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Emperors In The Jungle: The Hidden History Of The U.S. In Panama (American Encounters/Global Interactions)



Synopsis

Emperors in the Jungle is an exposé of key episodes in the military involvement of the United States in Panama. Investigative journalism at its best, this book reveals how U.S. ideas about taming tropical jungles and people, combined with commercial and military objectives, shaped more than a century of intervention and environmental engineering in a small, strategically located nation. Whether uncovering the U.S. Army's decades-long program of chemical weapons tests in Panama or recounting the invasion in December 1989 which was the U.S. military's twentieth intervention in Panama since 1856, John Lindsay-Poland vividly portrays the extent and costs of U.S. involvement. Analyzing new evidence gathered through interviews, archival research, and Freedom of Information Act requests, Lindsay-Poland discloses the hidden history of U.S.-Panama relations, including the human and environmental toll of the massive canal building project from 1904 to 1914. In stunning detail he describes secret chemical weapons tests of toxins including nerve agent and Agent Orange as well as plans developed in the 1960s to use nuclear blasts to create a second canal in Panama. He chronicles sustained efforts by Panamanians and international environmental groups to hold the United States responsible for the disposal of the tens of thousands of explosives it left undetonated on the land it turned over to Panama in 1999. In the context of a relationship increasingly driven by the U.S. antidrug campaigns, Lindsay-Poland reports on the myriad issues that surrounded Panama's takeover of the canal in accordance with the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty, and he assesses the future prospects for the Panamanian people, land, and canal area. Bringing to light historical legacies unknown to most U.S. citizens or even to many Panamanians, *Emperors in the Jungle* is a major contribution toward a new, more open relationship between Panama and the United States.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Emperors in the Jungle" by John Lindsay-Poland, co-director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean, is a "must read" for Americans to understand what has indeed been "the hidden history of the U.S. in Panama." After the Spanish-American War, 1898, when with the acquisition of the Philippines, the United States became a Pacific power and before we had an armada in every body of water on earth, it became imperative that our navy be able to travel quickly between our interests across the Atlantic Ocean and our new interests in lands across the Pacific. The answer was a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. The story of U.S. manipulation and conquest of that land is splendidly told by Lindsay-Poland in "Emperors in the Jungle." As the granddaughter of one of those Americans who, escaping poverty in Ohio, helped build that canal, and the daughter of a woman born in a construction town flooded in the creation of Gatun Lake as part of that canal, as a patriot of Panama as well as of the United States, I was heartened to read an account of the history between these two countries as accurate and balanced as Lindsay-Poland's. I quarrel with only a couple small inaccuracies, for instance that Americans in Panama did not share with Panamanians the loss of certain consumer goods during World War II. As a child, I remember my mother and her sisters struggling to draw a line on the back of their calves to simulate the seam of silk stockings which were not available; and my dad's drinking rum for the duration as Scotch, too, had disappeared.

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