

A harrowing portrait of Africa

The Leopard's Dance

LIEVE JORIS

A century has passed since Joseph Conrad wrote his *Heart of Darkness*, yet the Congo is still as hard to fathom as ever. All the problems of post-colonial Africa seem to rage there in exaggerated form. Ten years after her highly praised 'Back to the Congo', Lieve Joris was brave enough to return during a particularly precarious moment in Congolese history.

Few recent books have so authentically captured the mood of post-colonial Africa.

TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

When she arrived in the capital of the Congo in 1997, Kabila's army of children had just entered Kinshasa after a seven months' march. Everyone was holding their breath to see what was going to happen to a nation that President Mobutu had systematically robbed of its wealth and then left to its own devices. While politicians were engaged in a desperate power struggle, the inhabitants of Kinshasa had to face trigger-happy soldiers from the east. In this uprooted town Lieve Joris went in search of old friends.

'The Leopard's Dance' shows what lies behind the television reels about one of Africa's largest nations; hers is a harrowing portrait of a threatened land, but at the same time an act of homage to a people who have mastered the art of survival like no other nation in Africa.

For years we have been without a major book about Africa. Lieve Joris's book fills this painful, rather disgraceful void.

RYSZARD KAPUCZINSKI



AUTHOR



Lieve Joris (b. 1953) has built an international reputation as a writer of nonfiction, with books about the Middle East, Africa and Hungary. She emerges as an engaged observer, able to convey the atmosphere of postcolonial Africa with great authenticity. She has the astonishing gift of being able to unite the broad picture with its details, somehow managing to combine analysis and storytelling without ever losing the thread of either. *Photo © Atlas Contact*

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