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Tropical Zion: General Trujillo, FDR, And The Jews Of Sosúa (American Encounters/Global Interactions)



Synopsis

Seven hundred and fifty Jewish refugees fled Nazi Germany and founded the agricultural settlement of Sosúa in the Dominican Republic, then ruled by one of Latin America's most repressive dictators, General Rafael Trujillo. In *Tropical Zion*, Allen Wells, a distinguished historian and the son of a Sosúa settler, tells the compelling story of General Trujillo, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and those fortunate pioneers who founded a successful employee-owned dairy cooperative on the north shore of the island. Why did a dictator admit these desperate refugees when so few nations would accept those fleeing fascism? Eager to mollify international critics after his army had massacred 15,000 unarmed Haitians, Trujillo sent representatives to Évian, France, in July, 1938 for a conference on refugees from Nazism. Proposed by FDR to deflect criticism from his administration's restrictive immigration policies, the Évian Conference proved an abject failure. The Dominican Republic was the only nation that agreed to open its doors. Obsessed with stemming the tide of Haitian migration across his nation's border, the opportunistic Trujillo sought to "whiten" the Dominican populace, welcoming Jewish refugees who were themselves subject to racist scorn in Europe. The Roosevelt administration sanctioned the Sosúa colony. Since the United States did not accept Jewish refugees in significant numbers, it encouraged Latin America to do so. That prodding, paired with FDR's overriding preoccupation with fighting fascism, strengthened U.S. relations with Latin American dictatorships for decades to come. Meanwhile, as Jewish organizations worked to get Jews out of Europe, discussions about the fate of worldwide Jewry exposed fault lines between Zionists and Non-Zionists. Throughout his discussion of these broad dynamics, Wells weaves vivid narratives about the founding of Sosúa, the original settlers and their families, and the life of the unconventional beach-front colony.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a resident of Sosua, I found this book very interesting. It is very meticulous and goes into exacting detail as to all the players(U.S., Europe, Dominican Republic) involved in the creation of this unique city in the Dominican Republic.It is not for everybody but if you happen to be interested in this unique situation, as I am, you to might find it interesting. Note that although I was a little familiar with the situation before I read this book, what I thought I knew was a gross simplification of the often unpleasant reality.

I am a holocaust survivor who was able to escape to the Dominican Republic with my parents and brother. The Book Written by Mr. Wells is the most accurate book ever written about Sosua. His father was know to my family and he even ate at our house. His research was just amazing and it shows how more Jews could have been saved it weren't for the anti-Semitic politicians advising president Roosevelt. I recommend this book with all my heart.Al Weinberg

This book is a well written testimony on the hardships and history behind Sosua`s founders, their lives and how they escaped certain death in the hands of Hitler`s henchmen. Wells, the son of a Sosua settler and a historian at Bowdoin College, captures with admirable clarity the historical ironies and personal dramas at this intersection of European tragedy, U.S. diplomacy, and Caribbean caudillos. The book is featured as a top bibliographic reference at [...]

this is an excellent resouce book. I'm writing a book and this title gave specific detailed well documented information about the sosua settlement.

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