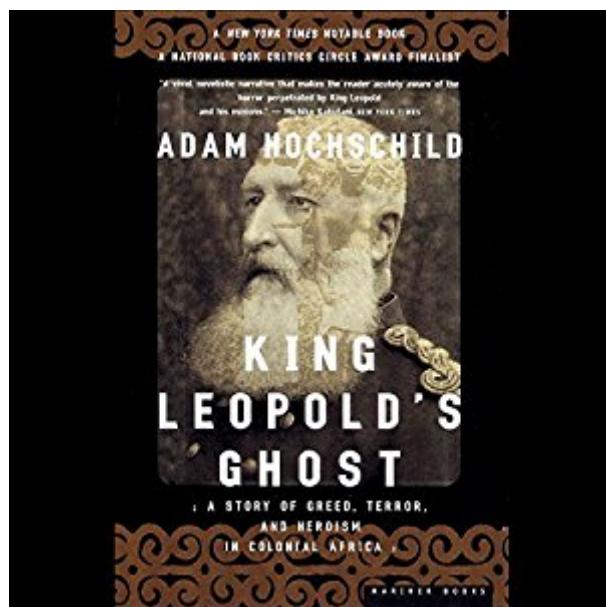


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King Leopold's Ghost: A Story Of Greed, Terror, And Heroism In Colonial Africa



Synopsis

In the late 1890s, Edmund Dene Morel, a young British shipping company agent, noticed something strange about the cargoes of his company's ships as they arrived from and departed for the Congo, Leopold II's vast new African colony. Incoming ships were crammed with valuable ivory and rubber. Outbound ships carried little more than soldiers and firearms. Correctly concluding that only slave labor on a vast scale could account for these cargoes, Morel resigned from his company and almost singlehandedly made Leopold's slave-labor regime the premier human rights story in the world. Thousands of people packed hundreds of meetings throughout the United States and Europe to learn about Congo atrocities. Two courageous black Americans - George Washington Williams and William Sheppard - risked much to bring evidence to the outside world. Roger Casement, later hanged by Britain as a traitor, conducted an eye-opening investigation of the Congo River stations. Sailing into the middle of the story was a young steamboat officer named Joseph Conrad. And looming over all was Leopold II, King of the Belgians, sole owner of the only private colony in the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

So I don't usually do leave reviews of books but I had to this time. I bought this book about 8 months ago but I read the last few weeks only and I think it was the perfect timing with what is going on in my life right now as I'm making big choices concerning my future right now. If I didn't read this book right I probably would have missed on what might just be my life goal and something I plan on focusing for a good part of my life once I get more ready for it. I know this is not much of a book review as of now but I just wanted to show how much the story of my people have affected me and

how I really want to do something about all the suffering that have been going and keeps on happening now. I myself grew up in Kinshasa, my dad was an army colonel who fought against Mobutu in the 90's and had to flee the country for a few years because of that. This year (2017) I'm about tombe 18 and I surprised that it's only now that I get to know the story of my people and what that so-called King Léopold II have done. Throughout my read I came to decide that one day I want to be a change in my countries history too, a positive change, I want to be the African voice to change the Congo and make it one of the great countries. I know I sound a little too exited now and kind of dreaming but I'm still a kid so I guess it's okay right? One day hopefully once I do start making a change someone finds this "review" and call me out on it.

King Leopold's ghost tells the story of exploitation, and suffering in the Congo as well the human rights movement to stop many of the abuses. Overall an excellent and engaging read for anyone interested in learning about a largely overlooked aspect of colonial history.

King Leopold's Ghost contains a great deal of history not found elsewhere. I learned a great deal. The book was, however, repetitive, especially of anything the writer disapproved, and a bit hateful, I suppose because he viewed the king from the mores of a century later and through a different lens than rulers of his generation saw themselves.

This is the first book I've read about the Congo colony and King Leopold of Belgium. What an eye opener! The cruelty and degradation. The bestiary of the colonists against the natives was astounding. This is an excellently written book that does not sugar coat anything. I would highly recommend it.

This book was excellent. Unimaginable cruelty and a total disregard for other human beings. Through greed and the obsession with power, 10 million human beings were killed, beheaded, hands and/or feet dismembered. I believe 98% of the folks on earth have NO idea of this man's atrocities.

Hochschild is an excellent writer of history. By letting major characters tell the story through their writings and diaries he lays out the world of greed and unspeakable torture of Belgium Congo. But this story could have been told about any of the colonial powers who exploited Africa for their resources and wealth, all under the guise of their own sense of being the superior race.

A fascinating, fact-filled account of how Leopold II of Belgium's desire for "a colony" grew into a global business enterprise that exploited lands around the Congo and brutalized millions of Congolese, some 10 million of whom died at the hands of Belgian mercenaries between 1904 and 1910. In addition to profiling Leopold throughout his life and reign, the book draws in other key figures in the story of African colonization. Henry M. "Dr. Livingstone, I presume" Stanley, a Welsh orphan who escaped to America where he became a journalist and steamboat captain, is one of the book's main subjects. Stanley served as a Congo "promoter" and agent for Leopold for many years. Irish diplomat and nationalist Roger Casement, who worked for Stanley, went to the Congo in 1884 to supervise construction of a railroad from the ocean up the river to the interior rubber plantations. Later he issued a scathing report on the brutalities inflicted by government and corporate overseers. Other figures -- crusader Edmund Morel, writer Joseph Conrad, Secretary of State Elihu Root, Sen. Nelson Aldrich, and many other international political figures -- all appear in the history.

Hochschild is a patient storyteller which is what he needed to be to present such a terrifying and hitherto unknown (to me) piece of history. He not only tells the story of the genocide against the Congolese, but also tries to figure out why some horrors make it into the minds and hearts of peoples across the seas (as it did in early 19c with the help of whistleblowers) and other horrors remain unknown. He describes, rightly, I think, King Leopold as a sociopath way ahead of his time in his use of humanitarian double speak to cover up his terrible doings in the Congo. He points out that this is the same method used today by the US in its "defense" of actions in the middle east.

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