

A Dream for Peace

Ghoulem Berrah

Dr. Ghoulem Berrah Foundation (Feb 20, 2019)

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A Dream for Peace is an insightful memoir about a life of international diplomacy that makes a heartfelt plea for unity.

Freedom fighter and globe-trotting diplomat Ghoulem Berrah's memoir *A Dream for Peace* is an inspiring, detailed account of working toward peace.

Berrah, an Algerian independence advocate who studied medicine in France, was arrested for his political activism in Spain and traveled to China and America to study and lecture. He also led medical research of DNA, visited religious sites from Mecca to the Vatican, and served as an ambassador on peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

Written in the tone of an idealist preoccupied with the big picture, the book is exhaustive with details, capturing a sweep of twentieth century history through Berrah's lens. It documents how French colonizers erased Algerians' history, how Berrah got involved in activism, and how he transitioned from science into political advising. Accounts of meeting world leaders, from Mao Zedong to Fidel Castro, include elements like Berrah sabotaging a speech by pretending Castro's microphone cut out.

Precise, lively descriptions—the dimensions of a jail cell; the flickering light bulb overhead—make the book's settings palpable. Berrah's experiences are rendered in an immersive, immediate way. When the prose is more conversational, it indulges in clichés and generalizations, though.

The book is chronologically organized and easy to follow, if its length allows for indulgences like excessive descriptions, meandering asides, and general long-windedness. Berrah's socially observant narration sometimes focuses on wider world more than it does on Berrah himself. The book is so thorough in its accounting—naming who stood next to whom at a funeral, for example; or covering social customs and the inner workings of diplomats—that its pace drags. Discursive anecdotes add little and go nowhere.

Inspirational quotes punctuate the text, reinforcing key points, hyping up next chapters, and conveying a sense of lofty, uplifting purpose. Photos illuminate the story at times but come in excess.

A worldly and sophisticated tone, as when Berrah espouses an “affinity for Rose du Portugal marble,” draws forth the book's global sweep and demonstrates charm. Characterizations of others are warm, empathetic, and knowledgeable. A sweeping, philosophical epilogue summarizes Berrah's personal history, showing him to have taken principled stands against racism, conflict, and division. It is a triumphant call to action that also provides a sense of closure.

A Dream for Peace is an insightful, historically attuned memoir about a life of international diplomacy that makes a heartfelt plea for unity.

JOSEPH S. PETE (April 25, 2019)

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