



Talk of the Devil: Encounters with Seven Dictators

Riccardo Orizio

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Inspired by newspaper clippings he had kept about two former African dictators accused of cannibalism, journalist Riccardo Orizio set out to track down tyrants around the world who had fallen from power?to see if they had gained any perspective on their actions, or if their lives and thoughts could shed any light on our own. The seven encounters chronicled in *Talk of the Devil* reveal Orizio's gift as an observer and his skill at getting people to reveal themselves. They are also, each of them, memorable stories in their own right.

Thanks to his conversion to Islam, the unrepentant Idi Amin lives in exile in Saudi Arabia and laughs off his murderous past while still attempting to meddle in Uganda. Jean-Bedel Bokassa, the bloody former emperor of Central Africa, boasts astonishingly that Pope Paul VI had nominated him as the thirteenth apostle of the Catholic Church. Nexhmije Hoxha defends her husband's brutal Stalinist regime from her Albanian prison cell and proudly explains how it worked. Paris-based Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier?in his first interview since fleeing Haiti in 1986?speaks about voodoo and the women of his life, and laments the loss of his fortune. Colonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam of Ethiopia, Mira Markovic (Slobodan Milosevic's wife), and General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the former Polish head of state, all claim, in one way or another, that history will do them justice.

By turns chilling and comical, rational and absurd, *Talk of the Devil* brings back into focus forgotten history and people we have viewed as evil incarnate. Stripped of their power and titles, they are oddly human, and in Orizio's hands, their stories, and his own, are compulsively readable.

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