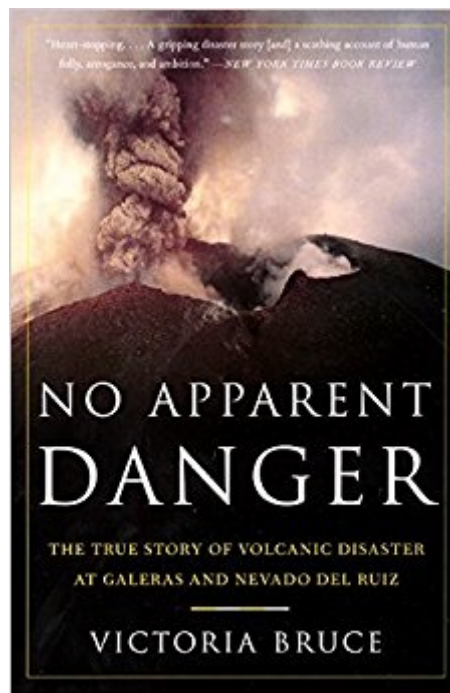




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# No Apparent Danger: The True Story Of Volcanic Disaster At Galeras And Nevado Del Ruiz



## Synopsis

In 1985 in Columbia, more than 23,000 people died due to the government's failure to take seriously scientists' warnings about an imminent volcanic eruption at Nevado del Ruiz. In 1993, at Volc  n Galeras, the death toll was smaller but no less tragic: despite seismic data that foretold possible disaster, an expedition of international scientists proceeded into the volcano. Two hours later, nine people were dead. Expertly detailing the turbulent history of Colombia, Victoria Bruce links together the stories of the heroes, villains, survivors, and victims of these two events. *No Apparent Danger* is a spellbinding account of clashing cultures and the life-and-death consequences of scientific arrogance.

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial; Reprint edition (February 19, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060958901

ISBN-13: 978-0060958909

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 137 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #477,399 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in    Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Geology > Volcanology #35 in    Books > History > Americas > South America > Colombia #84 in    Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Seismology

## Customer Reviews

The fight currently raging within the volcanological community, sketched by the discrepancies between Bruce's work and Stanley Williams and Fen Montaigne's *Surviving Galeras* (reviewed below), concerns what is known about predicting eruptions, and particularly about Galeras when it blew, and why nine people died in that eruption (see PW, Book News, Feb. 12). In Bruce's harrowing depiction of the 1985 Nevado del Ruiz eruption, which killed 23,000 people, scientists and survivors describe bureaucratic foolishness, scientific discovery and human strife. In her presentation of the 1993 eruption of Galeras, another Colombian volcano, numerous interviews illuminate further human folly, and particularly Williams's pariah status among geologists. Seismologist Bernard Chouet's testimony discredits Williams's assertion that there was no warning of the eruption. Previously, Chouet had successfully predicted two eruptions from seismographic

patterns also visible when Galeras erupted. While Williams says this was never brought to his attention, Bruce notes that leading a team into an active volcano without checking available data hardly seems responsible scientific practice. Chouet claims he presented his prediction technique, with Williams present, in 1991. Further, expedition members contend that, despite Galeras's signs of activity, Williams ignored advice to shorten the visit. One survivor says Williams took no safety precautions and mocked his colleagues who wore hard hats. Scientist and journalist Bruce traces the fascinating recent history of Colombian volcanoes and the scientific community's politics, wherein intellectual property generates fame and near-fortune, in an insightful, spellbinding account. Photos and illus. (Apr. 2)Forecast: Bruce's 11-city tour, participation in Columbia University's Earth Science Colloquium in March and the much-publicized Galeras debacle promise big sales.Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In 1993, a Colombian volcano named Galeras erupted, killing six scientists and three tourists inside its rim and severely injuring the expedition's leader, eminent vulcanologist Williams. Could this tragedy have been avoided? Could the eruption have been predicted? Two new books debate those questions from opposite ends of the spectrum. Williams offers a firsthand account of the disaster, which traumatized him physically and psychologically, while Bruce, a science writer with a master's degree in geology, provides an investigative journalist's perspective. Arguing that there is no method of accurately predicting eruptions, Williams defends his actions, and his book reads as a partial apology to the nine who died and to all who were injured. Bruce, who also discusses a 1985 eruption at another Colombian volcano that left 23,000 people dead (studied in a refereed scientific publication by Williams), writes in a more sensational style, accusing Williams of not being a "team player" (for years the scientist claimed he was the only survivor despite evidence to the contrary) and ignoring a seismologist's research indicating that Galeras was ready to explode. However, both authors agree that Marta Calvache and Patty Mothes, two Colombian geologists who ran into the volcano to rescue people, were heroes at Galeras. Williams acknowledges that he owes his life to Calvache's actions. Perhaps the whole story still is not known, but both books read together make a try. Recommended for academic and larger public libraries. Jean E. Crampon, Science & Engineering Lib., Univ. of Southern California, Los Angeles Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This volume describes tense situations at two Colombian volcanoes. One ended in a large disaster

and the other in nine deaths -- including six scientists and three sightseers. I love books about scientists doing science, and this book falls into that genre. This book convincingly corrects the record with respect to a scientist who has apparently claimed credit for work done others and avoided responsibility for errors that led to the deaths of several scientists. The book could have been better organized -- it wasn't always clear where the author wanted to go with this book. I wish the author would have explained a bit more about volcanoes and the work volcanologists do. But over all, both a good read and educational.

The story of Nevado del Ruiz and Galeras have long been of interest to me. I am an amateur geologist with a particular interest in volcanology and have visited most of America's volcanoes and am actually on my way to visit Ruiz in 2 weeks. I thought I knew the story of Galeras. I thought wrong. Mrs. Bruce tells the story of both disasters in vivid, at times horrific detail as it was witnessed through the eyes of the survivors. I found particularly disturbing the method in which Bernard Chouet was literally robbed of his legacy. It is fortunate that Bruce took the initiative to set the record straight and expose the truth in who was really at fault in the tour's tragic results. I myself being a scientist and amateur geologist, am very familiar with Long Period Events and their implications in pending eruptions. I was unaware of the problems at Ruiz with getting the necessary equipment and personnel on the scene to make a difference for Armero. I knew they town had been poorly advised of the coming lahars, but not all the details. The details of the Galeras eruption are particularly heartbreaking. The tragedy was completely avoidable and the details of the deaths and injuries are very graphic. Overall, Bruce does a fantastic job of telling two stories that need to be told and exposing the truth. I would recommend this book to anyone with an interest in geology, volcanoes, and anyone else.

I have always been fascinated by volcanoes having been to Mount St. Helens not long after it erupted so when I saw this book I was very interested. I found this to be well written in such a way that grabs you immediately. It is a story of tragic eruptions and the scientists who study them. One particular scientist whose arrogance caused deaths. His hunger for fame made him distort the facts to make himself a hero. My only complaint is that this scientist is never proven to be the liar that he is to the public.....unless you read this book. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and highly recommend it to anyone fascinated by volcanoes.

This was an amazing story of two volcanoes and how myth and local culture clashed with scientific

research resulting in human loss and tragedy to preserve the local economies reputation and how ego came into play to distort the reports of what happened to further (incorrectly) the reputation of one of the scientists present at an eruption scene

I don't know a lot about volcanoes but this book is a real eye opener. It is also a story about lives lost because one person convinced his team it was safe to go into the volcano. Then to make matters worse he began to tell the story of the eruption as though there were no warnings and he alone came out alive. A sad story of human life lost.

This book presents two tragedies caused by volcanoes in Colombia and how failure to act on best information available led to human tragedy. This book is easy to read and the author keeps your attention throughout the book without getting bogged down in technical jargon.

A well told story of human error, unpredictability of nature, political failure and incompetence, vanity and stupidity, as well as courageous effort of some in the face of such opposition. Very interesting account of events that would often be overlooked or ignored, or blamed on "fate". A reminder of human limitations.

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