

UNDERSTANDING TRANSITIONS
TO DEMOCRACY:
Recent Work on Guatemala

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- GUATEMALA: A COUNTRY GUIDE.* By Tom Barry. Revised edition. (Albuquerque, N.M.: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1990. Pp. 168. \$9.95.)
- GUATEMALA, A NATION IN TURMOIL.* By Peter Calvert. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1985. Pp. 239. \$28.00.)
- HARVEST OF VIOLENCE: THE MAYA INDIANS AND THE GUATEMALAN CRISIS.* Edited by Robert M. Carmack. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. Pp. 334. \$21.95.)
- GUATEMALA'S POLITICAL PUZZLE.* By Georges A. Fauriol and Eva Loser. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Press, 1988. Pp. 124. \$24.95.)
- SHATTERED HOPE: GUATEMALAN WORKERS AND THE PROMISE OF DEMOCRACY.* By James A. Goldston. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1989. Pp. 177. \$22.50.)
- GUATEMALA: ELECTIONS, 1985.* By Inforpress Centroamericana. (Guatemala City: Inforpress Centroamericana, 1985. Pp. 43. \$30.00.)
- THE BATTLE FOR GUATEMALA: REBELS, DEATH SQUADS, AND U.S. POWER.* By Susanne Jonas. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991. Pp. 288. \$42.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

There is no denying the dramatic turnaround in Latin America's political institutions in the past decade, the decade of democracy. Dictator after dictator has apparently yielded to the weight of forces demanding democracy. It is beyond the scope of this essay to review the abundant literature that has emerged following these events, but at the risk of adding additional layers of conceptual murkiness, I wish to distinguish two stances that I perceive in that literature.

The first stance is positive in tone. It accepts the basic presumption that Latin American politics are moving toward democracy. This approach includes the assumption that democracy is a *fait accompli* once honest elections have taken place, a stance that is difficult to defend and sometimes promulgated to advance other political agendas. This "school" also

includes more realistic analyses that assume that progress is intended and possible while acknowledging that the gains will be painfully slow due to the tremendous obstacles to democracy in Latin America. Such impediments can range from "dependency" through the lack of suitably democratic attitudes on through the overwhelming social and economic problems facing policymakers and the negatives resulting from the lack of an appropriate level of "civic culture." But whatever the cause cited, the result foreseen is movement toward democracy, albeit slow and halting.

The second stance is less optimistic. It begins with the assumption that the thrust of political life in recent decades has been to reduce democracy, to centralize authority over key social processes rather than to diffuse it. Faced with the apparent flow of history toward democratic institutions in Latin America, this school employs the concept of "counterinsurgency democracy" to reconcile these seemingly paradoxical forces. When adopting this stance, one begins with the tentative interpretation that seemingly democratic institutions are designed to mask or even preserve a power structure that has recognized that it must acknowledge democratic conventions in order to survive in a difficult international political economy. Outright dictatorship no longer sells, and thus the institutional forms of democracy must be tolerated so that international legitimacy (and international resources) will follow.

Critics of each of these two stances will point out the ideological underpinnings of the other, often dismissing reports and analyses as useless polemics. Yet each perspective has plausibility as well as historical evidence supporting it. Guatemala makes an excellent case in point because its recent political history has inspired works that illustrate both of these "schools" of democratic analysis.

The facts are generally accepted. Guatemala is famed for its scenic splendor and its Mayan heritage, and the country possesses excellent agricultural resources. Its citizens, however, live amidst chronic political violence, and its cultural heritage has been threatened by the forced dislocations of war. Guatemala has the harshest human rights record in the hemisphere and levels of social injustice ranking with the worst countries of the region. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Guatemala waged a counterinsurgency campaign against its rural population, especially in Indian regions, and against dissident citizens throughout the country. As vicious as any the hemisphere has ever seen, this campaign was more successful than most, at least in the short run. Amidst all this upheaval, a new constitution was adopted in 1984 under the tutelary control of the armed forces, and elections were held in 1985 and 1990, with civilians being elected to the presidency on both occasions.

If some level of consensus exists regarding the basic facts, disagreement on their interpretation abounds. The literature on Guatemala is rarely dispassionate. Researchers seem to be captivated by the country's charms

and its people but appalled by its violence and poverty. Polemics are rarely far from the surface, for better or worse. As early as 1986, some observers described Guatemala's transition to democracy as complete while others dismissed it as a total sham.¹

Reconciling paradigmatic confrontations in the social sciences requires empirical data, not ideological debate. In my view, during this process, comparative politics should be to political science what liberation theology is to traditional missionary work. The dogma remains the same: a commitment to accurate explanation based on empirical data. But the raw material, both the conceptual approaches and the resulting data, must emerge from field experience. Comparative politics should emulate liberation theology's commitment: to understand means to begin from the perspective of the lives of the people being studied, not from an imported or imposed model.

While such an argument is, in the abstract, equally applicable to any sector of society, its practical utility in this essay lies in its pertinence to the question of democracy, which is after all the study of the distribution of power in a society. Distribution of power is measured by focusing on the quality of political participation by citizens rather than merely on the architecture of political institutions. Although institutions matter because civility in politics matters, the quality of democracy is measured in the outcomes of politics: does the majority seem to be able to influence public policy? Does public policy seem to be improving the quality of life for sectors in dire economic circumstances? Does public policy seem to be preserving civility in politics, not to mention human rights? These outcomes affect any group's capacity to participate and hence influence public policy.

In sum, transitions to democracy in any society reflect the architecture of democratic institutions, but the quality of democracy depends on the lives of citizens inhabiting the space created by that architecture and by those institutions. Research that claims to be objective may be better social science in some traditional sense, but it may also be less relevant to the real world of Guatemalan politics or to the problems of Guatemalan social life. Understanding a transition to democracy in Guatemala thus requires passion as well as science and experientially derived models as well as sophistication in modern social science theory. In this essay, I will review several recent and not so recent works on Guatemalan politics in light of these dimensions.

Three of the seven works surveyed—those by Tom Barry, Peter Cal-

1. The post-transitional source was part of an address by Carl Gershman, president of the National Endowment for Democracy, delivered at the International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, 23–25 Oct. 1986, Boston. The second comment is taken from Paul Goepfert, "Democratic Opening," *The Progressive*, no. 49 (Nov. 1985):36–39.

vert, and Inforpress Centroamericana—are useful as historical overviews or as sources of background and context. Of these, Calvert's *Guatemala, A Nation in Turmoil* is more valuable as a historical overview and Barry's *Guatemala: A Country Guide* as a source of recent information. Neither book is theoretically useful, however, because neither is framed in the context of a clearly enunciated analytical perspective.²

Barry's *Guatemala: A Country Guide* contains much hard data on the 1984–85 electoral process, Guatemalan political parties, and economic and social questions. Excellent brief sections summarize the roles of various social forces, including the military, religious groups, and students, followed by a generous serving of appendices, tables, and glossaries. Unlike the other works reviewed here, Barry's study treats environmental, women's, and gender issues in separate sections. As comparative political science turns more to policy studies (as it should), these sets of descriptive material will prove more valuable and become more common. Finally, Barry focuses on the question of Indian nationalism in Guatemala. The role of Guatemala's Indians within—or outside—the Guatemalan state is clearly a major question facing any Guatemalan government, revolutionary or reactionary. Barry, casting his net wider than many, provides at least some of the raw material for improved analysis, even if the analysis is not included in this work.

By contrast, Calvert's *Guatemala, A Nation in Turmoil* suffers from insufficient integration of data into a conceptual framework. For example, Calvert includes a good section on Guatemala's Indians but ignores the multiple layers of nationality in Guatemala as a political or theoretically relevant issue. Like Barry's volume, Calvert's offers good summary sections on various social sectors and is well documented. Published before the 1985 elections, this work inevitably cannot cover the major developments that were to come in the second half of the decade.

Calvert's text is primarily historical context, with emphasis on the Guatemalan Army, combined with a critique of U.S. foreign policy in the region. Calvert presents the reader with clear empirical questions. For example, on the role of the military, he challenges some conventional wisdom (and implicitly the old thesis of "the military as modernizers") by asking if the military, dominant since independence, has made Guatemala a better country and if the military's supposed organizational skills and technical capacity have contributed positively to Guatemalan development. On this aspect, at least, Calvert arrives at a definite conclusion

2. To be fair, Barry does not claim theoretical sophistication, but he does present material from a critical perspective that reflects "dependency theory." Both works are flawed by minor errors. For example, Barry's bibliography mistakenly attributes Jim Handy's *Gift of the Devil* to Sheldon Annis, although the title appears elsewhere under Handy. Calvert misidentifies a photograph of the volcano Agua near Antigua Guatemala as Fuego.

by the end of the book: the military has done little on the whole to reduce corruption and improve economic development, nor has it improved political processes that would allow political resolution of conflicts to replace suppression of dissent. He observes, "The [Guatemalan] military are at best parasitical upon the resources of the civilian economy; at worst they drain out its wealth and expend it uselessly on buying arms abroad or increasing their own affluence" (p. 179).

Although Calvert's work integrates data insufficiently with theory, those willing to accept at face value the assumption that the Guatemalan military is the force behind democratization in Guatemala would do well to consult this volume for additional historical perspective. Calvert may not have provided enough evidence to justify his negative conclusion about the net impact of the Guatemalan Army on Guatemalan history. But from another perspective, one could easily ask at the end of the book, why would the Guatemalan Army want democracy in Guatemala considering that the army has profited by its position, is guilty of human rights violations, and hence might be subject to the pressures for justice? In short, Calvert's study, like Barry's survey of social and economic data, is best consulted as a source of data or as inspiration for hypotheses to be tested in more detailed studies of Guatemalan reality in the 1990s.

Inforpress Centroamericana's short but expensive description of the political and economic context of the 1985 electoral process is an excellent source of basic data on the elections, party platforms, personalities, and issues—or lack of issues. Despite its brevity, *Guatemala: Elections, 1985* incorporates the social context into its critical analysis of the electoral process. Writing in 1985 (immediately after the elections and before the new administration of Vinicio Cerezo had taken office), the authors conclude that the elections were "held in the midst of an economic and social crisis, both of which will undercut another care-taker government." This assessment turns out to have been a very accurate prediction.

Unfortunately, the authors of *Guatemala: Elections, 1985* indicate little in the way of an analytic perspective that led to this prediction. This publication stresses the basic facts surrounding the election, not an analytic model. Like the works by Barry and Calvert, Inforpress's effort is valuable for its data and occasional insights.

The four works remaining to be discussed in this essay fall into two categories. The work by Georges Fauriol and Eva Loser and that by Susanne Jonas undertake an overall analysis of Guatemalan events while those by James Goldston and Robert Carmack are more narrowly focused. Fauriol and Loser's ambitious *Guatemala's Political Puzzle* was the first overall treatment of Guatemalan politics to emerge after the institutional changes that occurred between 1984 and 1986. The authors may therefore be credited with taking on the complex challenge of monitoring and interpreting the results of these events not long after they occurred.

Fauriol and Loser's study is far more sophisticated theoretically than the books reviewed thus far. The coauthors argue that importing foreign theories is "disingenuous," but the only example they refer to is dependency theory. Fauriol and Loser are neither clear nor precise in presenting their own model, which evolves implicitly as a cultural diffusionist theory, tempered by the polite distance of outsiders not wishing to intrude. In their opinion, the problem in Guatemala is a cultural legacy of authoritarianism and a political history that is consequently marked by a singular lack of compromise and other political virtues associated with Western pluralist democracy. In other words, they find Guatemala to be politically immature.

Fauriol and Loser stop short of being scholarly imperialists, however. What Guatemalans do with their polity is essentially up to them, their argument goes, and outsiders should not impose standards of democratic development on Guatemala. Fauriol and Loser are realistic and cautious about the quality of democratic development, preferring to view recent events as major steps forward, given the Guatemalan historical context. For example, they term the 1985 elections a "break with authoritarianism" (p. 1). Yet they are more celebratory about these events at the outset of the book than at its conclusion. In the end, they describe Guatemala as "pre-democratic," as if even the data they present (which essentially ignore social injustice and downplay human rights questions) lead them to question their own early optimism.

On the subject of the military, Fauriol and Loser's thesis is more subtle and apologetic than Calvert's: although problems exist in Guatemala, the military basically has been a positive element in the equation. Despite a historical legacy that stresses authoritarianism and generations of political immaturity exhibited by Guatemalan elites, the military provided Guatemala with democratic structures in the 1960s and 1970s and revitalized them in the mid-1980s after they faltered in the late 1970s. Fauriol and Loser pose their questions about the military in a more recent time frame, hence their data base is more current. Nevertheless, when compared with the studies by Calvert and Barry, their data are not necessarily more detailed except in describing pre- and post-electoral events in the mid-1980s, which occurred largely after the Calvert study was published.

Given its publication date, Calvert's *Guatemala, A Nation in Turmoil* is not about democracy or about transitions to democracy. It is rather a critique of Guatemalan politics and history up to that time. Although flawed in some ways, this work reveals some value in its simplicity: it remains unswayed in its analysis by the weight of imported models of democratic transitions. By contrast, the theoretical sophistication of Fauriol and Loser is subtle, almost pernicious in assuming that democracy is on the horizon and that the military is the main force propelling Guate-

mala in that direction. Data that are unresponsive to this notion, like those on quality of life and human rights violations, tend not to be included in *Guatemala's Political Puzzle*. Electoral data are abundant, but they seem to float free of contextual material, other than the imputed historical legacies of authoritarianism and political immaturity.

Susanne Jonas's *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power* has the obvious advantage over Fauriol and Loser's study of a longer historical perspective. But the significant comparison is to be found in the nature of the theoretical approach and the integration of data, not in the added historical perspective. Jonas has been studying and writing about Guatemala since the late 1960s. She is perhaps the only U.S. political scientist studying Guatemala to have used a political economy approach consistently throughout this period. Her early works are thus landmarks against which to compare work by others,³ and her newest work has been eagerly anticipated by scholars interested in Guatemala.

The initial strength of *The Battle for Guatemala* lies in its analytic framework—its structural analysis. Jonas's starting points are the concept of social class and the notion of crisis in the class structure in Guatemala. The term *crisis* is not used with journalistic casualness but as a fundamental concept defined as "the breakdown of social order and structures of domination" (p. 3). As the subtitle of the book makes clear, Jonas is focusing on the crisis of domination in a broader regional and hemispheric context that includes the role of the United States. But the book stresses domestic politics, Guatemalan political culture, ethnic questions, and gender issues. As Jonas notes, this approach contrasts with early dependency theory and its emphasis on the international structure of world capitalism. Rather, this work offers a refined version of dependency theory that integrates the domestic political system into the international context.

The protagonists in *The Battle for Guatemala* are not traditional dependency theory's bourgeoisie and proletariat as pawns of international capitalism. Instead, complex sets of political actors are described as competing for control of the state. These actors reflect social class and class structure, however, not a system of interest groups (à la pluralism) or a set of interacting communities (à la Christian Democracy). Jonas explains, "'Rebels' are not simply those who have taken up arms but also are the unseen hundreds of thousands among Guatemala's 87 percent majority who have refused to accept a fate of poverty and discrimination" (p. 6). Similarly, Jonas uses *death squads* to refer to the entire apparatus that is systematically violating human rights in Guatemala, including those

3. See *Guatemala*, edited by Susanne Jonas and David Tobis (New York: NACLA, 1974); and Susanne Jonas, "Guatemala: Land of Eternal Repression," in *Latin America: The Politics of Dependency*, edited by James Chilcote and Joel Edelstein (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1974).

branches of the state responsible for massive terrorism over the years. Finally, the United States is portrayed not simply as the bully it might have been in the 1950s but as a complex player involved in a variety of ways in the struggle for power in Guatemala.

For all its analytic sophistication and thorough research, *The Battle for Guatemala* remains grounded in the grim reality of political life in Guatemala. For example, a key early question is one that many outside observers have asked: in the face of a recent history of extraordinary repression, how does one explain the resurgence of popular organizations in the 1980s? Whatever the explanation (and it is elusive), the fact is that these popular organizations reappear at the slightest opportunity for them to advance their agenda of moving Guatemala in the direction of social justice and economic fairness. The significance of this fact is the implication for the current model of social domination in Guatemala: there can be no enduring stability nor any "victory" for counterinsurgency democracy. Neoliberal economic policies have not solved Guatemala's problems with liquidity and investment capital and have continued the erosion of the quality of life for the vast majority of Guatemalans.

No easy solutions to this dilemma seem to exist. Reformism led by a progressive national bourgeoisie, perhaps along the lines of the state-led reformism between 1944 and 1954, seems illusory. First of all, the bourgeoisie in Guatemala is not reformist. Second, no political parties seem willing to adopt this model. Even the Socialist Democratic party and other reformists allied with it in electoral coalitions have adopted conservative platforms, a stance that is perhaps understandable given the price these sectors have paid in the past. In sum, a compromise model of socioeconomic development based on a progressive state role seems unlikely in the near future. The hope for such a solution is compelling, but the political force behind it is weak in the face of the neoliberal economic movement.

The absence of an easy solution within the bounds of civil politics implies continuing warfare in Guatemala. Warfare has raged off and on for several decades, with steep costs for the Guatemalan people and to national economic strength. Jonas projects that neither the armed forces nor the insurgent revolutionaries in the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) are likely to win this war in the foreseeable future. Recent steps toward negotiating a settlement, a process reflecting these domestic patterns as well as dramatic international changes in Eastern Europe, mark a possible path to civility. Jonas correctly notes, however, that this path will be successful only to the extent that it deals with the root causes of the national crisis.

Resolving problems at that level has never been easy in Guatemala. Perhaps the total social exhaustion threatening society will lead to greater success than has been produced by past efforts at establishing new basic political agreements. Jonas's conclusions are realistic and prob-

ably accurate but not very encouraging. Conditions have worsened throughout the society, and new attitudes have complicated the agenda in a sense: today there are not only basic economic and political questions to resolve but gender issues as well, not to mention consciousness of the most fundamental questions of Indian ethnicity in a multicultural nation.

In a sense, both the broader studies under review here eventually focus on the outcomes of the politics they are studying. Fauriol and Loser's *Guatemala's Political Puzzle* perceives a transition to democracy resulting, albeit one that will be slow in coming. Jonas foresees a different picture: the model Guatemala has adopted has not solved, and perhaps cannot solve, the problems that lead to its own instability. The result is a distinctly nondemocratic tendency on the part of the elites, with the energies promoting democracy coming from the popular sectors of society. A second result is the probability of continuing noncivil politics, despite institutions that are seemingly democratic.

Jonas stresses the impact of past events on political institutions and social justice and outlines the potential for additional struggle, and hence noncivil politics. The works by Carmack and Goldston come more quickly, and with a narrower focus, to the question of the results of recent political events in Guatemala.

Goldston's *Shattered Hope: Guatemalan Workers and the Promise of Democracy* studies the outcomes that reflect the quality of life in the workplace in Guatemala. In free societies like liberal capitalist democracies, a fundamental part of daily life is one's work. The workplace matters not only for the spiritual dimensions of social contact and community building but for more prosaic reasons. In individualistic societies like those ordained by the architecture of capitalism, a cash income is the sine qua non of survival. Thus no overall analysis of Guatemalan democracy can be complete without rigorous study of the impact of recent institutional changes on the working sectors of society.

Goldston's volume covers this aspect thoroughly, with chapters on urban labor, rural labor, different kinds of labor movements, government responses to petitions for legalizing labor organizations, the quality of the human rights climate in this area of social life, and related topics. It is notable that Goldston studies this subject matter from both sides of the relationship, within the architecture of liberal democracy. His book is not a revolutionary tract but a thorough analysis of the premises and results that emerged from the democratic institutions themselves. For example, chapters address questions of legal and constitutional enforcement. From the workers' perspective, the questions revolve around the results of work and organizing: is life (measured in various ways in this book) improving? Are conditions changing for the better? Are human rights improving under constitutional democracy?

Shattered Hope is as thorough a work on this topic as has been seen

recently. Acknowledging the complexity of modern social life, the data show that the answers to the questions posed above are not simple. Some improvements have emerged, along with some declines. This mixture is effectively presented in discussions with leaders of popular organizations, who still fear possible repression but see conditions improved enough since the 1985 election to allow organizing to resume. As Goldston notes, however, the optimism from the period from 1986 to 1988 must be tempered by the increasing human rights violations that followed the attempted military coups in 1988 and 1989. Although the gains and losses in each dimension are complicated, the net is negative. In some cases, life is simply worse. In others, few of the improvements expected under a democratic regime have been realized.

Harvest of Violence: The Maya Indians and the Guatemalan Crisis, the work edited by Robert Carmack, carries this mode of analysis further. While Jonas and Fauriol and Loser are concerned about the stability of political institutions and Goldston is concerned about the prospects for labor, Carmack and his collaborators focus on the question of cultural survival for the Indian population of Guatemala.

Carmack's introduction to this extraordinary volume summarizes the basic socioeconomic and political situation, placing it in the context of U.S. policy. The combined policy of various U.S. administrations has contributed to the historic persistence of these conditions. Moreover, simplistic U.S. analyses of the root causes of conflict in Guatemala have prescribed solutions that have exacerbated these conditions. As many scholars have concluded (including Jonas, Barry, and Calvert), the resulting policy package has undermined stability in Guatemala even though stability has been the stated goal.

Then why single out *Harvest of Violence* when so many others have covered similar territory? There are two reasons. The first is that this volume goes beyond standard analysis. As editor Carmack notes in his introduction, "We are not dealing with idle semantic games. . . . [A]nswers . . . to these questions weigh heavily on the lives of millions of Central Americans" (p. xi).

The second reason is the legitimacy and authority of this set of authors, all of whom have conducted field research over extended time periods in single localities in Guatemala. As a result, they can rely on historical perspective, trusted respondents, and the ability to compare conditions before and after. Moreover, as respected academic scholars, they have the weight of years (more than forty in a couple of cases) of professional achievement supporting their observations, methods, and conclusions. *Harvest of Violence* speaks to the human costs in Guatemala of the simplistic package of analysis cum policy and speaks to this tragedy with unique authority. *Harvest of Violence* is perhaps the most legitimate scholarly source for a treatment that combines theoretical sophistication,

a focus on nontrivial outcomes, and accurate data, all buttressed by the legitimate credentials of the contributors.

Their “methods” will be familiar to those trained in traditional anthropology: field study over long periods, analysis and interpretation of responses from trusted respondents, and painstaking recording of small details from which observable patterns eventually emerge. What are the observations, the “data”? One need read no further than Carmack’s contribution on the roots, extent, and consequences of the violence in Santa Cruz del Quiché, the historic center of the Quiché nation. Carmack writes with bitter passion about the cruel massacres of Indian villages and selective assassinations of friends and associates. As with many of the chapters in this volume, his reporting conveys a strong sense of involvement and feeling—indeed, love is not too strong a word—for the subject under study.

Although I do not wish to convey a blanket endorsement of passionate research, in my view, the levels of involvement and field experience evident in Carmack’s work are too rare in social science writing. Scholars working on Central America are well aware of polemics inspired by ideology that masquerade as objective social science. But it bears repeating that the contributors to *Harvest of Violence* are unique in their combined credentials as credible, seasoned, and professionally respected scholars. In the concluding chapter, Richard Adams states succinctly, “for those familiar with Central America and Guatemala, these chapters speak for themselves” (p. 277).

With the data on the sources and the extent of violence clearly established, the phrase “harvest of violence” takes on additional significance. Each chapter documents the effects of political violence on the communities studied and on the families within them: death, disruption, eradication of entire hamlets, militarization of rural areas, creation of conflict within communities, the unleashing of forces that threaten basic cultural structures, and ultimately the Mayan diaspora.

In the concluding chapter, Adams raises the level of analysis to a more abstract level, proceeding in two ways. He notes first that the roots of violence in Guatemala are neither capricious nor random: “These tragic processes grew out of events; the seeds were already present. . . . [T]hese cases are the substance of Guatemalan society and history. They are not unusual or exceptional; rather, they illustrate processes fundamental in the area” (p. 277). Violence has emerged neither from aberrant individuals nor from imported ideologies, although both may well be part of the equation of the moment. Rather, violence has arisen from the structure of Guatemalan history.

Adams places Guatemalan violence in the context of the violence of the Spanish Conquest and examples like the Salvadoran *matanza* of the early 1930s. “Model villages” of the 1980s are compared to the conquest practice of forced removal of villagers to new communities in order to

control rural populations and ensure adequate cheap labor for the conquistadores (p. 288). Forced labor in civil patrols and model villages are compared with forced labor provisions that existed until the 1944 October Revolution that ushered in the progressive era of Juan José Arévalo (p. 278). The historic pattern becomes clear in Adams's discussion of several factors: first, the inherent competition for basic resources by the native population and the *ladinos*; second, the growth of Indian population beyond the resource base available; third, the fact that Indian rights merit little consideration under national law; fourth, the advantages that *ladinos* reap from favorable connections at higher political levels; and finally, the willingness of the *ladinos* to exterminate Indians and others who refuse to accept the preceding assumptions (p. 278).

Given these patterns, the consequences of the recent wave of violence are especially poignant. Among them is the willingness of the Guatemalan army to assume that all Indians, as if by definition, were subversive. This assumption translated into massive repression that ignored any pretense at civilized behavior. Beyond the massive physical destruction, another consequence has been the ongoing threat to the survival of Guatemala's Indian cultures. A combination of trends are destroying communities and cultures: emigration, dislocation and destruction, a persistent "culture of fear" fanned by continuing militarization of rural areas, and disruption of economic patterns. As Adams concludes, new cultures will emerge and new communities will be constructed (pp. 288–91). But all the violence has not resolved the underlying social and economic problems reflected in the historical patterns that he describes. Thus one outcome of this harvest of violence is the seeds of the next conflict. As so many other scholars have concluded, Guatemala's future prospects are bleak.

It is this pessimism, this sense of futility and despair, that pervades the conclusions of many works on Guatemalan politics. The prevailing sentiment seems to be that Guatemala has been used as some sort of laboratory at the edge of the world political economy, a place where exploitation is tolerated and structures are reinforced to maintain oppression—sometimes by cynically using the language of democratic transitions, equality, and human rights. Yet most observers also acknowledge the extraordinary resilience and optimism of the Guatemalan people themselves. Seasoned observers ask, how can this be? On one level, the contest in Guatemala is nothing less than a struggle of the human spirit against social structures seeking to condemn people to degradation. On another, it is a daily struggle for food and dignity against overwhelming odds.

The last three works reviewed here, those by Jonas and Goldston and that edited by Carmack, portray this struggle in various ways because they focus on different aspects of social life. All the authors and contributors are torn between respectful awe for the Guatemalan people and

anger at the structures that oppress them and the political actors who reinforce these structures. All these scholars are hopeful about Guatemala's future but are also sanguine about the limits on their optimism. All correctly acknowledge the debt that we in the developed world owe to the struggling majority of Guatemalans who are leading the fight against the antidemocratic forces there. And all also acknowledge the grisly staying power of the repressors.