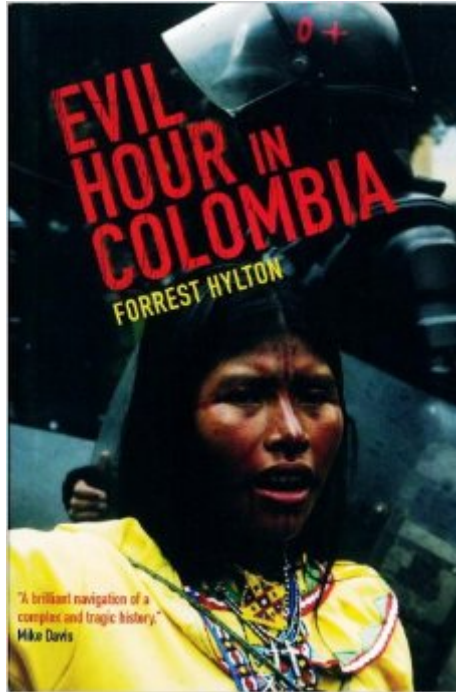


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Evil Hour In Colombia



Synopsis

In the English-speaking world, Colombia is the least understood of Latin American countries. Its human tragedy is generally ignored or exploited for political ends. In this work, Forrest Hylton, who lives and works in Colombia, explores its history of 150 years of political conflict, characterized by radical-popular mobilization and reactionary repression. *Evil Hour in Colombia* shows how patterns of political conflict, from the mid-nineteenth century to today's guerilla narco-traffickers and paramilitaries, explain the wear currently destroying Colombian lives, property, communities and territory. In doing so, it traces how Colombia's "coffee capitalism" gave way to the cattle and cocaine republic of the 1980s, and how land, wealth, and political power have been steadily accumulated by the light-skinned top of the social pyramid through a brutal combination of terror, expropriation, and exploitation.

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Customer Reviews

As someone who lives in Colombia, I've spent countless conversations with friends and colleagues talking about this country's civil war. The conversation often turns to whether there will ever be a peaceful end to this nightmare of the longest running civil war in the Western Hemisphere. In trying to find an "out," the intellectual exercise inevitably evolves into a discussion about the "true" origins of the war. Why this war? Why this country? With this excellent book, I feel like I've come as close as possible to "definitive" answers. The epigraph to Chapter 3, quoting Eric Hobsbawm, briefly sums part of the argument convincingly laid out by Hylton, as to the sources of the war: "I discovered a

country (Colombia) in which the failure to make a social revolution had made violence the constant, universal, and omnipresent core of public life." The other part of Hylton's argument explains why "social revolution" in Colombia stumbled, or rather (to continue the metaphor) he describes that it didn't stumble as much as it was tripped. The author skillfully traces how this caused a violent pendulum swing in Colombian history. In the Introduction, Hylton writes, "One effect of the long-term use of political terror in Colombia and elsewhere has been to erase the memory of the political alternatives to which terror responded." Indeed, one of the most compelling elements of the book is that it rescues from oblivion the recurring moments in the country's history marked by radical-popular mobilization and the consequent--if, sometimes limited--reforms.

Evil Hour in Colombia unravels the complicated dynamic of Colombia's decades long civil war, and it is must reading for anyone interested in understanding the violent social and political landscape of this war-torn country. Spearheaded by newly rich drug lords and their paramilitary henchmen, Colombia has experienced a massive counter-agrarian reform, and it has the second largest internally displaced population in the world. Moreover, an impunity-powered campaign of terror against trade unionists, human rights activists, journalists, and peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders have left thousands dead and the perpetrators -mostly among the right-wing security forces and allied government security forces--free to continue terrorizing and dispossessing innocent people. The book demonstrates how, in recent years, the right-wing government of Colombian president Álvaro Uribe Vélez, flush with massive infusions of U.S. military assistance and support from the Bush administration, has transformed the country into a model counterinsurgent "democracy," where regular elections accompany widespread state terror, and where officially imposed impunity legitimizes the violent concentration of wealth and power. As a result, Colombia in the early 21st century is evolving into a neoliberal paradise with a growing supply of dispossessed workers, unaccountable security forces available to suppress opposition, and a government opposed to redistributive policies and supportive of a vicious brand of unregulated capitalism. Yet the roots of the human tragedy unfolding in Colombia go much deeper than the present moment.

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