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Subject: Some Good Books . . .

Posted by [elektrartig](#) on Tue, 20 Apr 2004 21:56:09 GMT

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but gut-wrenching, so beware. I've been on an African kick this winter: Philip Gourevich, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* -- A powerful account of the genocide in Rwanda, in which 800,000 Tutsis and "moderate" Hutus were hacked to death in 100 days, the reaction of (read: abandonment by) the international community, the heroic efforts of local UN commander Romeo Dallaire and those few of his troops who were not withdrawn after the violence started, and the ambivalent role after the slaughter ended of aid organizations, which were basically shielding and supplying the murderers, allowing them to pose a threat to Tutsis in eastern Congo/Zaire (abutting western Rwanda) and to the new Rwandan government. Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* -- One of the finest books I have ever read, and a book that should be read by every American who has ever given more than two seconds thought to the circumstances in which America should intervene in foreign mass murders. We say "Never Again", but genocide has occurred repeatedly this century -- Armenia, Cambodia, Iraq, Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo. The author documents how, over and over again, bureaucrats and politicians of both parties have, at best, done nothing (with few exceptions) to prevent ethnic slaughter. Whether you ultimately agree with her thesis or not, she makes a powerful argument that the US should do more, up to and including the use of military force, if necessary. This book has me doubting many -- most? -- all? -- of my foreign policy preconceptions. You won't be able to sleep at night, but it has to be read. Paul Theroux, *Dark Star Safari: Overland from Cairo to Cape Town* -- I am not a big Theroux fan, but this is a sad and funny description of his overland journey down the eastern coast of Africa. Having (one learns in the book) thought many years earlier in Malawi, Theroux finds both joy in meeting interesting and friendly people but ultimately more sorrow in the corruption and lawlessness, and resulting decay, he repeatedly encounters. Contemplating these developments, he develops a hypothesis that international aid is doing more harm than good. Not as good a book as the other two, but well-written and on the other hand it's a somewhat lighter read.

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