**Out of the jungle. The peace process in Colombia**

An inside account of the pain-staking negotiations that ended the world’s longest war.

Authors: Dag Nylander and Tove Gravdal

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*Out of the jungle* is a comprehensive account of one of the most intense and complicated peace processes in modern history, which led to an agreement between the Colombian government and the guerilla group Farc in 2016. Dag Nylander was the lead Norwegian diplomat who from 2011 to 2016 accompanied the peace process. He was the prime witness and a key participant in all parts of the process, including risky missions to remote guerilla-controlled areas in Colombia. He obtained the trust of both parties and played a crucial role in nudging and smoothing the process through its many difficult phases.

The Colombian peace accord from November 2016 is one of the most astonishing recent achievements in conflict resolution. It ended five decades of war which had led to half a million dead and millions of refugees. The accord has since been a frequent reference for political leaders worldwide when appealing to diplomatic solutions to conflicts.

Nylander’s book, co-written with journalist Tove Gravdal, is the first account by a neutral actor and eyewitness to the Colombian peace process. The book has been acclaimed for being “a splendid introduction to how you can end a civil war” (NRK, April 30th, 2023), and it “conveys a recognition of the benefits of quiet and longterm trust-building work, but it is first and foremost an *action man*-story” (Morgenbladet April 21st, 2023). In another review it is described as “an intense and impressive story” (Panorama Nyheter, March 30th, 2023), while Norway’s leading daily newspaper Aftenposten says that “those who thought diplomacy and mediation is boring stuff, will have to reconsider after reading this story, which at its best is better than any thriller fiction” (Aftenposten June 12th, 2023).

Norway and Cuba were the guarantor countries for the peace process, which involved a wide range of responsibilities. Among them were a number of helicopter missions into the Colombian jungle, and reporting to White House officials in Washington D.C. It was an all-consuming diplomatic mission, with exclusive access to the parties and the negotiating table in the Cuban capital Havana, and with all sorts of challenges through frequent crises. The process was a political drama, which took place while the war was still raging on the battlefield. It was also an existential drama, with plenty of spoilers willing to use any means necessary to destroy what was agreed in Havana.

The insights from this long and complex negotiating process highlights what it takes to bring peace to armed conflicts, which is relevant in the midst of the war in Ukraine. Ongoing peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the remaining armed groups in the country also brings new relevance to the 2016 peace agreement. But first and foremost, *Out of the Jungle* is important because it is an exclusive account of a historic event in Colombia and in the field of peace mediation.

The book is a personal account, but it includes views and perspectives from other key actors in the process. Around 50 people have been interviewed for the book, among them former president Juan Manuel Santos and former Farc leader Timochenko. *Out of the Jungle* is also a thriller, with a number of dramatic events and crises along the way that are recounted publicly for the first time.

In the book, Nylander is refreshingly candid about certain aspects of the peace process, like the not so constructive involvement of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Nylander is also critical of the Nobel Peace Prize committee choosing to award only one party of the conflict in 2016.

Nylander is a well-known name in the UN system, and among diplomats and journalists who follow international politics. There is reason to believe that his account of the Colombia process is of great interest to an international audience. His co-writer Tove Gravdal is a longtime international correspondent for leading Norwegian newspapers. In 2020 she published a book about the UN Security Council.

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