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conventional Christian will engender heated rebuttals, but the book as a whole offers a valuable reassessment of a most elusive figure.

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Robert M. Carmack, ed. *Harvest of Violence: The Maya and the Guatemalan Crisis*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. 330 pp.

In *Harvest of Violence* Robert Carmack successfully brings together a diverse collection of essays written by anthropologists, a political scientist, and a geographer. All the works deal with the effects of the military repression on indigenous communities during the regimes of Generals Romeo Lucas Garcia, Efraim Rios Montt and Oscar Mejia Victores, which took place from 1978 to 1983. This period has been called one of the bloodiest in recent Guatemalan history. A number of guerrilla groups were operating in the northern highlands at this time. The Guatemalan Army adopted brutal methods of repression against the guerrillas and their suspected sympathizers. Military atrocities fell heaviest on the rural areas, in particular on communities with large indigenous populations.

The book is divided into essays which are categorized into different sections, these divisions are based on the type of violence visited on the communities. The sections are as follows: Generalized Violence, which deal with areas most affected, Selective Violence, which cover areas where political assassinations were usually the case, Indirect Violence, communities where violence came as a result of geographical location and not due to direct military operations, and finally a section dealing with the refugees of said violence.

The book is aimed at the popular audience. As Robert Carmack states

"...We [the essayists] seek to reach out, then, to US citizens and their government to explain what has been going on in the rural areas of Guatemala. We employ informa-

tion gathered according to anthropological methods to demonstrate that much of the interpretation of events provided by policy-makers has been grossly misleading and fails to reflect the realities confronting the Maya Indians of that small country [Guatemala]."

Yet the work never falls into the pit of propaganda or condemnation. It presents evidence of indiscriminate killing by the Guatemalan army. The violence took such proportions that the authors were forced into action.

Carmack states that

"...We [the authors] too were thrust into the debate, since many of the native peoples we had worked with through the years were killed, forced out of their communities, or adversely affected in other ways."

Thus the writers decided to make the book into a testament to those whose stories would otherwise have gone unheard.

One of the more interesting pieces is Benjamin D. Paul and William J. Demarest's "The Operation of a Death Squad in San Pedro la Laguna." This essay deals with the development of a ring of thugs who were able to operate unabated for a number of years due to the protection they enjoyed under the military regimes of Gens. Lucas Garcia and Rios Montt. The anthropologist began their field work in 1979, previous to the initiation of the bloodshed in the otherwise peaceful town. The piece sheds light on how the paramilitary death squads were formed, usually at the behest of the regional military commander, and how they quickly became a forum for extortion and murder. The supposed purpose of the squads was to eradicate suspected or known guerrillas. The squad in San Pedro came under the control of an opportunistic individual who saw in it a way to make easy money. So great was the power wielded by the squad that the simple accusation of communist usually sufficed to have someone killed either by the squad members themselves or by elements of the local military installation.

The violence inflicted on the indigenous peoples took on a variety

of forms, Ricardo Falla, a respected Guatemalan anthropologist, shows in his essay, "Struggle for Survival in the Mountains: Hunger and other Privations Inflicted on Internal Refugees from the Central Highlands," that denial of food and medical care was another useful method employed by the security forces. Falla states

"...I have sought not to add further data to the list of human rights violations but to illustrate the different examples of a system of violation of human rights, a system in which hunger, malnutrition, illness, lack of clothes, and exposure to the elements are privations imposed on the civilian population by the army as a mechanism of control."

Many people, in some cases whole communities, were forced to flee from the military forces. These people usually fled from the northern highlands to the coastal lowlands in an effort to save their lives. Falla bases his essay on accounts given to him by trusted informants who either had first hand experience or were close to people who underwent the suffering. The military changed its tactics from one of outright killing to one of stricter control of basic foodstuffs. The military planners hoped to force the people into "poles of development," akin to the strategic hamlets of Vietnam, where the army would be shown to have a kinder side.

The book will undoubtedly be criticized for not providing concrete data to back up its accusations. Yet there already exists literature which can support the assertions made by the essayists. This work gives a human face to the statistics of those who were killed during the height of the bloodshed, roughly from 1978 to 1983. The fact that it is based on first hand accounts provides the work with an undeniable sense of realism. The reader is compelled to question the legitimacy of a government that indiscriminately kills its own citizens.

The book will serve well to augment any works dealing with this period in Central American history. It is of particular interest to social historians due to the themes covered by the authors. In short, the book would serve well as a primary source for anyone doing work in the areas of contemporary history or political violence in Guatemala. Furthermore the essays provide an oral testament against recent policy decisions made

by the current unsympathetic Administration in Washington.

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Inga Clendinnen. *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. xiii + 245 pp. (Cambridge Latin American Studies, 61)

That this book is elegantly written and eminently readable may be its greatest strength and weakness, the former because it is to date the most useful synthesis of sixteenth-century Yucatan from the Spanish perspective, and the latter because fascinating theory and expert prose tempt the reader to expect a significant new scholarship that never fully materializes.

Like the first part of Nelson Reed's *The Caste War of Yucatan* (Stanford: Stanford University press, 1964), the equally well-written study of a later century in Yucatan's history of racial/cultural conflict, *Ambivalent Conquests* is divided into two sections. In both these books the first half dealing with the war from the Spanish perspective, is longer and more convincing than the second half, which attempts to analyze the Mayan viewpoint. One of the prime reasons for this weakness is the authors' apparent ignorance of the Yucatec maya language.

Clendinnen's account of the initial discovery and assault upon the peninsula by Spaniards builds upon Robert Chamberlain's classic narrative of 1948, *The Conquest and Colonization of Yucatan* (Washington: Carnegie Institution), emphasizing the sense of frustration and disillusionment symbolized in the elder Montejo's lament to the King in 1534: "No gold had been discovered, or is there anything from which advantage can be gained" (p.29).

The rise and fall of the Spanish expectation that Yucatan would produce another Tenochtitlan is no new discovery, and Clendinnen's account of the conquest period (1517-1562) relies heavily on the work of Chamberlain and that of Robert Ricard. It is in her partial reappraisal of the Ricardian apologia for the Franciscans in New Spain that Clendinnen's study reaps some original thought. The book, dedicated to the late