

convincing explanation for the squabbling between the head of the Armed Forces and the Defence Minister, General Carlos Mendoza. It remains unclear whether Mendoza's conduct, who replaced Gutiérrez in the "Junta of National Salvation" soon before announcing his retrial and condemning the coup, was part of a strategy of the higher command to neutralize the insurgency or a personal act of treason.

Still, Gerlach's book offers an interesting overview of the political events in Ecuador at the turn of millennium. One can learn a great deal from its remarkably detailed summary of the last three years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century about a country that has turned into a real laboratory for the analysis of political reforms.

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CHARLES BERGQUIST, RICARDO PEÑARANDA, AND GONZALO SÁNCHEZ, (eds.): *Violence in Colombia 1990-2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001.

Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda and Gonzalo Sánchez have edited another book dealing with violence in Colombia. Their previous effort, *Violence in Colombia: The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective*, was published in 1992 and offered a broad, sweeping, fourteen-chapter historical narrative of Colombia's violence. Their most recent work, published as *Violence in Colombia 1990-2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace* (2001), focuses on Colombian violence in the final decade of the twentieth century. Readers will notice that many of the questions, themes and problems presented in the 1992 volume remain relatively unchanged and unanswered nine years later. The most recent volume places far greater emphasis on Constitutional questions (not surprising, given that Colombians, with great fanfare, re-wrote their Constitution in 1991) and paramilitary organization/mayhem, which has played a compelling role in the more recent violence, especially concerning questions of human rights, land consolidation and forced internal migration.

*Violence in Colombia 1990-2000* is organized in ten chapters, five of which have been previously published in Spanish between 1992 and 1998. Five of the essays are original contributions. The translation work, from Spanish to English, is careful and admirable. But the volume is somewhat uneven, and the book is at its best when providing specific, clear examples and prose, which is the case in Donny Meertens' outstanding work, "Victims and Survivors of War in Colombia: Three Views of Gender Relations." Professor Meertens' essay explores gender issues and gendered coping mechanisms within a violent social fabric.

She offers direct testimony, based on her own field work and authoritative position as an anthropologist who has dedicated many years to research and writing on violence and gender in Colombia. Luis Alberto Restrepo's essay on Human Rights is thoughtful, clearly written and even-handed, in that he levels criticism at all of the "actors" who participate in, or profit from, violence in any way. Restrepo, a respected philosopher and social scientist in Bogotá, does not provide details from the battlefield; rather, he reflects passionately on the theoretical dimension of Colombian human rights, connecting the Colombian situation to world-wide human rights concerns. Professor Restrepo cites Rousseau and Kant rather than the ordinary Colombian citizens who have become victim and/or aggressor in an ongoing civil war; the author's strategy is prudent given that scholars and professors have been murdered for expressing their views directly, including Jesús Bejarano, the historian and peace advocate who was murdered in 1999 outside his classroom at the National University in Bogotá. The most troubling essay in the collection is by Mauricio Reina, "Drug Trafficking and the National Economy," which was published in 1996 during the administration of disgraced president Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) and reflects outdated research and bibliography, some of it from the mid-1980s. Research and writing on the impact of the Colombian drug trade changes with such frequency, and the statistics used are so nebulous and unreliable, that editors must try to obtain the most up to date scholarship available, and Reina's essay, I am afraid, does not meet that criterion.

The volume would have benefited from more careful attention to detail by the editors. Taken alone, the book confuses the uninitiated reader because it really *does* deal with Colombian violence during a ten-year period. That, in itself, is a problematic premise given that the historic roots of Colombia's contemporary violence date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or perhaps back to the colonial period. Despite Gonzalo Sánchez's laudable attempt at a grounding, introductory essay, the book tends to drift off in a series of different directions, all related to Colombia's violence in the 1990s, but without offering a clear framework of analysis, or sound historic structure. Charles Bergquist's closing essay offers an interesting comparison between economic and political processes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Colombia; the essay is a thoughtful, appropriate way to conclude the text. Also of concern is the book's structure: rather than relying on short "abstracts" to introduce each essay, the editors might have simply divided the book up into three, three-chapter segments (with Bergquist's concluding essay standing alone), and offered a short, 1000 word essay at the beginning of each of the three "parts." These essays would guide the reader and explain how individual chapters fit together, how they reflect political and social conditions during the period in which they were written, and

how they mirror significant patterns in Colombia's recent history.

The book would also have benefited from including the work of journalists, artists, religious leaders, or perhaps novelists who have dealt with Colombia's violence from their perspective disciplines or areas of interest. Too often, we rely too heavily on the advice and admonitions of social scientists that work and teach at leading universities. All of the authors in *Violence in Colombia* are social scientists (except Rodrigo Uprimny, who is a professor of law), and half of the authors are social scientists from the National University in Bogotá. Given the complexity of "the violence" in Colombia, it seems that new approaches from non-traditional alliances could provide new questions and creative dialogue on Colombia's violence.

Seventy five pages of the book are dedicated to documents, appendix and glossary; these sections are extremely useful, and informative in their own right. The documents section contains texts on the Constitution of 1991, dialogue between Colombian intellectuals and *guerrilla* leaders, and excerpts from a 1999 human rights report from Human Rights Watch. These documents help the reader appreciate the complexity of the contemporary Colombian crisis, and challenge students to continue research, study and reflection on the themes presented in the book.

Overall, *Violence in Colombia 1990-2000* is a useful text that will be read by students and scholars alike to help them navigate the often terrible terrain of Colombia's contemporary, complex social and political crises. This book works best when read in tandem with the editors' 1992 collection, *Violence in Colombia: The Contemporary Crisis in Historical Perspective*. The editors, though, should be commended for their efforts in bringing outstanding scholarship from Colombia to the attention of an English language audience. The topic — the devastating, transformative effects of violence in and on society— is universal and urgent.

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MARY ROLDÁN: *Blood and Fire. La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946-1953*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. (*A sangre y fuego. La Violencia en Antioquia, 1946-1953*. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, Banco de la República, 2003).

Este libro trata sobre la Violencia en Antioquia, un *departamento* (provincia) en el noroccidente de Colombia, cuya capital es Medellín. La Violencia, una