tacts may have been more devastating because no defense yet existed to Euroasiatic diseases. Yet based on *Indian Population Decline*, there is little evidence that mission populations in the Pimería Alta and Baja California ever developed successful immunities to measles and smallpox, even many decades after the initial native contact with Europeans. An intriguing question remains: if an earlier demographic collapse took place in Alta California, then why were the mission communities relatively insulated from these later epidemics? Clearly, Alta California is a special case that will require future study.

In sum, there is much to recommend in *Indian Population Decline* and *Indians, Franciscans, and Spanish Colonization.* Jackson and Castillo present detailed analyses of the vital rates and demographic patterns of mission communities in three regions of western North America. The books are well written, the demographic analyses detailed and comprehensible, and the interpretations provocative. ■

Missionaries and Foreign Agents

DAVID STOLL
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon, Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil. Gerard Colby with Charlotte Dennett. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. 960 pp.

In the 1970s an organization called the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) came under furious assault from Mexico to Bolivia. A host of opponents—including nationalists of all descriptions, anthropologists, Catholic missionaries, and indigenous activists—demanded its expulsion. Operating in more than 700 languages around the world, usually under contract to governments and universities, the U.S.-based institute was the single largest source of descriptive data for the linguistics profession. In the Amazon, it built a remarkable network of bases, outposts, and bilingual schools, tied together by the most reliable flight service in the region. But now its mainly North American members were accused of working for U.S. oil companies, destroying indigenous cultures, and spying for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Looking into the controversies, I concluded that the SIL was not just a North American scapegoat for internal colonialism, although that was part of the uproar. Unfortunately, the SIL itself had contributed to the confusion over its work. As a matter of policy, the group had long obfuscated the fact that aside from being a linguistic research organization, it was also an evangelical Protestant mission.

The ploy originated in the 1930s, when the organization's founder, William Cameron Townsend, evaded anticlerical legislation in Mexico by introducing his small band of Bible translators as linguists. Joint incorporation followed; the SIL dealt with contracting governments, and the Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT) dealt with the fundamentalist churches that provided most of the funding. The membership rolls of the two organizations were identical, but Wycliffe vowed to plant churches in every language it entered while the SIL denied that it was a religious mission. In the Amazon, the dual identity allowed SIL/WBT to befuddle its Catholic rivals long enough to make itself useful to generals and cabinet ministers, who would henceforth defend it from enemies. Besides putting Catholic bishops in their place, governments learned to rely on well-financed foreign linguists rather than go to the expense of developing their own national expertise.

The organization's clever presentations backfired in the 1970s, when CIA scandals heightened suspicion of North Americans. If the linguists were really evangelical missionaries, opponents reasoned, then maybe evangelism was a cover for truly nefarious activities. The hapless missionary linguists were accused of everything from sterilizing indigenous women to mining uranium. The governments of Colombia and Peru announced they were ending their contracts with the SIL, only to reverse themselves after U.S. embassies and military officers intervened. Eventually the SIL lost its government contracts in Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, and Panama, but members continue operating there and in some 40 other countries to this day.

One of the journalists attracted by the controversies was Jerry Colby, author of a book about the DuPont family called *Behind the Nylon Curtain.* A tireless investigator of corporate intrigue, Colby and his partner, Charlotte Dennett, saw more than coincidence in the overlapping distribution of mining concessions and SIL outposts. Perhaps the missionary linguists really were part of a conspiracy.

The result, after 18 years of research, is a gargantuan exposé of corporate imperialism revolving around Nelson Rockefeller, SIL founder Cameron Townsend, and the colonization of the Amazon. Colby and Dennett claim to have found half a century of systemic connections between the Rockefeller fam-

ily's quest for profits, U.S. foreign policy, and the SIL, mediated through Nelson Rockefeller's long career of public service and his family's wide-ranging philanthropies. To make their case, the authors present a succession of business deals, coups d'état, and genocides of Amazonian tribes, punctuated by expeditions to New Mexico, India, Irian Jaya, Vietnam, and the Congo, usually to track down an alliance between investors, missionaries, and spies.

Having inspected a staggering number of archives, the authors are able to demonstrate that virtually everyone in anthropology and missionary work has at one time or another been connected to the Rockefeller empire, including, for the record, Edward Sapir, John Collier, Frank Tannenbaum, Charles Wagley, Sol Tax, Allan Holmberg, Richard Evans Schultes, Nicole Maxwell, and the National Council of Churches. This is one expression of the postmodern era in which all that is solid does not melt into air because it is all connected to the Rockefellers.

Oddly, the authors never found the missing link between their two epic figures, Nelson Rockefeller and Cameron Townsend. One problem is that the Rockefellers were benefactors of mainline Protestants, not fundamentalists, with whom they had little patience. When Townsend tried to lobby the Rockefellers in 1938 to urge them to accept the Mexican government's expropriation of their oil wells, he could not get past the door. Eventually the authors found a grant proposal that the SIL submitted to a family charity but that was turned down.

Without evidence that Nelson Rockefeller and Cameron Townsend ever communicated with each other, the question arises: If the SIL was so strategic to the Rockefellers, why did it not join the long and public roster of groups benefiting from Rockefeller philanthropy? With only a few exceptions, the Christian businessmen supporting the SIL's work were not the same investors who presumably benefited from its work near their properties. If the SIL's corporate benefactors tended to be from the Bible Belt, its corporate neighbors tended to be from the religiously indifferent northeastern United States.

Refusing to be defeated, Colby and Dennett shifted their search to political connections. Here they bring in fascinating figures like Colonel J. C. King, a CIA officer who ran the Amazon Natural Drug Company. What their gallery of midcentury expansionists provides is a broad field of vision, demonstrating how diverse national and transnational interests with their own agendas converged in the Amazonian rain forest. But even if the many visitors at SIL bases included some thinly disguised Green Berets, these and other rogues tend to have clearer connections to Nelson Rockefeller, U.S. foreign policy, or the CIA than to the SIL.

What the authors' findings do suggest is that if the Rockefellers had shown any interest, Cameron Townsend would have been all too happy to work with them. Adding to the documentation I found in the 1970s, particularly in an archive that the SIL generously made available, Colby and Dennett demonstrate Townsend's eagerness to pitch his missionaries to any politician, dictator, or businessman who could help them gain access to an indigenous population. This included the U.S. government, which at strategic moments seems to have helped the SIL sign contracts with the governments of the Philippines, South Vietnam, and Colombia.

Using his ties with Latin American officials to convince North American officials of his importance, and vice versa, Townsend inserted his missionaries squarely into the conquest of the Amazon and the struggle against Communism. The authors flesh out some embarrassing moments in the SIL's political history, including how Townsend took advantage of the Rockefeller-funded networks of *indigenismo* to advance his followers, some of whom were rather sectarian fundamentalists, as a scientific institution. Then there is the SIL's first flight director, hired from a U.S. military mission at the end of World War II, who went on to work for the Helio-Courier Aircraft Corporation and the CIA in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Townsend's opportunism placed his missionaries, not to mention the indigenous groups they were trying to help, in some awkward situations. To protect its government contracts, the SIL adopted the policy of never criticizing host governments, no matter how they were treating the population under their control. Still, it must be acknowledged that the docile attitude of SIL missionaries was not necessarily a bad thing. By keeping their mouths shut, they could sometimes give hard-pressed native people medicine and schools they would otherwise not have had, not to mention the Bible translations that some have appreciated.

The law of unintended consequences works both ways. Consider the religious genealogy of the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas, which can be traced back to the challenge that the SIL's Mayan converts posed to a still-colonial Catholic Church, forcing it to experiment with what became liberation theology. In other cases, events could have taken an even worse turn without the missionary linguists. Consider the Huaorani in Ecuador, whom the SIL pacified just ahead of advancing oil teams—and who otherwise could easily have been bombed by the national air force.

Now that Colby and Dennett have published their findings, the SIL will doubtless feel that it is the victim of innuendo. Certainly it is the object of hyperbole.

The authors acknowledge the sincerity of the SIL's missionary vocation, but what remains of their original conspiracy hypothesis is a dense web of accurate, but essentially paranoid, associations. These will lead some readers to conclude that SIL missionaries really are CIA agents and willing accomplices to genocide, an impression that would have been dispelled if the authors had defined their task as burrowing into the contradictions and agonies of particular situations.

A characteristic weakness of power-structure research is that it turns everything into a function of deals between powerful white males. The authors footnote and qualify key assertions with care, but their approach can magnify the significance of what was just a lost missionary patrol. Hence Colby and Dennett seem to assume that SIL's presence is always strategic, contrary to the many instances of members investing decades in stubborn villages without achieving much influence. Maps detail SIL's occupation of indigenous groups next to other maps of mining concessions, even when the two seem to show rather little overlap, aside from the problem of whether association reflects causality.

Thy Will Be Done must be interpreted with care. But the authors' evocation of what Nelson Rockefeller meant to the occupation of the Amazon is quite a contribution. They also do an extraordinary job of placing the SIL's expansion in political context. Particularly in this era of anthropological introspection, it is inspiring to see that someone still takes a large missionary organization seriously as an instance of power. Hopefully, Colby and Dennett's work will be mentioned at the next anthropology meetings when someone tries to reduce anthropological criticism of missionary work to sibling rivalry. ■

Facing Threats: Studies of the Tropical Forest

BENJAMIN ORLOVE
University of California, Davis

The Social Causes of Environmental Destruction in Latin America. Michael Painter and William Durham, eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995. 275 pp.

Prophets of Agroforestry: Guarani Communities and Commercial Gathering. Richard Reed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. 264 pp.

Naturaleza y ecología humana en el neotropico. Dieter Heinen, José San José, and Hortensia Caballero Arias, eds. Caracas, Venezuela: Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas, 1995. 426 pp.

The word *threat* appears frequently in the discussion of Latin America, particularly for the tropical areas that have attracted increasing attention in recent years. Newspaper and magazine articles, books, television programs, and other popular media often focus on the threatened objects: plant and animal species threatened with extinction, rain forests threatened with disappearance, and Indians threatened with cultural or physical destruction. Occasionally the threatening objects appear as well: the resource-hungry world economy, misguided development schemes, corrupt officials. The public concern for these threats draws on the attachment to these distant objects and also on a more immediate sense of personal vulnerability in the increasingly globalized world, in which the end of the cold war has replaced the one big clear threat of nuclear war with many smaller, uncertain threats.

To the often hasty and muddled discussion of these tropical portions of Latin America, these three recent books bring considerable information, some important insights, and occasional suggestions for countering these threats. Painter and Durham's volume contains six case studies of regions within Latin American countries in which deforestation is progressing rapidly. The authors in this edited volume argue against the view that the major causes of this destruction are population pressure and the demand for resources from a capitalist international order. They propose instead a political ecology framework that emphasizes social, political, and economic factors within the Latin American nations, especially the unequal distribution of wealth and power that allows the rich to make quick profits from the clearing of forests while driving the poor from economic activities with low environmental impacts, such as subsistence agriculture, to more destructive ones, such as frontier colonization.

Edelman demonstrates that the clearing of extensive portions of forest in Costa Rica cannot be adequately explained by the "hamburger thesis," the view that demand for cheap, low-quality beef by the North American fast-food industry caused cattle ranching to expand, leading to the conversion of forest to pasture. Instead, he shows the ways that the powerful cattle-raising industry in Costa Rica and their allies promoted land-tenure and tax laws that favored extensive