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Weep, Grey Bird, Weep: The Paraguayan War 1864-1870



Synopsis

Weep, Grey Bird, Weep is the story of the most extraordinary love story of the 19th century, set against the background of the most disastrous war ever fought. The war saw the tiny republic of Paraguay fighting against the combined forces of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. By the time the war ended, in March 1870, Paraguay's population had been reduced by more than half, and 80 per cent of the male population had been killed. Paraguay's leader in this war was Francisco Solano Lopez and by his side was his devoted lover, a girl from Ireland called Eliza Lynch. He was killed on the last day of the war and she buried him and their eldest son, who died trying to protect her, with her bare hands.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The good news is that this IS a general history of The War of the Triple Alliance (1865-1870) and is NOT a love story between the Paraguayan dictator and his Irish mistress (as described on the outside back cover). The bad news is that this work has some very serious technical failings. Overall, it is the "best" readily available inexpensive work on this war. While Kohn appears to want to replace Charles Kolinski's 1965 work (Independence or Death! The story of the Paraguayan War), Kolinski's work is much better. (Of Kohn's 113 endnotes, he cites Kolinski 14 times.) The serious technical flaws include: 1. There are just two tiny maps (pgs. 146 & 339). They appear to be handwritten. The first is tied to the siege of Humaita. The second shows the post-war territorial annexations by Argentina and Brazil. So once again here is a work that needs maps and lots of them, but the author chooses to short the reader, who struggles to know the location of important

places. There is no excuse for this!2. There is no preface, introduction, or author's notes. All we know about the author is what is on the back cover: "Roger Kohn is a retired journalist with a life-long interest in Paraguay."3. For a work of 362 pages, there are a mere 113 endnotes and they are all buried at the very back of the book (on pgs. 369-371). There are no page footnotes or chapter endnotes.4. The table of contents is both a mess and uninformative. First, it fails to mention all of the following: Bibliography, b&w plates/photos, and maps! The contents are merely broken out into 4 parts (1. The Vanished Arcadia, 2. Humaita, 3. The Tiger's Paw, and 4. To Cerro Cora) comprising 36 unlabelled chapters.

This wonderful book shows exactly what's wrong with British publishing today. The story of what happened in Paraguay between 1865 and 1870 is shocking and inspiring in equal measure, yet hardly heard of outside the Hispanic world. Any publisher or literary agent with half a brain would immediately bring out this readable, beautifully-written account and provide the proper maps, index, table of contents, etc. that the self-published version lacks. But despite those shortcomings the text alone is terrific. The history of the War of the Triple Alliance has everything: a terrifying evil genius of a South American dictator (Francisco Solano Lopez) whose brave people (the Paraguayans) follow him to the bitter end. His beautiful, faithful, callous Irish adventuress of a mistress (Elisa Lynch). The British engineers and doctors who valiantly assisted Paraguay in her hour of need. On the other side, a liberal-minded Emperor of Brazil who would like to abolish slavery, but can't (Pedro II). An Argentinian President who craves great military glory, but cannot defeat little Paraguay (General Mitre). A pathetic U.S. consul who makes a terrible political situation worse, even betraying his erstwhile friends to torture and execution (Washburn)... Above all, though, it is the story of the Paraguayan people and their Guarani Indian heritage which has made them magnificently brave and stoical both in this 19th Century conflict and in that equally-unknown epic, the Gran Chaco War of the 1930s. Because the author is not, himself, South American he gives a balanced, well-reasoned account of what happened.

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