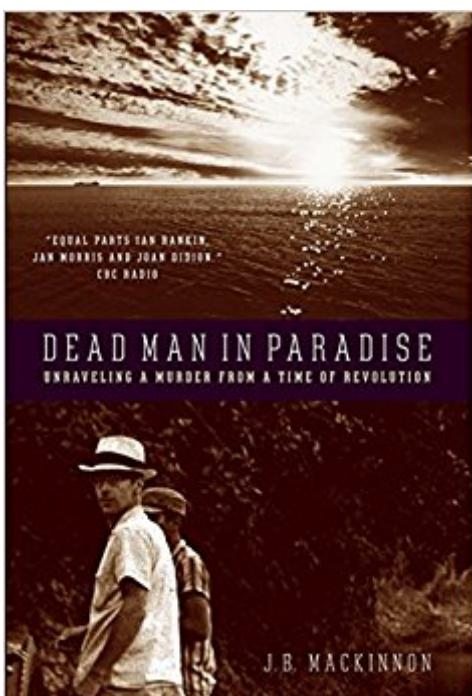


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Dead Man In Paradise: Unraveling A Murder From A Time Of Revolution



Synopsis

At nightfall on June 22, 1965, amid the turmoil of the Dominican revolution and U.S. military occupation, a soldier emerged from the outskirts of a small town to report that he had just shot and killed two policemen and an outspoken Catholic priest. It's the opening scene in a mystery that, forty years later, compels writer J.B. MacKinnon—the priest's nephew, born five years after the incident—to visit the island nation for himself. Beginning with scant official information, he embarks on a chilling investigation of what many believe was a carefully plotted assassination—and on a search for the uncle he never knew. Winner of Canada's highest award for literary nonfiction, *Dead Man in Paradise* takes MacKinnon to corners of the country far from the Caribbean paradise seen by millions of tourists; he meets with former revolutionaries and shadowy generals from the era of dictatorship, family members of the slain policemen, and struggling Dominicans for whom the dead priest is a martyr, perhaps even a saint. Along the way, he uncovers a story inseparable from the brutal history of the New World, from the fallout of American invasion, and from the pure longing for social justice that once touched a generation. Part memoir, part travelogue, part mystery thriller, *Dead Man in Paradise* is "a testament to the enduring virtues of literary journalism" (The Georgia Straight).

Book Information

Hardcover: 261 pages

Publisher: The New Press; First Edition edition (October 30, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1595581812

ISBN-13: 978-1595581815

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 1 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #3,502,747 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #81 in Books > Travel > Caribbean > Dominican Republic #102 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Dominican Republic #9308 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Writing > Travel

Customer Reviews

In the Dominican Republic, in the summer of 1965, when a popular rebellion triggered civil war and intervention by American troops, the author's uncle Arthur, a Canadian priest, was killed along with

two policemen under suspicious circumstances. In this engrossing investigation, journalist MacKinnon (coauthor of *Plenty*), winner of three National Magazine Awards, searches for the truth behind his uncle's death and the dark legacy of dictatorship and poverty that it symbolizes. The story is something of a picaresque through the modern Dominican Republic. The author encounters a Kafkaesque bureaucracy, tight-lipped generals brooding over past crimes, and a populace fearful of the police and of outsiders asking questions; as he wanders about looking for witnesses, he gets lost in a maze of rural hamlets that are all named Los Jobillos. The official line that Father Art was accidentally shot while speeding through a checkpoint becomes increasingly dubious, and other possibilities arise: that he was collateral damage in a fight over a woman or, more probably, assassinated for speaking out against repression and poverty. Through MacKinnon's novelistic treatment, this intriguing mystery unfolds into a haunting portrait of a rich land marked by grotesque squalor, brutal inequality and an abiding thirst for social justice. (Oct.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"A superb work of reportage." • Ian Thomson, *The Independent* (UK)
"Gripping, richly layered and in its ceaseless twists and turns a very apt metaphor for the Dominican Republic itself." • John Preston, *Sunday Telegraph* (UK)
"A wholly unique achievement [that] instantly places this young writer among the best talents in this country." • Paul William Roberts, *Author of Homeland*

In 1965, before the author was born, his uncle was murdered in the Dominican Republic. His uncle was Father James Arthur MacKinnon, born and raised on Cape Breton Island in Canada, and he was a priest of the Scarboro Order. In four-plus years in the DR, Padre Arturo proved himself an indefatigable worker and champion of the rights and interests of the poor and downtrodden. He was murdered in the midst of a revolution, in response to which the United States, two months earlier, had (once again) invaded the country. His bullet-ridden body was found with two other corpses, one an army lieutenant and the other a policeman in civilian clothes. Precisely what happened, and who was responsible, was a mystery, even after an investigation conducted by the Organization of American States. Forty years later, author J.B. MacKinnon spent months in the DR, trying to resolve the mystery of what happened to his uncle and who was responsible. At one point, he is told: "What you are doing is using history as a weapon, no? You are telling the story of our country, and you need to be careful. There are places where you would ask these kinds of questions and you would disappear." MacKinnon obviously lived to write his book, but he encountered countless runarounds

and stonewalls and even a little intimidation, and some (including many Dominicans) probably quarrel with the tentative conclusions he reaches. To my mind, there are three reasons for reading DEAD MAN IN PARADISE. First is for the picture it gives of Padre Arturo and other members of the Scarboro Order - they are admirable humans whose principal mission was helping people in this world as opposed to preparing them for the next. Second is the portrayal of the DR, both its history and much about life and conditions there today. Over both history and present conditions, the United States looms large, and I for one can't take much pride in what we have done for the DR. Third, DEAD MAN IN PARADISE is a good book, briskly paced and engagingly written.

I loved the book. I am Dominican and I can say proudly that I know my history; that's why I think the author of "dead man in paradise" really did his homework in order to show the reader the Dominican culture and history, as sad as it was. Do not think he is exaggerating about the cruelty and oppression of those days; he is not. By many expressions in the book, I can tell he is really identified with the Dominican People. I do not know how long it took for him to write the book, but I can tell it was quite some time. You could not get to know such a complicated history in details in a few months. I hope this book someday is translated into Spanish and put in the bookstores of the Dominican Republic. We would hear a lot about it since many people from the book are still alive, and still in powerful positions.

Found it dull and plodding, not much of a murder mystery. Decent overview of the various regimes in the Dominican Republic, but did not give me much of a feel for the country. Experienced little or none of that of the author during recent visit.

Very good writing, very descriptive of the way life in the Dominican Republic was during the Trujillo reign, during the revolution of 1965 and life as it is on the island today.

When is the spanish translation coming out? All Monte Plata wants to read it!

J.B. Mackinnon is a brilliant author. He wrote a book called "Plenty - Eating locally on the Hundred Mile Diet" that changed my life! I love him!

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