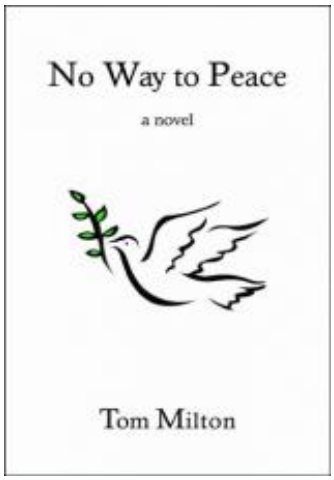
No Way to Peace

by Tom Milton



About the Book

No Way to Peace is about the courage of five women --- a refugee, a journalist, a widowed mother, a social worker, and a teacher --- caught up in Argentina?s war of terror during the 1970s. Their stories unfold through the eyes of Stephen Wyatt, an American banker in his early thirties who has volunteered to stay in Argentina and keep an eye on things after his American colleagues and their families have been evacuated for their safety. It is a time when foreign business managers as well as local managers who work for foreign companies are being kidnapped and held for ransom or simply killed by terrorists at the rate of more than one per week.

Stephen has just returned from New York, where he has finalized his divorce after a three-year separation from his wife, when he agrees to help a pair of CIA agents track the money that the terrorists have collected from their kidnappings. Evidently, they are laundering this money through his bank?s branch in Panama and using it to bring arms into the country. Though Stephen supports their goal of social justice, he opposes the methods used by the terrorists, who have murdered many innocent people, including his assistant, who left behind a wife and three children under the age of five. So his motive for helping the CIA is to stop the killing.

That evening he meets a young woman who has fled her country and is living under a false identity for reasons that he will eventually learn. She has taken the name of Cathy Linton, the heroine in **Wuthering Heights**, which she was encouraged to read by an American teacher assigned to the school in the slum where she grew up. Inspired by him, Cathy pursued her education to the university, where she was studying to be a teacher when her life was shattered by a terrifying event.

Stephen and Cathy fall in love, and they begin living together. He helps her get a regular job, and he introduces her to his friends: Chris, an American who works for a nonprofit organization committed to helping unemployed people start businesses; his wife Sofi, a social worker; Elena, a reporter for an English-language newspaper; Mario, a professor of political science at the university, and his wife Teresa, a school teacher; Francisco (?Paco?), a young priest who has

dedicated his life to helping the poor in the slums (*villas misera*) that surround the city of Buenos Aires; and Vittoria, the young widow of his assistant who is trying to raise her three little girls without a father.

Always in danger, and often needing bodyguards to protect them, Stephen and Cathy try to build a life together, but when the military take over the government the war of terror escalates and their friends become targets for being involved in ?subversive? activities. As Stephen tries to save them from being tortured and killed by the military, he gains a new perspective on the war, and from the women who deal with its havoc he learns the true meaning of courage.

Discussion Guide

1. Compare the five major female characters (Cathy, Elena, Vittoria, Sofi, and Teresa) with respect to the types of courage they show in their different situations.

2. Soon after we meet Cathy we realize that she is in danger, and eventually we learn that she has fled from people who want to kill her. Yet we see her worrying more about Stephen than about herself. How would you explain this?

3. What are the values that drive Cathy? How is her fate determined by a strict adherence to her values?

4. Describe the relationship between Elena and Stephen. Can you imagine it evolving into something else?

5. Compare the responses of Vittoria and Sofi to the loss of their husbands. How do they evolve as characters?

6. Teresa emerges relatively late as a character in the novel. How do her motivations change from the time Mario is arrested to the end of the story? Why do they change?

7. Adriana, though a minor character, plays a role in advancing the emotional awareness of some characters. What effects does she have on Cathy, Stephen, and Teresa?

8. Are Stephen?s actions motivated by ideology? If not, what drives him?

9. If Stephen?s friends knew that he was helping the CIA, how would they react? How would he justify his actions?

10. Discuss the issue raised by Stephen in his conversations with John and Bill about where to draw the line in dealing with terrorists.

11. Do John and Bill conform to your image of CIA agents? How does the author humanize them? What drives them?

12. Carlos and Boyd have definite ideas of what should be done economically and politically to create stability in Argentina. What do you think of their ideas?

13. Which characters take advantage of opportunities presented by the war of terror, and how do they exploit the suffering of other people?

14. In the background of the novel is the rise of ?liberation theology? in Latin America, an attempt by some clerical and

lay members of the Catholic Church to redirect its focus toward helping the poor, freeing the oppressed, and achieving social justice. Where do you see its influence in the novel?

15. Explain what Paco means when he says: ?The only way to stop the killing is to stop the killing.? How does this idea relate to the book?s title?

16. How do Stephen?s perceptions of the Montoneros evolve during the course of the novel?

17. Does Stephen achieve redemption by the end of the novel?

Author Bio

Tom Milton, who was co-author of the best-selling **Trend Tracking**, has had careers as a journalist, an international banker, a venture capitalist, and an educator. He lives in the Hudson Valley with his wife.

Critical Praise

"The setting is superb; the portrayal of the social scene and Argentine mores is understandable. Historic political background is cleverly woven into the story. The characters are clearly defined and are consistent with who they are. This book makes an excellent book club choice, with pertinent questions in the back. We rated this novel five hearts."

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