

Between Midnight and the Rooster's Crow. Nadja Drost,

Reviewed by Melissa G. Wiedenfeld

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As North America thirsts for more and more cheap oil, headlines are more likely to note the "suffering" of American consumers than the real cost of that oil in human and environmental terms. Nadja Drost's award-winning documentary film fills that void. Drost's *Between Midnight and the Rooster's Crow* investigates the operations of EnCana, a Canadian corporation building a heavy crude pipeline (the OCP) through Ecuador. EnCana's pipeline from the Amazon to the Pacific Ocean crosses the earthquake-prone and actively volcanic Andes—a seemingly unstable landscape for something with such potential for a pollution disaster. (The pipeline runs alongside El Reventador, an active volcano that in recent years has erupted several times spewing tons of ash on Quito and surrounding areas.) Drost followed the pipeline from its origin to terminus, interviewing local people, workers, and officials. Along the way she found many skeptical *campesinos* unwilling to sell rights to the land for the pipeline to EnCana. Politically and economically marginalized, Ecuadorians along the pipeline had little choice—accept the pipeline with or without compensation for their land—and no recourse through the courts. Those who chose to protest were attacked and jailed by Ecuadorian police or EnCana's private police. Drost returned to Ecuador to document the post-construction state of affairs along the pipeline corridor. The rural Ecuadorians along the OCP told tales of interrupted water supplies, polluted streams, loss of in-

come and property, and serious health consequences. One village lost its water supply for months, but when restored, the water was no longer potable and contained visible contamination. Villagers showed Drost evidence of the medical problems that now plague the population, particularly children. In the course of her investigations, Drost also traveled to Quito to discuss problems along the pipeline with EnCana executives and employees of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Environment. Not surprisingly, she was routed from one office to another, never receiving any answers for the questions she posed. And not surprisingly, news of the problems rarely filtered to the top of the EnCana corporation. Drost and concerned stockholders even went to the annual stockholder meeting to ask EnCana's CEO about the injustices along the pipeline. Not particularly surprisingly, they received no real answers and their questions were cut off. Drost's film tells an engrossing tale of corporate and governmental irresponsibility. But the film also reflects a naiveté. Did Drost really believe that she would find straight answers or sympathetic officials in Quito? While her quest to document the environmental injustice and aid the *campesinos* is laudable, no real changes resulted. EnCana has since sold the pipeline, but it remains a threat to the environment, and a similar new pipeline to the Amazon is being planned. Yet this criticism should not detract from the overall value of the film. Environmental historians, geographers, and

other academics will find Nadjia Drost's <cite>Between Midnight and the Rooster's Crow</cite> useful in the classroom, whether one is interested in environmental injustice, the human cost of global corporate ventures, or the marginalization of the environment.

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