



Proteus

Morris L. West

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John Spada publicly runs an enormous multi-national corporation, privately he heads Proteus, a clandestine resistance movement. His aim is to free prisoners of conscience wherever they may be. As the story unfolds, Spada himself becomes an outlaw, and holds the world hostage.

Proteus Details

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Author : Morris L. West

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From Reader Review Proteus for online ebook

Bowerbird says

This is a gripping story which held me throughout but I enjoyed the first half more than the second. The story is set in the 1970s and when we first meet John Spada he is a wealthy industrialist with a loving wife and daughter. The countries he has dealings with in the arms trade are not always the most scrupulous but Spada is able to justify this as necessary. Secretly though he is also head of Proteus, a worldwide organisation working to create a better world and he uses his money and influence to further various good causes. Then his daughter marries a man from Argentina whose outspoken editorials make them both a target for the secret police. The book becomes unputdownable as a scheme is hatched by Proteus to rescue them.

However, John Spada hasn't finished. As his own situation takes a turn for the worse he takes on the world in order to improve the lot of prisoners unjustly detained by world powers who feel threatened by them. This makes a very chilling read, is not a comfortable one.

Having read *The Devil's Advocate* many years ago I was aware that Morris West did not write light fiction. I didn't know whether to give this book 3 or 4 stars, but the quality of the writing deserves the extra star.

Balam Abello says

Proteus is a novel by Morris West which was published in 1979. This is a fascinating high finance high wire thriller that although at times it may seem a bit dated; nevertheless, it captures the essence of an international double life Wall Street saga.

West's uncompromising mastery of the language will easily transport you to the high glitz scenery of a powerful and influential Italian family, the "Spadas." And with one fell swoop he will drop you in the middle of Wall Street with all its power hungry pathos.

However, the book is a staunch criticism of torture. Ironically, it is this aspect of the book which in today's world it makes it the more compelling. His narrative is unapologetic and we will feel at the very least empathetic towards people who have fallen prey to these wicked dehumanizing hellish places.

The central character, John Spada, a balls-to-the-wall powerful captain of industry who cannot accept anything less than total victory and the destruction of his enemies, will be confronted with abject failure.

This experience will transform him, thus unleashing the ire of Proteus upon the planet.

Well that's it. Or did you think I was going to give the away ending? Go ahead and read it!
<http://balamabello.com>

Orestis says

Μια καλ? ιδ?α που χαραμ?στηκε σε ?να βιβλ?ο με ερεσιτεχνικ? γρ?ψιμο. Κρ?μα...

Cws says

F Wes

Danilo DiPietro says

Proxy for Book III of Joyce's ULYSSES where we're inside Stephen's head for the entire episode. Tough sledding but worth it.

Abubakar Faisal says

A sad plot with lots of twists. loved the twists, but the storyline ...

Joan says

I realised as soon as I started this book that I had already read it a long while ago but I read it again and felt just as disturbed by it as the first time. I felt for John Spada and his great losses and even greater desire to rid the world of the inhumanities practiced by some nations and governments. He had money, power, charisma and the backing of a secret society founded by himself but even that wasn't enough.

Michele says

The book was decent, well written, but suffers somewhat from a dated style. I also wasn't satisfied with the ending and, in general, the main character, John Spada, was too idealistic for my taste. An intelligent political and corporate thriller, though.

Paulus says

The writing and plot is excellent. I have read most of Mr. West's books and like them. His writing reminds me of Graham Greene.

However I gave this book only three stars because the ending peters out. I was left with a feeling that more could have been made of the ending of the plot line than what Mr. West gave us.

Mike says

I picked this up in a secondhand bookshop while travelling, because the book I'd been intending to read turned out to have a sick serial killer of a narrator, one who seemed to find killing amusing.

Proteus, of course, is now a fairly old book (1979) and occasionally that's obvious in the text. Its subject matter is still relevant - the corruption at the heart of many nations' governments which results in innocent people being incarcerated and tortured without reason. (Guantanamo Bay is a prime modern example.)

In terms of the story, West takes on a huge challenge, and I'm not sure that it comes off. His main character, John Spada, is a super successful businessman whose only child marries an Argentinian journalist, a man who's already in trouble with his government because of his outspoken writings. But Spada is also the undercover leader of an organisation whose main aim is to free innocent people who've been convicted of no crime but are a 'nuisance' to the State, and he performs this other role well, using his money freely, and being able to work with the people in the know who can make a difference. His organisation is reportedly very large yet somehow they all manage to keep their group invisible.

Things go awry for Spada, as they must in any good book, and instead of continuing on a benevolent path, rescuing innocent people, he turns to a kind of vigilante approach. I guess West is saying that even the best people can be corrupted by frustration with evil; certainly Spada, for all his integrity, goes downhill in due course in a way that I didn't find particularly believable. I'm sure other reviewers have given better synopses of the plot, so I won't expand on it here.

So why only 3 stars? West's characters lack real personality somehow; he gives them ticks and traits, but they don't come alive. There are dozens of characters in this book, because the subject matter and plot have considerable breadth, but they all speak with a similar voice: they're likely to slip from saying plot-moving statements to intoning the theme at the drop of a hat. Even in books, people don't preach to this extent. And it's often hard to tell where West's loyalties lie: in his own life he had an on-off relationship with the Catholic church, and most of his Catholic main characters are pretty loose in their religion; they don't really seem to present much of a faith. West had huge concerns about corruption, as is evident here, but the book swings all over the place, and poor old John Spada is swung around with it. He has reason to be deeply angry but the way his morals change doesn't quite ring true.

In spite of my criticisms I found the book surprisingly readable (as most of West's other books have been); even when my critical mind was saying - 'I don't believe that bit' - my reading mind wanted to keep on reading, to see what happened. Personally I found what happened rather disappointing: the climax is BIG, in keeping with the rest of the book, but it's not believable: it's Hollywood, rather than West.

Sowmya says

Read this waaaay back in 2002 (??) A total gamechanger for me. I don't own a copy, but I hope to read this again sometime.

Jeremy says

What a great book. Morris West is a terrific story-teller but I should remember that from the previous Morris West books I have read albeit a long time ago. John Spada, son of a large and established Italian family, is the head of a hugely successful business in New York but his daughter has decided to marry a Argentinian who speaks out against the establishment and the disappearances. John is also carrying on the leadership of a secret society that links influential people around the world who use their positions to achieve philanthropic gain that above board, political approaches could not.

When John's daughter and son-in-law become a "disappeared" statistic, John turns the might of his empire(s) to find and free them. He does this but then loses his entire family in a suspicious fire. Now that he is alone and has no-one in his life (his nearest relative is his uncle in Italy) he chooses to take on the might of the collected world governments and persuade them to release all prisoners of conscience. If he succeeds in the UN or not, you will have to read to find out.

I think what I like about Morris West is his straight to the point style. No padding here, no pointless diversions into a land of make-believe. Sure he has twists and turns and deceptions for the reader but every page contributes an essential part to the story. It keeps you reading on and rewards you for the effort. A little book with a big story. Perfect.

Manuel Sánchez says

I read this in 2012

Lisa Gunderson says

Really challenging on the question of how much we can expect from people who have suffered for a cause.

Kashfia Firdous says

Awesome!!! Everyone should read this right now to understand the times better. On point!!
