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Dinner With Mugabe: The Untold Story Of A Freedom Fighter Who Became A Tyrant



Synopsis

At a time when the world waits anxiously to see what will happen next in Zimbabwe - when there is little food in the country's shops, life expectancy is plunging and Zimbabweans are fleeing repression and unemployment - this book gets to grips with the man at the helm of a corrupt regime; the man behind the monster. Holland's tireless investigation begins with her having dinner with Mugabe the freedom fighter and ends in a searching interview with Zimbabwe's president in December 2007, more than 30 years later.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although Heidi Holland met Mugabe only a couple of times, she still provides some good interviews and insights into Mugabe. He has unfortunately proved to be one of the worst leaders of the past couple of decades. Look at the results of his presidency--100,000% inflation, massive food shortages and an 80% unemployment rate. Zimbabwe is an embarrassment to Africa and it didn't have to be that way. Here's a detailed critique of what went wrong, where it went wrong and who is responsible. Mugabe is an intriguing figure because he began his career largely heralded by everyone as a freedom fighter like Nelson Mandela. To see how tragically it turned out, leaves many questions; it's a void Holland is clearly trying to fill. Holland writes well--the words are fluid and vivid and so it's easy to see how her years of reporting for the BBC, the Guardian and many other reputable news organizations has helped. The book is broken into 15 chapters with an index and bibliography for further reading. I do have one complaint, that I wish this were written by someone who had spent more time with Mugabe instead of relying mostly on interviews and a couple of brief

encounters with him. However, I am glad this book was written and even more glad that it was published in America! I heard Heidi interviewed on the BBC and was dismayed that the book was available for sale only in South Africa. (Note: The book was rushed into production here so the British grammar remains. IE: magnetised instead of magnetized.) Yes, we are interested in the subject here too and are horrified by the still unfolding tragedy of Zimbabwe. If only there was something more we could do to help, but what?

Ms Holland repeatedly interviewed many people close to Mugabe over the course of his political years, and a couple of people who have known him all his life. She also interviewed Mugabe himself, but those who complain that the book should have been written by someone who knew Mugabe well are missing the point. Her take on his life, career, and psychology is neutral and thoughtful, and although she is not a psychologist/psychiatrist herself she worked closely with several professionals in the field to arrive at her conclusions. If you want to understand the situation in Zimbabwe, a country where I grew up (it was Rhodesia then), she makes it accessible and her analysis of Mugabe's character is logical and based on painstaking research. She doesn't excuse or downplay what Mugabe has done, but she offers explanations for his behavior which make sense, and plenty of insight into all the other factors which have played into the tragedy of that beautiful country. There is plenty of blame to go around!

This is one of the best books I have ever read. Robert Mugabe is clearly mentally unstable and to ignore that fact would be ignoring the truth about what is currently happening in Zimbabwe. Holland made an enormous effort to find and interview friends, relatives, acquaintances and priests that have ever known Mugabe. She explores the social and political environment that molded Mugabe as well as what it was like growing up with religious zealot for a mother and no father whatsoever. Mugabe's mother knew that Robert was a gifted and sensitive child from birth and told him that he was specially picked from God to lead the nation. Perhaps this is where his narcissism and persecutory delusions come from. Holland offers these valuable psychological insights into what is going on in his head. A lot of writers analyze political leaders in a chest-pumping way that only glamourizes their power and material wealth. Holland actually tries to understand who Mugabe is as a person and how that influenced him as a leader. I will highly recommend accompanying this book with Dr. Martha Stout's "The Myth of Sanity." It is about DID and once I finished reading it, I was convinced Mugabe had it. I highly recommend both books

Having grown up in post Independent Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe was a mystery to me. I remember seeing him on TV virtually every night and like most of the nation was in the dark about the brutality he employed in Matebeleland. This was a gripping account of how a man with no strong convictions save his own personal desire for power can plunge an entire nation into disaster. It was in my opinion a fair and balanced account and it answered many of my questions about a man we saw a lot of but knew very little about.

5 stars because the author sought to explain/understand who Mugabe is as a human through a series of interviews and psychology. Mugabe is shown as a little boy from Kutama who has been deeply insecure all his life, unable to tolerate rejection. A star pupil who preferred books to playing outside. The apple of his mother's eye. It is a foray into his personal life - the pain and suffering he has been through. The book is not an attempt to excuse his behavior rather a way to understand what went wrong. It is an emotional read - have an open mind.

Offers interesting insights and analysis into Mugabe's character but it gets extremely repetitive. The author does not make many new points or outstanding observations other than that Mugabe is unsure of himself and gets childishly vengeful when cornered or contradicted. The book was a good attempt on the whole and worth reading because it is well written but there is not much proof of the author's assertions except opinions based on what the author constructed using other people's thoughts.

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