



A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide

By Samantha Power

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Winner of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize For General Nonfiction National Book Critics Circle Award Winner

In her award-winning interrogation of the last century of American history, Samantha Power -- a former Balkan war correspondent and founding executive director of Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy -- asks the haunting question: Why do American leaders who vow "never again" repeatedly fail to stop genocide? Drawing upon exclusive interviews with Washington's top policy makers, access to newly declassified documents, and her own reporting from the modern killing fields, Power provides the answer in "A Problem from Hell" -- a groundbreaking work that tells the stories of the courageous Americans who risked their careers and lives in an effort to get the United States to act.

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A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide By Samantha Power Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #768446 in Books
- Brand: Harper Perennial
- Published on: 2003-05-06
- Released on: 2003-05-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.17" h x 6.40" w x 7.88" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 644 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

During the three years (1993-1996) Samantha Power spent covering the grisly events in Bosnia and Srebrenica, she became increasingly frustrated with how little the United States was willing to do to counteract the genocide occurring there. After much research, she discovered a pattern: "The United States had never in its history intervened to stop genocide and had in fact rarely even made a point of condemning it as it occurred," she writes in this impressive book. Debunking the notion that U.S. leaders were unaware of the horrors as they were occurring against Armenians, Jews, Cambodians, Iraqi Kurds, Rwandan Tutsis, and Bosnians during the past century, Power discusses how much was known and when, and argues that much human suffering could have been alleviated through a greater effort by the U.S. She does not claim that the U.S. alone could have prevented such horrors, but does make a convincing case that even a modest effort would have had significant impact. Based on declassified information, private papers, and interviews with more than 300 American policymakers, Power makes it clear that a lack of political will was the most significant factor for this failure to intervene. Some courageous U.S. leaders did work to combat and call attention to ethnic cleansing as it occurred, but the vast majority of politicians and diplomats ignored the issue, as did the American public, leading Power to note that "no U.S. president has ever suffered politically for his indifference to its occurrence. It is thus no coincidence that genocide rages on." This powerful book is a call to make such indifference a thing of the past. --*Shawn Carkonen*

From Publishers Weekly

Power, a former journalist for U.S. News and World Report and the Economist and now the executive director of Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights, offers an uncompromising and disturbing examination of 20th-century acts of genocide and U.S. responses to them. In clean, unadorned prose, Power revisits the Turkish genocide directed at Armenians in 1915-1916, the Holocaust, Cambodia's Khmer Rouge, Iraqi attacks on Kurdish populations, Rwanda, and Bosnian "ethnic cleansing," and in doing so, argues that U.S. intervention has been shamefully inadequate. The emotional force of Power's argument is carried by moving, sometimes almost unbearable stories of the victims and survivors of such brutality. Her analysis of U.S. politics what she casts as the State Department's unwritten rule that nonaction is better than action with a PR backlash; the Pentagon's unwillingness to see a moral imperative; an isolationist right; a suspicious left and a population unconcerned with distant nations aims to show how ingrained inertia is, even as she argues that the U.S. must reevaluate the principles it applies to foreign policy choices. In the face of firsthand accounts of genocide, invocations of geopolitical considerations and studied and repeated refusals to accept the reality of genocidal campaigns simply fail to convince, she insists. But Power also sees signs that the fight against genocide has made progress. Prominent among those who made a difference are Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who invented the word genocide and who lobbied the U.N. to make genocide the subject of an international treaty, and Senator William Proxmire, who for 19 years spoke every day on the floor of the U.S. Senate to urge the U.S. to ratify the U.N. treaty inspired by Lemkin's work. This is a well-researched and powerful study that is both a history and a call to action. Photos.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

In the wake of the Holocaust, United States policymakers have been rhetorically committed to the idea of preventing genocide, and yet they have consistently failed to back up their words with actions. Although

Power begins her magisterial chronicle of failure with the Turkish extermination of the Armenians during the First World War, she concentrates on America's recent reluctance to intervene in the mass slaughter of civilians in Iraq, Bosnia, and Rwanda. She argues that had the U.S. done so—particularly in Bosnia and Rwanda—it could have averted the murder of tens or hundreds of thousands; instead, geopolitical considerations, indifference, and worries over domestic support trumped American ideals. Though clearly imbued with a sense of outrage, Power is judicious in her portraits of those who opposed intervention, and keenly aware of the perils and costs of military action. Her indictment of U.S. policy is therefore all the more damning.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brian Freeman:

Here thing why this kind of A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide are different and reputable to be yours. First of all studying a book is good however it depends in the content from it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide giving you information deeper and in different ways, you can find any reserve out there but there is no reserve that similar with A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your own personal eyes about the thing in which happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. It is easy to bring everywhere like in park, café, or even in your way home by train. When you are having difficulties in bringing the imprinted book maybe the form of A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide in e-book can be your alternate.

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Augusta Wilson:

Exactly why? Because this A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap this but latter it will surprise you with the secret it inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who write the book in such incredible way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book get such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

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