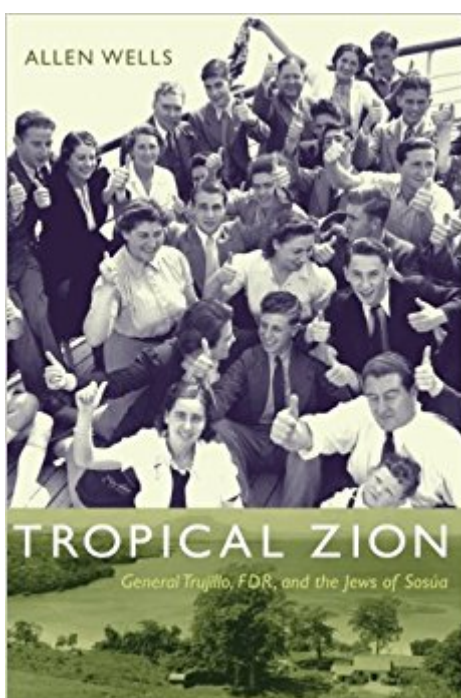


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Tropical Zion: General Trujillo, FDR, And The Jews Of SosÅ°a (American Encounters/Global Interactions)



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

[A] fascinating tale that combines a passionate devotion for one's patrimony with the dispassionate critical perspective honed in decades of superb scholarship. It makes for the best kind of history. • - Robert Jan van Pelt, American Jewish History

Allen Wells has written the definitive history of a controversial refuge for Jews escaping Nazism: an agricultural enclave in the Dominican Republic at Sosúa, created by Jewish charities and the country's dictator, Rafael Trujillo. . . . [A] fascinating, behind-the-scenes portrayal of high-level negotiations among diplomats and Jewish organizations, coupled with a social history of the experiences of the Sosúa settlers that brings the account up to the present. • - Max Paul Friedman, History: Reviews of New Books

[T]his fascinating book is an important contribution to the study of the role of Latin America in the rescue of Jewish refugees, as well as to a better understanding of Trujillo's dictatorship and U.S.-Dominican relations. Allen Wells, the son of a colonist in Sosúa, confronts the collective memory of the refugees with the contrasting factors that determined their fate, demonstrating their vulnerability. • - Margalit Bejarano, The Americas

[F]ascinating. . . . The reader will find in this excellent book rich hindsight on these and other unintended workings of human action as well as ample documentation to follow the complexities of this historical experiment of Jewish refugees escaping Europe and forced to recreate their lives in the tropics. • - Luis Roniger, Journal of Latin American Studies

Allen Wells has written a fascinating book. . . . This is an original, well researched and well written text. Wells discusses the settlers' experience in the Dominican Republic, at the same time as he sheds light on a wide variety of other, larger issues: U.S. restrictive immigration policies, the attitudes of American Jewry on the eve of World War II and during the war, Zionist and non-Zionist struggles over the "solution" to the "Jewish problem," U.S.-Latin American relations, the Trujillo regime and the high cost of Washington's complicity with the brutal dictatorship of the Dominican tyrant. • - Raanan Rein, Latin American Jewish Studies

This illuminating and irony-laden study deftly integrates twentieth-century Latin American, Jewish, and American history with that of the Holocaust. Readers interested in any of these fields will be rewarded and have their perspectives widened. An admirably researched and crafted book, and a touching one, too. • "Peter Hayes, Theodore Zev Weiss Professor of Holocaust Studies, Northwestern University

This is a masterful study of Jewish

refugees who found an unlikely haven in Rafael Trujillo's Dominican Republic, written with the head and the heart by a gifted historian of Latin America. Their full story is firmly anchored here in its salient contexts—personal and local, national, New World, European, global, and temporal. It will be of lasting value to students of Latin American, European, and world history, as well as modern Jewish studies.

• William B. Taylor, Muriel McKevitt Sonne Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley

œ This is an extraordinary and original contribution to Latin American, Jewish, and U.S. history. In a remarkable work, Allen Wells describes and assesses how and why one of Latin America's bloodiest dictators was willing to rescue Jews from Nazi persecution.

• Friedrich Katz, Morton D. Hull Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Latin American History, University of Chicago

œ [A] fascinating tale that combines a passionate devotion for one's patrimony with the dispassionate critical perspective honed in decades of superb scholarship. It makes for the best kind of history.

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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.

Factual but gripping and interesting. This is a part of history that no one seems to know. A very long book, but worth it.

GOOD BOOK

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

Excellent

good historical information

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 Sosãa 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 [...]

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