

The Obscure Massacre: Blood in Central Africa

By C. L. Sulzberger

James Reston is vacationing

LONDON — "Nothing," Voltaire wrote, "is more annoying than to be obscurely hanged"—nothing, we may add in this enlightened century, than to be obscurely massacred. In the absence of any newspaper or TV men around to record what may be going on, one might say cynically that it is decreasingly attractive to die for a cause.



It is the unpleasant fate of

Tutsi minority and seized control of the government; Rwanda's emigre Tutsis promptly formed a terrorist organization called Inyenzi, or Cockroaches, and blood has been flowing copiously since.

Only fragments of this ghastly tale have penetrated to the outer world. Neither Bujumbura nor Kigala, the respective Burundian and Rwandan capitals, teems with newspapermen. And even after the latest tribal bash began in April, it took weeks before serious information began to seep out.

The world has paid minimal attention to the grizzly holocaust; there is simply no com-

It is the unpleasant fate of the Tutsi and Hutu people who together make up almost the entire population of tiny Burundi and Rwanda in Central Africa that for the better part of 13 years they have been chopping each other up on a disagreeably massive scale. But they have exceeded all past records for bloodiness during the period since April 29 in Burundi.

A KIND of double genocide has been applied intermittently between rival tribes. President Micombero estimated in Bujumbura that between 50,000 and 100,000 persons have been slaughtered so far and there are still high estimates. Considering Burundi has a population of only about 3 million, even the minimal figure is astounding.

The two ministates (Rwanda has about another 2 million inhabitants) have similar histories and also virtually the same population ratio: about

same population ratio: about 84 per cent Hutu, 15 per cent Tutsi and 1 per cent Twa. They were both attached closely to the Belgian Congo (now Zaire) prior to its liberation and were administered by colonial officials from Brussels.

Their joint condition has never been strikingly modern or enlightened. Slavery was abolished in only 1923! The gross national product of either country approximates what U. S. children spend annually on bubble gum. And human relationships between the strikingly different tribes are and have usually been bitter.

The dominant Tutsi minority is shrewd, proud, cruel and enormously tall. The Hutu are tiny, patient, hard-working, irascible; they comprised most of the slaves. The Twa are greedy, uninhibited, dwarflike and rarely seen.

Rwanda, unlike Burundi, expelled a large proportion of its

caust; there is simply no comparison between the heed accorded to this tragedy and the Indonesian killings of 1966, or Vietnam. The Chinese have shrewdly showed much interest in this strategically located area at Africa's heart, but most other countries don't know it exists.

Eight years ago, I visited an Earnest mission school in Rwanda, near Gitarama. The teachers told me both Tutsi and Hutu boys were there but after the (then) recent troubles many Tutsi boys had been slaughtered and the two tribal groups of students had split up. A Tutsi had been staked out on a nearby hillside and his hands and feet lopped off.

AT THIS stage, a real race (call it tribal) war is going on to the death and very few newspapers or liberals, who get exercised about more widely advertised killings, seem to be paying sufficient attention. Surely it is time for

attention. Surely it is time for the UN or the Red Cross to move in there on a dramatic scale.

It is in interest of every human being to stop the slaughter. It might be stressed that, while ancient race questions are at stake, regardless of differing size or skin pigmentation, the color of everybody's blood is red.

Burundi and Rwanda are backward countries. They are probably not backward simply because they spent years as colonies under European tutelage, but also because their traditional society had been unimpressive. Now it is high time for bodies like the UN to recognize that political liberty alone is not an adequate substitute for the previous foreign thrall. Money, trade, education—and the glare of publicity showing what is really going on are the imperative requirements of decolonialism's second stage.