

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The discussion began with commentaries on the Stein paper by officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration. In these commentaries the officials stressed foremost that return must be voluntary. They also emphasized that in all of the first asylum countries there is a need to provide refugees with accurate, objective information on the conditions and procedures for repatriation. In fact, officials reported that the UNHCR had just launched such a campaign in Costa Rica. It was noted, however, that one danger to be considered in these campaigns is creating the impression that international bodies and governments are promoting repatriation, when conditions may not in fact warrant large-scale return.

That it is misleading to generalize about Central American refugees or about home and host governments was a point on which all of the participants agreed. Nonetheless, one researcher offered a useful framework with which to interpret refugees' and host governments' orientations to repatriation. He suggested that we consider two variables: the refugees' ideology and their level of organization.

According to this framework, where the refugees share an ideology at odds with that held by the host government and where they are organized, mass repatriation is more likely to occur than individual repatriation. Similarly, under these conditions, host governments will tend to facilitate this mass return. Such conditions prevail in Mesa Grande, Honduras and in the Guatemalan camps in Mexico. In contrast, where refugees lack a coherent ideology and resist collective action and organization, it is more likely that refugees will opt for individual repatriation, integration in the first asylum country, or migration to yet another country. An example of this second tendency is found in Honduras among Nicaraguan ladinos.

Along these same lines, several participants voiced skepticism over the return of large numbers of undocumented refugees residing outside camps. For the most part, these Central Americans also lack organization and many may not identify themselves as refugees. As one individual noted, in order to survive without documents, Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Mexico City are struggling far more to pass as Mexicans than to identify and organize themselves as Central American refugees.

The participants expressed concern for such refugees who will likely not return home even when conditions for repatriation are propitious. Thus, they argued, alongside plans for repatriation, must come policies and plans for legalizing this large and highly vulnerable population.

Another impediment to return, mentioned by several participants, is distrust of the military and other governmental authorities charged with repatriation and reintegration. Thus, one individual cited the paradox posed by larger numbers of refugees returning to El Salvador where conflict continues to rage than to Guatemala where there are far more areas of relative calm. One reason for this disparity, it was argued, is the militarization of the repatriation and reintegration processes in Guatemala--a situation that is intimidating to refugees and the displaced. The situation differs in El Salvador where we find, instead, a multiplicity of national and international institutions, both governmental and civil, involved in repatriation and reintegration.

Participants also cited differences among countries with respect to refugees' attitudes toward UNHCR. In El Salvador, on the one hand, it was said that refugees perceive UNHCR to be acting in league with governmental authorities, and consequently, UNHCR is treated with the same distrust reserved for the Salvadoran, Honduran, and U.S. governments. On the other hand, another participant reported that UNHCR is respected by both the Nicaraguan government and the Miskito for its efforts at repatriation and reintegration. Most discussants stressed that full participation by refugees in repatriation and reintegration decision-making is necessary to overcome this distrust and resistance.

ISSUES OF CENTRAL AMERICAN RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

Beatriz Manz

The author makes a clear distinction between repatriation, which is the physical relocation process, and reintegration, the actual socio-economic and political reincorporation of repatriates and displaced persons. Successful reintegration requires not only material assistance, she argues, but also human rights protection, as return often occurs to areas of continued conflict. However, it is the participation of returnees in the planning and implementation of policies and programs that is the key to promoting full reintegration.

A number of studies have been undertaken in recent years on the return and reintegration of the refugee and displaced populations of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. While there is a need for further research on this crucial topic, a preliminary analysis can be made based on findings thus far.¹

It is generally agreed that the refugees are among the most vulnerable populations in the region and that the vast population displacement is one of its most serious problems.² According to the U.S. General Accounting Office (1989a) an estimated 1.7 million Central Americans left their countries this decade. Of these, about 120,000 were registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The most important problem facing the displaced population of Central America is that the political conflicts that drove them from their communities have not been solved. In addition the economic conditions and general living standards of the majority have deteriorated. Thus, the challenge for a sustained and effective integration is enormous. While the goal ought to be that the refugees return to structurally improved

social, economic and political conditions, it is clear from the research that after years of displacement the refugees are willing to return to their communities even though the desirable or optimal conditions do not exist. The Esquipulas II peace agreement gave the impetus and created expectations which now require a response.

For Central American policymakers and assistance agencies, therefore, basic human rights must be a component, along with economic aid--aid which encompasses a broader national and regional development goal. This goal must comprise political, economic, and social restructuring. In effect, the refugees are part of the process for change that will be necessary to create a society that guarantees human rights and social justice.

In this light, the reintegration is viewed as a process and it encompasses more than merely the physical transfer of the displaced to their communities, but the full participation of the refugees as actors in their own future.

It is the mandate of the UNHCR to facilitate the refugees' return to their home communities and to provide them with at least initial protection and assistance for their reintegration. But the UNHCR's work alone, admirable though it may be, is not enough to ensure effective reintegration. Minimally, the governments must make a clear and unequivocal commitment to adhere to Esquipulas II, so as to lay the foundations for an effective integration. These commitments can best be accomplished if they are fully backed by the international community, are verifiable, and are politically and legally binding.

Timing is critical in this process. The process of reintegration begins at the point when the displaced and the refugees determine they want to return, not just at the point when they have already returned. For that reason the refugees need support when the decision is being made. This involves creating a supportive climate for the return, as well as the material and security conditions for it. Also, while it is agreed that no refugee should be forced to repatriate, that is, that repatriation should be a voluntary decision of each individual, it should also be clear to the refugees that they have a right to return when they so choose and that governments have no right to prevent or hinder the right to repatriate.³ The elected representatives of the refugees and the organizational plans devised by the

refugees may also not be to the liking of the various governments. To avoid confrontations regional agreements should establish precisely the rights of the refugees in their repatriation. If impediments are present even before the repatriation, it will not be conducive to promoting integration and the refugees will understandably be apprehensive about their ability to exercise their rights once resettled. In the context of Esquipulas II there is an expectation that governments show a willingness to compromise.

Unfortunately some governments have been either indifferent or outright hostile to reintegration. For example, Salvadoran research conducted among the returnees from the Mesa Grande camp (Stein forthcoming) indicates that the Salvadoran government and armed forces have harassed and sabotaged the repatriation process. It is imperative to have enforceable mechanisms to prevent these obstructions, discrimination, and abuses from continuing.

Likewise, the Guatemalan government has shown contempt and indifference toward the Central American peace accords in this regard (Manz 1988b). Refugees in Mexico have communicated their strong desire to return and the conditions they feel need to be guaranteed: voluntary, organized and collective repatriation; recuperation of their land; the right to freedom of organization and association; the right to life and communal integrity; freedom of movement; and allowing delegations to accompany them at the time of the return (Comisiones Permanentes, 1989). The Guatemalan government has not responded to these demands. The conduct of these governments hardly provides the necessary "urgent attention" to the refugee problem and does not "facilitate" repatriation as agreed upon in point 8 of the 1987 Esquipulas accords.

Programs aimed at reintegration should always have as the most essential component the participation of the refugees. Their participation in conferences and planning sessions, including the international refugee conference to be held in Guatemala City at the end of May 1989, is crucial as the decisions that will be adopted directly affect refugees.

Given the on going conflicts in Central America, the tenuous character of civilian institutions, and the fact that the current governments have yet to demonstrate that they will actively cooperate in the process of

repatriation and reintegration, it is imperative that, in addition to international organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) be directly involved in aid and long term development programs. Currently there are more than one hundred NGOs working in the region. NGOs can play a key stabilizing role as bridge between the refugees and displaced and the government. To perform that role, however, the NGOs need full guarantees to carry out their work in areas of population reintegration.

The number of NGOs in a given country or region of a country varies. The work of the NGOs in facilitating integration is more efficient and effective when they work in a coordinated manner. It has also been shown that the integration process is facilitated when there is an adequate infrastructure, and the programs are decentralized and have full local participation.

An important requirement for normalization of life, especially for those returning to isolated conflictive zones, is freedom of movement. Normal documentation as accorded all citizens without any distinctions should be given to the returnees within a fixed amount of time. The preparation of this documentation should start when the UNHCR's list of returnees is made available to the respective government. Likewise the birth of all children born while displaced should be registered.

Beyond the initial assistance given in the course of relocation, longer term assistance projects should be aimed at the whole community or area, avoiding the creation of returnee communities that would be the recipient of more material assistance than neighboring kindred communities that have not been relocated. In Nicaragua, for example, resentment has been created when some relocated communities have been the recipients of promised services while local communities have not (Bilbao 1988, Aznar forthcoming). The same applies to Guatemala and El Salvador where land is a critical component for the refugees' livelihood. In those instances where the refugees will rejoin an established community the assistance agencies ought to include the whole community in the project. In this manner, needed development is brought to the general area and the projects can serve as a catalyst for cooperation between those who remained and the returnees.

The more successful rural projects will be those that promote economic diversification in which all able-

bodied persons have the opportunity to make a contribution to the sustenance of the community: men and women, young and old. Women's participation in resettlement projects have proven to be a determining factor in the success of some projects (Bilbao 1988). The inclusion of all members in production and the mastery of non-agricultural skills (in addition to agricultural skills) in a community enhances its adaptive capacities and therefore economic and social well-being.

In Guatemala, especially in the Ixcan rain forest region, refugees face uncertainty about recuperating their land parcels either because in their absence the parcels were given to landless peasants from throughout the country, or because their parcels are located in areas which today are military conflict zones (Manz 1988a and 1988b). In the first instance, there is much apprehension on the part of both the new settlers and the refugees. In my view, the government must settle this land dispute in favor of the original owners, while finding land for the new settlers; the contest over land should not be left to be settled by two groups of land-starved peasants at the time of return. In the second case, returnees have either not been allowed to return to their parcels because of the military conflict, or when they do return and rebuild their destroyed community, they are overwhelmed by direct military presence. For example, in the name of "national security" or for the refugees' "own protection," the military has established outposts with as many as three hundred soldiers in the resettled community, has forced the refugees to become part of armed patrols, and has even required them to participate in armed sweeps searching for guerrillas. Another common practice has been building infrastructure with military aims.

In all the countries there are various organizations assisting in repatriation and relocation. Governmental organizations, the armed forces, national and international non-governmental organizations and various religious denominations. It appears that the contributions of a variety of well-coordinated organizations, can prove most beneficial. If that institutional mix, however, includes the armed forces in a direct way, such as in the case of the Ixil and Ixcan areas of Guatemala, it not only inhibits the population, but because of the army's power, produces an imbalance in the efforts being carried out by civilian governmental and nongovernmental organizations. While fully limiting military intervention may appear unrealistic in the

present context, it is nonetheless a critical standard by which to measure the progress taking place. Moreover all projects that are alien to the culture of the refugees and to the tasks of integration, must be excluded, especially those that have military ends.

The importance of government flexibility in allowing the population to participate in decisions about its reintegration is illustrated in the Nicaraguan case. Research (Bilbao 1988) showed that forcefully relocated communities often became economically and socially viable only when residents could shun rigid production schemes forced on them by the government, in order to choose and control their own production methods.

National and local conditions favorable to reintegration are essential. For returnees, direct access to a repatriation monitoring office would give them confidence to return and help avoid abuses during the reintegration process. Mediators can help create favorable conditions.

The repopulation of Tenancingo in Cuscatlan, El Salvador is an interesting example of how the two parties to that conflict, through the good offices of the Catholic Church, facilitated the relocation to that community in 1986 (Wood 1988). The Catholic Church negotiated an agreement with the army and with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), for the re-population and the creation of an "unarmed zone". Tenancingo is an example of successful negotiations, third party mediation and good use of political influence. Crucial to this case was the right timing, international support, willingness to propose and try a new approach, creativity and having the will to see the process through. In Tenancingo the Church's willingness to act as a mediator between contending groups was a major contributing factor in the resolution of a local conflict.

While the spotlight falls frequently on Salvadoran and Nicaraguan refugees benefitting them with international pressure to improve their conditions in exile and upon return, relatively little media attention is given to Guatemalan refugees and returnees. In addition, the two factors that have enabled Salvadoran refugees to take charge of their own reintegration--bold self-organization and strong political organization within El Salvador--do not exist in the Guatemalan case.

There are more Guatemalans under UNHCR protection than any other refugee group in Central America, yet they have had the smallest percentage of return. The role of the international community, NGOs and churches within Guatemala could spur some activity to end the stalemate that exist between the refugees and government officials who have not responded to their demands. There is already a somewhat analogous situation to that of Tenancingo, El Salvador, in which the Catholic Bishop of Alta Verapaz has acted on behalf of displaced Kekchi Indians who after years of hiding sought his intervention, protection auspices and reception (AVANCSO forthcoming). The Guatemalan Bishops of the border departments of San Marcos, Huehuetenango and El Quiche, departments from which the majority of the refugees come, have also become more directly involved with the refugees by paying visits to the camps to learn about their concerns. While in general Guatemalan refugees must contend with direct military intervention in the whole process of repatriation and reintegration, a highly regarded national institution such as the Catholic Church could play a key role as intermediary. And beyond the role of intermediary in the return process, the Church might serve as witness to the rights of the returnees and adjacent communities, so as to maintain the conditions conducive to generating stability and integration. In the rural indigenous areas, churches and NGOs can make a space for themselves and counteract the monopoly of the military, even at the local level.

An issue that is seldom addressed is the future of the displaced--that colossal internal and external population flow--who have no defined status or protection. This population seeks anonymity and tries to blend in or hide. It is incumbent on the international community, particularly the United States, to aid the Central American undocumented and displaced populations. Statistics indicate that an overwhelming number of these Central Americans (generally not defined as refugees) are entering the United States. It is essential that these Central Americans, without regard to country of origin, be allowed to remain in the United States until the foundations for peace have been created in their home countries. Research conducted in Central America (Montes 1988, Manz 1988a and 1988b) is confirmed by the conclusions drawn by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO 1989a), suggesting that the flow of immigrants to the United States and other countries will be reduced when peace and economic stability is achieved in the region. The GAO concludes that political

stability, the protection and the promotion of respect for human rights, and addressing the social and economic inequities are essential in detaining the population flow. In that respect the United States could also assess its relations and roles in Central America. A major review of U.S. activities in Central America, also conducted by the GAO (1989b) determined that the United States fell short of achieving its self-proclaimed policy objectives: regional security, promoting democracy, economic stabilization and structural adjustment and development.

While the obstacles to successful integration are daunting, Esquipulas II was a concrete step, historic in nature, that lays the foundations and the spirit of integration. A certain dynamic and good will is being generated that offers important possibilities for the future of Central America. Researchers who have observed the process through the years can point to some procedural improvements and added power in the hands of the victims of displacement. For example, in Nicaragua, the government has recognized its mistakes and abuses in the forced relocations, has cooperated with repatriations, and accepted an autonomy process. In El Salvador, the refugees have been able to press for their rights to return on their terms. And in Guatemala, there have been a few instances in which human rights abuses against the returnees have been favorably resolved, and the UNHCR has played an active role in repatriation.

The potential role of the National Reconciliation Commissions in the three countries in return and reintegration can yield positive results. However, as we have learned from other experiences, much depends on the power these commissions are accorded (Mármora and Gurrieri 1988). If these commissions are organs without power, then their role in return and reintegration of refugees and the displaced will run the risk of being merely symbolic and the process of return and integration will likely be downgraded to a low profile and low priority in the political agenda.

The governments of the region and the international community should pay particular attention to the historic grievances of the indigenous peoples of Central America on the eve of the 500th anniversary of the Conquest. Their displacement from ancestral lands and communities is a painful reminder that still today no one will guarantee anything to the Indians. And, 40 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted,

there are still no guarantees that a single one of those universal rights is being respected.

Ultimately, at issue is settling the dichotomy between "personal security" and "national security". Or more explicitly: Will those in power respect the full rights of all citizens?

NOTES

1. Among the recent studies conducted in Nicaragua are Bilbao (1988), Aznar (forthcoming), in El Salvador, Montes (1988) and Stein (forthcoming), and in Guatemala, on the refugee exodus Manz (1988a) and on prospects for repatriation Manz (1988b). Research on the internally displaced population of Guatemala has been undertaken by AVANCSO (forthcoming). There is also the recently completed report of the International Commission for Central American Recovery and Development (Informe 1989) and a forthcoming report by the United States General Accounting Office.

2. For convenience sake, throughout this paper I will use the single term refugee. In Central America there has been a population displacement that has included those that have fled to other countries where they have refugee status and are under the auspices of the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); there are those who have fled to other countries and are not defined as refugees as well as a considerable number of internally displaced. The term refugee will be used here without prejudice to include all those people, who felt forced to abandon their communities and travelled to another country for military/political, economic and social reasons, whether technically defined as refugees or not.

3. This frame of rights and obligations has its basis in the most recent developments on human rights, whereby the person as well as the states and international organizations, constitute a subject of international law. This must be the most propitious moment to promote new national and regional legal frameworks, appropriate for the most effective protection of the rights of the repatriate and the population in general. A possible regional treaty concerning refugees and displaced could deal with the creation of mechanisms to promote and regulate the whole repatriation process and the protection of the repatriate's rights.

COMMENTARY

Luis Vargas Aybar*

According to the program, I was asked to comment on the document drafted by Beatriz Manz. I would like to organize my remarks in two parts. The first, more encompassing than the topic of today's workshop, refers to the role of national and international agencies. The second specifically addresses the process of integration of the displaced or refugee population; here I will touch on the issue that Beatriz takes up.

As regards the first point, I believe that some of Ricardo Stein's points in his presentation yesterday should be recalled, first of all, regarding the volume of resources earmarked for supporting the displaced or refugee population. At some point he also assessed the relationship between the total sum of resources and the results, indicating that the two latter did not correspond to the former, that is, that in some sense excessive resources were being used in relation to the results achieved to date. And not only financial resources, but hand-in-hand with them, the proliferation of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, of international, bilateral, and multilateral agencies, programs, projects, etc., for attending to this population. I believe that it would be unfair to say that any of these agencies has had a criterion different from that which would lead any of them to support populations in extreme need. I would not hesitate to say that almost all of them were established, or reinforced their lines of work, for the purpose of truly supporting the populations who at those respective points in time were defined as the target population, whether refugees or displaced persons. But I also believe that all of them, initially (surely there must be honest exceptions; here I am referring rather to the general trend) have been fundamentally geared to

*Remarks were made in a personal capacity

providing assistance in emergency situations, because I believe that implicitly it was also in the mind both of the victims of such situations and of the aid organizations that one of the characteristics was the temporary nature of the phenomenon of displaced or refugee populations.

I believe that in this regard it is clear, the mandate of UNHCR is to attend to, support, and assist in the broadest sense populations in the express situation of having lost a series of rights making them vulnerable outside of their countries. It is in such situations that UNHCR has the full and complete power to act. I believe that other agencies, in one way or another, provided assistance and aid packages that were, I repeat, geared to emergency situations. Unfortunately, what was essential initially, i.e. food, clothing, medicine, and shelter, albeit precarious, over time leads us to fall into a welfare approach (el asistencialismo), with all that this practice implies. If we have a self-criticism to make, we would say that the agencies displayed little creativity. I believe that no agency made an effort to prepare for a transition from an emergency situation to a more permanent situation. If we take the case of El Salvador, obviously no displaced population continues to subsist in an emergency situation after eight years--receiving food aid and material aid for housing in the same way as it did in 1980.

An overall assessment also leads us to conclude that the population's situation has not improved; to the contrary, there are many cases of major steps backward in material living conditions as compared to the original situation, especially, as was said yesterday, in the case of a majority peasant population, which was already poor, with very low educational levels, and with very little access to the benefits of modern society. These conditions, already precarious, not only have failed to improve through the assistance received, but in some cases indicators suggest that they have deteriorated. Although it may seem somewhat harsh, I believe that we must speak here of the perverse effects of external cooperation on communities. I believe that this is an effect and a finding that can be empirically verified. Certainly no one set out, I repeat, to generate such effects; but reality suggests that they were generated. These populations' levels of dependency (as Pablo Aznar paper on the deterioration not only of material conditions but also of values, of the capacity to identify oneself as an individual or collective

subject, clearly points out) I would practically associate (and here Segundo Montes could certainly help me, casting much more light on this) with the rise and development of many eminently religious groups that tend fatalistically to accept the present situation, not wanting to consciously face the adverse circumstances in which they survive.

The above points should lead us to reflect seriously on what is being done, and as to what we are supporting or contributing to. Certainly this is not the first time these problems have been set forth; they are present in all the discussions, in all the dialogues among those of us interested in one way or another in working with or supporting such populations.

As for the second part of my remarks, regarding the process of integration of the displaced or refugee population, I would like rapidly to--in view of the time--note the following:

A general comment: the specific and particular nature of the displaced and refugee population cannot be understood outside of the context of a broader explanatory framework that not only encompasses the political sphere, which is a very important determining factor in the emergence of this problem, but also touches on the economic and social spheres. As a result, it must be situated in the framework of poverty, in the framework of a development model capable of offering alternatives for possible economic and social insertion and thus, certainly, within a context of balanced mental health, which was discussed yesterday and which both Armando Campos and Cristina Bottinelli illustrated brilliantly.

Beatriz's proposal is centered primarily on resettling the affected populations, understanding this to mean a physical move, whether to their place of origin or to a third area with better conditions. Beatriz's paper represents a very good step in the direction of a horizon to be strived for, a goal, suggesting that all efforts could be geared to having a positive outlook with better alternatives.

I want to refer not so much to the relocation process as a process of insertion or reinsertion of the population, whether in its place of origin, in the case of return, or in what is today called the destination; certainly one never knows whether it is actually the

ultimate destination or yet another point along the social and economic path these families must travel.

Reading Beatriz's paper, a question occurs to me, as does a desire. As for the latter, I would hope that we could rapidly achieve the social conditions that she proposes. But immediately the question arises: And in the meantime, what are we to do? Until these structural changes take place, while the change in the direction of favorable political structures is underway, so long as no understanding is reached between the parties in conflict, what is to be done? And the dilemma on this point is critical: one must opt either for a welfare approach (asistencialismo), repeating what we have already done, or for something different, assuming that what we do today is a step towards that which we all, I believe, hope to attain further down the road. It seems to me that we often either fall into excessive empiricism, wanting to do too many material things, or we adopt a contemplative posture, making philosophical proposals. The pressing nature of the situation of displaced persons and refugees demands that we make a commitment today. It is essential that things get done, but with a forward-looking perspective. Pragmatism for its own sake makes no sense; but on the other hand not moving beyond pure and simple philosophical reflection does not help these populations who each passing day are suffering hunger, abandonment, malnutrition, disease, etc.

If this is so, the processes of reintegration will have to be seen, first of all, as having irreversible difficulties; that is, if the desired peace were to come today, this would not make us go back to the pre-conflict years in any of the countries. Since the war began, the countries' demographic profiles have changed considerably and irreversibly. This does not mean that there are no specific and sporadic returns; but I do not believe that we can imagine massive returns of the 100,000 Salvadorans who are living in the outskirts of the metropolitan area; that the 400,000 who are in Mexico will return to Guatemala, or to El Salvador; that these, I don't know, 150,000 or 250,000 Nicaraguans and Salvadorans who are in Costa Rica will return.

The process, since unfortunately it is long and drawn out, has given rise to a new contingent, particularly among the youth, who have come to view the place where they currently reside as their frame of reference, and the children who yesterday were brought by their parents when they were 11 or 12 years old are

themselves heads of families today. Therefore, that is their world, and certainly, however unfortunate it may be, they will have stronger affinities and roots there than with their families' respective places of origin. This is compounded by the fact that in many of these places of origin the conditions that led them to leave not only have not changed, but have grown worse. If this is a shared reflection, it should facilitate improved formulation of policies. If we assume that there will be a return in the short term, evidently our policies must place the major emphasis on emergency and temporary assistance. Why carry out a long-term housing program if the target population is going to move on later? And that is precisely what was done, providing for physical needs so as to make it possible for them to get by. Nonetheless, many settlements of displaced populations established on a short-term basis ended up being the long-term places of residence for those who have lived in such settlements for eight consecutive years. For those of us who are familiar with El Salvador, it suffices to see Moncagua in San Miguel or Santa Bárbara in Morazán, to realize that this is the antithesis of what should be done to support these populations.

It is on the basis of these experiences that I call your attention to this phenomenon whose characteristics in some cases make it necessary to define policies consonant with reality. In no way should this be understood as a negation of the impulse and will of any of these populations to return. To the contrary, they should be supported; but I believe that just as the right of voluntary return is recognized, one must also recognize the right to voluntarily remain where they are today, and the obligation to create the minimal conditions for them.

I was struck in Beatriz's document by a paragraph that states: "... in the support and assistance that must be extended to these populations, one must be careful not to give them more than is given to the neighboring populations...." If we adhere to this guideline, I ask myself: What can one give those who have repatriated en masse to Chalatenango, if they are to be given the same as is given to the other communities? Does this mean one mustn't give them anything? I suspect that here there is a problem of nuance, but which is important. One mustn't give them the same thing as is given the other populations but rather, I would say, based on the settlement or return of the population, one

must foster a mechanism for generating micro-regional development; thus the populations should be attended to independent of their origin, of their status as repatriates, displaced persons, or if they had the misfortune to be simple peasants who lived there because they had no access to any other place. If one looks at the Honduran peasants near the camps at Colomoncagua or those at Mesa Grande, you will realize that those people's only misfortune was to be born poor and to live there, working land with poor soils, without access to resources, and that they do not receive any type of support; that they are even unaware, or barely aware, of the presence of the institutional or civilian governmental apparatus. What they see is the movement of trucks that come and go, taking foodstuffs, materials, taking people or soldiers, from one place to another. And this is extremely dangerous because independent of anyone's will, it gives rise to xenophobia. The locals rightfully ask, why are those others receiving things, and not us? In the case of the displaced within the countries, this sense of resentment and renewed marginality can be sensed; it is accentuated in the case of populations of a different nationality.

Finally, the processes of integration or reinsertion, to use the more widely accepted term, should thus be based on recognition of these factors. I believe they should also orient and support actions of an economic nature, in generating economic activities, because we cannot imagine families without access to an activity that generates a minimum income for satisfying its needs--which is the least a man aspires to in terms of leading a dignified life-- generating an income that must be linked to improving one's quality of life, providing basic services, but in eminently participatory contexts, not only in the sense of decision-making, but participatory in their implementation and in the effort that must be made to attain such results. And this latter point is not just a declaration of principle, but should be made part of the methodology for action.

When we find refugee camps that I would say practically become--and pardon the expression--vacation centers, with a "microclimate" totally foreign to the local reality, with a power generator, equipment for making water potable, with the largest school in the area, with medical posts, carpentry and mechanics shops, and other facilities; where supplies come from outside, and so what, if the shoemaker makes a mistake and puts a

hole through the middle of the sole, since another one is on its way; where training "exercises" are done until it is physically impossible to continue, or for as long as the participants would like, since there is no pressing need to sell the product on the market to generate income. What is it, after all that we are doing? We are generating a situation of a "crystal bell," and the day that bell breaks, that population will--as Cristina Bottinelli rightly mentioned --suffer the additional trauma, the trauma of a compulsive departure, the trauma of a painful road, the trauma of insertion somewhere; and then this population will once again experience the trauma of the unveiling of this "enchantment" in which all the problems of life had apparently been resolved. To not bear in mind these considerations can be even more dangerous than not providing any assistance at all. Thank you.