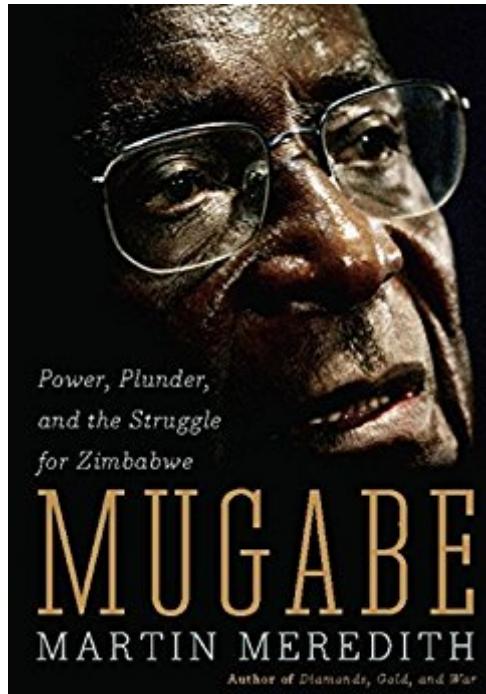


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Mugabe: Power, Plunder, And The Struggle For Zimbabwe's Future



Synopsis

Robert Mugabe came to power in Zimbabwe in 1980 after a long civil war in Rhodesia. The white minority government had become an international outcast in refusing to give in to the inevitability of black majority rule. Finally the defiant white prime minister Ian Smith was forced to step down and Mugabe was elected president. Initially he promised reconciliation between white and blacks, encouraged Zimbabwe's economic and social development, and was admired throughout the world as one of the leaders of the emerging nations and as a model for a transition from colonial leadership. But as Martin Meredith shows in this history of Mugabe's rule, Mugabe from the beginning was sacrificing his purported ideals and Zimbabwe's potential to the goal of extending and cementing his autocratic leadership. Over time, Mugabe has become ever more dictatorial, and seemingly less and less interested in the welfare of his people, treating Zimbabwe's wealth and resources as spoils of war for his inner circle. In recent years he has unleashed a reign of terror and corruption in his country. Like the Congo, Angola, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Liberia, Zimbabwe has been on a steady slide to disaster. Now for the first time the whole story is told in detail by an expert. It is a riveting and tragic political story, a morality tale, and an essential text for understanding today's Africa.

Book Information

File Size: 765 KB

Print Length: 274 pages

Publisher: PublicAffairs (April 28, 2009)

Publication Date: April 28, 2009

Sold by: Hachette Book Group

Language: English

ASIN: B003P9XDGG

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #755,745 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #89 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Africa #103 in Books > History > Africa > Zimbabwe #234 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Africa > Southern

Customer Reviews

For anyone interested in beginning to understand the dynamics of Zimbabwe's recent electoral crisis, this book is essential. Meredith goes into Mugabe's long history of violence, who like Mao sees violence as essential for politics. From the war waged against opposing guerilla forces because of political differences, the slaughter of 10,000 in Matabeleland, the seizure of white farms, threatening judges who ruled against the ZANU-PF government, and electoral violence, what we are seeing is nothing new, as Meredith reminds us. He also hints at the ethnic and racial tensions driving the politics and violence, something too often forgotten in today's media coverage. For example, Mugabe's ZANU-PF has its roots in the rural Shona ethnic group, while the Movement for Democratic change is much more urban and has many white supporters. The book is also relatively short (about 244 pages) and easy to read. Meredith provides a huge amount of detail without wasting too many words (or the reader's time). I think the book could have used a bit more of an introduction into Zimbabwe's and Africa's history more generally for the uninitiated to allow us to compare Mugabe's rule to how politics was conducted in the past in the country and the wider continent. For example, some readers might not realize the importance tribal and ethnic divides play in many African countries. However, any ignorance in this regard could be fixed by reading Meredith's other books on Africa. Usually in biographies authors try to psychoanalyze their subject. Fortunately, Meredith does not try to do this. He provides insights using quotes and sources, not psychobabble.

This book outlines the career of an evil and utterly ruthless man who emerged from being a key figure in a guerrilla war fought against white minority rule, to engineering through intimidation and terror a victory in Zimbabwe's first all-inclusive elections over the moderate Abel Muzorewa's United African national Congress and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union. After returning to Salisbury on January 27, 1980, after five years in exile, Mugabe was given a hero's welcome by a large crowd bearing banners with images of rocket grenades, land mines and guns, many wearing youth T shirts with the Kalashnikov rifle, which Mugabe's Marxist Zimbabwe African National Union party had wanted to use as an emblem, but which the British authorities had prohibited. The scale of intimidation by ZANU was massive. Neither the UANC or ZAPU were allowed to campaign at all in eastern Rhodesia, leading ZAPU leader Nkomo to state that 'the word intimidation is mild, people are being terrorized, it is terror, there is fear in people's eyes.' Therefore Mugabe's landslide win and

all of his subsequent electoral victories can not in any way be seen by a fair minded observer as in any way legitimate. After victory and becoming Zimbabwe's Prime Minister, Mugabe spoke the language of soothing words to the the country's White population and the international community. But in 1982 he resorted to terror in order to impose the one-party state he dreamed of imposing and his goal of absolute. power.

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