



Dr. America: The Lives of Thomas A. Dooley, 1927-1961 (Culture, Politics, and the Cold War)

James Fisher

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This book chronicles the life of Tom Dooley, the American doctor whose much-publicized exploits in Vietnam and Laos during the 1950s helped lay the ideological groundwork for the U.S. military intervention a decade later. The scion of an upper-middle-class St. Louis family, Dooley was an enormously complex and fascinating individual. He was a devoutly religious Roman Catholic as well as a self-styled playboy socialite, a devoted physician to the poor and a tireless propagandist for the "Vietnam Lobby," a shameless self-promoter and a closeted homosexual, a victim of Navy persecution and a beneficiary of CIA support. Dooley first gained notoriety as a young Navy doctor charged with overseeing the evacuation of Catholic refugees from North Vietnam in the wake of the 1954 Geneva Accords. His celebrity grew after his book *Deliver Us from Evil*, a fervently anticommunist account of his experiences, was serialized in *Reader's Digest*. By the end of the decade, as his name became associated (albeit mistakenly) with a ballad popularized by the Kingston Trio, he had achieved the status of "America's first pop star saint." In addition to exposing the roots of the Vietnam War, Dooley's story illuminates a broad range of developments in post-World War II United States culture—from the "Americanization" of Catholicism to the rise of the mass media.

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