catmís, and when Father Silveira passed away in the 1850s, the capital returned to her portfolio.⁵⁴

Sometime in the 1850s Doña Gregoria purchased Hacienda Xocneceh located near Oxkutzcab, where she engaged in a lengthy dispute with the municipal authorities over ownership of an image of San Antonio de Padua which had been abducted from the hacienda chapel at the time of the rebel invasion in 1848. Although the bishop supported her claim to the miraculous image, the authorities of the parish and town refused to return it to the hacienda, and the painting remained in the principal church of the parish. It must be noted that the widow's interest in investing in religious property was probably not entirely motivated by piety, but rather was one link in the financial networks of the region which provided loan capital for entrepreneurial activities.⁵⁵ The control of religious objects of popular piety, moreover, created a financial windfall for the community, for the icon served to attract pilgrims to the saint's fiesta every year, generating income for local shopkeepers and aguardiente vendors, and revenue for the clergy who performed special ceremonies in the saint's honour.⁵⁶

Another prominent hacendado identified with Peto was Marcos Duarte, whose ownership of a distillery there is recorded in a document from 1859.⁵⁷ As befitted a merchant of aguardiente, Duarte was one of the wealthier capitalists in the region, able to loan two thousand pesos to Colonel Juan María Novelo in 1857.⁵⁸ Duarte also benefited from the munificence of San Antonio Xocneceh, by borrowing money from the fondo general de cofradías, using as collateral his hacienda Kamuchil located in the municipality of Tecoh. In 1866 he repaid four hundred pesos to the cofradía fund of San Antonio.⁵⁹ A relative, Anselmo Duarte, also owned property in both Peto and

Tekax, and while his lands were not worth as much as those of Marcos Duarte, he probably carried a substantial amount of capital in goods, since he was a merchant of considerable importance in the region. Cline notes that he moved to Peto in 1835 to take advantage of the booming economy generated by the sugar industry.⁶⁰ In 1855 he was a representative of Tekax on the transitional governing council set up to implement the Plan of Ayutla.

Another figure of interest is Manuel Anselmo Paz, owner of two rural properties located near the towns of Ticum and Tixcuytún and a townhouse in Tekax. In August of 1857 Paz was involved in a plot to overthrow Governor Pantaleón Barrera. He was a supporter of the Campechano candidate for governor, Liborio Irigoyen, who, feeling that he should have won the election that spring, roused a number of followers in the communities of the Sierra into open rebellion in the summer of 1857. The coup failed to take fire outside the region, and Paz was subsequently imprisoned in Mérida in the aftermath. His wife, Doña Leandra Varquez, was later blamed for failing to warn the garrison at Tekax of the approach of Mayan rebel troops, and it was reported at the time that she had willfully mistaken the soldiers for partisans of Campeche, coming to avenge the defeated conspirators (see Chapter Four).⁶¹

Below the level of the upper elite was a larger group of moderately wealthy individuals whose rural properties were smaller versions of the large estates, and who engaged in a variety of commercial activities and periodically served as officials in local government. Among the most active in local politics were the Spanish-born

merchant, Cirilo Montes de Oca and the militia officer, Colonel Felipe Pren, who had received lands worth 250 pesos as a reward for his services during the creole counter-offensive in the region.⁶² The original solicitud from Colonel Pren had requested dominio util of the lands belonging to rebels from the municipality of Pencuyut. By the time of the Censo de fincas rústicas of 1856, the lands in question had become the private property of the colonel.

Also included among the petit bourgeoisie were two priests, Manuel Mezo Vales, the cura of Tixmeuac, who owned a townhouse in the village worth one hundred pesos, a modest amount by creole standards, and José Leocadio Espinosa who did slightly better, with a house in Oxkutzcab worth 166 pesos and the rural property of Santa Rita assessed at 285 pesos in 1856. Hacienda Santa Rita had formerly belonged to a landowner by the name of Bernabé Cetina, and since the property was mortgaged to the cofradía of San Antonio Xocneceh, it became the property of the cofradía upon his death, although according to the 1856 tax roll Espinosa was considered its owner.⁶³ Before the rebellion, Santa Rita had been one of the more prosperous haciendas in the district--in 1856 the property was assessed at one third of its pre-war value and by 1862 there were only eight resident peons.

It appears from the tax rolls of 1856 that the church in this region, both as an institution and as a collection of individual clerics, had emerged from the rebellion in much worse shape than secular members of the rural bourgeoisie. Contrary to their role in the decades prior to the rebellion, rural clergy no longer played a key role in the economic development of the region; rather they complained to secular authorities

about their inability to collect revenue from impoverished parishioners and threw themselves on the mercy of local officials for financial assistance. In March 1857 the cura of the once wealthy parish of Peto, José Bruno Romero wrote directly to Governor Méndez requesting permission to enlist the services of the local subdelegado in collecting the contribución religiosa. Father Romero explained to the governor that it was virtually impossible for him to exert pressure on those who were supposed to pay the tax, because the vast majority of his parishioners were "poor servants, vecinos as well as indígenas, and those who possessed some wealth were reluctant to give up their small luxuries." The situation left him no option but to request that the local authorities enforce the law regarding the payment of religious taxes, so that the faithful could continue to observe the sacraments and feast days in the parish.⁶⁴

The secularization campaign of the national liberal government in 1857 was probably seen as the last straw by people still committed to the presence of the church in their communities. On August 18, the parishes of Yucatán were required to surrender, along with an inventory, "all the silver of the Church and the jewellery decorating its sacred images" so that they could comply with the federal legislation nationalizing church property. A handful of parishioners in Oxkutzcab signed a petition to the Governor, protesting that the removal of these sacred objects from their church would result in the end of religious observances in their community. While they admitted that the riches of the church presented a target for rebel invasions, they assured the governor that such an occurrence was very unlikely, since the línea del defensa was completely secure, and their village was not vulnerable to attack.⁶⁵ It is

not known what effect their petition had upon the governor, but they were sadly mistaken about the security of their village. The petition was sent ten days before the massive rebel raid on Tekax, only eighteen kilometers down the road from Oxkutzcab. It is interesting to note that few of the petitioners were large landowners of the district-- rather, they were petit bourgeoisie, probably shopkeepers and artisans, humble residents of the town of Oxkutzcab.

These details provide some insight into the complex interweaving of the personal, political, and economic interests of the regional elite. Many individuals owned multiple properties scattered throughout the region and practised diverse methods of capital accumulation. While their enterprises were undoubtedly damaged by the rebellion of 1847, it appears that many of them were able to pick up the pieces and carry on in the decade which followed. They were a fractious lot, and because of this, seldom cooperated on a political level unless their basic interests, profit and survival, were at issue. For instance, in the wake of a renewed rebel offensive in the spring of 1853, a group of the region's elite gathered in Peto to offer Colonel Eulogio Rosado contributions of horses, supplies, and money for the formation of a mounted cavalry unit of cosacos which would assist the militia in defending the outlying settlements of the frontier. Among this group were Macedonio Dzul, the cacique and Father Bruno Romero, the cura of Peto, both survivors of the original uprising who had set aside their periodic disagreements with other members of the regional elite in order to bolster the cause of "civilization."⁶⁶ Dzul was one of the few pre-war caciques to emerge from the rebellion unscathed, and it appears that he was careful to

distance himself from the caciques who had taken part in the rebellion. In this sense he is a good example of the limitations of identifying the uprising as a purely racial phenomenon.

The Peasantry

The Mayan peasantry of the region had suffered greatly as a result of the rebellion. The consequences were primarily demographic, but the uprising also had its social and political repercussions. The most obvious impact of the fighting had been the depopulation of what had once been a densely-concentrated collection of prosperous villages. For the survivors, however, the competition for scarce resources no longer centred around lands, for the huge drop in population meant that there was now enough land for everyone to engage in subsistence agriculture. But the shortage of labour meant that the peasantry had to bear the brunt of reconstruction, both of public buildings and roads and pathways.⁶⁷ Local government officials were in charge of these public works called faginas, really a form of corvée labour, and all of the able-bodied residents of the village, Mayan and Mestizo alike, were liable for this duty.

In the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, the essential needs of most communities were housing and food. Homes destroyed in the fighting had to be rebuilt, and crops left standing in fields had to be harvested. In Tekax, the jefe político determined that the best way to accomplish these tasks was to utilize the services of the presentados, whom he identified as rebel sympathizers and therefore, indirectly responsible for much of the damage. But peasants had been promised relief

from labour services if they would agree to return to their villages, and the government actually had legislation on the books which prohibited forced labour for Indians.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Francisco Galera managed to avoid this difficulty by arguing that since this class of people were already obliged to perform two hours fagina on Sundays, they could use the time to repair the houses of members of the local militia. Thus, community labour services became a form of punishment for involvement in the recent uprising, and the relationship between Mayan peasants and the militia, composed primarily of creole and mestizo vecinos, took on the added dimension of revenge.⁶⁹

Not all local officials, however, thought that reviving the fagina was appropriate in the straightened circumstances of the times. In October 1852, the new jefe of Tekax, Francisco Coello, offered this opinion on the subject of enforcing community labour on the inhabitants of the partido: "Such is the misery in which the pueblos of this unfortunate partido have been submerged . . . that notwithstanding the positive benefits of a vigorous campaign of road repairs, now is not the time, in my opinion, to order the inhabitants of the partido to perform such labours; moreover, that group of citizens who do not belong to Battalion 11 [of the Militia] are otherwise engaged in agricultural labours, from which they eke out their miserable subsistence."⁷⁰ Earlier, the jefe had informed the governor that he was unable to draft sufficient numbers of hidalgos to serve as auxiliaries to the mobile force commanded by Colonel Novelo, because most of the indigenous residents of Tekax were employed as criados by the landowners of the district. The jefe asked the

governor's permission to requisition hacienda servants, or soldiers of the militia to assist the regular troops.⁷¹

What these incidents reflect is the extreme scarcity of human and material resources which had to be parcelled out among several competing interests. In the decades prior to the rebellion, there had been fierce competition between secular and religious authorities, and between creole and Mayan local government officials for the labour services and tax revenue of the peasantry.⁷² Now the contest revolved around manpower alone, and although the caciques no longer formed part of the equation, there were still disputes pitting local government officials against military comandantes, and landowners against the clergy. While the campaign against the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz was in full swing, in the dry seasons of 1852 and 1853, the needs of the military took precedence, and local jueces de paz were ordered to cooperate with the troops in organizing work parties of peasants to harvest the crops belonging to rebels who had fled the district.⁷³

Not all of the local authorities cooperated willingly with the directives of the military, as a series of curt responses from Felipe Rosado, jefe político of Peto, illustrates: "In this partido there is not a single hidalgo, since the Indios presentados have all been signed on as workers by the local landowners who have paid their fees;" and, "Since the few pack mules which exist in this partido have already been requisitioned for the military garrisons in the south, I cannot in any way respond to the request of the Comandante General [Díaz de la Vega] to requisition more, as I informed him today . . ." ⁷⁴ The struggle for manpower between military and civilian

authorities forms a continuous thread throughout this period and was never really solved, even under the military governorship of General Díaz de la Vega who mobilized the resources of all regions of the peninsula for the provisioning of soldiers serving along the línea del defensa. Local landowners tried to protect their labour force from the military draft, but there is evidence that they also benefited from the forced labour of prisoners of war brought in by the military patrols.

The socio-economic system of debt peonage under which the peasants had laboured in the decades before the rebellion had changed little--landowners still paid civil and religious taxes in advance for workers whom they then held bound by these debts. It is no coincidence that the wealthiest hacendado in the partido was also the tax collector, Domingo Tenreyro. Perhaps the major difference was that there was less cash available to pay wage labourers, and consequently more use of various systems of sharecropping in order to secure the services of the peasants. In a report on agricultural activities in the vicinity of Tixcuytún, the local juez de paz noted that local proprietors had planted around 4,600 mecatres of maize, and the cost of production was between 3 and 3.5 reales per mecate--the only payment for labour was the vegetables grown along with the corn, such as beans, squashes, cassava, and various types of peppers.⁷⁵

The most serious political consequence of the rebellion was the destruction and disappearance of the majority of the Mayan elite who in the decades before the rebellion had played such a crucial role as brokers between creole society and the people of their communities. Even though the repúblicas de Indios were restored in

the aftermath of the rebellion, jefes políticos were instructed to recommend for the office of cacique only those Maya who had proven their loyalty by active participation in the campaigns against the rebels, or had quickly declared their adherence to the regime. Such people must have been difficult to find in the communities of the Sierra, where large numbers of peasants joined the rebel forces as they advanced into the area in the spring of 1848. Because of their participation in the rebellion, and the death, exile, or flight of their leaders into the guerrilla strongholds or over the border, peasants who returned to their communities had to look for new leaders and patrons. And few Maya were in a position to play that role effectively in post-war society. The new caciques chosen in the post-war period were not in the same class as the leaders of the rebellion. Many of them did not own rural properties of any value; most were poor householders such as Esteban Balam of Tixmeuc, who begged to be relieved of his duties as cacique after a service of twelve years, because of his poor state of health and advanced age, and also because he had no sons to help him with his milpa.⁷⁶ The majority of the caciques who were appointed were thoroughly under the control of the local creole authorities and could not wield much influence on behalf of their people, compared to their antecedents in pre-war society.

The only indigenous government which continued to exercise some power in the aftermath of the rebellion was the república of Chumayel, also the only pueblo which experienced a population increase in the post-war period. Although Chumayel was a poor community, its leaders were able to defend communal ownership of a parcel of land willed to them by a member of the community in the 1840s. It appears

that the inhabitants of this village did not take an active part in the uprising, since the village is the one of the few in the partido, along with Ticum and Tixcuytún, which did not have anyone identified as a rebel captain in Reina's 1850 list.⁷⁷ One can only speculate as to the nature of their relationship with the local hacendado, Colonel Juan María Novelo, but it is interesting to note that when the liberal government of Pantaleon Barrera was elected in 1857, they were allowed to keep the lands belonging to the village despite national legislation requiring the expropriation of corporate properties.⁷⁸

Local Government

The institutional structures by which the governing classes of Yucatán extracted surpluses and maintained their dominance over the peasantry had changed little as a result of the rebellion. Without strong local leadership in the person of the cacique, who before the rebellion was often a member of the landowning bourgeoisie, the full force of creole government bore down directly on the peasantry. There were outlets, the traditional ones of flight and migration, but for peasants who remained within the system, there was little choice but to renegotiate their relationships with local landowners, the jueces de paz of each village, and the few clergy left in the district. The system was strengthened by the presence of the military who were maintained in a state of active defence against rebel incursions. The creole elite of the region, however, was not a monolithic entity--the system was weakened by factionalism and personal rivalries.

The most powerful government official in the region was the jefe político of the partido. Directly appointed by the governor for a two year term, he was required to reside in the cabecera, or head town, of the district. For several years after the rebellion, high-ranking militia officers were frequently appointed as jefes, probably because defence and internal security were the most pressing concerns of the period. Colonel Felipe Rosado held office in both Tekax and Peto in the early 1850s, while Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz served as jefe under the military government of Díaz de la Vega from 1853 to 1855. Ruiz held a joint appointment, both as prefect (another term for jefe político) and Comandante de la linea del sur. In 1856 he was replaced by a civilian, Francisco Granado, but continued to exercise his military command.

With the victory of the liberals under Comonfort and Juarez on the national stage, and their counterparts in Yucatán, Governors Santiago Méndez and, succeeding him, Pantaleon Barrera, local government took on a more civilian hue. A prosperous hacendado from Oxkutzcab, José María Avila, became the jefe político of the partido, and remained in that post for only one year--1857. During that time Tekax suffered its worst disaster of the rebellion, when a small force of Mayan rebels from Chan Santa Cruz successfully penetrated the defences of the town and killed approximately one quarter of its inhabitants. Avila, who took some responsibility for the disaster, retired to private life shortly afterwards, although he later reappears as a local official in Oxkutzcab and Muna. He was succeeded by Joaquin Castillo Peraza, and Francisco Ramirez, another colonel in the militia.

In the early 1860s, Yucatán went through a period of total political confusion-- at one point there were actually two governors simultaneously issuing proclamations and decrees from various parts of the state. During this period the post of jefe político of Tekax was once again assumed by Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz, who was shortly replaced by the Escalante brothers, José Dolores and Jacinto. The Escalantes continued to dominate the office of jefe político throughout the 1860s, during the French intervention as well as at the time of the restoration of the Republic in 1867. It appears that changes in this office were more a reflection of local political power and influence than changes at the national or state level. One jefe político, Cirilo Montes de Oca, a Spanish-born merchant with republican sympathies and links with Governor Liborio Irigoyen, briefly tried to stem the tide in favour of Maximilian in 1863, but he was swept aside in the general euphoria with which Yucatecans embraced the monarchy. Within a couple years, however, he resurfaced to take an active part in the Ayuntamiento of Tekax during the empire.

The second most powerful person in the partido was the subdelegado, or financial administrator. Directly appointed by the governor, his primary duty was to oversee the collection of taxes in the partido. During the period under study, this office was held by only two people, Domingo Tenreyro and Cirilo Montes de Oca. Both of these men doubled up as jefes políticos for brief periods in the early 1860s. When Tenreyro was jefe in 1862, he became involved in a dispute with Nicolasa Trujillo, a landowner and sugar grower in the region, who complained that Tenreyro did not spend sufficient time in the cabecera to fulfill his duties properly. In a letter

to the governor, Tenreyro defended himself by saying that all of his absences were legitimate and that his accuser had long been an adversary, most of their quarrels revolving around control of manpower.⁷⁹

In the villages, the power of the jefe político was embodied in the office of the juez de paz. Each community had one or two, depending on the size of the village. These individuals were appointed for a two-year term by the governor, from a nomination list of three candidates submitted by the jefe of the partido. The nominees for juez were, for the most part, petit bourgeoisie who did not own huge properties or wield substantial amounts of economic power. Once in office, however, they were able to use their power as a means of enhancing their economic position. In 1852, Bernardo Cetina laid claim to lands belonging to a deceased Maya, Felipe Bé of Oxkutzcab, whose heirs were living among the rebels. The local authorities were not convinced, and called for witnesses to clarify the situation. Cetina's claim was denied--in December of the same year, he was nominated for juez de paz of Oxkutzcab, and had he not died the following year, it is likely that his claim would have been quickly resolved in his favour. The office of juez could therefore become an opportunity for personal gain, as well as a link to patronage at the higher level of the partido.

In the aftermath of the rebellion, the jueces were instructed to draw up lists of all property owned by rebels, and were allowed to rent out this land as a means of generating revenue for reconstruction. Since the local municipalities were strapped for funds, this provided a means of rebuilding public buildings and quarters for the militia.

Labour was "voluntary," but the cost of materials still had to be met, and since commerce was slow to revive in the district, there were few other ways to finance such projects. The system was not closely monitored, however, and it is quite probable that much of the revenue intended for reconstruction found its way into private coffers. In 1862, municipalities were still complaining of a lack of revenue for public works. Most villages in the partido reported that there were no funds in the municipal treasury.⁸⁰

Economic Recovery

Studies of the economic consequences of the rebellion have focused on the losses suffered by the regional elite, the depopulation of the frontier, and the movement of capital and labour away from the sugar industry of the interior to the henequen plantations of the northwest.⁸¹ While these generalizations have considerable validity on a macro-economic scale, they do not present a totally accurate picture of the Puuc region. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the partido of Tekax tried to reconstruct its economy on the basis of the same diversified agricultural activities which had obtained before the war. Moreover, the landholding elite which dominated political and economic affairs throughout this period included a surprisingly large proportion of the pre-rebellion creole families. While some of the creole elite emigrated from the region, what is most striking is their persistence, not their destruction.⁸²

The main agricultural activity of the region continued to be the production of food crops, including maize, beans, squash and other vegetables. Before the rebellion,

the partido of Tekax had more land in sugar than any other area of the peninsula, but in the aftermath, corn once again became the dominant crop in terms of land use. No reliable statistics exist to illustrate the importance of this crop--as Lawrence Remmers points out, "most of the staples produced in the peninsula did not enter the market," and for this reason, the value of corn production cannot even be estimated.⁸³ But in the nineteenth century literature, corn was often referred to as "el grano de la primera necesidad," and even today, independently produced milpa corn remains a major component of the rural diet.⁸⁴

Corn production was seriously disrupted by the rebellion and its aftermath. As government troops pushed the rebel forces into the southeastern jungles, both armies fought over scarce food supplies, burning or stealing stored corn, and requisitioning peasant crops standing in the fields. These actions caused a severe shortage of food in the whole peninsula. Several times during the 1850s the government was forced to import corn from New Orleans and other parts of Mexico for the urban markets, and many residents of outlying areas simply starved to death or survived on famine rations by foraging in the monte. The cholera epidemic of 1853 caused further hardship as many peasants, weakened by disease, were unable to plant and harvest enough corn to feed their families.

War and disease were not the only factors determining the success or failure of the food supply. Poor harvests were also caused by the varying climatic conditions of the region. Too much rain at the wrong time did as much damage as drought, and whenever there was a crop failure, the price of corn in the urban markets rose from a

normal average price of four reales per carga to between twelve and fifteen reales per carga.⁸⁵ One of the chief responsibilities of the jefe político was to keep track of the anticipated harvests each season, so that shortfalls could be made up by surpluses from other regions. In March 1857, the jefe político of Tekax forecasted a serious scarcity of corn in his district, because heavy rains at the beginning of the dry season were delaying the clearing and burning of fields in preparation for planting in May. Landowners who had surpluses were hoarding them, for fear they would run out of supplies for their workers, while others were hanging on to their supplies in the hopes of reaping windfall profits when shortages became acute. Peasant producers had no surpluses to sell, and even the Pacíficos del sur could not be relied upon to supplement the regional supplies, because they were suffering from the same bad weather. Families from the pueblo of Xul were migrating to Oxkutzcab and Ticul because of the scarcity.⁸⁶ Corn yields varied considerably from one year to another, and even from one region to another.

Urban markets were supplied by both large growers and small peasant producers. Producers were unwilling to part with surpluses when prices were low, but problems associated with grain storage in a tropical climate meant that extra supplies often spoiled before they could be delivered to market. Transportation remained a serious problem for the movement of grain surpluses throughout the region. Complaints from local officials about the poor condition of roads underline the difficulties which local producers had in delivering surpluses to market. Moreover, the

shortage of manpower, and the competition for control of a severely diminished labour force meant that road construction was neglected by most municipal governments.

Sugar, the primary commercial crop, made a slow and uneven recovery during the decade after the war. The works of Cline, Reed, and others have left the impression that the sugar industry was completely destroyed by the rebellion, but many haciendas and ranchos resumed sugar production, not on the same scale as before, but enough to supply the needs of the domestic market. Much of the sugar was distilled into aguardiente, and it is in this spin-off of the sugar industry that the damage caused by the rebellion is most apparent. In 1844, the partido of Tekax reportedly had sixteen alambiques or distilleries.⁸⁷ Many of these establishments were located in the urban centres of the region, although Cline reports that Andrés María España, whose property was located near Akil, built a distillery and a sugar processing plant on his rural property, which was destroyed in the course of the uprising.⁸⁸ After the rebellion, few of these distilleries were still in operation. In 1859, only three were reported in Tekax, and four in Peto.⁸⁹

Paradoxically, the revival of the sugar industry around Tekax was threatened by the tax reform undertaken by Governor Santiago Méndez. Although a law passed in April 1856 cancelled the tax on the distillation of aguardiente, it restored the tax on consumption.⁹⁰ The government reported a 58 percent increase in revenue in the first year of this new tax, but sugar producers and retailers in the Sierra would have preferred no tax at all on production or consumption. On September 3, 1856, thirty-six residents of the region signed a petition to the Governor protesting the tax on

aguardiente. This group represented a cross-section of large and small producers, owners of distilleries, shopkeepers and vendors of aguardiente. While there is no documentation to prove a connection between these individuals and the movement which later developed in the region in support of the Campechano candidate for governor, Liborio Irigoyen, several were implicated in the coup in favour of Irigoyen on August 7, 1857.⁹¹ Ironically, the fiscal reforms undertaken by Méndez as part of an effort to restore the economy after the rebellion may have indirectly pushed some members of the elite in the Sierra into open rebellion against the government of Mérida. And there was a direct link between this partisan uprising and the rebel raid on Tekax which occurred five weeks later.

The most serious constraints on the economic recovery of the region were the labour shortage and the continuing factional disputes among the elite which left the communities of the Puuc vulnerable to rebel attack. Although landowners in the partido were exempt from taxation on the products of their holdings for several years, and the head tax was suspended for some towns and villages, little progress was made in rebuilding the infrastructure of roads and public services which these communities needed in order to recover their former prosperity. And, by the mid-1850s, the attention of the state's politicians and capitalists was directed elsewhere. The invention of the steam-powered raspadora in 1856 transformed the henequen plantations of the northwest into rural factories, and that region became a powerful magnet drawing labour and capital into its orbit.

The partido of Tekax became marginalized in terms of economic and political importance, briefly occupying centre stage only when the guerrillas of Chan Santa Cruz threatened to destroy what remained of creole influence in the region. But for the peasants who remained in the tiny communities huddled at the base of the Puuc hills, life went on as usual, and the yearly round of activities associated with survival on the land continued to be the core around which rural life revolved. In the aftermath of the rebellion, peasants may have actually exercised more control over subsistence agriculture, since they were in a better bargaining position vis-a-vis local landlords who desperately needed labour to revitalize their sagging fortunes.⁹²

NOTES

1. Marie Lapointe suggests that his accession to the governorship represented "a cleansing of the political climate and the maintenance of peace." Also, Méndez was able to persuade the central government not to withdraw the National Guard companies posted in the military cantons along the frontier, despite the need for more troops to defend the liberal regime during the Wars of Reform. Moreover, "so as to avoid swelling the ranks of the rebel armies, Méndez tried to oppose the dismantling of communal properties, ordered by Mexico, in favour of private property." Lapointe, Los Mayas rebeldes, 110.
2. Serapio Baqueiro, Reseña geográfica, histórica y estadística del estado de Yucatán desde los primitivos tiempos de la península (Mexico City: Imprenta de Francisco de León, 1881), 97. By the end of his administration, Méndez had liquidated the debt, paid the salaries of civil servants and soldiers, and left 40,000 pesos in the state treasury.
3. Reed, The Caste War, 156.
4. Howard F. Cline, "The Sugar Episode in Yucatán, 1825-1850," Inter-American Economic Affairs, 1:4 (1948): 79-100. Cline's calculations demonstrate that sugar production in 1845 represented 55.7 percent of the total value of commercial commodities produced by the Yucatecan economy. Despite the rhetoric of sugar producers regarding the importance of sugar as an export crop, the state still exported insignificant amounts of sugar; the bulk of the harvest was refined and distilled for domestic use, and in 1845 local markets accounted for 99.5 percent of the revenue generated by sugar.
5. Rugeley, "Official Cult and Peasant Protocol," 1992.
6. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Milicia, General Pedro de Ampudia to the Ministro de la guerra y marina de México, February 24, 1855.
7. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 28, Jefatura Política de Ticul, Jefe Político to Governor Barbachano, May 4, 1848.
8. Farriss, Maya Society, 201.
9. In Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán" (316) and Rodríguez Losa, Geografía política (211) the 1862 population of Tekax partido is listed as 23,690 which represents only a 43.81% population loss from 1846. But neither of these authors can account for the doubling of population between 1861 and 1862. The most likely explanation is that the 1862 figure includes the 11,693 inhabitants of the district of Mesapich as residents of the partido of Tekax even though

they were Pacificos del Sur who were also counted in the 1861 census of the new state of Campeche (see Chapters Four and Five).

10. Rodríguez Losa, Geografía política, 200, 211, 225.
11. Sources for population data include Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 95; Rodríguez Losa, Geografía política, 185, 200, 211, 212, 215, 216, 225; and AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 94, Juzgado Civil, Partido de Tekax, Padrón General, April 15, 1862.
12. Ancona, ed., Colección de leyes, decretos, vol. 1, 148.
13. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Coello to Governor Barbachano, October 19, 1852.
14. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Peto, Felipe Rosado to Governor Barbachano, September 14, 1852.
15. González Navarro in Raza y tierra (100) states that over one hundred residents of Tacchibichén, whom he characterizes as morenos or mulatos, died in the siege of Yaxcaba in September 1848.
16. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 37, Jefatura Política de Yaxcaba, Pascual Espejo to Governor Barbachano, May 6, 1850.
17. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 66, "Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas," Sotuta, 1856.
18. Ancona, ed. Colección de Leyes, Decretos, vol. 1, 186-187.
19. In May 1853, Gumersindo Ruiz, the military commander of Tekax, complained that one of his junior officers had seen but had been unable to prevent six residents of the town heading south in order to trade with the rebels. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 55, Milicia de Tekax, Gumesindo Ruiz to Díaz de la Vega, May 9, 1853.
20. Farriss, Maya Society, 209-210.
21. Rugeley, "Official Cult and Peasant Protocol," 1992.
22. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 54, Jefatura Política de Sotuta, José María Esquivel to Díaz de la Vega, August 11, 1853.
23. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 46, Jefatura Política de Sotuta, Pascual Espejo to Governor Barbachano, November 22, 1851.

24. Ancona, ed., Colección de leyes, decretos, vol. 1, 146.
25. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Peto, Felipe Rosado to Governor Barbachano, October 8, 1852.
26. Rodríguez Losa, Geografía política, 227-229.
27. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Galera to Governor Barbachano, February 14, 1852.
28. Rodríguez Losa, Geografía política, 192, 208.
29. Archivo de la Mitra, Curato de Tekax - "Estado del pueblo de Tekax, con los haciendas y ranchos de su administración - 1821"; Curato de Pencuyut - "Estado que manifiesta el numero de lugares, sus anexos . . . y su respectivo vecindario, 1828." Copies of these documents are located at the University of Texas at Arlington Library, Special Collections Department.
30. In 1853 the parish secretary of Tixmeuac drafted a letter on behalf of several residents of the village, protesting forced labour as auxiliaries in the military cantons of Tekax, Becanchén, Macanche, and Xul, for which they had received no pay or recognition as hidalgos. Unlike hidalgos, they received no exemption from the head tax, and were required to perform these services far away from homes and families without compensation or recognition. Their complaints were dismissed because Father Mezo Vales was considered a troublemaker. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 56, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Coello to Governor Barbachano, March 13 and April 21, 1853.
31. According to the Censo de fincas rústicas of 1856, the subdelegado of the partido of Tekax, Domingo Tenreyro, owned the most valuable rural property in the district and was probably able to use his position as tax collector to persuade landless peasants and refugees to live on his hacienda. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 58, Población--Padrón General, compiled by Juan de Díos Marín, juez de paz segundo, Ticum, November 8, 1853, contains a list of hacienda residents, both mestizo and Mayan, who worked on the large estates in the vicinity of Ticum.
32. Agricultural workers were given an exemption from service if they could prove that their labours were essential to the community. And, if they were liable for conscription, their patron could simply pay a fine to the local recruitment board in lieu of service. In this way landowners could attract and maintain discipline over their labour force, since the workers owed their employers the fee for their release from military service.
33. Reina, Las rebeliones campesinas, Doc. 7, "Relación nominal de los capitanes indígenas," 402-404; AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Juzgado Civil,

- Caja 94, Padrón general del partido de Tekax, 1862: Akil, 250-264 and Pencuyut, 230-242.
34. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 66, Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas, Tekax, 1856.
35. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Gobernación, Caja 70, Petition from José María Tus, cacique of the pueblo of Chumayel and Vicente Balam, teniente, to Governor Pantaleon Barrera, June 26, 1857; Reply from Governor Barrera, July 30, 1857.
36. Stevens, Incidents of Travel in Yucatán, vol. 2, 160-162.
37. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Juzgado Civil, Caja 94, Padrón general del partido de Tekax, 1862.
38. Both Cline and Remmers suggest that one consequence of the continuing insecurity of life in the "frontier zone" between rebel and government-held territory was an increase in the number of peasants willing to exchange autonomy for the limited protection afforded by hacendados who maintained their own defenses rather than relying upon the military garrisons in the towns. While this may have been true for the mestizo residents of the large estates around Ticum, it is not the case in the partido as a whole where the rural population remained at a low level for several decades.
39. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 66, Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas, Tekax, 1856.
40. Ancona, ed., Colección de leyes, decretos, January 18, 1856, 265-268.
41. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 66, Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas, Tekax, 1856.
42. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Juzgado Civil, Caja 94, Padrón general del partido de Tekax, 1862.
43. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 66, Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas, Tekax, 1856.
44. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 66, Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas, Tekax, 1856.
45. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 66, Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas, Tekax, 1856.

46. In particular the works of John Lloyd Stephens have been drawn upon exclusively by most historians of nineteenth century Yucatán, often without a critical awareness of the particular viewpoint of the author, who could not help but compare the Puuc region of the peninsula to the American frontier.
47. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 81, Jefatura Política de Peto, Pedro Escalante to Governor Barrera, January 8, 1859.
48. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 66, Censo de fincas rústicas y urbanas, Tekax and Peto, 1856.
49. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Franciso Coello to Governor Barbachano, October 21, 1852.
50. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 96.
51. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia, Correspondence between Gumersindo Ruiz, Governor Pantaleón Barrera, José Dolores Escalante, and Colonel José María Novelo, December 14, 1856 to January 21, 1857.
52. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 72, Ayuntamiento de Tekax, April 8, 1857.
53. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Justicia, Caja 57, Juzgado de Primera Instancia de Tekax, Francisco Perasa, August 6, 1853.
54. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 72, Ayuntamiento de Tekax, Notice of changes to mortgages on properties located in this partido, April 8, 1857.
55. For a thorough discussion of the role that religious institutions played in this pre-capitalist system of banking and credit see Michael Costeloe's Church Wealth in Mexico: A Study of the 'Juzgado de Capellanías' in the Archbishopric of Mexico, 1800-1856 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).
56. Rugeley, Men of Audacity, 340-344; see also, his "Official Cult and Peasant Protocol, 1992.
57. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 81, Jefatura Política de Tekax, January 9, 1859.
58. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 71, Ayuntamiento de Tekax, April 8, 1857.
59. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 116, Libro de manifestaciones de reducciones de capital que pesan sobre diversas propiedades, No. 380, June 5, 1866.

60. Cline, "The Sugar Episode," 91.
61. Serapio Baqueiro, Ensayo histórico, vol. 3, 71-72.
62. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Coello to Governor Barbachano, Oct. 25, 1852.
63. Rugeley, "Official Cult and Peasant Protocol," 29-30.
64. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Iglesia, Caja 74, José Bruno Romero to Governor Méndez, March 21, 1857.
65. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Iglesia, Caja 74, Vecinos de Oxkutzcab, "Los que suscribimos . . ." September 4, 1857.
66. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 55, Milicia, Peto, Colonel José Eulogio Rosado to Governor Barbachano, May 10, 1853.
67. Yucatán's rainy season imposed a severe burden on those responsible for keeping open the transportation routes, and without constant clearing, no traffic or goods could move from village to village.
68. Ancona, ed., Colección de leyes, decretos, vol. 1, December 31, 1855, 263.
69. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 46, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Galera to Governor Barbachano, August 16, 1851.
70. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48. Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Coello to Governor Barbachano, October 2, 1852.
71. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Galera to Governor Barbachano, February 3, 1852.
72. Terry Rugeley's Men of Audacity provides ample references to this type of conflict among regional elites for control of labour.
73. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Coello to Governor Barbachano, September, 1852.
74. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Peto, Felipe Rosado to Governor Barbachano, January 11, 1852.
75. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 91, Estadísticas--Tixcuytún, July 26, 1862.

76. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 95, Cacique--Tixmeuac, Esteban Balam to the Governor, January 7, 1863. Balam is listed on the 1856 Censo de fincas as the owner of urban property worth 4 pesos. He was definitely not in the same class as some of the pre-war caciques like Jacinto Pat who owned extensive properties around Tihosuco.
77. Reina, Las Rebeliones Campesinas, 402-404.
78. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, Jefatura Política de Tekax, José María Tus, cacique del pueblo de Chumayel, to the Governor, June 26, 1857. This document is an important example of the kind of delicate manipulation of the system which indigenous officials of the república were capable of when they had the backing of powerful creole intermediaries--in this case, the jefe político of Tekax, José María Avila.
79. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 92, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Domingo Tenreyro to Governor Irigoyen, June, 1862.
80. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 91, Estadísticas--Akil, Oskutzcab, Pencuyut, Tixmeuac, Tixcuytún, Xaya, and Xul, June - August, 1862.
81. Cline, "The Sugar Episode," 79-100; and Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán."
82. This is not surprising--the ability of entrenched interests to regroup and reconstitute the structural bases of their power has been noted in other historical contexts, notably the southern United States in the aftermath of the Civil War. See Jonathan M. Wiener, "Planter-Merchant Conflict in Reconstruction Alabama," Past and Present, 68 (1975), 73-94.
83. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 266.
84. Rugeley, Men of Audacity, 26.
85. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, Jefatura Política de Tekax, José María Avila to Governor Santiago Méndez, March 21, 1857.
86. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, Jefatura Política de Tekax, José María Avila to Governor Méndez, March 21, 1857.
87. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 200.
88. Cline, "The Sugar Episode," 91.
89. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 81, Jefatura política de Tekax and Peto, January 8, 9, and 11, 1859.

90. Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán," 339.
91. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 67, Tekax, September 3, 1856. The list included Vicente, Jose Dolores, and Jacinto Escalante, Manuel Anselmo Paz, Trinidad Ojeda, Cirilo Montes de Oca, Nicolasa Trujillo, Agustin Cetina, Meliton Rendon (militia officer and later comandante of Tekax) and Lorenzo Peraza. Both Paz and Peraza were imprisoned in Mérida for their part in the uprising and thus escaped the carnage in Tekax.
92. In situations of what Clifford Geertz has termed agricultural involution, subsistence agriculture usually rebounds. After the abolition of slavery in Jamaica, sugar planters complained bitterly of their ruin and inability to adjust to a free labour market, while peasant agriculture flourished and eventually occupied a commanding position in the domestic economy. Carlos Bojórquez Urzaiz argues that peasant control of corn production both for subsistence and for domestic markets was reasserted in the aftermath of the rebellion in the central and southern regions of the state. See Carlos Bojórquez Urzaiz, "Estructura agraria y maiz a partir de la 'Guerra de Castas,'" Revista de la Universidad de Yucatán, 20:120 (November-December 1978): 15-35; and Bojórquez Urzaiz, "Regionalización de la política agraria de Yucatán en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX," Revista de la Universidad de Yucatán, 21:123-124 (May-August 1979): 32-45.

CHAPTER FOUR

CREOLE FACTIONALISM AND THE SECESSION OF CAMPECHE: 1857-1863

Introduction

Shortly after the elevation of Pantaleón Barrera to the governorship in July 1857, Yucatán was shaken to its core by a rebel raid on the town of Tekax, which resulted in eight hundred to a thousand casualties. During the dry season of 1856-57, the Chan Santa Cruz Maya had gathered their strength for a new offensive. The rebels had harvested a successful maize crop, sold cattle and other livestock taken in raids on villages and outlying haciendas, and between payments from British hardwood contractors and plunder collected in raids, had replenished their arms and ammunition.¹

Most historians are in agreement that the raid on Tekax would never have occurred had not the Sierra region become embroiled in a plot to overthrow Governor Barrera. In the recent election, many members of the regional elite had supported Liborio Irigoyen for governor, and since he was the candidate more closely identified with Campeche, the fortunes of his followers became linked with the movement to set up an independent state with that city as its capital. While Suárez y Navarro dismisses the rivalry between Barrera and Irigoyen as mere factionalism, stirred up by the recent elections and primarily motivated by the desire of local politicians to enrich themselves at the expense of the public purse, there were several important issues at stake, including tariffs, taxes, and militia recruitment.² In addition, many of the landowners and merchants of Tekax had close ties with Campeche which went back to

the early days of the expansion of the sugar industry.

However, the roots of the conflict between Mérida and Campeche went back even farther to the policy of *comercio libre* initiated by the Bourbon economic reforms in 1796. The new trade regulations allowed the free exchange of goods between different regions of the empire. Alejandra García Quintanilla notes that from the early nineteenth century Mérida consistently attempted to build up its commercial links with Havana while Campeche's interests lay in developing closer ties with Mexico, leading to integration within a national market. During the first republic, when Mexico declared war against Spain, Mérida opposed the severing of trade with Cuba and continued importing sugar, coffee, and *aguardiente*, even after the federal government had declared a full embargo on trade with Spain and its remaining colonies.³ Eventual enforcement of the embargo stimulated the domestic production of sugar and *aguardiente* and led to the economic development of the interior of the peninsula. But the quarrels with the national government resulting in Yucatán's unilateral declaration of independence from Mexico in the 1840s and the subsequent Mayan uprising took the momentum out of the sugar economy. Nonetheless, some landowners and merchants in the old sugar regions still looked to Campeche as the champion of a radical form of commercial liberalism which they hoped would lead to a revival of their fortunes. In common with the merchants of Campeche, they also resented Mérida's control of customs revenues and the drafting of militia from among the agricultural labour force.⁴ The bureaucrats and politicians of Mérida, on the other hand, continued to maintain close commercial and cultural ties with Cuba and, since a

major part of government income came from customs revenues at the port of Sisal, trade with Cuba was essential to their survival.

The rebel assault on Tekax brought to the forefront several issues which were of great importance to the future of the region--the ongoing problem of defence against rebel attacks, the secessionist struggle of Campeche, and the ambivalent loyalties of the regional elite toward the government of Mérida.

Problems of Defence

Irigoyen's revolt began on August 4, 1857 with the seizure of the fort and armoury at Campeche, which was timed to coincide with uprisings in the communities south of Mérida, including Acanceh, Chapab, Oxkutzcab, Maní, and Ticul but most of these incidents only involved the capture of arms and ammunition from the local militia barracks. However, in Tekax the revolt took on a more serious aspect. Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz, finding himself vastly outnumbered by an attacking force whose ranks had been increased by mutinous local militia, surrendered control of the town to the partisans of Campeche.⁵ News of these events reached Mérida on August 6, and Governor Barrera responded by sending a force under the command of Colonel Manuel Cepeda Peraza, who, raising more troops in Ticul, advanced upon Tekax. These were to be joined by a section of the Brigada Novelo normally stationed at Peto. The pronunciados, not wanting to get caught between the government troops advancing from both directions, took the initiative and launched an attack on Oxkutzcab. Their troops, numbering around five hundred men, included a few prisoners liberated from the jail in Tekax, reportedly Mayan rebels captured from Chan

Santa Cruz. Local elite supporters of the Irigoyen faction included the parish priest of Oxkutzcab, Leocadio Espinosa and a Spanish-born militia officer, Juan Tamayo, as well as a prominent hacendado and distiller, Manuel Anselmo Paz.⁶

The uprising quickly attracted the sympathy of the majority of the citizens of Tekax. Ancona suggests that the hacendados may have looked upon this revolt as an opportunity to protest a recent militia levy which was intended to reinforce troops serving in the military garrisons along the southeastern frontier.⁷ Neither creole landowners nor their mestizo employees had any stomach for further military service, particularly when it interfered with the daily operations of their agricultural enterprises. A further motive may have been their fear of Barrera's intention to continue the fiscal reforms undertaken by his predecessor, Santiago Méndez, which included increased taxation on the production and consumption of aguardiente. For a host of reasons, the new government of Barrera was not popular in the south and with the frontier apparently safe from rebel attacks, many joined the movement to replace him with his defeated rival, Irigoyen.

However, the residents of Tekax would soon discover that their sense of security was unwarranted. The problems of defence against ongoing rebel incursions had not been seriously addressed since the final days of the military governorship of Díaz de la Vega. From the point of view of the militia officers stationed in the region between Tekax and Peto, the failure to give a higher priority to military preparedness was a chronic weakness of all civilian governments. While local landowners who were involved in the militia could and often did call upon their own servants to defend

their establishments, the towns and villages had to rely upon small garrisons of ill-equipped and often absent soldiers of the Guardia Nacional.

Even before Governor Méndez assumed control of the state government in 1855, there were indications from local military officials that the fragile line of defense established by Governor Díaz de la Vega was beginning to fall apart. On the effectiveness of Díaz de la Vega's leadership Suárez y Navarro comments, "under the command of this man, the war against the indigenous rebels was pursued with great success . . . and repeated victories pushed the rebels back to their final strongholds."⁸ In February 1855, the military commander of Tekax forwarded a message from Colonel Juan María Novelo at Peto which complained of the difficulties of completing the harvest because of the ever-present danger of guerrilla attacks. Novelo wrote,

The peasants are still prevented from finishing the harvest for fear of being attacked by Indians hidden in the monte . . . if we lose this opportunity to bring in the crops, all will be lost, because the inhabitants of those scattered communities of the interior will have to abandon their settlements because of starvation and will have to migrate to other areas simply to survive, and then, the manpower to defend this region will have disappeared: thus, the meagre amount of commercial activity and agricultural development that is presently going on will disappear entirely, as well as the population and communities that have served as a bulwark against the enemy. These disastrous consequences have arisen from the withdrawal of troops from the military cantons of

Kancabchén and other outposts which defended the farflung agricultural establishments which are the living soul of these communities; places that the former Governor and Comandante General Romulo Díaz de la Vega, with his practical knowledge of these regions, considered so important that he reinforced the garrisons every time it was necessary to protect workers during the planting and harvesting of the crops."⁹

Ruiz added that he was in complete agreement with Colonel Novelo that they were at risk of losing control of the territory presently held if forward posts were abandoned.

These reports from military officials on the spot appear to have been taken seriously by General Ampudia, who had replaced Díaz de la Vega as governor and comandante general. He wrote to the federal minister of war summarizing his problems with maintaining the army in a state of readiness to repel guerrilla attacks:

The Caste War continues to afflict the countryside and if presently the situation appears to be under control, this in no way convinces me that the conflict is about to be resolved, because despite the fact that our troops have pursued the rebels even to their settlements deep in the jungle, it is only by sheer luck that they have returned safely despite the constant harassment of their attackers . . . fleeing through that immense wasteland in which the enemy, after withdrawing from one location, immediately reappears elsewhere to attack our undefended villages . . .

This situation demands constant vigilance and increasing resources . . .

For all of these reasons the Comandancia General must maintain in the

field around five thousand men . . . If the army makes any further economies, desertion will escalate; discipline will evaporate, and Yucatán will slide back into a condition as horrifying as during the initial uprising when the "savages" were at the gates of our major cities.¹⁰

While Ampudia may have been overstating the case in an effort to persuade Santa Anna to leave Yucatán's customs revenues alone, his letter is an accurate statement of some of the problems faced by the military responsible for defending the agricultural communities of central Yucatán from rebel attacks.

There is no indication that these problems were addressed by any subsequent administration. Under the civilian governments of Méndez and Barrera the state administration made a deliberate choice to ignore the interior and concentrated its efforts on fiscal and administrative reform and the economic development of the northwest. The commander of the línea del sur, Colonel Novelo, repeatedly presented his complaints to the highest level, calling attention to the "state to which the garrison [at Tihosuco] had been reduced, because of desertions which have occurred over the failure of the jefes políticos of the partidos of Yzamal, Maxcanú, and Motul to send relief troops on time."¹¹ This neglect did not go unnoticed by the residents of the region. The assessment of the colonels was echoed by the juez de paz of Chikindzonot, a small community between Peto and Valladolid. Because of its location on a well-travelled route linking it with Chan Santa Cruz, this village was extremely vulnerable to rebel raids. On March 1, 1857 Aniceto Rivero wrote to the

governor begging for troops to be reassigned to his village, "the only pueblo in the partido which has not yet been totally devastated." Rivero added that the families of the village had taken refuge in the monte for fear of rebel attack and that if the government did nothing to remedy the situation, all of the inhabitants would migrate elsewhere.¹²

Although the activities of the rebels had thus far been limited to hit and run attacks on smaller settlements and isolated haciendas, from the beginning of March 1857 the frontier was boiling over with rumours and alarms. No one among the creole military or political leaders seemed to be able to determine whether the threat of a major rebel offensive was real, or if they were victims of a disinformation campaign instigated by the supporters of Irigoyen.

Military officials in the partidos of Peto and Tekax gathered most of their intelligence from contacts they had planted in the settlements of the Pacificos or from deserters seeking to avoid punishment by returning with information about both rebel and pacifico Maya. But since this information was often contradictory and unreliable, it seldom led to any concrete measures to bolster the defences of the region. A striking example of this occurred early in April 1857, when the jefe político of Tekax informed the regional military commander that a soldier belonging to the first company of the Active Battalion of Mérida had recently turned himself in, having deserted to the Pacificos over a year previously. While in Xbusil, the soldier had overheard a conversation between Tiburcio Briceño, the pacifico military commander of that garrison, and a woman who had been abducted by the rebels of Chan Santa

Cruz during their last raid on Lochhá. She had escaped from the rebel encampment, about eight leagues away from Xbusil, and brought news that the Cruzob forces were planning to divide into three columns, one to attack Peto or Tekax, the second to go against the pacifico communities of Lochhá and Mesapich, and the third to be deployed against the garrison at Xbusil. The informer also reported that around fifty soldiers at Xbusil had deserted to the rebel camp, taking their weapons with them.¹³

Acting quickly upon this information, the jefe político had authorized a special levy of sixty to eighty men drawn from the haciendas of the region, to reinforce the meagre garrison at Tekax (the same levy which aroused the anger of the landowners and merchants of the district). His actions were supported by Colonel Juan María Novelo, the commander of the garrison at Peto. The governor also approved the measures, with the provision that the men be allowed to return to their regular employment as soon as the danger had passed.

Part of the letter from the jefe dealt with the circumstances under which this information had been obtained. The informer was a clearly a deserter and had provided information in exchange for an amnesty. Could he be trusted as a reliable witness? At first, his report was accorded the serious attention that it probably deserved. However, four days later, a new version of the story arrived in Peto, brought by the pacifico leaders, Briceño, Chable, and Balam who declared that the soldier Aguilar was a liar and that all of the rumours he had been spreading were totally unfounded.¹⁴ From here on, the story gets even more complicated. Aguilar claimed that he had overheard Briceño passing along the information about the

impending rebel offensive to the gobernador of the pacificos, Pablo Encalada. But Encalada had not informed creole military authorities at Peto or Tekax. The pacificos at Chichanhá had been attacked by the Cruzob earlier in 1857, and probably wanted to avoid participation with creole forces in a campaign against the rebels, out of fear of further reprisals. Unfortunately for the citizens of Tekax, Novelo chose to accept Encalada's assurances that the rumours were false, the special levy was disbanded, and the town slipped back into complacency.

By early August, the warning brought by the deserter, Aguilar, had already been partially justified. A small rebel force, less than two hundred, had taken advantage of the withdrawal of most of the troops from the outposts around Peto to launch an attack on Chikindzonot, the only viable community remaining on the southeastern flank of the district of Sotuta. While casualties were low, numbering around seventy people, the victims of this raid included the juez de paz, that same Aniceto Rivero who had begged for reinforcements for the garrison only a few months earlier. Later reports indicated that the rebels taking part in this skirmish were probably not the same group involved in the later attack on Tekax, although no one was able to sort out at the time exactly from where the attack had originated. No prisoners had been taken and survivors were unable to identify their assailants, who withdrew after carrying off the statue of the Virgin and other saints from the church and burning most of the houses in the village.¹⁵

Such was the precarious situation on the eve of the rebel attack on Tekax; mutinous troops, a spirit of rebellion among the landowners, and government and

military officials in open disagreement over how to prevent further rebel incursions. Although the Irigoyen uprising in the Sierra was quickly dealt with by troops loyal to the government, the situation in Campeche had become further complicated by the revolt of Pablo García. At this point, it was not clear what the objectives of this second group of conspirators were. Mediators were called in and a commission was formed to negotiate a peaceful solution. But while negotiations were proceeding in Mérida, events in Campeche continued to unfold at an alarming pace--the movement for the separation of Campeche declared itself openly, and rejecting all compromise, prepared to fight for independence. The government troops which had defeated Irigoyen's supporters in the Sierra were redeployed to Hecelchakán where they were to join forces with Colonel Baqueiro and prepare for an attack on Campeche. Into this void, the Chan Santa Cruz rebels inserted themselves, in the most cleverly planned raid of the entire war.

The Raid on Tekax

Most sources are in agreement about the facts of the raid. Ancona's account is the most detailed, although Baqueiro is the source for some interesting speculation about the connection between Irigoyen's supporters and the rebels. On September 14, at nine o'clock in the morning, several patrols of armed men entered Tekax from various directions, having slipped past the sentries without being challenged. The jefe político, José María Avila, alarmed by their sudden appearance, went to the garrison where the Guardia Nacional unit of the town was bivouacked, and ordered them to resist the invaders who by this time had already reached one of the entrances to the

central plaza. But the militia, instead of obeying him, joined the troops entering the plaza, whom they believed to be partisans of Campeche and supporters of Irigoyen. Meanwhile Avila went around to the other outposts and quarters in search of troops to defend the town, but apart from a few dozen regulars belonging to the Active Battalion of Mérida under the leadership of Comandante Onofre Bacelis and Capitan Gerardo Valle, all of the other soldiers in the town had joined the invading force, which numbered around five hundred. By then resistance was out of the question; Bacelis and his men retreated in the direction of Oxkutzcab, the jefe left town to see if he could raise some troops from the neighbouring villages, and the mysterious soldiers in the plaza began to carry out the orders of their rebel commander, Crescencio Poot.

Sentries had been posted at all the entrances to the plaza to prevent a surprise counter-attack, and with the escape routes thus secured, the rebel troops turned on their new "comrades in arms" and killed or wounded most of them. Then the raiding party turned its attention to the objective for which they had occupied the town, the seizure of all the contents of the shops and warehouses in the area, including stockpiled supplies of aguardiente, hardware, firearms and ammunition, which were loaded on mules and pack horses for the eight-day journey back to Chan Santa Cruz. Individual houses were raided for personal treasures, and many people lost their lives attempting to defend their possessions from sacking by the rebel troops. Many others fled into the surrounding countryside, hiding in caves and in the woods, while others were cut down by machete while fleeing from the raiders.

Civilian casualties numbered over eight hundred, the great majority of them

women, children, and the elderly. Of the two hundred identified as victims from among the creole families of Tekax, only twenty-eight were among the wealthy elite of the town. Among them were hacendados José Sebastien Vera, José Gregorio Góngora, Lizaro Jacinto Escalante, Feliciano Alonso, and a female landowner, Amanda Juárez. The subdelegado of Peto, José María Zavala, had the misfortune to be in Tekax on that fateful day, and he too fell victim to the rebels. Only four Maya names are listed among known victims, although there were an additional six hundred casualties whose names do not appear in the initial report.¹⁶

The population of Tekax was predominantly creole/mestizo (seventy percent, according to the 1862 Census) and the fact that it was, as Reed characterizes it, a Ladino town, lends credence to the assertions of the creole historians of the nineteenth century that the Maya rebels were primarily interested in "killing whites." Nonetheless, it is clear from the speed of their withdrawal that the main purpose of the rebels was to capture the town's stores of aguardiente and other supplies, and to steal the personal wealth of the town's elite for exchange with the arms dealers of Belize. Tekax was a logical objective for such a raid--it was the only community in the region which still possessed significant wealth, and the weakening of its military garrison and the mutiny of the remaining militia made it an easy target. But there are many unresolved questions about this event which may never be clarified.

The first question has to do with the overwhelming perception that the troops were partisans of Campeche. Baqueiro's explanation of this fatal mistake is that the wife of Manuel Anselmo Paz, angry over her husband's imprisonment for involvement

in the Irigoyen coup, deliberately failed to warn the residents of Tekax about the identity of the troops advancing along the road from Xul. According to local tradition, the woman, Leandra Varquez, ignored the reports of fugitives from an earlier attack on Rancho Santa Cruz and prevented them from carrying a warning to Tekax, insisting that the troops were "not rebel Indians, but adherents of Campeche who are coming to exact revenge on our behalf."¹⁷ Baqueiro thus implies that it was the deliberate treachery of Doña Varquez which led to the expectation in Tekax that the troops were supporters of Irigoyen.

However, the woman was not alone in her belief that the soldiers were partisans of Campeche. Even the jefe político, José María Avila, was still convinced of this later in the day when he dashed off a hurried report from the neighbouring pueblo of Teabo, where he had gone to enlist the support of the local militia. As he wrote in his report, "It is around five o'clock in the afternoon, and I have just arrived at this village, after the disastrous defeat suffered by the garrison of the regional capital, due to the surprise attack carried out by dispersed remnants of the insurgent forces which carried out the coup of August 4, along with Indians from the bandidos del Sur."¹⁸ At this point, Avila obviously believed that the pacificos and the supporters of Irigoyen had joined forces to carry out the attack on Tekax.

By September 17 Avila had pieced together what had happened, frankly admitting that he had been totally mistaken in his original report:

Up until now I believed that [the attack had been carried out] by remnants of the Irigoyen faction who had not yet surrendered, aided by

Indian rebels. I was firmly convinced of this because of the criminal behaviour of the sentries at the outposts who did not fire a single warning shot against the barbarians when they appeared and penetrated the line of defence.¹⁹

Avila had encountered little enthusiasm for the rescue of Tekax in the various communities in which he had tried to raise support, but by the time he reached Oxkutzcab, where rebel spies had been seen in the vicinity, the true nature of the attack on Tekax was finally apparent. By now everyone realized that this was no mere continuation of the skirmishes between political factions, but rather a major assault on the capital of the region by the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz. Even so, Colonel Bacelis was only able to collect a small force of eighty men, and very little ammunition, but by the time the government troops reached Tekax on the morning of September 15, the rebels had already begun their retreat south across the Puuc hills in the direction of Xul.²⁰

In the days following the raid the number of casualties continued to mount, from five hundred, to six, and eventually to between eight hundred and a thousand. Avila also reported the extent of physical damage done by the rebels, noting that only five houses belonging to the town's elite, including the priest's residence, were left standing. Anselmo Duarte's shop also remained unharmed, and in the aftermath of the raid he distributed emergency supplies to the survivors of the attack. Ancona calls him a philanthropist, while Reed, following Baqueiro, reports that his shop was spared because he had given work to rebel Maya held as prisoners in the town jail. Duarte

closed down his business and moved away from Tekax shortly after these events, and one wonders if there might have been some connection between him and the Chan Santa Cruz rebels, particularly if he was involved in contraband trade with Belize. The records provide no evidence for such speculation, only that he and his possessions escaped the ruin that the majority of the town's elite had suffered.

A final unanswered question about the events of September 15 concerns the absence of Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz, who had played an important role in the early campaigns against the rebels and who had served both as a high-ranking militia officer and jefe político under Governors Díaz de la Vega and Méndez. When the Tekax militia mutinied in support of Irigoyen on August 4, Ruiz lost control of the military situation in Tekax for the first time since 1849. At the time of the raid he was absent on a recruiting trip in the northern part of the state in an attempt to strengthen the militia companies which served on the frontier. Ruiz's absence gave the rebels an opportunity to penetrate the town's defences without having to deal with an experienced militia commander.

The success of the raid depended on a thorough analysis of creole politics, an assessment of the military readiness of the troops stationed at Tekax, and a bold plan of deception based on the credulity of local elites distracted by their own power struggles. Good intelligence-gathering obviously played a part in the planning of this operation, but the decision of the jefe político to ignore the warnings given in April by the deserter Aguilar clearly helped the Chan Santa Cruz rebels to execute their plan without encountering serious resistance. Even the role of the supporters of Irigoyen is

ambiguous; while there is no concrete evidence for a conspiracy linking them to the raid, it is tempting to speculate about a secret understanding between the pacificos and the partisans of Campeche which, intentionally or not, worked in favour of the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz.

In the weeks following the events in Tekax, local government officials tried to dissuade the civilian population of the region from emigrating en masse, as they had done in 1848, and lobbied the government to reinforce the militia garrisons. The comandante general, José Cadenas, reminded the governor that the recent disaster had occurred primarily because of "civil dissension," and that the withdrawal of troops from the linea del defensa in order to redeploy them against the separatists of Campeche had left the entire region between Peto and Tekax virtually undefended.²¹ Cadenas explained to Barrera that he simply had no more troops to spare, and that to weaken the garrison that defended the capital would be to court disaster, since there were, even within Mérida, elements conspiring to overthrow the government. Reliance upon a citizen army, composed of members of the militia who were normally occupied elsewhere, had resulted in a state of chronic military weakness. The only real solution was a larger standing army, properly financed and easily mustered; if this was deemed impossible, priorities had to change, since the military could not fight on three fronts simultaneously.²² With this reference to three fronts, Cadenas had correctly identified the three issues which were to plague the internal politics of Yucatán over the next six years: chronic political instability, the secessionist movement of Campeche, and the failure of the militia to protect central Yucatán from repeated rebel

attacks.

Political Instability

To a certain extent, the struggles between factions and the rapid changes in government in Yucatán were a reflection of political instability at the national level. On December 17, 1857 the deepening rift between radicals and moderates among the liberals ended in the dissolution of the national Congress and the coup engineered by Ignacio Comonfort with the support of General Félix Zuloaga. Comonfort was betrayed by his new allies, however, and by January 22, 1858, Zuloaga had installed a Conservative regime in Mexico City with himself as president. Benito Juárez, who had been elected President of the Supreme Court under Comonfort, and was therefore constitutional successor to the deposed president, fled to Guanajuato where he claimed the presidential succession and began the struggle to reassert liberal control of the central government. These events initiated the three-year civil war, known as the war of the Reform, during which two competing administrations attempted to attract the support of the whole country--Zuloaga centred in Mexico City, and Juárez in Vera Cruz.

Zuloaga derived most of his support from the army--he had been commander of the Mexico City garrison--while Juárez relied upon the constitutional legality of his succession and the regional bases of liberal power which were primarily in the north and south of the country. Yucatán seemed far removed from these struggles, yet within the region this period also witnessed the repeated intervention of military figures in the making and unmaking of governors, and the suspension of

constitutionally elected governments. Some of the liberal principles for which Juárez and his provisional government struggled were also under attack in Yucatán, and were evoked by politicians seeking to unmask the abuses of power at the state level.

Throughout all the vicissitudes of these times, some Yucatecan liberals continued to believe that "government should be constitutional, that the law should be upheld and obeyed, and that the civil power should be supreme."²³ But they were a small minority. The protracted struggle against the Mayan rebels had given rise to a class of militia officers who wielded a disproportionate amount of influence over civil society, while the militarization of the countryside had eroded the liberties of most citizens.

The state elections of the summer of 1857 had returned Pantaleón Barrera to the office of governor, but the results of that election had been hotly contested by the two other candidates, Liborio Irigoyen and Pablo Castellanos. At the same time, Pablo García had placed himself at the head of a movement for the secession of Campeche. The supporters of Irigoyen and García were apparently aiming for similar results, but as described at the beginning of this chapter, Irigoyen's movement in the communities of the Sierra was put down by troops loyal to the elected governor. The Campechano uprising, however, continued to gather momentum and it was the transfer of troops from the southern *linea del defensa* to join in the assault on Campeche which enabled the Chan Santa Cruz rebels to carry out their successful attack on Tekax.

Over the next six years, the three original candidates in the 1857 election continued to jostle for power, alternately supported and abandoned, and even replaced by various military figures. Pantaleón Barrera managed to stay in office until events

in Mexico City prompted like-minded conservatives in Yucatán to declare their support for the Plan of Tacubaya and to replace Barrera with General Martin Peraza. Like Zuloaga, Peraza derived much of his support from the army, although in Yucatán the local militias often acted out of regional and personal loyalties to their commanders. It is simply not possible to equate all members of the military forces in Yucatán with a conservative programme at the state or national level. The response of the militia officers in the Puuc region to Zuloaga's coup is an excellent example of this paradox.

Ever since the counter-insurgency campaign against the Mayan rebels, the key military figures in the Peto and Tekax region had been Colonels Juan María Novelo, Gumersindo Ruiz, and Felipe Pren. All of these men were important members of the local landowning elite, and frequently did double duty as local government officials. During Barrera's struggle against Irigoyen and the separatists of Campeche, Novelo and Ruiz supported the constitutionally elected government, helping to put down the August uprising in the Sierra and joining the other Yucatecan forces which gathered to attack Campeche in the fall of 1857. Sometime during this campaign, Ruiz was wounded in action, ended up in the military hospital in Hecelchakán on December 1, and was later transferred to Mérida to recuperate.²⁴ While he was away, Colonel Felipe Pren took over as commander of the garrison at Tekax, and soon found himself dealing with a mutiny against the officers of the Peto garrison on behalf of Peraza and the Plan of Tacubaya.

The alcalde primero of Tekax at this time was Diego Crisanto Andrade, also a

militia officer and owner of properties in Ychmul and Peto. In the previous November, he had clashed with Cirilo Montes de Oca, a well-known liberal in the district, over the appropriation of the latter's horses for use by a militia officer's family.²⁵ Andrade was a conservative, furious over Pren's slow response to the Plan of Tacubaya, and demanded that he be replaced by Jacinto Escalante, a teniente colonel in the National Guard and a member of the Escalante clan. José María Avila temporarily caved in to Andrade's demands, and shortly thereafter, resigned from his position as jefe político of Tekax.²⁶ This incident demonstrates that even in the threatened communities of central Yucatán, there was little unity among the local elites, although they had cooperated for a brief period in the aftermath of the rebel attack on Tekax.

On January 3 and 4, 1858, the ayuntamientos of both Tekax and Peto proclaimed their adherence to the new regime. The document from Tekax refers specifically to the Plan of Tacubaya of December 17, 1857, while the Peto declaration addresses the more immediate issue of General Peraza's promise to end the war with Campeche. The wording of the second document also makes it very clear that the civilian authorities "proclaimed" as a result of the mutiny of the garrison:

In the town of Peto on the fourth of January in the year 1858. Having gathered together the majority of the vecinos of this town, under the presidency of the jefe político of this partido, Don José Leonardo Díaz, at the invitation of the same president, for the sole purpose of discussing the political movement which has taken place this morning in

the military garrison of the district in support of the plan proclaimed in the capital of the State on January 1, after giving the matter the full attention which it deserves, we have agreed to the following articles: 1. We recognize as Governor and Commander General of the State, His Excellency Don Martin Francisco Peraza . . . The authorities of the town also recognize as legal the treaties which His Excellency, the Commander General has arranged with the authorities of Campeche.²⁷

What was there about the Zuloaga/Peraza takeover that would have appealed to the interests of junior-ranking officers and the rank and file of the militia?

Liberal politicians during this period had a reputation among the military for seeking to undermine both the size and power of the regular army, preferring to rely upon the citizen-based National Guard for major defense needs. However, during the fall of 1857, President Comonfort not only attempted to reduce the regular army from 40,000 to 10,000 men, but also proposed discharging 20,000 men from the state-level National Guards. As Hamnett comments, it "was an extremely provocative action."²⁸ While it is more likely that the common soldiers of the Peto garrison supported the governorship of General Peraza because he had negotiated an end to an unpopular war, the junior officers also feared an end to the possibility of promotion and a long-term career as officers in the National Guard. Zuloaga's coup against the liberals ensured that the army would continue to remain a powerful force in national and regional politics. But in Yucatán, the military continued to be divided in their political

allegiances, with the older and more senior officers tending to remain loyal to politicians whom they had supported in previous campaigns, while new alliances were forged between politicians and ambitious new officers. During the period between 1857 and 1863, military officials intervened in political affairs to a greater extent than ever before, often with the pretext of trying to restore order or "stabilize" the political situation, but the end result was chronic instability from the highest to the lowest levels of Yucatecan society.

Examples abound from the region under study. Again, because of its strategic location between Mérida and Campeche, the Sierra region witnessed several disturbances because of the ongoing rivalries between factions. Many people in the region clearly supported the existence of Campeche as a separate political entity. However, despite the fact that the dispute seemed to have been solved by General Peraza's recognition of Campeche's independence in January 1858, the issue refused to go away. One of the former candidates, Liborio Irigoyen, decided to reassert his bid for the governorship, and in order to broaden his support in the Puuc region, promised to guarantee the territorial separation of Campeche if he became governor. Irigoyen's pronunciamiento provided an opportunity for discontented officers to challenge their superiors for access to political patronage via the governorship.

On April 12, 1858, while Felipe Pren was acting commander at Tekax, he received an ultimatum from Juan Tamayo, a militia officer and resident of Oxkutzcab, who demanded that he turn over the command of the National Guard to Jacinto Escalante, in the name of the separation and territorial integrity of the state of

Campeche. Tamayo had been one of the ringleaders of the August 1857 uprising on behalf of Irigoyen, so it was no surprise that his mutiny was also in favour of Irigoyen's ongoing quest for the governorship. Pren acted with dispatch, however, calling upon Colonel Andrés Maldonado of Ticul to assist in dealing with Tamayo's mutiny as quickly as possible. But Pren complained that no one from the Tekax militia or the townspeople had come to his aid: "no one from the local unit of the National Guard or from the community answered the call to arms, with the exception of a few officers."²⁹ As for the residents of Tekax, they had taken to the hills for fear of getting caught in the crossfire. Pren reported that the resident militia unit of Tekax had been only able to muster around twenty men, so Colonel Novelo sent reinforcements to prevent another disaster similar to the rebel attack of September 1857. As a result of this incident, Pren was relieved of his command and summoned to Peto, his obvious unpopularity with the people of Tekax proven beyond all doubt.

Tamayo's little uprising on behalf of Irigoyen had not succeeded in April, but that did not put an end to it. On September 12, the juez de paz of Oxkutzcab reported that Tamayo had forced the vecinos of the village to sign a declaration in support of Irigoyen for governor, an act which was quickly repudiated as soon as Tamayo's troops left the neighbourhood.³⁰ But events were moving quickly towards a victory for Irigoyen, anyway. By the end of September it was clear that Irigoyen had gained the support of key politicians and military officers in Mérida and Izamal. As Suárez y Navarro puts it:

The attempts of General Peraza to hang on to power were useless, and

in the end he stepped down in favour of the original pretender, Liborio Irigoyen, who then accepted the position of governor and began to exercise the functions appropriate to his office: this occurrence was neither new nor strange; experience had demonstrated . . . that in Yucatán, when support from the ballot box was lacking, the most expedient solution was to call upon the soldiers; Irigoyen wanted the governorship, he obtained it, and then without missing a step, proclaimed the reestablishment of the constitution and the rule of law.³¹

In order to achieve his victory, Irigoyen had courted the support of the Acereto family, father and son, promising the latter a promotion to Colonel in command of the eastern *línea de defensa* in Valladolid. This dependence on the Aceretos was to prove his undoing. In less than a year, Irigoyen found himself the victim of a coup engineered once again by the Aceretos, this time in favour of Pablo Castellanos, the third candidate for governor in the 1857 election.³² The Aceretos were rapidly assuming the role of power-brokers in the fluid politics of the period, and it was inevitable that sooner or later one of them would assume direct control of the governorship. The regime of Castellanos lasted only a few months before Agustín Acereto (father of Colonel Pedro Acereto) became the fourth governor of Yucatán in the brief period of two years.

Agustín Acereto's interference with the civilian government of Irigoyen signalled the end of his patience with what he and his supporters called the

"oppressive regime" of Irigoyen. In the Plan of Izamal (August 21, 1859) Acereto had also criticized his predecessors for failing to respond forcefully to the rebel assault on Tekax. Once Acereto became governor, many of the resources collected by previous governments were put together into a major campaign against the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz. The full story of this military disaster will be told in the final section of this chapter.

During his first term in office, Agustín Acereto was reportedly in constant conflict with the government of Benito Juárez over various aspects of his administration's practices, including the use of customs revenues on contracts for military supplies such as uniforms, ignoring government decrees, and the sale of Mayan and mestizo prisoners of war as indentured labourers in Cuba.³³ All of the governments since 1857 had engaged in the trafficking in bodies, but Suárez y Navarro claims that Acereto had even arranged Cuban financing before the expedition against Chan Santa Cruz in exchange for a promise to deliver captives to Cuba. When the expedition failed, he allowed the rounding up of innocent *Indios pacíficos* and indebted mestizo peasants in order to fulfill his contracts with Cuban labour brokers.³⁴

Acereto faced a considerable amount of opposition from a substantial number of militia officers who did not belong to the military faction controlled by his son, disaffected liberals, and the supporters of former governors Barrera and Irigoyen. Late in 1860, an uprising led by Lorenzo Vargas, Anselmo Cano and Pantaleón Barrera, employing the rhetoric of constitutionalism represented by Juárez and the government

in exile in Vera Cruz, temporarily got rid of Acereto, held elections, and placed Anselmo Cano in the governor's office. These developments coincided with the return of the Juárez administration to Mexico City in December 1860. With the liberals triumphant on the national scene, steps could now be taken to bring Yucatán back into the national fold, so to speak, particularly with respect to its treatment of Mayan prisoners of war and the still unresolved problem of Campeche.³⁵

In March 1861, General Juan Suárez y Navarro was sent by President Juárez to conduct an inquiry into the separation of Yucatán and Campeche, the causes of political instability in Yucatán, and the illegal trade in Mayan workers. Suárez y Navarro was overwhelmed by what he saw as the blatant disregard for national laws by successive state administrations, and he judged Yucatecan politicians harshly for their corruption and self-serving behaviour. Despite the obvious centralist bias of his report, the document is an excellent summary of the problems facing Yucatán at this point in time.

The first question the report addressed was the political instability. Suárez y Navarro had first hand experience with the turbulent political climate of the peninsula, since shortly before his arrival the elected government of Anselmo Cano had been toppled by the Irigoyen faction in temporary alliance with the Aceretos. In the middle of this coup, however, the Aceretos had switched their allegiance to Pantaleón Barrera, but only briefly--by the time Suárez y Navarro arrived, Agustín Acereto had once again become governor of Yucatán, having declared the previous elections null and void. As the federal envoy commented, "this extremely irritating series of repeated

upheavals, indicated by the list of recent Yucatecan administrations, proves that there exists within this peninsula an evil which is a mortal threat to the survival of the province."³⁶

GOVERNORS OF YUCATAN - 1857 - 1864		
NAME OF GOVERNOR	PERIOD IN OFFICE	POLITICAL ORIENTATION
Pantaleón Barrera	July 1857 - Jan 1858	Moderate Liberal
Martin Peraza	Jan 1858 - Oct 1858	Military/Conserv.
Liborio Irigoyen	Oct 1858 - Aug 1859	Moderate Liberal
Pablo Castellanos	Aug 1859 - Nov 1859	Moderate Liberal
Agustin Acereto	Nov 1859 - Nov 1860	Military/Conserv.
Lorenzo Vargas	Nov 1860 - Dec 1860	Liberal coalition
Pantaleón Barrera	Dec 1860 - Jan 1861	Liberal coalition
Anselmo Cano	Jan 1861 - Feb 1861	Liberal coalition
Agustin Acereto	Feb 1861 - Nov 1861	Military/Conserv.
Liborio Irigoyen	Nov 1861 - July 1863	Liberal
Felipe Navarette	July 1863 - Sep 1864	Military/Imperial

Suárez y Navarro pointed out that in the three years before his arrival Yucatán had experienced four essentially distinct governments, yet each accused the other of the same crimes and the same failings. He traced the roots of this instability back to the conflicts of the 1840s which had propelled the region out of the federation and created the conditions which led to the Mayan rebellion:

The constant turmoil which has disturbed the peninsula for more than twenty years has destroyed the habit of obedience, blocked the wellsprings of prosperity, rendered the system of public finances unworkable, and as a consequence of all this, the administration of justice has lost its foundations, the military its morality, and the civil administration its prestige and efficiency . . . The principal origin of such a tragic situation is the discord among the white race.³⁷

Suárez y Navarro was not saying anything new or original about the factional politics of Yucatán, nor were these problems confined to the peninsula. But his observations must have struck a chord among federal liberals trying to hold a country together in the face of pressure from outside creditors, opposition forces from within the party, and conservatives actively seeking the restoration of a monarchical form of government.

Moreover, the problems of Yucatán were linked to the crisis threatening the country as a whole. The arrangement by which customs revenues were earmarked to finance the war against the Mayan rebels meant that the federal government could never expect to see any increase in federal tax receipts from the peninsula while the

state government continued to divert so much of its income towards military expenditures. And for Suárez y Navarro, much of this expenditure was not only unjustified and unproductive, it contributed to the continuing political turmoil. Troops which were supposed to be engaged in defending the communities of central Yucatán against rebel attacks were more often employed in skirmishes between political factions or against similar groups from Campeche. The system of recruitment for the National Guard was badly in need of reform, and simply served to line the pockets of already rich and powerful speculators:

The continuous see-saw and frequent political changes have weakened the institution of the National Guard and have converted it into a system of profiteering, oppression, and commercial opportunity. Every one of the governments which have existed in the past four years has issued directives and made new appointments, which has converted the towns and villages into the private domains of comandantes and other officers who receive salaries which they do not deserve. Every government, in order to remain in office, recognizes as legal the appointments of its predecessor, and in this way military appointments have proliferated to the point where it is no exaggeration to say that a major part of government revenue is consumed by the salaries of these officers, many of whom are not even assigned to a particular regiment. Moreover, a heavy tax is imposed on a large part of the inhabitants of the State, for exemption from military service, and this tax is collected without any

supervision, solely at the mercy of determined individuals.³⁸

One of those determined individuals was Domingo Tenreyro of Tekax. Registration for military service was supposed to be regulated by a junta calificadora appointed by the local jefe político, but the fees were collected by the subdelegado of the partido. In the case of Tekax, the post of subdelegado had been occupied for several years by Domingo Tenreyro, a wealthy hacendado and resident of the district, who claimed to be above factionalism. But he was, in fact, a crony of the colonels, and when the constitutionalist government of Anselmo Cano briefly controlled appointments, he was replaced by Cirilo Montes de Oca, a prominent liberal of Tekax. As soon as Acereto returned to office, the post reverted back to Tenreyro, who continued to enjoy its fruits for several more years.³⁹ He was often the target of complaints from members of the creole elite who resented paying the exemption fees on behalf of their mestizo workers or poor relatives.⁴⁰

As far as Suárez y Navarro was concerned, the entire system of government finances was corrupt beyond redemption: "Order and accountability disappeared many years ago . . . Those responsible for collecting taxes in the various districts neither guarantee that it will be carried out, nor ever give an account of the sums which, from whatever source, pass through their hands. The favouritism and complicity on the part of those who manage the system with those who defraud it, have made it impossible to render an accurate account, and for this reason, enormous sums accruing to the Nation and the State have been lost."⁴¹

The remedies which Juárez's envoy prescribed for treating the problems of

Yucatán were severe and invasive. The report suggested that an interim provisional governor be appointed to organize and oversee elections and to help put into place a legally constituted government. As well, a visitador should be charged with reforming government finances and administration, and should not, under any circumstances, be related to or have a personal connection with anyone in the peninsula. Finally, these reforms must be backed up by the presence of federal troops. Suárez y Navarro argued that the federal authorities had the right, under Article 116 of the Constitution of 1857, to intervene in the affairs of the peninsula, because "the series of uprisings and coups which had occurred since 1857, undermine the fundamental laws and regulations which apply to the country as a whole, since the goal of these laws is to conserve the federal pact, and the peace and harmony of the participating states."⁴² Ironically, the majority of the administrative reforms which the report called for were implemented during the period of the French intervention, when the peninsula was governed by the imperial commissioner, José Salazar Ilarregui. All that the government of Juárez was able to do before being engulfed in problems of a greater magnitude than those of Yucatán, was to issue a decree on May 6, 1861 halting the traffic in Mayan labour to Cuba.⁴³

On the national level, one of the main issues of the 1861-63 period was the relationship between the central government and the states. The government of Acereto, although not openly hostile to the Liberal regime at the centre, did not represent those interests within the state, and was therefore not able to hang on to power indefinitely. In November 1861, Liborio Irigoyen once again took over the

governorship, proclaiming the restoration of "constitutional order" interrupted by the government of Acereto. One of his stated reasons for doing so was that Acereto was raising money for another campaign to force Campeche back into union with Yucatán.⁴⁴ Irigoyen and his supporters had always been sympathetic to the idea of Campechano independence and no doubt considered it a foolish waste of resources to employ the military in a situation which could better be solved by negotiation. Moreover, the government of Pablo García was openly liberal in sentiment and could be counted on to support the Juárez government in the looming struggle against European intervention. Accordingly, Irigoyen decided to promote a policy of reconciliation with all of his political enemies--the threat of the French invasion had the effect of uniting the forces of republicanism for the first time since the governorship of Santiago Méndez.⁴⁵

The victory over the French invasion forces at Puebla on May 5, 1862 was celebrated in Yucatán with a spontaneous outburst of patriotic fervour. As Ancona commented, "It appeared that there was only one party in the State, the national party, and the old enemies of Irigoyen . . . declared themselves ready to cooperate with him in the salvation of the country. That same Martin Peraza, who had served as leader of the conservative party, offered his services, while Colonel Manuel Cepeda Peraza, who even though he was a liberal, had always been an enemy of his administration, accepted the modest post of military commander of the port of Sisal."⁴⁶

Such harmony was short-lived. Irigoyen's administration managed to survive for almost another year, despite another challenge from Pedro Acereto which finally

ended with his defeat and execution. But the victorious advance of French forces toward the central region of the country gave encouragement to local conservatives, and even before the French took Mexico City on June 10, 1863, General Felipe Navarette had proclaimed his support for the French intervention in the Plan of Izamal (March 28, 1863). The capitulation of the ciudadela of San Benito in Mérida on July 12, 1863 heralded the success of Navarette and his supporters, but his movement had been vigorously opposed by liberals in central and southern Yucatán, where Irigoyen had consistently derived much of his support.

On April 4, 1863, the jefe político and members of the ayuntamiento of Peto expressed their opposition to Navarette's coup in the following terms:

In an extraordinary session just completed, the Ayuntamiento has given its attention to an official document sent by the leader of the dissidents to this corporation from Izamal, dated April 1st: this body, having considered the plan which sets out the programme of the revolution, and finding its contents contrary to the values which we espouse, hereby forwards the original to be disposed of according to its merits. The celebrated document which has taken up the attention of this corporation does not deserve the courtesy of a reply, out of respect for the constitutional authorities who have been elected by the popular vote of the people.⁴⁷

In Tekax, Cirilo Montes de Oca issued a declaration to the inhabitants of the partido offering an amnesty to any deserter who volunteered to fight on behalf of the

legally-constituted government. For this Spanish-born liberal, the fight against the French invasion appeared to be a matter of principle. He called upon "Mexicanos libres" to oppose the Plan of Izamal, not only because its intention was to bring down the lawful government, but because the pronunciados were allied with the enemies of national independence. "In such cases," he wrote, "the people must find within themselves the strength to cause liberty to triumph, and teach the criminals who are selling our independence the lesson they deserve."⁴⁸ On April 17, Montes de Oca reassured Governor Irigoyen that his administration still enjoyed "el buen sentido de la Sierra," thanks to certain measures which had been taken in time, such as the arrest of some supporters of Navarette in Tixmeuac. Moreover, troops of the National Guard from the Chênes district of Campeche had arrived in Ticul, and these, together with Cepeda Peraza's battalion which guarded the capital ought to be sufficient to put down the rebellion. The jefe político had also raised a substantial amount of money in the form of loans from some prominent members of the communities of Tekax, Oxkutzcab, and Teabo to pay for the expenses of the troops defending the capital, but all of these efforts were in vain.⁴⁹

Tekax was occupied by troops loyal to Navarette on July 12, the same day that the Mérida garrison surrendered. A rump portion of the ayuntamiento submitted their adherence to the Plan of Izamal, protesting that they had no other choice, since armed forces were presently occupying their town. Seven days later, their capitulation was confirmed by a newly-elected ayuntamiento which, nonetheless, contained some familiar names--the Escalante brothers, Demetrio Duarte, Cirilo Baqueiro, Pedro

Canto, and Lorenzo Peraza, all of whom had been supporters of the previous government.⁵⁰ Cirilo Montes do Oca's opposition to Navarette had been too blatant to allow for his immediate political rehabilitation. Besides, it was customary for new *jefes políticos* to be appointed when new governors took office, so there was nothing unusual about the temporary withdrawal of Montes de Oca from public life.

Supporters of the constitutional government took refuge in Campeche and used that state as a base from which to oppose the resurgent conservative forces in Yucatán. Once again, the political struggles of the nation had taken on a regional configuration, with Campeche emerging as a centre of resistance to the empire, while Mérida and a significant portion of the state of Yucatán became loyal subjects of Maximilian. The residents of the Puuc gradually transferred their cooperation, if not their enthusiastic allegiance, to the imperial authorities for as long as the latter held the power to command it, but were quick to rally behind the forces of Colonel Manuel Cepeda Peraza when they invaded Yucatán in support of Juárez in 1867.

The Secessionist Movement in Campeche

Throughout the latter part of 1857, the government of Pantaleón Barrera continued its military campaign to pressure the Campechano separatists into giving up their struggle for independence. However, support for Barrera's administration collapsed with Comonfort's adoption of the plan of Tacubaya and the subsequent conservative coup by General Zuloaga. In Yucatán, Zuloaga's example was followed by General Martín Peraza, who combined his bid for the governorship with a concrete plan for a negotiated settlement with the rebels of Campeche.

Events at the national level thus had important implications for what was essentially a regional conflict. In the words of Suárez y Navarro, "the men of Campeche made haste to adopt the plan of Tacubaya on December 25, creating a governing junta and naming as speaker of the council, that same general Peraza, to whom Barrera had handed over control of the government: with such a nomination they believed that their adversaries would be attracted to the merits of their cause, and render further conflict unnecessary."⁵¹

On January 29, 1858 the de facto separation of Campeche from Yucatán was recognized by the government of Zuloaga, which then appointed Tomás Marin as interim administrator of the new state. However, the Campechanos reacted to this effort to subvert their control of the situation by totally ignoring the representative of centralist authority. This was not the result for which they had planned. As Suárez y Navarro commented:

If the origin of the revolution was to be found in the desire of local politicians for office and the control of public funds, it was certain that Zuloaga and his ministers would spoil their plans by this effort to gain control of Campeche by means of Sr. Marin. In fact, events had moved so rapidly, that Sr. García had already named himself governor of the new state: Pedro Baranda had done likewise by declaring himself chief of the brigade and commander of the armed forces; . . . in February the governing junta issued a decree, and disregarding not only the faction which ruled in Mexico, but also the constitutional authorities, declared

itself a sovereign state, postponing its reincorporation into the rest of the Republic until the reestablishment of constitutional government.⁵²

Even a declaration of support for the constitutionalist cause did little to mollify Suárez y Navarro's negative assessment of Campeche's drive to become a separate state.

In reporting these events Suárez y Navarro argued that Campeche did not possess the human and natural resources to exist as an independent state, and was in open competition with Yucatán for territory and people, particularly in the region south of the Puuc hills. At the time of its first declaration of independence on August 7, 1857, the population of the district was estimated at approximately eighty-two thousand, with no increase over the previous decade.⁵³ During the 1840s the decline of shipping and commerce had caused the out-migration of several thousands to the neighbouring state of Tabasco. More and more shipping was diverted to the port of Sisal, only an hour's journey away from Mérida. Nonetheless, customs revenues from the ports of Campeche and Carmen were still substantial enough to fight over.

According to Suárez y Navarro, the dispute between Yucatán and Campeche was really about customs revenues and access to government patronage. His solution was for Congress to legislate the reunification of the two states, but the government of Juárez had neither the time nor the power to impose a settlement even though it would have primarily been of benefit to the bankrupt central administration. As Juárez's representative explained it:

Ever since 1848, the central government has allowed the state of Yucatán to collect customs revenues from the ports of Sisal, Campeche,

and Carmen, to finance the war against the indigenous rebels. Since Campeche's secession from the rest of the state, they [the administration of García] have appropriated the duties collected at Campeche and Carmen, and since it is not beneficial to the federal government to sustain a loss of around 200,000 pesos annually, the authorities of Campeche must be persuaded to cease collecting these revenues, which should be turned over to the Federation, because they belong to it by law.⁵⁴

On May 3, 1858 Pablo García and General Peraza signed an agreement recognizing Campeche's status as a sovereign state free of any administrative control from Mérida. The treaty also provided that Campeche would continue to station troops along its southeastern flank in the Chênes region so as to prevent rebel incursions. A garrison was maintained at Hopelchén, which functioned as a point of contact with the pacífico communities south of the Puuc. In addition the government of the new state agreed to provide a subsidy for the war against the Mayan rebels equalling one third of annual government expenditures.⁵⁵ Nelson Reed claims that the financial terms of the treaty were never fulfilled.⁵⁶

It is clear from the number of skirmishes that were reported along the ill-defined border, conflict between Campeche and Yucatán would continue to be a source of regional instability. In 1861, Campeche claimed that the entire region south of the Puuc belonged within its jurisdiction, and Tomás Aznar Barbachano and Juan Carbó advanced the argument that all of the pacífico communities south of the partido

of Tekax had pledged their allegiance to the new state. In fact, residents of the pacifico villages were divided in their loyalties and used the desire of the Campechanos to win their support as a counterweight to control by Mérida (see Chapter Five).

Open warfare between the two states did not break out again until General Navarette took over Yucatán at the time of the French intervention in 1863. The government of Liborio Irigoyen (1858-1859) was generally favourable to its liberal counterpart in Campeche, while the first administration of Agustín Acereto (1859-1860) concentrated on the campaign against the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz. But during the second term of Acereto, some Yucatecan military officers again found the Campechanos to be a more attractive target than the Mayan rebels, and Acereto may have fallen because of rumours that he was recruiting troops for a new attack on Campeche. Irigoyen's second term in office brought some stability to the situation, but the fact that Campeche provided refuge to the constitutionalists after Navarette's seizure of power in Yucatán meant that war between the two states was inevitable.

Shortly after the consolidation of his power in the state, General Navarette sent emissaries to Mexico City to reassure the regency that Yucatán was in favour of the intervention, and "to solicit aid for the purpose of forcing the Campechanos to surrender, for they were still engaged in hostilities against the French [part of the French navy was blockading the port] and therefore constituted an obstacle to the consolidation of imperial rule in the southeastern part of the nation."⁵⁷ French military aid was not immediately forthcoming; in the meantime, a bitter exchange took

place between Governor Pablo García of Campeche and the Yucatecan government, which quickly led to open conflict.

Once again, the spark that lit the fuse was ostensibly a dispute over customs revenues. Because of the French blockade, goods destined for Campeche were being offloaded at the port of Sisal, and then trans-shipped to Campeche. Governor García requested that customs duties collected on these imports be remitted to his administration, which was in serious financial difficulty because of the loss of revenues. Navarette replied that since all of the customs revenues really belonged to the central administration, anyhow, it did not matter where they were collected.

The dispute quickly grew from an argument about control of customs revenues to one over ideology and forms of government. García replied that there was nothing wrong with Navarette's theory of administration, "if both states belonged to the same nation, recognized the same supreme authority, and were governed by the same form of government, the same constitution, and the same general laws . . . unfortunately, recent actions of the government [of Yucatán] clearly demonstrate that such is not the case."⁵⁸ García's letters accused Navarette of treason against the constitution, the laws of the Reform, the legitimate government headed by Juárez, and of opening the door to foreign invasion.

García also blamed the administration of Navarette for subverting the loyalty of the Mayan communities south of the Puuc which had established links with his government (see Chapter Five). In the meantime, the constitutionalist forces were preparing to invade Yucatán under the leadership of Colonel Cepeda Peraza. On the

assumption that communities along the camino real south of Mérida were still favorable to the liberal cause, Cepeda Peraza advanced with a combined army of approximately one thousand soldiers as far as Maxcanú, where he declared himself interim governor of Yucatán and chief of the armed forces. On November 22, 1862 Cepeda Peraza's forces attacked the garrison of Chocholá (only 36 kilometres southwest of Mérida), with the cry of "Libertad y Reforma." With this action, Cepeda Peraza and his Campechano allies left no doubt as to which side they were on in the increasingly polarized struggle enveloping the entire country. It was, however, a relatively futile gesture.

Navarette had placed loyal supporters in all of the key military posts within days of his accession to the governorship. Playing upon the historic rivalry between Campeche and Yucatán, the three commanders of the *linea del oriente, del sur, y del centro* rallied support by accusing the neighbouring state of attempting to impose its rule on the entire peninsula. They also made an appeal to the many enemies that Liborio Irigoyen had acquired during his two terms in office, by claiming that the real objective of the invading forces was to restore Irigoyen to the governorship of Yucatán. Colonel Cepeda Peraza had only one aim in mind, however, and that was to regain control of the capital, thereby demonstrating the military strength of the constitutionalists.

Once again, the Puuc region became involved in a struggle for control of the peninsula. Cepeda Peraza's forces occupied the pueblo of Muna, after the withdrawal of a small garrison which remained loyal to Navarette. They then advanced to Ticul,

where they met with little opposition. However, Naverette's military commanders had managed to muster sufficient troops to mount a flanking operation which forced the republican forces to fall back on Maxcanú, where they remained under siege for several days. Despite the arrival of reinforcements from Campeche, the troops of Cepeda Peraza were outnumbered and outgunned. At some point during the siege, Cepeda Peraza slipped away under cover of darkness. Two days later, the remaining troops surrendered to the Yucatecan forces. One of the high-ranking constitutionalist officers, Daniel Traconis, transferred his allegiance to Naverette, and later played an important role in several campaigns against the Mayan rebels.⁵⁹

Navarette, however, was not satisfied with this limited victory, having previously determined that Campeche must be forcibly reunited with Yucatán and delivered over to the imperial camp. Accordingly, Yucatecan forces continued their advance into Campechano territory, occupying Halachó and Hecelchakán, and finally, Campeche itself. On January 22, 1864, Governor García, along with remnants of the republican army, surrendered to the commander of the French fleet, after being threatened with a naval bombardment if they continued to resist. Pablo García and his Yucatecan allies, Manuel Cepeda Peraza and Liborio Irigoyen, went into exile, rather than give up their support of Juárez.

Naverette justified his actions against Campeche on the grounds that the campaign had not been undertaken for purposes of territorial aggrandizement nor a desire on the part of his government to dominate the neighbouring state, but merely to destroy a small number of liberal agitators who were responsible for spreading "chaos

and anarchy." With their disappearance from the scene, Campechanos could look forward to a happy era of "peace, concord, and harmony" under a monarchical form of government.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, from this period on, Campeche was considered part of the imperial departamento of Yucatán, until the restoration of the republic in 1867.

The Burdens of War

The response of the rest of Yucatán to the rebel attack on Tekax in 1857 was initially quite overwhelming. Donations poured in from all over the state, and local authorities were able to distribute almost one thousand pesos in relief to victims of the raid.⁶¹ Politicians and the military called for an immediate punitive expedition to destroy Chan Santa Cruz, but Governor Pantaleón Barrera was also engaged in a bitter struggle for survival against his rival, Irigoyen, as well as the separatists of Campeche. Internal conflicts claimed the full attention and resources of the government, so there was no immediate military response to the renewed threat from the Mayan rebels.

In February 1858, rebel forces recaptured Bacalar, and stationed a small garrison there for the purpose of guarding their trade with the British in Belize. This southern outpost remained in the hands of the Mayan rebels until 1901, when it was finally occupied by Mexican forces at the same time as the fall of Chan Santa Cruz. With their supplies of arms and ammunition secured, the rebels once more turned their attention to keeping the pacifico communities in check and raiding the towns and villages of central Yucatán. Most efforts to prevent these raids were unsuccessful, including a major expedition mounted by Governor Acereto in 1860. Several times during the 1860s, rebel bands penetrated deep within government-controlled territory,

and even established temporary base camps in places like Tzucacab, a small village on the road between Tekax and Peto.⁶² Travel in the countryside became difficult and dangerous, while the desertion rate at forward garrisons such as Tihosuco escalated as the war dragged on. Everyone talked about the necessity of bringing the rebellion to a definitive end, but no government seemed capable of marshalling the resources necessary to achieve this goal.

On December 18, 1858, Liborio Irigoyen published a decree granting an amnesty and offer of peace to the rebels, while preparing for a campaign against them. These overtures were ignored, but more importantly, several internal uprisings broke out among various factions opposed to his governorship, so the campaign was put on hold. Eventually, one of Irigoyen's supporters, a young colonel by the name of Pedro Acereto, led a coup which installed his father as governor in December 1859. Once Agustín Acereto became governor, all of the resources collected by the two previous governments were put together into a major campaign against the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz.

Valladolid, where Colonel Acereto was jefe de la linea del oriente, became the staging ground for the largest army assembled since the days of General Díaz de la Vega. Ancona reported that there were around three thousand soldiers involved in the expeditionary force, including 750 Indian auxiliaries. They departed after an outdoor mass in the plaza mayor of Valladolid on January 2, 1860. The commander of this army was young and inexperienced, as were all of the general staff, "since everyone had lost confidence in the old caudillos of the previous campaigns."⁶³ After a march

of eight days, Acereto's forces occupied Chan Santa Cruz without encountering any serious opposition along the way, apart from intermittent sniping. But, as Ancona related, "experienced veterans of the war had no illusions about the facility with which they had achieved this apparent victory over the rebels. The ease of occupation was not a sign of the weakness of the rebels, but rather, a time-honoured and well-known tactic. They [the Maya] had allowed them to occupy their base, only to lay siege to it when their widely-dispersed forces had all been assembled."⁶⁴

What happened between the middle of January and mid-February is largely a matter of speculation. On February 15, Pedro Acereto returned to Tihosuco with a small remnant of the main army--around six hundred men. The rest of the force had either been wounded, killed, or captured by the rebels in various attempts to break out of the siege. Ancona describes a situation in which the occupying forces became progressively demoralized, mutinies erupted, and finally, part of the army decided to try and break out of their encirclement. But, due to inexperience, they had failed to establish any intermediate camps between Chan Santa Cruz and the creole outpost of Tihosuco, so they decided to try to reach the Bahía de la Ascensión, which was much closer. A group of around five hundred left, along with the wounded, but they were attacked and dispersed by the rebels, so the survivors returned to Chan Santa Cruz. The remainder of the force then prepared to try the northern route, toward Kampolcoché, where they were again attacked, suffering enormous casualties. By this time Acereto had lost over two-thirds of his men, including an entire military band with its instruments, the surgeon and the chaplain.⁶⁵ As Reed comments wryly, "the

Colonel had learned that his campaigning in the petty revolts of the west had no meaning or application against the Cruzob, and neither he nor his followers wanted to talk about the experience."⁶⁶

Apart from the Acereto expedition, government troops adopted a defensive strategy, staying within garrisoned towns and avoiding open clashes with rebel bands which raided villages and haciendas in the central part of the state with impunity. Many communities took on the task of self-defense without relying on the thinly scattered companies of the National Guard. Even in Peto, headquarters of the *linea del defensa del sur*, local residents assumed a major responsibility for the safety of their own community. There were many categories of exceptions to service in the militia, but as the *jefe político* of Peto pointed out, there were so many occasions in which the inhabitants had to take up arms to defend their homes, including hacienda servants, who were supposed to be exempt, or people over the age of fifty, that "the exceptions which the regulation for the National Guard establishes are illusory for these villages."⁶⁷

In addition to the burden of military service which was supposed to be spread out over the entire state--companies of the National Guard were supposed to be rotated out of active duty every two months--residents of the front line *partidos* were required to provide food for the troops on a regular basis.⁶⁸ As can be expected, evidence reveals that this obligation fell mostly upon the poorer classes. Montes de Oca, *jefe político* of Tekax, borrowed money from local government funds to purchase meat for the soldiers' mess, because there was a shortfall in the amount of bread and corn

supplied by the people of the district: "the production of bread and corn that the poor classes in the villages of this partido have been sending to this garrison . . . has fallen behind, allegedly because they have used up their meagre resources."⁶⁹

Even wealthier residents of the region suffered from time to time. In July 1862 the jefe político of Peto, Nazario Novelo, reported an incident in which a band of drunken soldiers passing through the village of Chacsinkin, broke into the courtyard of Doña Antonia Varquez, and stole a mare and foal belonging to the woman.⁷⁰ The main complaint from landowners about the National Guard, however, was the drain on human resources which they felt could be better employed in agriculture. But as long as the threat of rebel attacks remained, there was little that could be done about the problem. Moreover, the constant involvement of units of the National Guard in factional disputes meant fewer resources were available for the garrisons of the línea del defensa.

A quick survey of changes in the size of the garrison at Tihosuco over an eight year period reveals that the number of soldiers assigned to this important outpost had declined considerably by the 1860s. In 1854, there were seven companies for a total of 293 soldiers at Tihosuco. In 1855, the garrison reported its highest number, 390 at full strength. In 1860, figures of 157 and 131 were recorded for Tihosuco, but by 1863, the number had declined to 57. In June of that year, Nazario Novelo recorded these dismal comments by the comisario municipal of the town:

In the first place, the town is isolated in the midst of a wilderness ten leagues away from the nearest canton (Dzonotchel), and relies for its

defence on the insignificant number of fifty-seven men, with little ammunition, the greater part of it having been carried off by the numerous deserters who have gone missing in the past few months . . . Secondly, the scarcity of basic food supplies has caused a number of people to emigrate . . . the price of corn here is often six and sometimes seven reales per carga (approximately 100 lbs.) and this fact, along with the lack of money in circulation, has made efforts to acquire enough to live on useless . . . Thirdly, the scarcity of food will become even more serious in the future, because the few people who remain are constantly under arms and for this reason have no time to prepare their fields for planting . . . Finally, we are presently entering the rainy season, the most dangerous period, because this is the time when the rebels invade our settlements, and since we cannot travel from one part of the region to another because the roads are impassible, to remain in this place is a choice between dying of famine or a machete wielded by Indians.⁷¹

The inability of successive governments to maintain adequate garrisons in the communities threatened by rebel attacks reflected not only the political chaos of the time, but also the miserable conditions under which members of the militia were expected to serve. Desertion was punishable by death, yet increasing numbers of soldiers risked the penalty because it was seldom enforced. According to Article 91 of the General Orders for the Army, "those who desert while on active service . . . will suffer the death penalty . . . this regulation is meant to apply not only to those

involved in a campaign, but also to those who desert from the garrisons and outposts to which they are assigned."⁷² Many who ran away did so on the certain knowledge that if they signed on with some hacendado they would be allowed to leave the army with minimum punishment. Such was the case with Juan Romero who spent only ten days in detention before he was released to the service of his employer in Oxkutzcab.⁷³

Many desertions took place while en route to the garrisons to which new recruits had been assigned. A desertion rate of between twenty-five and thirty percent was not uncommon among troops destined for active service against the Mayan rebels.⁷⁴ Many deserters eventually made their way back to their respective villages, even though local jueces de paz were instructed to keep track of individuals missing from the ranks by means of lists circulated by their officers. However, desertion to the enemy was much more serious, particularly since such fugitives usually took their weapons, ammunition, and other supplies along as a means of bargaining for their survival.⁷⁵

After the 1853 peace accord with the Pacificos del sur, the problem of desertion escalated because fugitives were welcomed by these communities which depended on adequate numbers of fighters in order to sustain their autonomous way of life. The impact of the pacifico communities on the military situation will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter. For the moment, suffice it to say that without their presence in the region south of the Puuc, the problem of desertion would have been less serious. They contributed to what was probably the most

serious impediment to the defense of the central region of Yucatán--the chronic lack of manpower.

By the mid-1850s, the rebels had been more or less successfully contained within the southeastern region around Chan Santa Cruz. After the daring assault on Tekax in 1857 and the capture of Bacalar, the Cruzob increased their control of the region between their stronghold and the creole *linea del defensa* until they were able to force the abandonment of Tihosuco in 1867. The "attrition" factor eventually wore down the ability of successive state governments to deal a final blow to the rebels, while political instability both at a national and regional level made such a solution impossible to implement.

NOTES

1. Reed, The Caste War, 163.
2. Juan Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas y carácter de los frecuentes cambios políticos ocurridos en el estado de Yucatán (Mexico City: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1861), 13-14.
3. Alejandra García Quintanilla, "En busca de la prosperidad y la riqueza: Yucatán a la hora de la independencia," in Los lugares y los tiempos: Ensayos sobre las estructuras regionales del siglo XIX en México, ed. Alejandra García Quintanilla and Abel Juárez (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1989), 107.
4. Reed, The Caste War, 165.
5. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 5, 21.
6. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia, Ticul, Santiago Espinoza to Comandante General del Estado, August 5, 1857.
7. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 5, 21.
8. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 12.
9. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 62, Prefectura de Tekax, Gumersindo Ruiz to Governor Ampudia, February 18, 1855.
10. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Milicia, General Ampudia to the Ministro de la Guerra y Marina, February 9, 1855.
11. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 72, Comandancia General, José Cadenas to Governor Barrera, March 28, 1857.
12. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Justicia, Caja 75, Chikindzonot, Aniceto Rivero to Governor Barrera, March 1, 1857.
13. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia, Comandancia en Jefe de la Brigada Novelo, Peto, Juan María Novelo to Governor Barrera, April 10, 1857.
14. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia Comandancia general de la Brigada Novelo, Peto, Juan María Novelo to Governor Barrera, April 14, 1857.
15. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia, Comandancia en Jefe de la Brigada Novelo, Peto, Juan María Novelo to Governor Barrera, August 4, 1857.

16. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, Jefatura Política, Tekax, José María Avila to Governor Barrera, September 17, 1857.
17. Baqueiro, Ensayo histórico, vol. 3, p. 71.
18. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, Jefatura Política de Tekax, José María Avila to Governor Barrera, September 14, 1857.
19. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, Jefatura Política de Tekax, José María Avila to Governor Barrera, September 17, 1857.
20. Four days after the raid on Tekax, the commander of the garrison at Xul reported that scattered groups of rebel soldiers were seen in the surrounding countryside, and that the civilian population was on the verge of fleeing into the monte for fear of experiencing the same fate as the citizens of Tekax. The militia at Xul was powerless to pursue the rebels since they had neither the manpower nor sufficient weapons and ammunition to conduct an effective pursuit. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, José María Avila to Governor Barrera, September 18, 1857.
21. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 72, Comandancia Militar, José Cadenas to Governor Barrera, September 23, 1857.
22. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 72, Comandancia Militar, José Cadenas to Governor Barrera, September 23, 1857.
23. Brian Hamnett, Juárez (London and New York: Longman, 1994), 56.
24. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia, Brigada Cepeda, Colonel Cirilo Baqueiro to General José Cadenas, Dec. 1 and 3, 1857.
25. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, Jefatura Política of Tekax, Cirilo Montes de Oca to Governor Barrera, November 29, 1857.
26. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 77, Ayuntamiento of Tekax, Alcalde Segundo Luis Perez to Governor Martin Peraza, January 30 and 31, 1858.
27. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 77, Ayuntamiento of Tekax, Alcalde Primero Don Diego Crisanto Andrade to Governor Martin Peraza, January 3, 1858; and AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 77, Jefatura política of Peto, Leonardo Díaz to Governor Martin Peraza, January 4, 1858.
28. Hamnett, Juárez, 82.
29. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 76, Milicia, Comandancia del Cuartel de Tekax, Felipe Pren to Governor Martin Peraza, April 12 and 14, 1858.

30. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Justicia, Caja 78, Juzgado de Paz de Oxkutzcab, Bartolomé Granado to the Jefe Político of Tekax, September 12, 1858.
31. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 14.
32. Suárez y Navarro states that Castellanos only remained in office long enough to "liquidate his outstanding debts, paying them with revenues rightfully belonging to the national government." Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 14.
33. Suárez y Navarro comments, "The difficulties which have surrounded the central administration in its attempts to call attention to the behaviour of Sr. Acereto and his predecessors [have proven insurmountable] . . . All of the complaints of the constitutional government have come up against the reality that a great gulf divides Yucatán from the rest of the republic, and against the studied indifference of Acereto . . . The favourite response of this official when he receives some reprimand from the Supreme Magistrate [Melchor Ocampo] is; the shots fired in Mexico City do not reach as far as Yucatán." Informe sobre las causas, 16.
34. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 21; and Reed, The Caste War, 179.
35. Hamnett, Juárez, 129. Hamnett comments that "once Liberals regained the capital city the Constitution of 1857 would be applied to the full extent of the national territory."
36. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 17.
37. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 17.
38. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 29.
39. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 92, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Domingo Tenreyro to Governor Irigoyen, June 1862.
40. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 92, Jefatura política de Tekax, Domingo Tenreyro to Governor Irigoyen, June 1862. Tenreyro was trying to defend himself against the charges of some local citizens for his alleged abuse of the laws regarding service in the National Guard: "In the list that I passed on to Colonel [Manuel Cepeda] Peraza, I included the young Manuel Coello and other youths of this city. . . . it was only my duty, even more my desire, that military service should not solely weigh upon the poorer classes leaving the rest free."
41. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 29.
42. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 37.
43. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 146.
44. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Decretos del gobierno, 1861-1866, Caja 88,

Liborio Irigoyen, Presidente del Tribunal Superior de Justicia de este Estado, a sus habitantes, Mérida, November 11, 1861.

45. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 5, 145.

46. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 5, 146.

47. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 97, Jefatura Política de Peto, Nazario Novelo to Liborio Irigoyen, April 4, 1863.

48. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 97, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Cirilo Montes de Oca to the inhabitants of the partido, April 8, 1863.

49. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 97, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Cirilo Montes de Oca to Liborio Irigoyen, April 17, 1863.

50. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 96, Ayuntamiento de Tekax, July 12, 19, and 21, 1863.

51. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 26.

52. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 26.

53. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 172.

54. Suárez y Navarro, Informe sobre las causas, 37.

55. González Navarro, Raza y tierra, 171.

56. Reed, The Caste War, 176.

57. Faulo Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa (Mérida: Maldonado Editores, 1983), 22.

58. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 24.

59. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 32-33.

60. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 43.

61. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 71, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Padron general de las familias socorridos por la comición de la junta de socorros establecida en la capital, October 31, 1857.

62. AGEY, Poder Ejectivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 87, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Pedro Canto to Governor Acereto, August 19, 1861.

63. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 5, 92-93.
64. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 5, 94-95.
65. Ancona, Historia de Yucatán, vol. 5, 96-101.
66. Reed, The Caste War, 179.
67. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 77, Jefatura Política de Peto, Leonardo Díaz to Governor Peraza, September 11, 1858.
68. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia, Peto, Juan María Novelo to Governor Barrera, April 14, 1857. "The force which occupies this garrison is composed for the most part of members of the National Guard, who are relieved every two months."
69. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 97, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Cirilo Montes de Oca to Governor Irigoyen, April 29, 1863.
70. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 92, Jefatura Política de Peto, Nazario Novelo to Governor Irigoyen, July 3, 1862.
71. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 97, Jefatura Político de Peto, Nazario Novelo to Governor Irigoyen, June 6, 1863.
72. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Milicia, "Ley penal para los desertores, de 26 de Setiembre de 1853," reissued August 10, 1855.
73. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Milicia, Gumersindo Ruiz to Governor Méndez, September 9, 1855.
74. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 55, Milicia, Colonel Manuel Cepeda Peraza to Governor Díaz de la Vega, May 3, 1853.
75. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 55, Milicia, Colonel Eulogio Rosado to Governor Díaz de la Vega, May 2, 1853.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PACIFICOS DEL SUR AND THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL: 1853-1867

Introduction

The presence, south of the Puuc hills, of several virtually autonomous communities of peasant refugees, army deserters, and "pacified" rebels remained a problem for Yucatecan authorities for several decades. The fluctuating population, numbering over fourteen thousand according to the 1862 Census, was collectively known as the Pacificos del sur because their leaders had been signatories to the peace treaty of September 1853 in Belize. Although this treaty was never officially ratified by the state legislature of Yucatán (probably because it had been negotiated by representatives of the military government of General Díaz de la Vega), "it was fairly consistently observed by both parties and was credited with a significant diminution of hostilities."¹ Ever since Cline's early work on the Caste War, the pacifico communities have been viewed as "tribes" or "chiefdoms;" essentially Mayan political units organized around the same quasi-military structure adopted by the Chan Santa Cruz rebels, although without the theocratic elements which characterized the latter group.² Don Dumond has examined their organizational structure and relations with British authorities in Belize, and has attempted to identify the shifting geographical location of many of these communities over the second half of the nineteenth century.³ While the work of both Cline and Dumond on the Pacificos succeeded in focusing more attention on an important, but neglected region during the post-rebellion period, their almost exclusive use of British archival sources and their

conceptualization of these communities as ethnically "Mayan" has obscured the role that the Pacificos played in the conflict over the separation of Campeche from Yucatán and their continuing relationship with the communities of the Sierra. Both Cline and Dumond were primarily interested in the southern group centred around Chichanhá and later Icaiche, which engaged in trade and hostilities with Belizean settlers, and eventually migrated south of the Rio Hondo.⁴ The northern communities, on the other hand, continued to play an important role in the politics of Yucatán, and were not exclusively composed of former Maya rebels, but included mestizo and creole elements, many of whom were deserters from government forces fighting against the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz. In addition, these communities harboured peasant refugees from the pacified areas of central Yucatán, and continued to serve as zones of refuge for tax evaders, criminals, and fugitives from debt and conscription. Rather than fitting the definition of tribe or chiefdom, they resemble in many ways the maroon communities found on the fringes of slave societies in Brazil, the Guyanas, Jamaica, and the southern United States.⁵

The primary importance of the pacifico communities in the aftermath of the rebellion in the Puuc region, however, may have been their continuing ability to destabilize the linea del defensa and to render ineffectual the attempts of local authorities to control population movements in the region. One of the original goals of the 1853 treaty with the southern group of rebels had been to persuade them to return to their communities of origin, within the territory controlled by the government

forces. Despite numerous incentives to do so, including a complete exemption from both civil and religious taxes, resettlement assistance, and the return of lands seized by the government, few of the former rebels took up these offers. They chose, instead, to remain in remote settlements dispersed through a broad area extending south from Tekax to the border with Guatemala and Belize.

In this chapter I will attempt to determine what effect the presence of the *pacificos* had upon the communities of the Puuc. In order to explore this issue, it is necessary to examine the nature of their relations with the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz, military and government officials, residents of the frontier communities, priests and traders, and the peasants of central Yucatán. In addition, I will try to determine whether or not *pacifico* leaders actually pursued an independent "foreign policy," as Mexican authorities feared, and what role they played in creole factional disputes such as the secession of Campeche.

The *Pacifico* Leaders and their Communities

The idea of negotiating an end to the war originated among a group of rebel captains who had come together under the leadership of José María Tzuc, the former lieutenant of Jacinto Pat who had captured Bacalar in 1848. It had been apparent for some time that the rebels at Chichanhá were losing interest in the rebellion, despite the efforts of José María Barrera to keep them committed to the struggle.⁶ After Barrera's death in 1852, Tzuc and nine other rebel caudillos met with Yucatecan authorities under the auspices of the British superintendent of Belize, Philip

Wodehouse, in August and September 1853.⁷ This settlement did not significantly alter the military situation between the rebels and Yucatecan military forces, for neither side was strong enough to achieve a decisive victory over the other. However, the treaty redefined the military frontier and created a third force which occupied a large amount of territory between the Chan Santa Cruz rebels and the partidos of Tekax, Hecelchakán and Hopelchén. Moreover, pacifico leaders pledged themselves to participate in joint military operations with Yucatecan government troops when called upon to do so, as well as maintain a force of four hundred fighting men at Chichanhá to prevent British and Yucatecan residents of Belize from selling arms to Cruzob rebels.

In 1857, the southern pacifico community of Chichanhá was attacked by rebel forces from Chan Santa Cruz. The community split into two factions, a large proportion of the southern group migrating into Belizean and Guatemalan territories, while the remnants under Luciano Tzuc continued to occupy the area around Chichanhá. By 1863, however, letters from Tzuc indicated that the settlement had been permanently abandoned and its inhabitants had relocated at Icaiche.⁸ Relations between the Pacificos of Icaiche and the northern Pacificos seemed to have been fairly tenuous after 1857, perhaps because Tzuc became heavily involved in disputes with the British authorities in Belize. As far as the British were concerned, the Icaiche Maya were trouble-makers who raided settlements on the Belizean side of the border and exacted payments from hardwood contractors for permission to harvest the forest

in what they considered to be their territory. While their relationship with Mexican authorities is not well-known, it is possible that state authorities in both Yucatán and Campeche expected the Icaiche Maya to continue to intervene in the arms trade between the British and the Cruzob after the fall of Bacalar in 1858.⁹

Even before the relocation of the southern Pacificos to Icaiche, the northern Pacificos had been developing their own ties with central Yucatán. According to Dumond, "the impression conveyed by the list of leaders on whose behalf Tzuc signed the treaty of 1853 is that of relatively independent caudillos, each with his personal following, who had coalesced into an ephemeral union. It is certain that at least three of the ten were residents of the area around Mesapich and Lochhá."¹⁰ While some of the secondary literature suggests that these communities had existed before the rebellion, and that they were composed of renegade Maya who had never lived under Yucatecan rule, Dumond's statement that they were "outgrowths" of the rebel army is probably closer to the truth.¹¹ From subsequent reports it appears that the majority of the pacifico leaders involved in the 1853 agreement were from what Dumond calls the northern group, and that residents of these settlements were initially refugees and former rebels from the villages of the region around Tekax and Peto. Two of their leaders were connected with Oxkutzcab and Teabo in the partido of Tekax, one was from Tahdziú near Peto, while a fourth had links to Kimbilá, in the northern partido of Izamal.¹²

The caudillo who had led the dissident Maya in negotiations, José María Tzuc, died soon after the agreement was signed, and was succeeded by Andrés Zimá who

lasted only a few years as head of the coalition. According to a military report, he was succeeded by Luciano Tzuc, who became gobernador of all the Pacificos in 1855.¹³ Tzuc's headquarters were in the village of Chichanhá, some distance away from the northern group of settlements located at Lochhá, Macanche, Mesapich, Xbusilákal, and Xkanha. Northern leaders identified at this time (1850s) were Pablo Encalada, José Yx, José María Cocom, Juan Crisostomo Chablé, and Pedro Pablo Tec. In 1858 a mestizo, Tiburcio Briceño, became captain of Xbusil, and continued to be identified as one of the comandantes of the northern communities until the mid-1860s. Of the original leaders who signed the 1853 treaty, only the mestizo leader, Pablo Encalada, seems to have survived the mutinies and realignments which characterized these groups.

Creole military leaders had a difficult time keeping track of the power struggles and shifting alliances among the Pacificos and for this reason the historical record is confused and contradictory. While it is possible to identify individual leaders with certain communities over a period of time, the record is seldom clear as to who spoke for all of the Pacificos at any one time. The most complete published accounts exist for those groups of Maya who interacted with British hardwood contractors in northwestern Belize, or eventually settled permanently in the British colony. By 1861, the number of people who had settled in Belize was comparable (thirteen thousand) to the population reported for the northern communities in the 1862 Census of Yucatán (fourteen thousand).¹⁴

CENSUS OF THE NORTHERN PACIFICO COMMUNITIES - 1862 ¹⁵			
VILLAGES	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Mesapich	466	455	921
Xaranjo	120	114	234
Xbusilákal	63	60	123
Elecib	449	419	868
Yakalcab	1380	1196	2576
Noh-ayin	503	401	904
Xkanha	470	400	870
Xmaben	200	187	387
Macanche	1412	1381	2793
Xchumpil	722	587	1309
Yakalzul	386	317	703
Lochhá	1542	1527	3069
TOTAL			14,757

The Pacificos and the Partidos of Tekax and Peto

Information on the northern Pacificos comes primarily from militia records and local government documents from the partidos of Tekax and Peto. Early in 1852, refugees returning to Tekax reported to the jefe político that there were approximately one hundred families living at Lochhá, where they had created a thriving settlement based on the traditional crops of Mayan agriculture. Residents of this settlement had fled the villages of the Puuc along with the retreating rebel armies, and now their captains would not allow them to return. Lochhá was subsequently occupied by creole

forces in April 1852, and the recalcitrant settlers were rounded up as prisoners of war and sent on their way to Tekax.¹⁶ As soon as government troops withdrew, the settlement at Lochhá was quickly reoccupied, while other rebel communities at Macanche and Yakalzul continued to thrive despite the offensive carried out by General López de Llergo's troops in 1852.

Until the treaty of 1853, the rebels of this region obtained their arms and ammunition from British hardwood merchants, with whom they entered into contracts to supply mahogany from the forests on the Yucatecan side of the border. The resumption of timber operations on the northern side of the border after the Mayan capture of Bacalar presupposes the existence of some form of arrangement with the rebels "as some of the best available stands of mahogany were located within Mayan-controlled territory to the north of Belize, including the undefined north-western frontier of that settlement."¹⁷ In this trade, rebel leaders functioned no differently than their former creole patrons in Yucatán, selling the labour of their followers in return for a steady supply of arms and ammunition to maintain their independence. Prisoners of war reported some discontent among the rank and file over these arrangements, but it was a labour system that was so entrenched that Yucatecan settlers are said to have brought the practice with them to Belize, even though the laws of the colony prevented debt peonage.¹⁸

As a result of the 1853 treaty, the Pacificos were able to re-open commercial relations with the villages of central Yucatán and a lively trade in tobacco, maize, and other agricultural products soon developed. In November of that year, Felipe Rosado,

jefe político of Peto, reported that "around ten o'clock this morning, seven Indians reported to the lines of this town, having arrived from the rancho Xbusilákal, with passports signed by Captain José Camal, bringing with them tobacco and other goods to sell in our market; they were warmly welcomed, in accordance with the instructions circulated by the authorities . . ."¹⁹ From this period on, scattered reports from the municipal and military authorities in Tekax and Peto reveal a continuous, yet troubled relationship with the Pacificos which contributed to the anxieties of creole authorities responsible for defending their communities from rebel attacks.

Officially, the enemy was identified with Chan Santa Cruz and its satellite settlements numbering between thirty and forty thousand souls--three to four times as many as the Pacificos. Unofficially, creole military authorities feared all Indians who lived outside their surveillance. This attitude was summed up in the February 9, 1855 communication from General Pedro de Ampudia to the Minister of War and the Navy:

Moreover, there is a problem with that faction of Indians who, it is said, have come to terms with the government; while they no longer actively attack us, they are still a constant threat because they are unpredictable, and they are able to muster more than three thousand fighting men, well-armed and all living in hidden jungle settlements, without any officers other than their own, whom they obey after a fashion, but among whom there exists no lawfully constituted authority, nor will it be easy to establish any government presence among them.²⁰

Nonetheless, creole officials often used the Pacificos as couriers and spies, relying on

them to provide information about rebel troop movements and the arms trade between the rebels and residents of Belize.²¹ Colonel Juan María Novelo reported to his superiors in March 1855 that:

One of the Indians of the south, Nicholas Ek, who visits this town regularly on his own business has told me that the rebels have gone down to the Rio Hondo to purchase supplies with which to sustain the war, and this report has been corroborated by two others, Ysadora and Encarnación Tún, who spoke to me yesterday; they said that after they had been taken as prisoners at rancho Xkanbul on September 6 [1854] by the Indians of Santa Cruz, they were brought to Santa Cruz; when that place was briefly occupied by government forces, they were moved to rancho Xcoohol from whence they escaped to the south; that the captains of the Pacificos welcomed them and provided them with an escort to bring them to the abandoned pueblo of Barbachano, where their escort returned and they continued on to this town without any further incident. They also said that the Indios pacificos have established a defensive line from Chanchen to Nohhalal composed of around 3,000 armed men.²²

Such reports no doubt reassured the authorities that the Indians of the south were fulfilling their obligations to defend their territory from Cruzob attacks. But the near presence of so many armed Indians who had only recently agreed to a peace settlement did not guarantee future security. Creole officials continued to doubt their

intentions and used every means at their disposal to keep track of developments in the Pacifico communities. Peddlars, merchants, and mestizo arrieros were all potential gleaners of information and were questioned carefully upon their arrival in Peto or Tekax.

In April 1855 Herculano Medina, a vecino of Peto and mayordomo of Hacienda Hobomil, was given a passport to travel to Lochhá in search of some servants who had fled, along with several horses and other property belonging to the hacienda for which he was responsible. While in Lochhá, he claimed to have discovered by accident a confidential letter from Luciano Tzuc to the pacifico captains under his command, telling them to prepare themselves and sharpen their weapons for an assault on Nohcacab, south of Ticul, after which their troops would occupy haciendas Uayalceh and Yaxcopoil (where there were many adherents to the rebel cause) and then their combined forces would lay siege to Mérida itself. Medina also reported that the two pacifico leaders, Pablo Encalada and Pablo Rosado, commanded more than ten thousand men between them, and that since the 1853 treaty more than a thousand deserters from the state militia had turned up among the pacificos, two hundred of them currently in Lochhá itself. Another eighteen deserters, along with their weapons, arrived in Xbusilákal while Medina was among the pacificos, and it was his impression that they had been actively recruited to join these communities where they were warmly received and well-treated. Medina also revealed that sixteen prisoners of war who had escaped from Chan Santa Cruz had not returned to their own lines at Peto, but had been sent under escort to Chichanhá, where they were

persuaded to join the ranks of the pacificos.

Finally, he mentioned that a priest by the name of Juan Asunción Tzuc had already made three pastoral visits to Lochhá and that he was expected to return to celebrate the festival of Santa Cruz early in May. Medina stated that Tzuc was in direct communication with Bishop Guerra, and that he had delivered a petition from the pacifico captains requesting that religious services be provided for their communities on a regular basis. Since the role of the clergy in the recent conflict had not been entirely unequivocal, military officials were surprised that such arrangements had been made without their knowledge. All of these alarming reports seemed to corroborate the warnings of General Ampudia that the pacifico leaders were continuing to act independently of government authorities, and that their reliability as allies was seriously in question. While Medina had clearly exaggerated the number of troops controlled by the Pacificos (see the Table on page 253), and the plan to attack Mérida was perhaps in the realm of fantasy, the report about deserters was of great concern to military officials like Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz, who immediately forwarded Medina's statement to the governor. As for the horses and the fugitive servants, Medina was told that the horses had been sold and the servants had disappeared, so he received little satisfaction beyond the information that he had gathered.²³ Subsequent events were to suggest that these losses were simply a pretext for his sojourn among the pacificos--he was later implicated in the Irigoyen conspiracy to oust Governor Barrera.

Around the same time two Mayan residents of the village of Kimbilá in the partido of Izamal were apprehended and turned over for questioning by the jefe

político of the town. He reported that both had recently returned from the pacífico communities of the south, and that they planned to stay in Kimbilá along with their families. Their testimony confirmed the identities of various pacífico leaders, such as Pablo Encalada of Lochhá and José Yx of Macanche, but they denied the presence of large numbers of deserters from government troops as reported by Medina. They also informed the authorities that while there were abundant food supplies in the region, the scarcity of water at times caused some hardship, and for that reason, they had decided to return to their home community.²⁴

Many people remained, however, and in the following year (1856) the jefe político of Tekax reported that surplus maize from the pacífico communities had supplied the needs, not only of his partido, but many other settlements in the region.²⁵ In return, the villages within government-held territory supplied some of the needs of the Pacíficos, such as bulls to celebrate the various religious festivals of the communities.²⁶ A basic economic relationship was being forged between residents of the villages south of the Puuc and the partido of Tekax, similar to the relationship which had existed between the new settlements of Xul and Becanchén and the mercantile centre of Tekax before the 1847 uprising--with one important difference. The pacífico communities had successfully removed themselves from the burden of taxes and creole bureaucrats, and were relatively autonomous in their relationships with the rest of the peninsula.

The very independence of these communities, however, posed a serious security problem for the government. Local officials in Peto and Tekax were

instructed to try and prevent the sale of rifles, powder, lead and other municiones de guerra to the Pacificos, indicating that the government truly feared their potential to disturb the peace. Persons caught doing so were subject to a fine of two hundred pesos or one year in prison.²⁷ There are no records of any convictions for such an offense, although people were occasionally charged with engaging in contraband trading with the British in Belize, which probably followed the routes now controlled by the pacificos. It is evident from the records concerning desertion that these groups also built up their arsenal with weapons obtained from discontented members of the militia who ran away while serving in the garrisons along the frontier. The high desertion rate was probably the most serious issue that creole militia officers had to face, not only because the losses weakened their capacity to deal with rebel attacks, but also because they feared that an increase in the military strength of the pacifico communities might tempt their leaders to meddle in the factional politics of Yucatán, or combine forces with the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz. Both courses of action were possible, as the events of 1857 and 1858 were to demonstrate.

On March 24, 1857 General José Cadenas, Comandante General of Yucatán, forwarded a report to Governor Barrera which had been written by Colonel Novelo, commander of the Peto garrison. Novelo told his superior that he had just received a visit from an informer, who lived in Lochhá expressly for the purpose of gathering information on the Pacificos. This man, "an honourable and truthful" citizen, reassured Novelo that despite alarming rumours about factional disputes among their allies, Pablo Encalada had simply replaced Luciano Tzuc as gobernador.²⁸ In turn,

General Cadenas informed the governor that he was satisfied that peace and good order prevailed among the Pacificos and they could continue to rely upon them as allies.

However, the ink was barely dry on this dispatch, when the deserter Manuel Aguilar turned up in Tekax, and told a story of intrigue and deception which led Colonel Novelo to make preparations for the defence of both Tekax and Peto against an impending rebel attack. Aguilar's story, which is told in full in Chapter Four, indicated that the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz were planning a three-pronged offensive, directed at Tekax or Peto, Lochhá, and Xbusil. Aguilar reported that the news had caused fifty fighters from Xbusil to desert to Chan Santa Cruz, while he and five other soldiers had decided that it was time to throw themselves on the mercy of the government and return to their military duties, even though they feared being shot or punished severely.²⁹ Aguilar's assertions were later denied by the pacifico captains, perhaps because they had no wish to become involved in joint military operations to defend the region from attack. The warnings were premature anyhow--no attacks occurred until early August at Chikindzonot and the mid-September raid on Tekax. But these incidents illustrate how difficult it was for military officials to sort out useful information from rumours, particularly when the political situation within Yucatán itself was so unstable.

At the time of the surprise attack on Tekax led by Cresencio Poot, the Cruzob military leader, there was no mention of the possible role of the Pacificos in this affair, and it is quite likely that they had nothing to do with it. However, it will be

remembered that the initial reaction to the raid was to blame it on the conspirators who had led the uprising of August 5, 1857 against Governor Pantaleón Barrera, and in this matter, the Pacificos had a definite interest. Herculano Medina, the mayordomo of Hacienda Hobomil, was deeply implicated in the conspiracy, along with Manuel Anselmo Paz, a prominent and wealthy hacendado who owned a distillery in Tekax. Medina had visited the pacifico communities in 1855, and was apparently a regular visitor thereafter, until the abortive coup against Barrera. While there is no evidence that the Pacificos participated directly in either the Irigoyen plot or the Cruzob attack on Tekax, the fact that they remained aloof from both of these events does not indicate that they had no interest in the outcome.

In September 1857, a few days after the raid on Tekax, José Tiburcio Briceño personally visited Peto with an armed company of his followers to find out if rumours that the government was about to reinstate the head tax were true. Briceño wrote from Peto that he and other pacifico leaders had decided to contact the Governor directly because "enemies of the government" had been circulating rumours about Barrera's intentions to reimpose the "personal contribution" on residents of the pacifico communities. Since the exemption from taxes had been a key provision of the 1853 treaty, the Pacificos were understandably anxious to get to the bottom of these reports. Briceño enclosed a letter in Maya from one of Encalada's captains to Crisostomo Chablé which stated, "I have seen a circular issued by . . . Pantaleón Barrera in Mérida on March 11, 1857, in which the council agreed unanimously that we shall all be required to pay taxes, and also that they are making preparations to end the wars. I

have also sent a copy of this document to Pablo Encalada."³⁰ Briceño added that he feared that Encalada was on very good terms with Herculano Medina and Manuel Paz, and that these individuals had tried to "enlighten" him about the treachery of Mérida. According to Briceño, supporters of Irigoyen and Campeche had been trying for some time to undermine the alliance between the Pacificos and the government of Mérida, and for this reason, the residents of these communities were confused and angry over the current situation.

Colonel Novelo added his warning to Briceño's statement, that if this issue remained unresolved, they were in danger of doing irreparable damage to an alliance which had been maintained, "at considerable cost and sacrifice." The implication was that the military did not want the relationship with their allies jeopardized by any careless change of policy on the part of the government. Governor Barrera reassured him that the government had no intention of restoring the head tax and that the communication to which the Pacificos referred was an appeal to the national government for financial aid to conclude the war against the rebels, not a plan to end the agreement with the Pacificos. Barrera added that the information had been taken out of context, by "enemies of peace" who wanted to manipulate the facts for "sinister" purposes.³¹

In the aftermath of the raid on Tekax, creole residents of the district began to appreciate the fact that despite the uncertainties of the alliance with the Pacificos, there were definite advantages to maintaining good relations with these independent warriors of the south. Given the government's lack of resources, the military strength

of the Pacificos was an essential element in the defence of the frontier against attacks from Chan Santa Cruz. The brutality of the attack on Tekax had reminded citizens that there were important differences between the Cruzob and the Pacificos, and the latter began to be perceived as "buenos indígenas" in contrast to the rebels who were characterized as "una raza exterminadora."³²

In April 1858, members of the pacifico garrison of Xbusil joined forces with Colonel Onofre Bacelis in a raid on some of the outlying rebel settlements south of Lochhá. After occupying two villages, they successfully repelled a counter-attack by the rebels, and brought back forty-three prisoners, most of them women and children, whose ultimate fate is unknown, although they were sent on to Mérida and therefore probably ended up in Cuba. Colonel Novelo made much of the contributions of the Pacificos to this operation, perhaps because it was one of the few successes the garrison at Peto could boast of during these years. Both Bacelis and Novelo reported that the Pacificos under the command of Briceño had comported themselves with valour and had demonstrated their loyalty to "the cause which sustains us in our campaign against the rebels."³³ Presumably the Pacificos, by virtue of their participation in this campaign, had joined the ranks of the "civilized."

Relations Between the Pacificos and Campeche

After Pantaleón Barrera had turned over control of the government to General Martín Peraza (see Chapter Four), and an agreement for the separation of Campeche from Yucatán had been worked out, the pacifico communities entered a new phase in their relationship with the creole governments of the peninsula. While they continued

to be threatened by periodic attacks from the Santa Cruz rebels, the real threat to their survival was the continuing problem of internal dissension. The situation was now further complicated by an alternative locus of power in the form of Campeche, which was eager to bolster its arguments for statehood by adding to its population from whatever region of the peninsula it could attract adherents. The settlements of Macanche and Mesapich and their satellites were located close to the new border between Yucatán and Campeche, and until a proper survey could be done, it was arguable which state could claim their residents as citizens. The location of Lochhá was less ambiguous and it was listed as a pueblo belonging to the partido of Peto in the 1862 Census of Yucatán.

In April 1858 Father Juan Asunción Tzuc informed Bishop Guerra from the settlement of Iturbide in the partido of Hopelchén that there had been a mutiny among the Pacificos of Mesapich. The old caudillo, José María Cocom, whom Tzuc described as "one of the only remaining able and intelligent leaders among the southerners," had been assassinated by a faction which favoured restoring an alliance with Chan Santa Cruz. Father Tzuc feared that the entire population was now in danger, because the man who had carried out the coup, Marcelino Bé, was "very unstable, and a drunkard." Moreover, Bé and his associates intended to carry their mutiny all the way to Lochhá, where they planned to overthrow Pablo Encalada.³⁴

Their plot never matured, however, and by July 1858, Pablo Encalada had entered into negotiations with representatives from Campeche to bring the Pacificos under the jurisdiction of the new government. It is likely that Tzuc played an

important role in this affair. According to a letter sent to Briceño at Xbusil, the initiative for this move had originated among the Pacificos:

The Indios pacificos of Cituk, Elecib, Macanche, Mezapich, Xchumpil, Yakalcab, Soscichae and Chintuk, having made known their desire, through the indígena José María Canche, to live under the jurisdiction of the government of Campeche, and for this purpose a commission having been named to come to these parts to hear them, I found it expedient, as battalion commander, along with Don Mariano Roca, Cura Don Juan Asunción Tzuc, and Don Jorge Burgos, to visit this settlement [Mesapich], for the praiseworthy object of hearing and giving serious attention to the request of these people. We have been here since yesterday, and today, having held our first meeting with all of the generals, caudillos, and other leaders of the pacifico communities, it has been decided that we should send you this message, so as to account for my actions, and so that both governments of Yucatán might be in agreement as to how to improve the welfare of this region and its inhabitants, I would request that from henceforth you will refrain from entering any of these villages; if you do so, thereby choosing not to heed the voice of reason, before God and man you will be responsible for any ills which befall the country.³⁵

The letter was signed by Colonel Romualdo Baqueiro, Juan Asunción Tzuc, Jorge Burgos, and Mariano Roca. Baqueiro did not indicate the size of the delegation from

Campeche, but from a subsequent document it is clear that this was an armed contingent which had invaded what Briceño and others considered Yucatecan territory.

This development caused considerable anxiety, not only for the military commanders of Tekax and Peto with whom the Pacificos had been dealing, but also for several of Encalada's associates. Tiburcio Briceño, Juan Crisostomo Chablé, and Pedro Pablo Tec refused to go along with the plan to join Campeche, and requested intervention from Mérida to put a halt to the negotiations. In the meantime, Briceño replied to Baqueiro's ultimatum by stating that he and his associates were puzzled by the threatening tone of the letter, since "they recognized no enemies other than the rebels of the east." However, Briceño also took care to warn Baqueiro that he had notified the governor of Yucatán that state sovereignty had been violated and had sent him a copy of the letter so that a protest could be made to the government of Campeche. Briceño told Colonel Novelo what he had done, and requested immediate reinforcements from Tekax so that he would not be forced to surrender to the demands of the Campechanos.³⁶

A few days later Major General Mariano Quijano wrote to Campeche demanding an explanation as to why "troops from Campeche had invaded territory which unquestionably belongs to Yucatán." The general conceded that while it was possible that the commissioners had acted without authorization from the government of Campeche, he was serving notice that it must not happen again, without "severe consequences."³⁷ There is no record of the withdrawal of Baqueiro's forces, and the question of the boundary between the two states remained unresolved at the time of

General Suárez y Navarro's report on the issue in 1861. As for the Pacificos, they continued to be plagued by internal divisions, not only over the question of whether or not to support Campeche, but also by renewed overtures from the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz.

Residents of the partidos of Tekax and Peto continued to be alarmed about instability in the pacifico communities, not only because the Pacificos served as a buffer against rebel attacks, but also because their own military resources were so limited. In October 1858, Colonel Juan Ortoll reported on the poor state in which he found the defenses of Tekax. "The garrison," he wrote, "consists of one hundred and fifty men: twenty-five men belonging to the Active Battalion of Mérida, paid out of the state treasury, twenty-five men belonging to the battalion of Ticul, paid by the citizens of the partido, and one hundred men from this city and partido, paid a miserable half real per day out of the taxes collected by the subdelegado for this purpose." Ortoll mentioned, in particular, that he had strengthened the system of checkpoints allowing people to enter the town, in order to avoid "the introduction, without passports, of various individuals who enter the city under the guise of Pacificos, but, it must not be doubted, are simply using this identity to act as emissaries for the rebels."³⁸

Tekax had not recovered from the raid of the previous year when rumours of another offensive, led this time by dissident groups within the Pacificos, reached the authorities at Peto. On October 12, 1858, two of the pacifico leaders, Briceño and Chablé, reported that a large group of Indians from Lochhá, Mesapich, and Macanche

were planning to go and burn Peto down to the ground. Included in the package was a manifesto in Maya and a letter from Briceño to Bishop Guerra, the contents of which are not revealed. The leaders of the group were "the subordinate captains Arana and Huchim of Lochhá and Mesapich," who were later identified with the pro-Campeche faction, so it may be supposed that this latest threat was connected with the ongoing dispute between Yucatán and Campeche over the allegiance of the Pacificos.³⁹

In the following year, the jefe político of Tekax reported that recruitment for General Pedro Acereto's proposed campaign against Chan Santa Cruz was going badly because of the chronic lack of manpower in the partido, not only because of the labour needs of the landowners, but primarily because of the continuous migration of the vecinos of the district, to Campeche and "the South" occupied by the Indios Pacificos.⁴⁰ In the 1861 census of the state of Campeche prepared by Tomás Aznar Barbachano and Juan Carbó, the pacifico communities reported a population of over 14,000 residents, and this figure increased in the wake of each offensive against the rebels.⁴¹ In 1865, for example, José Dolores Escalante reported from Tekax that the majority of hidalgos who had deserted from the Imperial forces of General José Gálvez had ended up among the pacificos.⁴²

During the 1860s, despite two major military campaigns against Chan Santa Cruz, the Cruzob entered into a period of renewed aggressiveness during which they launched numerous attacks on the pacifico communities. This resurgence of rebel power caused some of the population of Lochhá and its satellites to move further west

into Campeche, but also attracted former Pacificos to the rebel cause. In 1862 Nazario Novelo, provisional jefe político of Peto, reported that around a hundred Pacificos belonging to the settlement of Yakalcab (population 2,576 in 1862) were planning to join the rebels.⁴³ In 1863 and again in 1867, Lochhá was directly attacked by a rebel force, and as a result of the second attack, this settlement which had existed for almost twenty years in the aftermath of the 1847 rebellion was finally abandoned. Encalada had consistently attempted to avoid choosing sides in all the conflicts surrounding his community. In 1863, despite previous cordial relations established with the government of Pablo García in Campeche, the Pacificos of Lochhá refused to send troops to defend Campeche against the Yucatecan invasion on behalf of the French intervention.⁴⁴ But by 1867, they could no longer sustain this delicate balancing act. According to Don Dumond, "in mid-1867 the rebels of Santa Cruz succeeded in subverting a substantial number of Pacificos who rose up in concert with an invasion by Santa Cruz forces . . . As a result of the disturbance, Encalada and his family moved permanently westward to the protection of government troops [in Campeche], whither they were accompanied by a large number of residents of the pacifico settlements around Lochhá and Mesapich."⁴⁵

After Lochhá was abandoned by Encalada, the centre of power shifted to the community of Xkanha whose leader, Eugenio Arana, functioned as "general" of the Pacificos until the end of the century: "He was shortly to be in amiable correspondence with the British government in Belize, using on his letters a stamp with the Mexican eagle and the title "Canton General de Xkan-ha." However, despite

the attempts of Mexican authorities to exercise effective jurisdiction over the Pacificos del sur, they remained in a condition of de facto independence from the period of the French Intervention well into the Porfiriato. In 1878, the Mexican minister of external relations admitted that "the submission of the Pacificos was far from complete and that the governments of Yucatán and Campeche received only the degree of obedience from the Indians that the Indians cared to give . . . far from being loyal subjects, these "generals" felt themselves free to treat with foreign governments--that is, British Honduras--without need of consultation with any Mexican authority."⁴⁶

Patrons and Clients

The primary focus of this discussion of the pacifico communities up to this point has been on the strategic role they played in the political struggles of the Sierra region during the 1850s and 1860s. They were important in another way, however, and while it is difficult to uncover much concrete evidence, it is apparent that one of the functions of these communities was to serve as intermediaries in the clandestine trade which had existed for decades between Belize and Yucatán. The meager evidence that does exist corroborates Farriss's notion that the "frontier" was open, that there was a constant flow of people and goods from one side to the other. Moreover, far from being marginalized in terms of the rest of the peninsula, some members of the pacifico communities maintained personal as well as "diplomatic" relations with members of the creole elite of the region.

What appears to have developed is a system of clientelism similar to that which existed prior to the rebellion between the cacique Jacinto Pat and the creole

governor, Miguel Barbachano. Pacifico leaders, seeking to broaden their power and influence, entered into patronage relations with creole officials perhaps as part of the network of contraband trading between Belize and the Yucatán peninsula which included luxury goods and British manufactured items as well as guns and ammunition. This may be what lay behind a puzzling incident which occurred in 1863 involving Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz, a prominent militia officer and landowner in the region, and José Domingo Yx, a Pacifico leader from Macanche.

In October 1863, the jefe político of Tekax, José Dolores Escalante, reported that a certain Manuel Morales had arrived in Tekax, claiming to represent the pacifico commanders of Macanche, Paulino Martin and Buenaventura Cruz. Morales revealed that his purpose in coming to Tekax was to seek the release of "the indígena José Domingo Yx . . . whom D. Gumersindo Ruiz holds in his power, alleging him to be his indebted servant." Morales claimed that there were a thousand Indians ready to carry off Yx by force if Ruiz did not let him go. Further correspondence revealed that Yx had been imprisoned by Ruiz for debt, and that Escalante had already assured the Pacificos that the Colonel was willing to let him go, with the promise that in future, none of their people would be detained in any of the military garrisons in the region. Escalante did not consider Morales to be an accredited representative of the Pacificos, so he wrote back to the gobernador, Pablo Encalada, telling him that if Morales was lying, "he deserved to be punished severely so that no one else would dare to destroy the harmonious relationship which the Pacificos del sur had maintained with the whites over the last ten years, during which time there had never been the slightest

complaint from either party to the agreement."⁴⁷

Whether or not Morales was lying is beside the point. What the correspondence reveals is that Ruiz had loaned a considerable sum of money to José Yx, who was no simple peasant. In 1855 he was named as gobernador of the pacifico community of Macanche, and at the time of the rebellion had been commander of the rebel contingent from Oxkutzcab. What possible relationship could Ruiz have had with Yx, other than a commercial one? As far as we know, Ruiz was not attempting to buy the military services of the pacifico community of Macanche, nor was he involved in the rivalry between Campeche and Yucatán over the support of the Pacificos. Ruiz may have been selling aguardiente to Yx but there were many other sources for this type of trade in the region. Whatever the nature of the agreement between Ruiz and Yx, the incident demonstrates that it was essential for creole authorities to maintain good relations with the Pacificos, even at the expense of the personal interests of powerful members of the regional elite. Military figures were powerful sources of patronage, however, and from the correspondence between Tiburcio Briceño and Colonel Juan María Novelo, it appears that militia officers often determined the nature of the interaction between the Pacificos and creole elites. Nor is this to be wondered at, since the organizational structure of these communities had grown out of the community-based militia units of the pre-war period.

Migration and Flight

The constant movement back and forth between the pacifico communities and the villages of central Yucatán suggests that these settlements also functioned as places

of refuge for peasants and soldiers looking for a way to escape the rigours of life in the haciendas and garrisons of the region, and that migration was an important survival strategy and a widespread form of individual resistance to authority. While creole officials were definitely aware of this movement of people, they could do little to prevent it, beyond the occasional fulmination about unauthorized travelling and the need for a passport to go from one community to another.

In May 1866, officials in Cantamayec, a village located halfway between Teabo and Sotuta, questioned three peasants, all members of the same family, about their wanderings of the previous year. The longest testimony came from Herculano Balam, who described a remarkable journey of over a year during which he spent a significant amount of time among the Pacificos, served as a messenger to Chan Santa Cruz, and visited relatives in the south. Here is his statement:

He stated that he was the son of the aforementioned Bonifacio Balam, and that he had come from the South: that more than a year ago he had gone to live in Yakalzul with the Pacificos: that from this village he had been sent by the comandante to deliver a confidential message to the leader of Yakalcab, who then sent him, along with nine other Indians, to carry messages to the easterners at Chan Santa Cruz . . . at Dzonot they had not been allowed to leave the barracks in which they were housed: that from there they saw many prisoners held by the rebels: that in Santa Cruz there were around nineteen buildings made of stone as well as the Church: that they stayed there for three days

and then they were sent off without any written reply . . . : that they [the rebels] had not harmed them in any way because they were in a state of peace and friendship, since they [the Pacificos] did not get mixed up with the blancos: that while they were in Santa Cruz, rebel forces had laid siege to Dzonot where they engaged the Imperial forces [see Chapter Six]: that they had returned to Yakalcab without encountering anything else of note along the way, and from there he had returned to Yakalzul, from whence he had made numerous journeys to this town and many other villages until he was apprehended: that in this recent trip he had come to work in the milpas of several vecinos belonging to this community, and that afterwards he had returned to the hacienda Chichicam to look for his father, Bonifacio Balam, to take him back to Yakalzul to see his sister who was ill.⁴⁸

The travels of Herculano are a brief revelation of a mysterious and largely secret world, that of the hidden paths through the forests that only the peasants and guerrillas knew. His narrative confirms the fact that relations between Chan Santa Cruz and the pacifico communities were often friendly and that the armed neutrality which had been the condition for the treaty of 1853 was a convenient way for the leaders of one faction of the rebels to withdraw from the conflict without choosing sides definitively. This is not to deny that the Chan Santa Cruz rebels occasionally tried to subvert the neutrality of the Pacificos, but they were only successful with small minorities in each community. For the most part, they respected the

determination of the pacifico commanders to remain aloof, provided that they did not openly join forces with government troops in any major campaign. As for the pacifico leaders, they proved themselves most adept at balancing the competing interests of creole factions, whether this involved rival candidates for the governorship, or the more serious struggle over the secession of Campeche.

From a military point of view, the Pacificos served an important strategic function--they neutralized the threat from the rebels by occupying territory between Chan Santa Cruz and the settled regions of the Sierra and the Chênes. Government officials were aware of their vital role, and were prepared to overlook the desertion of both soldiers and peasants to the Pacificos, provided they maintained the relative stability of the military frontier. On the other hand, the continual jockeying for power among their leaders, and their courting of various factions during the highly volatile period of 1857-63 was a potential threat to the political stability of the region. The agreement with the Pacificos failed to prevent rebel incursions into the central and eastern parts of the peninsula, and in this respect the treaty of 1853 delivered less than was expected.

NOTES

1. Don Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century: Chiefdoms and Power Politics," in Anthropology and History in Yucatán, ed. Grant D. Jones (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1977), 109.
2. As Morton H. Fried comments in The Notion of Tribe (Menlo Park, California, 1975), it is commonplace to regard tribes as political units, yet a clear definition and description of their distinguishing characteristics has eluded social scientists (60-65). Fried discards the conventional definition of the tribe as a group united by linguistic, kinship, and historical ties, i.e. claiming a common ancestor, because most "tribes" are far too heterogenous to fit the definition. I agree with Fried's insight "that the tribe is a secondary sociopolitical phenomenon, brought about by the intercession of more complexly ordered societies" (114). In other words, the term has been used primarily as a means of defining and controlling groups which are in the process of being taken over by nation states.
3. Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century," 103-138. Dumond's map on page 104 places the boundary between Quintana Roo and Campeche in the wrong place, as a continuation of the border between Guatemala and Belize. This is not a grave error, but it does locate the northern pacífico settlements within the state of Campeche, rather than Quintana Roo, or Yucatán, as they would have been in the 1850s and 1860s. Thus the settlement of Xkanhá is shown in Campeche, whereas even on current maps it is located in the state of Quintana Roo. Most of the other villages no longer exist.
4. Recent work on the impact of the migration of Maya refugees on Belize has been done by Angel Eduardo Cal, "Anglo Maya Contact in northern Belize: a study of British policy toward the Maya during the Caste War of Yucatán, 1847-1872," (M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1983).
5. Richard Price, ed., Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1973), 400. Any attempt to define the culture of such groups should also take into account the work of Sidney Mintz and Richard Price on post-emancipation peasantries of the Caribbean, where a "reconstituted culture of resistance" emerged as an alternative to re-incorporation into the plantation system.
6. Angel Cal, "Anglo Maya Contact in Northern Belize," 68. Earlier peace overtures had been made through the offices of the corregidor of Petén, Guatemala. See Chapter Two, 114.
7. O. Nigel Bolland, "The Maya and the Colonization of Belize in the Nineteenth Century," in Anthropology and History in Yucatán, Grant Jones, ed., 75.
8. Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century," 112.
9. Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century," 114-115.

10. Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century," 110.
11. Don Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century," 103. The persistent notion that these communities were composed of the mythical "Huits" of the frontier, Maya who lived beyond the pale of civilization, seems to have originated from the writings of John L. Stephens, Incidents of Travel in Yucatán. It is repeated in the works of Cline, Reed, and others, yet I can find no mention of such people in the archival documents of the period.
12. José Domingo Yx is identified on Leticia Reina's list as the rebel captain of Oxkutzcab, Pedro Pablo Tec was connected with Teabo, and Juan Crisostomo Chablé was listed as captain of Tahdziú; see Leticia Reina, Las Rebeliones Campesinas, 402-404. Pablo Canché is named as a presentado in a military document listing refugees from the village of Kimbilá; see AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Política de Peto, "Lista de los indigenas presentados en el pueblo de Kimbilá, procedentes del campo enemigo," 1852.
13. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 62, Prefectura de Tekax, Gumersindo Ruiz to Governor Barrera, April 14, 1855.
14. Cal, "Anglo Maya Contact in Northern Belize," 228.
15. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 94, Juscado Civil, Padrón general del partido de Tekax, 1862.
16. The details of this operation are fully described in Chapter Two, 117-120.
17. Angel Cal, "Anglo Maya Contact in Northern Belize," 60.
18. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 49, Report on the campaign of the Brigada Cadenas, by General Sebastien Lopez de Llergo, April 24, 1852.
19. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 54, Jefatura Política of Peto, Felipe Rosado to the Governor, November 26, 1853.
20. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Milicia, Caja 61, General Ampudia to the Ministro de la Guerra y Marina, February 9, 1855.
21. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 62, Prefectura política of Tekax, Gumersindo Ruiz to Governor Ampudia, April 20, 1855.
22. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Peto, Comandancia de la linea del sur, Juan María Novelo to the Governor, March 31, 1855.
23. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 62, Prefectura Política of Tekax, Gumersindo Ruiz to Governor Ampudia, April 14, 1855.

24. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Prefectura Política de Izamal, José Castillo to Governor Ampudia, April 24, 1855.
25. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 70, Jefatura Política de Tekax, José María de Avila to Governor Barrera, March 21, 1857.
26. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Prefectura Política de Izamal, José Castillo to Governor Ampudia, April 24, 1855.
27. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Subprefectura de Peto, Francisco de Montalvo to Governor Ampudia, April 26, 1855.
28. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia 2, Comandancia en jefe de la Brigada Novelo at Peto, José María Novelo to General Cadenas, March 25, 1857.
29. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia 2, Comandancia en jefe de la Brigada Novelo at Peto, April 10, 1857.
30. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia 2, Cuartel de Peto, José Tiburcio de Briceño to Governor Barrera, September 18, 1857.
31. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 69, Milicia 2, Colonel Novelo to General Cadenas, September 19, 1857. Reply in the margin from Governor Barrera, September 23, 1857.
32. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 72, Comandancia Militar, José Cadenas to the Governor, October 13, 1857.
33. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 76, Milicia, Juan María Novelo to the Governor, April 17, 1858.
34. Archivo de la Mitra, Microfilm Roll 110, Decretos y Oficios, Pbrõ. Juan Asunción Tzuc to Bishop Guerra, Iturbide, April 26, 1858.
35. AGEY. Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 76, Milicia, Comisión del gobierno de Campeche at Mesapich, July 29, 1858.
36. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 76, Milicia, Tiburcio Briceño to Colonel Novelo, Chankit, August 1, 1858.
37. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 77, Milicia, Mariano Quijano to the Governor of Campeche, August 7, 1858.
38. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 76, Milicia, Juan Ortoll to the Governor, Tekax, October 9, 1858.

39. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 76, Milicia, Comandancia Militar, Felipe Pren to the Governor, Peto, October 12, 1858.
40. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 81, Jefatura Política de Tekax, Francisco Ramirez to the Governor, November 27, 1859.
41. Aznar Barbachano and Carbó, "Censo de población del estado de Campeche, 1861," Memoria sobre la conveniencia, 175ff.
42. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 105, Prefectura Política de Tekax, José Dolores Escalante to the Imperial Commissioner José Salazar Iñarregui, April 23, 1865.
43. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 92, Jefatura Política de Peto, Nazario Novelo to the Governor, September 9, 1862.
44. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 38.
45. Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century," 116.
46. Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century," 116.
47. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 92, Jefatura Política de Tekax, José Dolores Escalante to the Governor, October 12, 1863.
48. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Justicia, Caja 116, Deposition of Herculano Balam of Cantamayec, May 1866.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FRENCH INTERVENTION IN YUCATAN: 1863-67

Introduction

For many Yucatecans, the French intervention, culminating with the installation of Maximilian of Austria as emperor of Mexico, represented a return to the security of the past, the restoration of "law and order," and an end to the anarchy of the preceding twenty-five years. Yucatán's descent into chaos, they believed, had begun with the revolt of Santiago Imán in 1839 when state politicians had enacted the series of liberal reforms which had precipitated the Mayan rebellion of 1847. Yucatán had experienced a dazzling variety of governments since the 1840s, including several elected liberal administrations, and the military/conservative governorships of Romulo Díaz de la Vega, Martin Peraza and the Aceretos. None of these governments, however, had come close to resolving the problems of the Mayan rebellion, political instability, or the ongoing struggle between Campeche and Yucatán. Partial solutions had been achieved; notably, the peace treaty with the Pacificos arranged by Díaz de la Vega in 1853, and the recognition of Campechano independence by Martin Peraza in 1859.

But in 1863, conflict between rival factions continued to disrupt the peace of the countryside, while a resurgent rebel movement in Chan Santa Cruz threatened to make significant inroads into territory previously recovered and pacified during the campaigns of the early 1850s. The prospect of a strong, authoritarian government backed up by the military might of one of Europe's wealthiest powers seemed to offer

a new beginning to many of the peninsula's war-weary inhabitants. The extravagance of their sentiments in favour of the monarchy is expressed in the following remarks which the Yucatecan commissioners addressed to Maximilian on his arrival at Vera Cruz: "Señor, the people of Yucatán, united and free, full of hope and of jubilation, welcome you. Yucatán has fallen into a paralysis of agony. Impulses for good have fallen captive to evil passions unleashed with fury; brother has been struck down by brother, while the knife of the savage has reflected the sinister glow of destructive flames. . . . At the right moment the redemptive idea of monarchy has been rekindled there. Hope is reborn in downcast spirits."¹

This chapter will attempt to determine whether or not Mexico's final experiment with a monarchical form of government brought peace and prosperity to the people of the Puuc. What impact did the reorganization of Yucatán's internal affairs under an imperial commissioner have upon relations with the rebel communities of the southeast, the Pacificos of the south, the discontented separatists of Campeche, and the inhabitants of a region which had suffered grievously from the effects of insurgency and prolonged political instability? Ironically, the period of the French intervention marked, not a beginning, but the definitive end of a period of looking backwards with nostalgia to a golden age of social harmony which had probably never existed, at least not in Yucatán. But for a few years, many people actually believed that the problems of Yucatán would disappear under the benevolent rule of Maximilian and Carlotta.

Campaigns Against the Rebels of Chan Santa Cruz

Shortly after General Navarette had assumed control of the government of the peninsula by military force in 1863, he sent representatives to Mexico City to plead Yucatán's special case before the new administration. The need was great, they argued, particularly for financial resources to mount a campaign against the Mayan rebels in the southeastern forests. Their request for a monthly subsidy was initially turned down because of lack of resources in the imperial treasury, but the state government was allowed to continue to collect customs revenues from the ports of Sisal and Campeche.² This was much less than Navarette had hoped for, but since plans for a campaign against the rebels were already underway, he was forced to raise a special tax on imported flour, a move which further alienated the mercantile interests.

A new impulse had been given to the forthcoming campaign by rumours of dissension among the leadership at Chan Santa Cruz. A rebel prisoner captured during a raid near Valladolid told of the emergence of a new "peace party" led by Dionisio Zapata, which had overturned the old leader, Venancio Puc, and was prepared to enter into negotiations. Navarette responded to this news by sending a group of commissioners, including the former governor, Pantaleón Barrera, Father Manuel Sierra O'Reilly, and Colonel Juan Méndez to Belize with instructions to get in contact with the new leadership. By the time the commissioners arrived in Belize, Zapata and his associates had been replaced by a triumvirate composed of Crescencio Poot, Bernabé Ceh, and one of the original leaders of the rebellion, Bonifacio Novelo.³ The

new leaders ignored the overtures of the commissioners, who returned to Mérida convinced that the rebels would never negotiate. Their assessment of the situation was supported by José María Martínez de Arredondo, the Yucatecan consul in Belize, who advised Navarette to reoccupy Bacalar, thereby cutting off the rebels' arms supply. If such a move were successful, he claimed that the rebels could be defeated in the short space of three months, because their numbers had declined as a result of the recent internal disputes.⁴

The commissioners also attempted to secure the cooperation, or at least the neutrality of the British in the event of a military expedition to retake Bacalar. They were not successful, but in the long run it made no difference. On June 29, 1864 Navarette handed over the government to his deputy, and went to Tihosuco to take personal command of the forces being assembled to attack Chan Santa Cruz. He only had seven hundred men at his disposal, and since the rebels, despite recent losses, could still muster at least 4,000 fighters, it was a quixotic gesture. Navarette set up his headquarters at Kampocolché, on the edge of rebel-held territory, and from there his forces made several reconnaissance expeditions in the direction of Chan Santa Cruz. They brought back news that the Cruzob were making preparations to defend themselves from a possible attack by creole forces. This information, along with the realization that the army lacked sufficient means to transport food and other supplies, much of which had to be discarded because of poor quality, caused Navarette to abandon his plan to attack the rebel stronghold. Finally, the news that one of his three subordinate commanders had mutinied drew the general back to Mérida to deal with

this latest threat to his attempt to hand over a pacified state to Maximilian's deputy, the new imperial commissioner, José Salazar Ilarregui.

Salazar Ilarregui arrived in Yucatán at the beginning of September armed with ample powers to address the regional problems that had been brought to the attention of Maximilian's cabinet.⁵ The campaign against the rebels was put on hold while the new administration initiated reforms and attempted to gain the support and confidence of a broad spectrum of Yucatán's elite classes. Reed praises the new administrator of Yucatán for his conciliatory policy towards political opponents (three former governors and Colonel Manuel Cepeda Peraza were recalled from exile) and his willingness to tackle problem areas such as military recruitment and the exploitation of Indian peasants.⁶ In these respects Salazar Ilarregui was following Maximilian's instructions to provide fair and honest government which would protect the poor and weak in society, and avoid the plague of factionalism--in other words, a government of "reconciliation."⁷

However, while the reforms may have looked good on paper, in practice, most of these measures were mere window-dressing and public relations. Simply changing the name of the National Guard to Batallones Auxiliares or Guardia rural, retiring a few officers from active duty, and expanding the list of people eligible for recruitment by lottery hardly represented a major break with the corruption identified in the Suárez y Navarro report of 1861. Most of the exemptions remained in place, while the same officers who had enjoyed commissions since the early days of the rebellion continued on the pay-roll. Similarly, the official who was appointed to the reinstated colonial

office of "Abogado Defensor de los Indios" produced a lengthy report on the abuses committed against Mayan hacienda workers and villagers whose lands had been stolen by unscrupulous jueces, but in the end, concluded that little could be done to address these issues through the courts since such proceedings would "stir up a commotion throughout the entire peninsula."⁸

For the residents of the beleaguered towns and villages of central Yucatán, their chief hope lay in Maximilian's promise to send money and troops to defend their communities from the increasingly daring raids executed by Cruzob guerrilla bands in the latter part of 1864. Contrary to the information given to Navarette by his consul in Belize, the recent quarrels among various rebel factions had not weakened their resolve to continue fighting. Crescencio Poot had consolidated his leadership of the military wing of the rebel organization, and in November 1864 led around six hundred of his fighters deep into government-held territory. This raid, which resulted in the deaths of several residents of the district of Peto, provided further impetus for the new administration to organize a major military expedition against the rebels.⁹

Salazar Ilarregui appointed a junta central of prominent citizens who were responsible for raising local funds for the upcoming campaign. In addition, Maximilian sent three military advisors from his general staff to confer with local military officials, and promised a monthly subsidy of 60,000 pesos to finance the construction of barracks, forward camps, and roads leading into rebel-held territory. General José María Gálvez, who had served on Mexico's northern frontier, was chosen to lead an army composed of federal and foreign troops to supplement the local

militia.

If Maximilian's good intentions combined with Salazar Ilarregui's administrative talent could have made a difference to the situation, these measures might have succeeded in laying the foundations for a successful campaign. When Gálvez arrived in February, however, he brought with him only one battalion of Mexican troops instead of the two thousand promised by Maximilian.¹⁰ Moreover, the creole elites of Yucatán were war-weary and had little interest in digging deeply into their pockets for yet another crusade. As the civilian junta pointed out to the imperial commissioner, it had never been easy to collect funds for campaigns against the rebels, particularly cash donations. They recommended that donations in kind be considered an acceptable alternative, and suggested that a certain amount of coercion might be needed to persuade prospective donors to come up with the necessary amounts.¹¹ By the middle of March 1865, the citizen's committee had collected only a little more than 10 percent of the money which they had undertaken to raise (4,456 out of 41,000 pesos).¹² Local hacendados pledged food and animals for transporting supplies, while a few volunteers came forward to serve in the auxiliary forces which were given the task of clearing roads into the jungle and digging trenches. The rest were pressed into service in the usual way, through the coercive powers of local officials.

The government's preparations for a major campaign did not go unnoticed by the rebels. Early in May, government troops clearing a road near Kampocolché were attacked by a large rebel force and had to pull back to Dzonot. There they were

surrounded and cut off from the nearest military outpost at Tihosuco. Troops sent to break the siege were initially successful but soon found themselves surrounded by an even larger force of rebel soldiers. Finally, General Gálvez, who had been in Tihosuco preparing for the campaign, led four hundred Mexican troops to the aid of the besieged garrison at Dzonot. This larger force finally destroyed the entrenchments set up around the garrison and took some of the pressure off the defenders. But this small respite had been won at great cost. Gálvez had lost much of his artillery and his troops had suffered many casualties; moreover, the rebels had not withdrawn permanently. As in previous encounters, they waited until the soldiers began their retreat to Tihosuco, and attacked the stragglers from behind. When the army finally made it back to Tihosuco, Gálvez discovered he had suffered losses of over three hundred dead and wounded, while desertions among the auxiliary battalions (Yucatecan recruits) were substantial. And that was the end of General Gálvez's military career in Yucatán.¹³

After this debacle, responsibility for the *linea del defensa* reverted to Yucatecan commanders with more experience in dealing with the style of fighting and tactics employed by the rebels. Colonel Daniel Traconis, who had transferred his allegiance from the liberal forces led by Colonel Cepeda Peraza during the resistance to the French intervention, took over command of the garrison at Tihosuco, while General Naverette became commander of the eastern headquarters at Valladolid, assisted by Colonel Cantón. In the first half of 1866 there was little or no activity against the rebels, but as soon as the rainy season began, reconnaissance patrols ran into heavy

resistance from rebel forces massing for a full-scale attack on Tihosuco. The rebel siege began on August 3, 1866 and lasted for almost two months. It was unusual for the Cruzob to mount an offensive assault of this nature, but as Reed suggests, they probably wanted to force a withdrawal of government troops from Tihosuco, since it served as a base from which sorties into rebel-controlled territory were made.¹⁴

Traconis and his small force (around three hundred men) held out without help for over a month. Finally, reinforcements fought their way through the besieging lines, with food and extra ammunition for the defenders. Encouraged by this timely aid, the government troops managed to beat back every rebel attack and finally broke the siege, destroying the rebel entrenchments and burning their encampment. After this apparent defeat, the Cruzob withdrew to their headquarters at Chan Santa Cruz, while Traconis and his men returned to a victory celebration in Mérida. It was the first significant military victory experienced by the government since the days of General Díaz de la Vega, and Yucatecan creoles rejoiced that it had been achieved by one of their own.¹⁵

In the general euphoria over Traconis's victory at Tihosuco, it was easy to overlook the fact that the days of the French intervention in Mexico were coming to an end. In the United States the defeat of the confederate troops by the north in the civil war meant that the US could finally address the problem of French interference in the internal affairs of Mexico. Napoleon III, who had backed up Maximilian with soldiers, money, and advisers, decided that he had no taste for a confrontation with the US over Mexico, and ordered the evacuation of French troops by January 1867.¹⁶ In

the Yucatán peninsula, the liberal opposition, which had gone underground after Navarette's successful coup, took encouragement from these events, and began to organize armed resistance to imperial rule, using Campeche as a base (see Chapter Four).

As on previous occasions when civil dissension threatened the creole communities of the northwest, troops were withdrawn from the *linea del defensa* to defend Mérida and its environs. Forward posts such as Ichmul and Tihosuco were abandoned, and the line of defense was moved back to Peto. Traconis, who had been ordered to proceed to Campeche with the Ninth Battalion, left Colonel Gumersindo Ruiz in charge at Peto with a small force of around 260 members of the Batallon Ligero of Yucatán--in other words, reluctant conscripts who had had more than enough of fighting Mayan rebels and would rather have been at home working in their milpas.¹⁷ Ruiz reported that desertions were endemic and that because of the lack of manpower, the town's defenses had been reduced to the church and the convent. The soldiers were reduced to grinding their own corn for tortillas, and morale was at its lowest ebb since the earliest days of the rebellion.¹⁸

The Mayan rebels, whose defeat at Tihosuco had not been as devastating as had been reported in the official government bulletin, took advantage of the situation and once again began raiding communities in the districts of Peto and Tekax. In January 1867, a rebel force of about five hundred bypassed the garrisons of Tihosuco and Peto, and made a broad sweep through the haciendas and pueblos of the southern Puuc, including the village of Ticum. Few casualties were reported as a result of this

raid; rather, the guerrillas had concentrated on stealing horses and mules, cooking equipment, sugar, and agricultural implements. A prisoner who had escaped from the rebels reported that his captors questioned him concerning the size of the force at Peto and whether or not the garrison possessed artillery pieces. Officials feared that the purpose of this operation might be to build up supplies and transportation in preparation for another major offensive against one of the garrisons along the *linea del defensa*.¹⁹ Fortunately for the residents of Peto and Tekax, the rebels were satisfied by the abandonment of Tihosuco. They could claim, with some justification, that they controlled a significant portion of the peninsula, and feared no army, not even the imperial army of Maximilian.²⁰

The Empire and the Pacificos del Sur

One of the more bizarre episodes which occurred during the imperial adventure in Yucatán involved a small group of Maya from the *pacífico* communities of the south. After the failure of the peace mission sent to Belize in 1864, the Yucatecan consul, José María Martínez de Arredondo, was commissioned to visit the *pacífico* communities around Mesapich and Lochhá, in order to explain the recent changes which had occurred in Yucatán and México. In December 1864 he reported to the *jefe político* of Tekax that his mission had been successful. Not only had he managed to mediate a dispute between two leaders, Tiburcio Briceño and Pablo Encalada (see Chapter Five), he had persuaded the leaders of the various communities to declare their support for the "new order of things"; in other words, the imperial administration in Yucatán.²¹

Martínez de Arredondo was incredibly confident in his abilities to manipulate the people with whom he was dealing. Early in 1865 he organized a delegation of fifty pacifico "volunteers" who travelled to Mérida to offer their services to the imperial commissioner for the next campaign against the rebels. Salazar Ilarregui then chose twelve representatives from this group to go to México City, where they swore their allegiance in person to Maximilian and Carlotta. According to Sanchez Novelo, the conservative press of the capital read a great deal of significance into this event, declaring that the complete submission of these "rebel tribes" was a tribute to the "wisdom and sound policy" of the imperial commissioner of Yucatán.²² No one seemed to realize that the pacifico leaders had already signed a peace treaty twelve years previously, and had little interest in supporting any government which did not guarantee their autonomy.

As a reward for his negotiating skills, Martínez de Arredondo was named prefect for the district in which the pacifico villages were located and took up residence in Mesapich which became an administrative centre for the region. The new prefect chose the pacifico leader, Pablo Encalada, as his deputy, and appointed comandantes from twenty-two communities as jueces de paz. This experiment in establishing formal governmental structures in the previously autonomous communities of the south did not last very long. Martínez de Arredondo committed many errors, including imposing a tax on the movement of goods in and out of the pacifico villages. This measure proved too much for the inhabitants of Xmaben, who administered their own version of justice and killed and mutilated the imperial official,

along with the Mayan delegates who had made the long journey to Mexico City.²³

The actions of the *pacíficos* in taking back control of their own affairs apparently went unpunished by the imperial authorities in Mérida. As Dumond comments, "whatever explanation they [the *pacíficos*] provided for Arrendondo's death, it was apparently acceptable to the imperial commissioner . . . who was already busy with various cracks in the imperial edifice; the government made no attempt to intervene."²⁴

The Empire and Campeche

From 1863 until 1867 Campeche was administered from Mérida as part of the imperial department of Yucatán. Previous attempts at asserting independence were ignored or forgotten, as liberal dissenters went into exile or joined forces with the underground opposition in the neighbouring state of Tabasco.²⁵ A significant portion of the Campechano elite cooperated with the French intervention and were unstinting in their praise and admiration of imperial rule during Carlotta's official visit to Campeche in the latter part of 1865.²⁶ However, when opposition to Maximilian began to gather momentum in the northern part of Mexico in the spring of 1866, supporters of Juárez began to come together in small groups throughout the peninsula. Former governor Pablo García openly declared his claim to the governorship and republican forces under the leadership of Colonel Pedro Brito began a siege of the walled city of Campeche.

Salazar Ilarregui tried to halt the spread of the rebellion by placing the Yucatecan liberal, Colonel Cepeda Peraza, under house arrest, but the colonel escaped and joined García in Campeche. The Campechano politician agreed that Cepeda

Peraza should lead the campaign to restore republican government in Yucatán. Differences between the two regions were set aside in favour of a united opposition to imperial rule. Cepeda Peraza then proceeded to Hecelchakán where he assumed command of a small force which successfully defended the town against an attack by Yucatecan troops still loyal to the imperial administration. This setback convinced Salazar Ilarregui that he needed to organize the defences of the capital. After a lengthy siege, the garrison defending Mérida finally capitulated to republican forces and the imperial commissioner agreed to go into exile in New York, shortly before Juárez ordered the execution of Maximilian. As Sanchez Novelo concludes, with these events, "the illusion of empire had ended."²⁷ The new rulers of Campeche argued successfully that their support of the liberal cause during the French intervention had gained them the right to remain independent of Yucatán. From that time on, Campeche was recognized as a separate entity by the central government.

The Impact of the French Intervention on Rural Life

The imperial administration in Yucatán generated a flurry of bureaucratic activity, but the directives of the imperial commissioner had little impact at the grass roots level. As in the case of the various military initiatives against the rebels, many of the policies drawn up by Maximilian were not concrete enough, not implemented, or completely ignored by local officials. Imperial decrees addressing the working conditions of the rural poor and the restoration of communal lands to indigenous villages were not even promulgated in Yucatán.²⁸ A few examples from the districts of Tekax and Peto will serve to illustrate Sanchez Novelo's judgement that

Maximilian's "promises of social reforms distanced him from both conservative and liberal landowners and his inability to implement them [reforms] meant that the campesinos and indigenous peones lost interest in the fate of his government."²⁹

Late in December 1864, the prefect of Tekax, Jacinto Escalante, asked for clarification of a recent circular from the abogado defensor de los indios which prohibited the drafting of Indians for any kind of forced labour in excess of that allowed by law. The colonel in charge of the defences of Tekax had asked Escalante to supply work parties of hidalgos (Mayan auxiliaries) to dig trenches for the fortification of the town. While Escalante agreed that the work was essential, he could not justify it as a form of community service, nor could he pay the indigenous workers out of an empty treasury. Escalante's letter pointed out that this type of labour had been specifically prohibited by a recent memorandum from the imperial commissioner.³⁰ Escalante was told to find funds to pay them, even though the work had been done under military authorization.

Around the same time a document from Peto confirms that the practice of exacting forced labour from indigenous peasants continued under the imperial administration. In the second example, the prefect of Peto mentions that fagineros (labour conscripts) from Tekax had been sent to clear the road to Tihosuco in preparation for the military campaign which General Gálvez was organizing against the rebels. The Peto administrator had complained to Escalante that the workers had been sent without food or supplies to sustain them, but the prefect of Tekax replied that he had been told merely to supply workers, not the means to support them.³¹

Later in the same year, as preparations for the campaign against the rebels were intensifying, the jefe político reported that members of the local militia had manifested their "repugnance and disgust" at the prospect of escorting more convoys of supplies and hidalgos to Tihosuco, since they felt that they had already contributed more than other districts.³²

Residents of the Puuc were seen as reluctant supporters of the imperial administration. In August 1866, Cirilo Montes de Oca who had been elected presidente of the ayuntamiento of Tekax wrote an angry letter to Salazar Ilarregui refuting statements in a periodical published in Mérida under the title "Guerra de Castas" which characterized Tekax as "indifferent" to the government's plans for continuing the campaign against the rebels. Montes de Oca pointed out that Tekax had suffered greatly during the prolonged struggle; people were "exhausted," agriculture was paralyzed, and the region could hardly be expected to share its limited resources with other communities when its own defences were neglected.³³

The perennial struggle between the military and the hacendados for control of manpower continued unabated during the imperial administration. Sanchez Novelo recounts an incident involving Simon Peon, a "sincere and dedicated supporter of the intervention," in which the landowner took advantage of the presence of Carlotta to register a personal complaint about the arbitrary and abusive conduct of Colonel José María Adalid, who had authorized the conscription of several of Peon's workers.³⁴ Several months after Peon had spoken to Carlotta, the issue was still unresolved. Peon registered a formal complaint with the imperial commissioner in an effort to recover

his sirvientes, all of them residents of Muna and employed at Hacienda Uxmal.³⁵

It is ironic that in Yucatán, Maximilian and Carlotta enjoyed a reputation for noblesse oblige, with gifts to the poor, special funds set aside for widows and orphans of the war, and donations for the repair of churches destroyed during the Mayan rebellion. Carlotta's visit to the peninsula, including a journey to the Mayan ruins of Uxmal (south of Muna in the Puuc hills), left behind a rosy glow among the individuals touched by her warmhearted generosity, but for the overwhelming majority of the region's inhabitants, the imperial episode had a minimal impact. The rebels continued to be a threat to the peace and stability of the region, while their increasingly aggressive behaviour towards the pacificos disturbed the compromise that had allowed the residents of the Puuc to live in relative security. In the final days of the empire, rebel raiding parties penetrated areas that had previously been secure from attack, and frontier outposts such as Dzonot, Kampocolché, and Tihosuco were abandoned by the military garrisons. While Yucatán enjoyed a brief respite from political factionalism, in that dissent was stifled or placated by the imperial administration, the exploitation of the underclasses continued unchanged.

NOTES

1. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 55.
2. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 53.
3. Reed, The Caste War, 190; Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 44 and 57.
4. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 101, Consulado de México en Belice, Honduras, José María Martínez de Arredondo to Felipe Navarette, May 10, 1864.
5. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 62.
6. Reed, The Caste War, 187.
7. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 67-68.
8. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 72-75.
9. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 101, Prefecto Político del distrito de Tekax, Jacinto Escalante to José Salazar Ilarregui, December 1, 1864.
10. Sanchez Novelo says that Maximilian's plan to send a thousand Austrians under General Thun was vetoed by the emperor's chief of staff, General Bazaine, who was reluctant to expose European troops to the tropical climate of Yucatán. Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 86.
11. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 101, Junta central recolectora de donativos para la Guerra de Castas, Manuel José Peon to José Salazar Ilarregui, December 31, 1864.
12. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 87-88.
13. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 95-96; Reed, The Caste War, 190-191.
14. Reed, The Caste War, 194.
15. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 137.
16. Hamnett, Júarez, 184-185.
17. Imperio Mexicano, 7a División Militar, Estado que manifiesta la fuerza y pertrechos de guerra que ecisten en los puntos de Tekax, Peto, Tihosuco y Valladolid, December 24, 1866,

José Salazar Ibarregui Papers, University of Texas at Arlington Library, Special Collections (hereafter cited as Salazar Ibarregui MSS).

18. General Felipe Navarrete to Commissioner Salazar Ibarregui, Mérida, February 26, 1867, Salazar Ibarregui MSS. 33.

19. General Felipe Navarrete to Commissioner Salazar Ibarregui, Ticul, January 21, 1867, Salazar Ibarregui MSS. 44.

20. Reed, The Caste War, 201.

21. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 101, Prefectura Política de Tekax, Jacinto Escalante to Salazar Ibarregui, December 21, 1864.

22. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 84-85.

23. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 88-90.

24. Dumond, "Independent Maya of the Late Nineteenth Century," 115.

25. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 138.

26. Reed, The Caste War, 192.

27. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 159.

28. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 131.

29. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 130.

30. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 101, Prefectura Política de Tekax, Jacinto Escalante to Salazar Ibarregui, December 9, 1864.

31. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 105, Prefectura Política de Peto, Juan Montalvo to Salazar Ibarregui, January 17, 1865.

32. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 105, Prefectura Política de Tekax, Jacinto Escalante to Salazar Ibarregui, April 25, 1865.

33. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 116, Ayuntamiento de Tekax, Cirilo Montes de Oca to Salazar Ibarregui, August 30, 1866.

34. Sanchez Novelo, Yucatán durante la intervención francesa, 113-114.

35. AGEY, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 117, Simon Peon to Salazar Ibarregui, June 19, 1866.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: BETWEEN THE LINES

"Toda nuestra historia era de muerte porque si hablábamos nos hacían que dejáramos de hablar y hoy, lo que pedimos, es que nosotros podamos hablar, que todos tengamos ese derecho de poder expresar lo que estamos sufriendo."

"All of our history was about death, because if we spoke up they silenced us, and today, what we are asking, is that we may speak, that all of us may have the right to be able to tell about what we have suffered."

Comandante Tacho, Ejido San Miguel
(Chiapas, April 10, 1995)

One of the principal aims of this study has been to restore agency to some of the forgotten participants in the dramatic events of nineteenth century Yucatán. In order to do this, I have used an oblique method, reading between the lines of official documents to discover stories that reveal the lives of the common people. I have not intended to appropriate the voice of the oppressed, to speak for peasants, or even on behalf of peasants. Their actions often spoke clearly enough without words. Rather, I have attempted to sort out the threads of many narratives buried in the larger historical literature of the period.

Much of this literature was written from the perspective of the creole elites, because they were the ones who possessed the tool of literacy that allowed them to tell their own stories. Many of the literate leaders among the rebels died during the course of the rebellion--all that survives of their writing is a collection of letters whose authors seldom reflected on the meaning or context of the events to which they

referred. As for the people of the Puuc, they lost most of their leaders during the war and its aftermath, and their voices were truly silenced.

However, the point of view of the peasants is not the only perspective that is absent from the historical literature on the Mayan rebellion. Because most studies of the Caste War focused on the struggle between the creole politicians and military leaders of the northwest and the rebels of the southeast, there is an entire regional dimension to the rebellion and its aftermath that has not been examined. In the classic works on the Caste War, Mérida and Chan Santa Cruz were juxtaposed as symbolic focal points of two opposing world views. Moreover, in many of these works, the conflict between Mérida and Campeche was presented only as a subplot, as a tale of two cities whose mutual antagonisms arose from their essential characteristics, or as a causal factor in the breakdown of social relations between the elites and peasants. But there was no attempt to look at where the people of the region "in between," which I have defined as the Puuc or Sierra, positioned themselves with respect to the various struggles going on around them. As for the Pacificos, the Maya who signed a separate peace six years after the uprising, they were totally ignored, because it was assumed that once they had dropped out of the larger picture, they ceased to have any influence on the course of events.

The main focus of the dissertation, therefore, has been on the reconstruction of society in one particular region in the aftermath of conflict. Much has been written about the political, economic, and social disintegration leading up to the rebellion; few works have addressed the equally important question of how the people of the central

region went about the task of reintegrating their society. The study first addresses the practical problem of how people survived and how they managed to pick up the pieces of their fractured lives, reconstructing families, homes, and communities. In this process, a number of different actors exerted varying degrees of influence on the outcome, including the military, regional landowners, local officials, and the peasants themselves.

An important part of the investigation has been an assessment of the effectiveness of counter-insurgency campaigns undertaken by the Yucatecan military authorities against the rebels and their civilian supporters. One of the main reasons for these campaigns was to persuade the returning refugees to reoccupy villages which had been abandoned during the course of the rebellion. Creole elites saw this process of pacification and resettlement as part of a strategy to ensure that manpower was available for the agricultural development of the region.

Government policy evolved from outright military repression to an attempt to negotiate the return of large numbers of civilians who had fled in the wake of the retreating rebel armies. Once creole authorities grasped the idea that the scarcity of labour supply was an impediment to economic recovery in the aftermath of the war, they mounted a massive campaign to persuade refugees to resettle their villages. The refusal of refugees to return from Belize and the continuing existence of large communities outside government-controlled territory suggests that local military and civilian officials never managed to strike the right balance between coercion and persuasion. Forced labour remained a constant source of tension in the relationships

between peasants and authorities.

Another of the goals of the study has been to arrive at a clearer understanding of the relationship of class and ethnicity on the eve of the Caste War and to assess the impact of the rebellion on the social structure of the region. As a result of looking at these issues from many different perspectives, a purely racial interpretation of the uprising and its consequences seems too simplistic. There were too many examples of mixed communities, transfer of loyalties, and even collaboration to understand the Caste War solely in terms of racial categories. Class antagonisms make a little more sense, even though rural society in Yucatán was still influenced by corporate values, and much social interaction moved along vertical lines, often described in the anthropological literature as a patron-client society. There is some evidence that the disintegration of such ties played an important part in the period leading up the rebellion.

Some historians of the rebellion have suggested that the rebels were primarily reacting to the modernization of their communities, and that the rebellion was an attempt to turn back the clock to an older, more organic vision of society. However, the same may be said of the reaction of the regional elite to the uprising. There was a determined attempt in the aftermath of the rebellion to reconstruct rural society according to the previous model, which, after all, had worked for several centuries. Successive state governments tried to restore peace in the countryside using paternalistic models, but they were only partially successful, primarily because the government did not have the resources to maintain order nor the will to encourage

economic growth beyond a small area around Mérida. The creole elites of the capital were often too preoccupied with their own struggles to put together a concerted effort to rebuild the economy and society of the Puuc. As a result, the region became marginalized and neglected in terms of the political economy of the peninsula.

Everyone in the central region, elites and commoners alike, suffered in the aftermath of the rebellion. Where the creole-dominated literature revelled in the horrors of massacres and emphasized the economic ruin of the landowners, the modern literature has focused on the suffering and exploitation of the peasants and the fate of prisoners of war transported as indentured labor to Cuba. Nevertheless, if the region is considered as a whole, a relatively large segment of the population managed to rebuild their lives, sometimes restoring old relationships between landowner and peon, sometimes as members of free communities of *Pacificos* south of the hills. The prosperity of one group was not necessarily bought at the expense of another. If a landowner could afford to restart his agricultural operations and hire labourers, he also created a refuge from compulsory military service. If a priest took a strong stand against the abuses of the military, he also provided local landowners with a stable labour force for their haciendas.

Many inhabitants of the Puuc maintained their strong attachment to a village-based subsistence economy throughout the period studied. Intermittent participation in a commodity market (the production and sale of maize for internal markets) did not imply the death of kinship and community ties, the loss of language, culture, and moral outlook, and, in the end, total assimilation within the dominant culture. Where

people were able to maintain even limited control over land and labour, some degree of autonomy survived. Such autonomy was more pronounced in the pacifico communities, but it did not totally disappear in the communities north of the Puuc hills. Creole elites may have been successful in restoring their dominance over the peasantry of the Puuc, but total hegemonic control was beyond their grasp.

Some historians have argued that peasant society was so dislocated in the aftermath of the rebellion that the bulk of the population ended up as a rural proletariat in the henequen plantations of the north. I have argued, rather, that peasant society was modified, not destroyed, by the Caste War. The disappearance of the caciques as a distinct intermediate social group which wielded power and economic influence on behalf of their own people in pre-war society is one of the tragic consequences of the rebellion. But it must be pointed out that the cacique form of local government was a mixed blessing. Not all of the caciques played a benevolent role; some delivered their own people into debt peonage and servitude. Among the Cruzob and the Pacificos, the rank and file had a way of dealing with this problem by a form of rough justice. Recourse to such direct action was not possible for the majority of peasants who resettled in their home communities. Their basic form of protest was flight.

The emergence of the pacifico communities south of the Puuc ensured that a viable alternative existed for dissidents. Fortunately for the peasants of central Yucatán, the government did not have at its disposal the sophisticated means of terror and repression which modern counter-insurgency forces employ. But some of the

tactics employed by government forces are disturbingly familiar to present readers, such as the intimidation of family members to persuade peasants to desert from rebel communities and the establishment of strategic villages in the zone of conflict.

The relationship between peasants and guerrillas remains problematic, because it is not always clear that peasants were sympathetic to the guerrilla forces which conducted periodic raids on their settlements and villages. While it is true that wealthy creoles were more often the target of such raids, peasants were also abducted to boost the population of the rebel communities, their homes were destroyed, and their meagre property was stolen. Terror was used as a weapon by all sides in this long and bloody conflict, but it was seldom used indiscriminately by the rebels. Guerrilla raids were carefully planned, based on intelligence-gathering in government-controlled territory and undertaken for specific goals. Government efforts to defeat the rebels were hampered by the guerrillas' superior knowledge of the terrain and their unhindered access to weapons and other supplies which allowed them to continue their resistance until 1901.

In reconstructing the history of central Yucatán I have specifically rejected the "frontier" paradigm, because it obscures the true nature of this conflict. Contrary to the image presented by some scholars, central Yucatán on the eve of the rebellion was not a frontier in the sense that there were clear divisions between competing cultures and antagonistic forces. The rebellion of 1847 tore apart a society which had functioned more or less as a unitary whole, albeit with severe inequalities and endemic conflict. What was at stake in the uprising of 1847 were questions of land usage,

unjust taxes, the exploitation of labour, and the historic right to a certain amount of local autonomy. The rebels who withdrew to the southeastern jungles in response to the creole counter-offensive had originally come from the central and eastern regions of the peninsula. A distinct theocratic-military culture emerged among the Cruzob as a means of ensuring the cultural cohesion of the rebel communities. But not all people caught up in the rebellion and its aftermath chose to become "People of the Cross."

Those people who remained in central Yucatán had to learn to live in the militarized zone between the rebels and creole-dominated Yucatán. In the aftermath of the rebellion, loyalties and identities were all suspect. The people of the region were able to invent a new way of existing "in between" competing zones of power and antithetical models of society. However, despite the inevitable polarization, there was a great deal more movement between communities and ways of life, and more contact among all of these groups than most of the literature suggests. Negotiating survival demanded a high degree of flexibility and a rejection of labels on the part of everyone who chose to remain in that contested territory. As historians, we write more about the heroism of those who fought for principles and ideologies; this study seeks to tell the stories of those who simply survived.

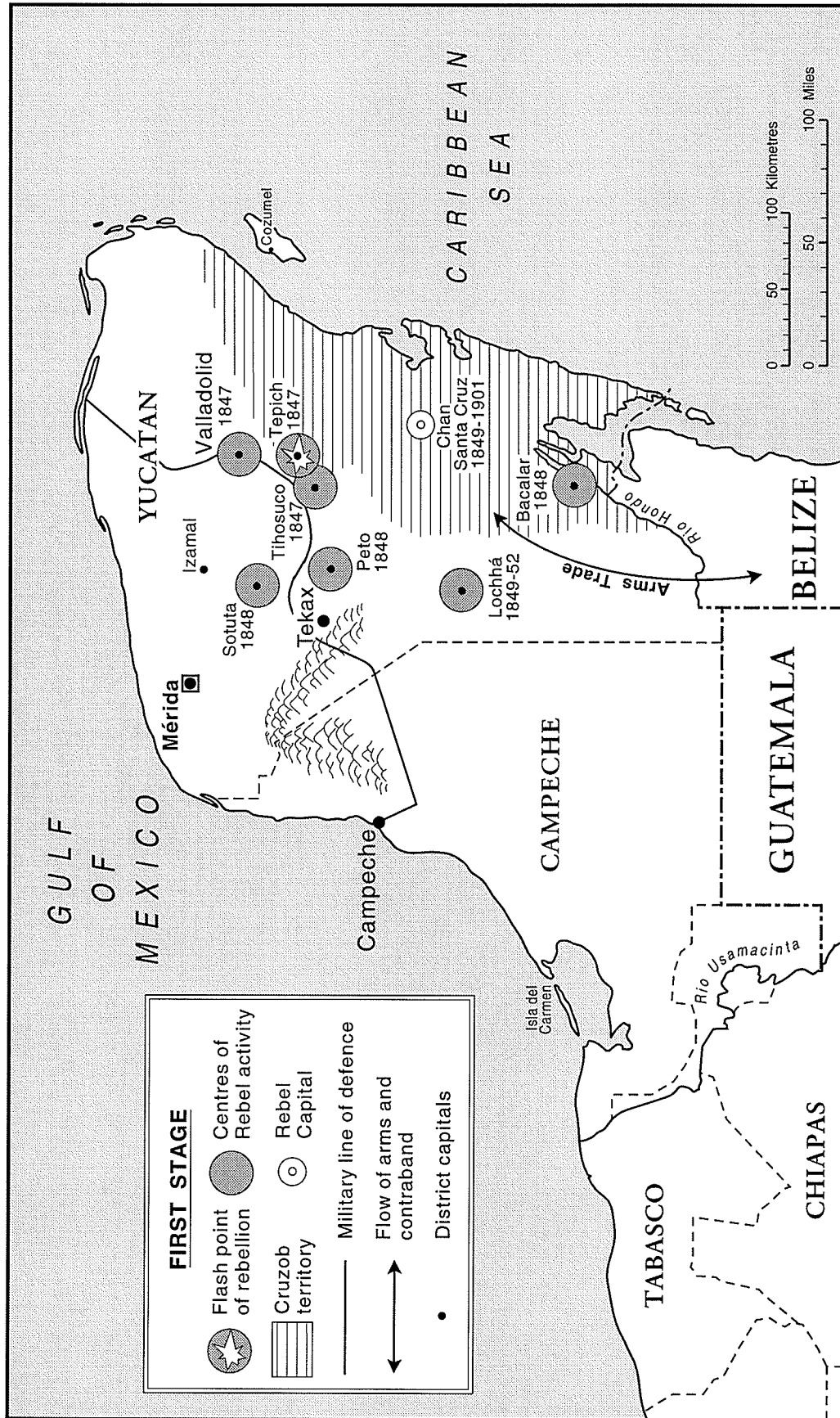
APPENDIX - MAPS

Map 1 YUCATAN PENINSULA



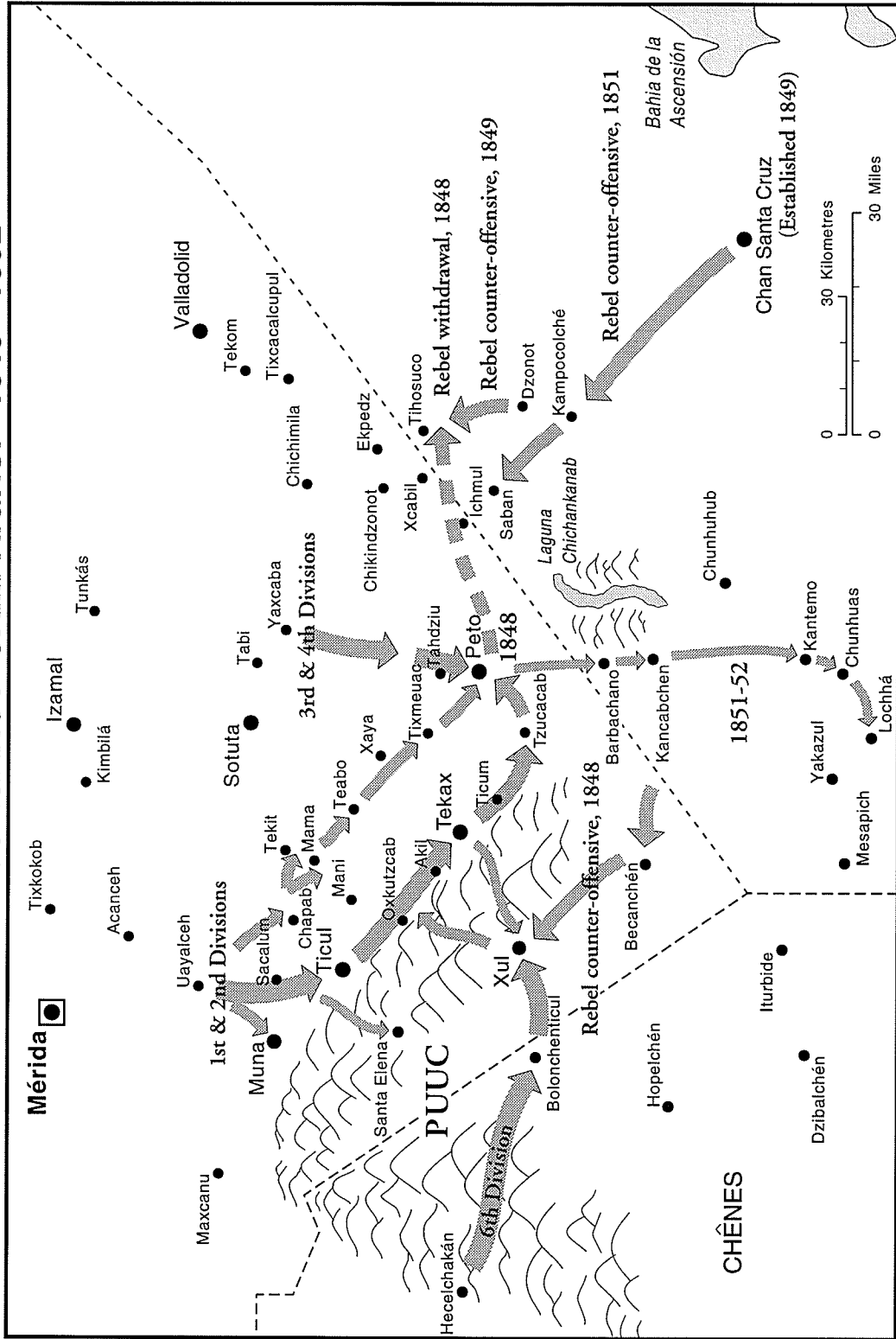
Sources: Gilbert Joseph, *Rediscovering the Past at Mexico's Periphery* (Alabama, 1986).
 Grant Jones, ed., *Anthropology and History in Yucatán* (Austin & London, 1977).

Map 2
THE MAYAN REBELLION OF 1847



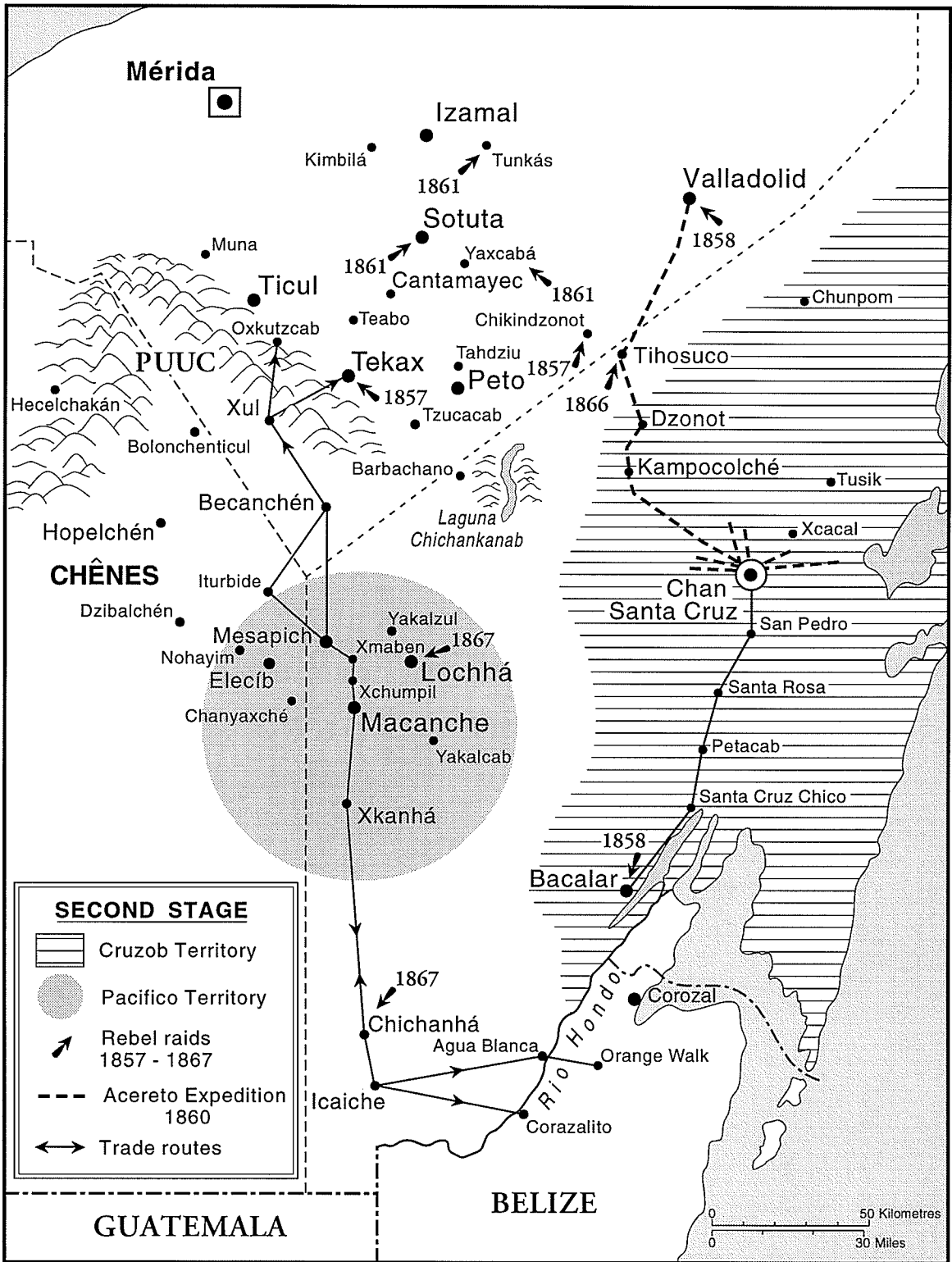
Source: Instituto de Geografía, UNAM, ATLAS NACIONAL DE MEXICO, 11.3.2 "Rebeliones y Revueltas II" Mapa N (México, 1991).

Map 3
COUNTER - INSURGENCY CAMPAIGNS: 1848 - 1852



Sources: *Estados Unidos Mexicanos - Mérida 16 Q.-111* (Comisión Intersecretarial coordinadora ... de la Carta de la República Mexicana). Primera edición, 1958. Eligio Ancona, *Historia de Yucatán*, Vol. IV (Mérida, 1885).

MAP 4
THE PACIFICOS DEL SUR AND THE CRUZOB: 1853 - 1867



Sources: Eligio Ancona, *Historia de Yucatán*, Vol. IV & V (Merida, 1885).
 Instituto de Geografía, UNAM, *ATLAS NACIONAL DE MEXICO*, 11.3.2 (México City, 1991).
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