FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Africa: The Holocausts of Rwanda and Sudan

Lucien Niemeyer
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Whether more of Africa's burden of suffering results from the Western imperialism that destroyed the continent's traditional governance systems, depleted resources, and destabilized tribal societies, or from age-old local land-and-power quests that drove one tribal or religious group to suppress another will be endlessly debated. But undeniably, Africa is locked into wars—religious, ethnic, and economic—often most vigorously and viciously pursued in marginal regions where basic human survival is precarious.

The author brings a clarity of vision to his searing book; its four accounts—a focused taxonomy of horror—numb the mind. The Rwanda section, capturing the aftermath of the Hutu-on-Tutsi genocide, presents refugees on the road and in camp. All too many are orphans; family units are few. Single men and women, stripped of their livelihoods, project a quiet dignity, a seemingly infinite capacity to absorb suffering. Many face life's saddest moments, like a child's slow death from hunger. Yet many also project a latent strength, a capacity to begin life—to work, to hope—if the chance is granted. Surprisingly, smiles are not entirely absent: a man celebrates possession of a goat; a woman takes comfort in her pipe.

Equally horrific is the continuing barbaric assault of almost entirely Muslim northern Sudan on the nation's primarily Christian southern region. Niemeyer powerfully portrays what the UN and the international community are unwilling to discuss and impotent to stop: the firing of Christian communities, the slaughter of males, and the enslavement and sexual abuse of women and children. Here Niemeyer's camera captures not death but redemption: thousands of women and children being bought out of slavery while Muslim intermediaries count the cash—raised through an effort headed by the Swiss.

Niemeyer then takes the reader to the Bentiu oil fields in the Nuer and Dinka region. The Sudan's government in Khartoum simply declared a *jihad*: Sudan was to be an Islamic nation. Some two million have died in the region—where in the early 1990s Osama bin Laden prepared the ground and polished his killing skills. Niemeyer's final section addresses the Khartoum government's campaign to exterminate the Nuba Mountains people, who lived in a productive

agricultural region—and who put up a well-orchestrated and successful military resistance.

To see these appalling Sudan situations strictly as Muslims butchering Christians is incorrect: Niemeyer points out that northern “brown” Muslims are relentlessly killing southern “black” Muslims: racism overrides religion. He pays much-deserved tribute to the many heroic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that run life-saving missions in highly dangerous circumstances. He also celebrates the sheer, vibrant humanity of the survivors: somehow, despite their suffering, many have retained hope. Children look up trustingly, women radiate a quiet strength, men seek to provide. These are Africa’s hope, together with the NGOs and crusading humanitarians like Niemeyer, who strive to waken the world’s conscience.