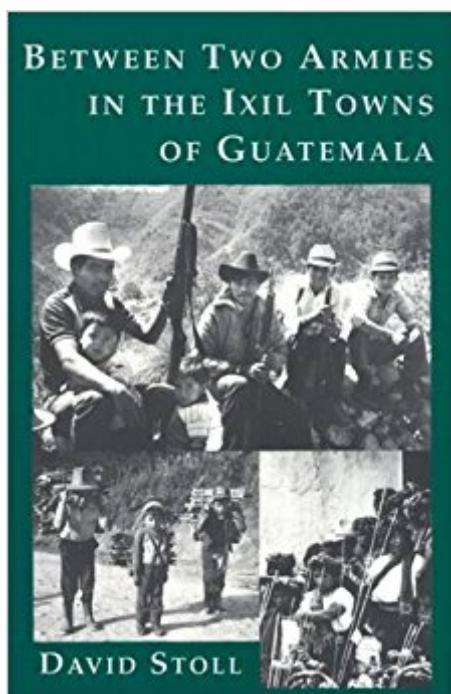


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Between Two Armies In The Ixil Towns Of Guatemala



Synopsis

Challenging the views of human rights activists, Stoll argues that the Ixils who supported Guatemalan rebels in the early 1980's did so because they were caught in the crossfire between the guerillas and the army, not because revolutionary violence expressed community aspirations.

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Customer Reviews

Challenging the views of human rights activists, Stoll argues that the Ixils who supported Guatemalan rebels in the early 1980's did so because they were caught in the crossfire between the guerillas and the army, not because revolutionary violence expressed community aspirations.

A well researched and timely analysis of the role both the Guatemalan Government and guerilla groups terrorized and killed so many of the Maya population in the Ixil regional of Quiche in the highlands of Guatemala. The research contradicted the popularly held belief that all the human rights abuses were perpetrated by the Guatemalan military--although it also provided details on what those abuses were including an excellent profile of former President Rios Montt who eventually was tried and found guilty of many of those abuses. The author also provide valuable information about how the violence impacted religious groups in the area--and the eventual accelerated growth of Evangelical Christian churches. Many of the trends and lessons learned by the research are applicable to many of the Maya dominated regions of the Guatemalan highlands. The research included many graphs and maps which were very helpful. The information

was very timely for me as I revised several chapters of my soon to be published memoir, "Different Latitudes: My Life in the Peace Corps and Beyond" because although I've worked in and traveled to Guatemala many times over the last 40 plus years --including the Ixil Triangle which is the focus of the book--I always assumed that the military was the source of all the violence but that was not the case. Reading this book was like peeling an onion to a better understanding of the very complex history of violence, poverty and racism in Guatemala.

This is such an interesting book for anyone who is interested in Guatemala.

In the early 1990's, I prepared political asylum petitions for numerous Mayan Indians that had fled the killing grounds of Guatemala. The single thing that surprised me most, were their stories of atrocities committed by the Guerrillas. I had thought the "Army of the Poor" were fighting on behalf of the Mayan Indians against the Army and Guatemalan State. However, many of the stories I heard had to deal more with communal land struggles than Revolution against the State. I soon realized that the situation was vastly more complicated than I had thought. Soon after the worst of the killings were over, the anthropologist David Stoll was doing fieldwork in one of the areas most devastated during the War. What he found is a more nuanced story than many of the accounts outsiders were hearing during this time period. By looking at revolution and counter-insurgency on a village by village, hamlet by hamlet basis, Stoll paints an extraordinary complicated picture of an Indian peasantry caught between a brutal Army and its own violent history of intercommunal conflict. More than any other type of warfare, revolution and counter-insurgency lends itself to the analysis of micro-history. This book is an extraordinary account of a War that devastated Guatemala's indigenous people. David Stoll is to be commended for his personal bravery in gathering the local details of the War and his commitment to the unvarnished truth. One has to wonder how many more years it will take for the first anthropologists to be doing this same work in Iraq. Highly recommended.

I have spent the past several years of my life living and working in the Ixil region of Guatemala. During this time I have traveled to nearly all the places described in this book. I HAVE lived and worked with many former guerrillas and members of the "comunidades en resistencia" and I found Stoll's analysis of the Ixil region and its recent history to be both enlightening and accurate. His conclusions concerning the nature of the armed conflict in this region correspond very closely to my own experiences interacting with the people here. Those who criticize Stoll are generally people

who have only a very superficial knowledge of Guatemalan reality or those who try manipulate the country's history to confirm their own political fantasies of third world "noble savages" carrying out popular utopian revolutions. The only criticism I would offer to Stoll is that he should have been much more vocal in his denunciations of the army's disgusting genocidal campaign against the Ixiles and the other indigenous peoples of Guatemala. By characterizing the army's campaign of mass murder as a simple reaction to a perceived threat, Stoll almost sounds as if he is excusing or rationalizing the unthinkable acts of this most horrible national institution.

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