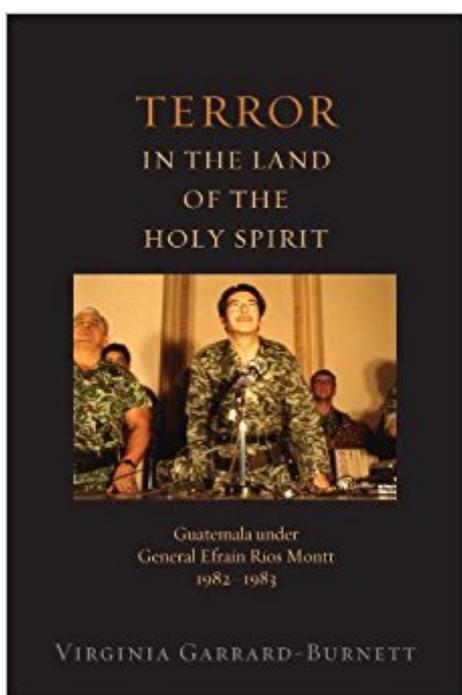


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# Terror In The Land Of The Holy Spirit: Guatemala Under General Efraim Rios Montt 1982-1983 (Religion And Global Politics)



## Synopsis

"Waging a counterinsurgency war and justified by claims of 'an agreement between Guatemala and God,' Guatemala's Evangelical Protestant military dictator General Ríos Montt incited a Mayan holocaust: over just 17 months, some 86,000 mostly Mayan civilians were murdered. Virginia Garrard-Burnett dives into the horrifying, bewildering murk of this episode, the Western hemisphere's worst twentieth-century human rights atrocity. She has delivered the most lucid historical account and analysis we yet possess of what happened and how, of the cultural complexities, personalities, and local and international politics that made this tragedy.

Garrard-Burnett asks the hard questions and never flinches from the least comforting answers. Beautifully, movingly, and clearly written and argued, this is a necessary and indispensable book."--Francisco Goldman, author of *The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop?*"Virginia Garrard-Burnett's *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit* is impressively researched and argued, providing the first full examination of the religious dimensions of *la violencia* - a period of extreme political repression that overwhelmed Guatemala in the 1980s. Garrard-Burnett excavates the myriad ways Christian evangelical imagery and ideals saturated political and ethical discourse that scholars usually treat as secular. This book is one of the finest contributions to our understanding of the violence of the late Cold War period, not just in Guatemala but throughout Latin America."--Greg Grandin, Professor of History, New York University Drawing on newly-available primary sources including guerrilla documents, evangelical pamphlets, speech transcripts, and declassified US government records, Virginia Garrard-Burnett provides a fine-grained picture of what happened during the rule of Guatemalan president-by-coup Efraín Ríos Montt. She suggests that three decades of war engendered an ideology of violence that cut not only vertically, but also horizontally, across class, cultures, communities, religions, and even families. The book examines the causality and effects of the ideology of violence, but it also explores the long *durée* of Guatemalan history between 1954 and the late 1970s that made such an ideology possible. More significantly, she contends that self-interest, willful ignorance, and distraction permitted the human rights tragedies within Guatemala to take place without challenge from the outside world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In a country still torn over the war by polarizing accusations amplified by righteous self-exculpation, Garrard-Burnett listens carefully to as many sides as her sources allow-the Left, the Right, Catholic activists, evangelicals, the US embassy-to conclude that states turn genocidal, not just because they can, but because both perpetrators and public come to see their self-preservation, if not salvation, at stake. In helping us understand better that self-preservation, this book also speaks with respect-and hope-to the survivors. We should all be listening carefully." --John Watanabe, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Dartmouth College

"This is a careful narrative and sober analysis of Mott's seventeenth-month regime in Guatemala."--Religious Studies Review

Virginia Garrard-Burnett's examination of General Efraín Ríos Montt is one of the best available historical-political analyses of Guatemala's brutal armed conflict...Garrard-Burnett is arguably one of the most important contemporary historians of Protestantism in Latin America. In this slim volume, she not only demonstrates her deep and nuanced understanding of the evangelical movement in Guatemala but also explains the dynamics and contours of the political crisis that brought Ríos Montt to power in 1982."--American Historical Review

This work secures a solid place among some of the dominant works in modern Latin American historiography, particularly in its positioning within the field of subaltern studies. While remaining sensitive to the voice and agency of the victims of the genocide, Garrard-Burnett relies heavily on truth commission reports to provide a clear analysis of the influences of evangelical rhetoric that saturated Guatemala's violent struggles of the late Cold War. This useful, insightful work deserves a wide reading among students and specialists alike."--Hispanic American Historical Review

Professor of History and Religious Studies, UT-Austin

Great book... Gives vital information about the period of Rios Montt in Guatemala... very scholarly and careful in its analysis.

The author writes with a keen grasp of the facts of Guatemala's civil war, but more than that she shows great insight into the social, psychological and political aspects of the conflict. She has covered ground which no other writer on this subject has covered or tried to cover. For these reasons the book is perhaps better suited to scholars of the conflict than lay persons.

Professor Garrard-Burnett's book on Guatemalan dictator Brig. Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt, who ruled Guatemala from 1982-1983, is an essential read for anyone who wishes to understand the chronology and complexities of Guatemala's internal war, which claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Guatemalans. Professor Garrard's account of Ríos Montt's reign of terror explains the synergy between the Protestant church and the military both clearly and thoroughly. Refreshingly, Professor Garrard does not yield to ideological screed or agit-prop; instead she draws on hundreds of examples, both anecdotal and scholarly, to make her point. This one is worth the money.

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