



Special Edition

April, 2009

Genocide in Rwanda

A Collection of Analyses, Reflections and Thoughts for the Fifteenth Anniversary



A publication of the



University for Peace



For Reprints and Permissions please contact:

The Peace and Conflict Monitor

University for Peace

San Jose, Costa Rica

Ross Ryan, Managing Editor

editor@monitor.upeace.org

Compiled and Designed by Elliot Waring

University for Peace © 2009

Contents

Editorial
Remembering Rwanda
Ross Ryan.....5

Opinion
The Rwandan Identity in the Eyes of the Foreigner: “Are you Hutu or Tutsi?”
Jean Bosco Habyarimana.....6

Environmental Analysis
The Rwanda 1994 Genocide: Conceiving the Inconceivable
Prunelle Thibault-Bédard.....9

Interview
No Small Mercy: How a Rwandan genocide survivor made peace with the man who almost killed her
Jina Moore, reviewed by Jean Bosco Habyarimana.....18

Essay
Some Similarities Between the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1923, and the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda
Jean Bosco Habyarimana.....27

Analysis
Memory and denial: The Rwandan genocide fifteen years on
Gerald Caplan.....31

In The News
Congolese and Rwandan Forces Should Make Protecting Civilians a Priority
Human Rights Watch.....35

Film Review
Sometimes in April: When one fails, we all fail
Elliot Waring.....38

Book Review
Machete Season
Sam Wolf.....41

Poetry
I have been to Nyamata
Chipchedenga Mercy Jumo.....44

<u>Diaries</u>	
Three tales of Rwandan Genocide <i>Collected by Ferdinand Katendeko</i>	46
<u>Comment</u>	
Ignoring Genocide, One More Time <i>Benjamin Hess</i>	51

Remembering Rwanda

Ross Ryan

Editorial

Rwanda is a small country, but it occupies a central place in the discourse of peace and conflict studies, illustrating the full range of the human capacity for violence, as well as forgiveness and reconciliation. The events surrounding the 1994 genocide have also given peace and conflict theorists a lot to think about in terms of causes and drivers of the conflict, among them: the legacy of colonialism in Africa, political and economic instability in the region, the role of the Rwandan media in fueling ethnic tension and inciting violence, the world media which turned its attention elsewhere while the months of killing passed, France's support for the Habyarimana government, various issues of scarcity, and the failure of the United Nations to recognize the conflict as a genocide and intervene.

Debates about the relative importance of these and other factors have led to the publication of many thoughtful and articulate articles on the subject, many of which have enriched our understanding of conflict and strengthened our resolve for peace. This special edition of the *Peace and Conflict Monitor* is a collection of such articles, some of them new and others from our archives, all of which share this resolve. Beyond the diversity of authors and perspectives, they point to at least two common conclusions.

The first is that responsibility for the 1994 genocide cannot be limited to a certain place or group of people. There is no question that those who took part in the violence must take responsibility for their actions, but it is important to recognize that they are connected to regional and international structures of power and powerlessness, some of which have merely continued patterns of division and exploitation established in Rwanda during the era of direct European imperialism. There are other points to consider as well, such as the many parallels between the Rwandan genocide and instances of extreme ethnic discrimination and violence in other parts of the world, and the millions of people who stood by in silence and allowed such tragedies to go on. There is no escape from the conclusion that forgetfulness and division must give way to remembrance and solidarity.

Equally clear is that the way forward from here is through forgiveness and reconciliation. Holding onto the bitterness of revenge can only lead backwards, to more discrimination and violence, to more pain and sorrow. Again, this is not limited to Rwanda; all nations and ethnicities are faced with this challenge. It is not hard to see that some of the most belligerent groups today believe themselves to be carrying out some sort of historical justice, or at least justified in their actions by historical wrongs against their own kind. Whether or not they are responding to legitimate grievances, however, today's violence will almost certainly fuel tomorrow's revenge. It is a monumental challenge, but that cycle must be broken.

When we begin with reconciliation, rather than revenge, our shared humanity becomes obvious – and our shared desire for justice is just another step behind. It will take some maturity on our part, but we must find ways to forgive each other, and settle our differences without falling into the trap of violence. Let us take this lesson from our remembrance of the Rwandan genocide: we have much more in common with each other than we have differences – a fact which we ignore at our peril.

The Rwandan Identity in the Eyes of the Foreigner: “Are you Hutu or Tutsi?”

Jean Bosco Habyarimana

Opinion



Believe it or not, if you are Rwandan and publicly declare it (because there are some who might have chosen not to for their own reasons), you will be asked to say whether you are Hutu or Tutsi any time you happen to visit several countries in the world. This sort of identification takes root from the time when colonialists invented and changed African identities to create a “divide and conquer” system. In the case of Rwanda, it is very important to prove that

Rwandans were united before the colonist’s arrival. Many people who are currently writing about the killings during the genocide and massacres which took place in Rwanda as early as 1959 tend to describe these events as based on bad relations or hatred between Hutus and Tutsis before the White People’s arrival (Office of the President of the Republic of Rwanda, 1999).

In addition, I have come to believe that the question of whether a Rwandan is a Hutu or a Tutsi is the result of the same colonial construction of Rwandan identity that has made all Rwandans to be looked at in the spectrum of two different ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis. There is a persistent notion that these two groups have always hated one another and cannot live together without killing each other, because they are totally different. The situation is presented as if living together would only be possible between homogeneous or identical groups as it was preached by Adolf Hitler in his book *Mein Kampf*.

If one looks at what happened in 1994 for example, it is true that extremist Hutus stood against their neighbours, friends, relatives, etc, and killed them. However, limiting or basing the analysis of these atrocities on the so called hatred between Hutus and Tutsis is promoting discrimination and divisionism based on genocide ideology. It says that peace is impossible among Rwandans, among Africans as it has been said several times, and among human beings at large because all countries of the universe are inhabited by different groups, or at least different people. Fortunately, the reality on the ground shows that despite their differences, human beings have always been able to live together peacefully, and whenever violent conflicts have occurred among them, it is the same human beings who have been able to transform them, and reinstall peace after violence.

History shows that, centuries before colonization, Rwanda existed as a well structured kingdom inhabited by Hutus (considered as peasants), Tutsis (defined as pastoralists) and a small minority of pygmoid Twa. In the report of the Committee set up by the then President of the Republic, Pasteur Bizimungu, on June 27, 1998, to study the issue of unity of Rwandans, members of this Committee reported that before colonization all Rwandans (Hutus, Tutsis, Twas) made up all together what Rwandan ancestors called “The King’s People”, and all of them knew they were Rwandans, that Rwanda was their country, that nobody could say they had rights to it more than others. The report adds that Rwandans believed Rwanda belonged to the King (the owner of the country), but also

that the King (the crux of the country) was supported by warriors who were supposed to be all Rwandans. This report continues that all Rwandans liked their country, felt that they shared the Rwandese nationality, and did not identify themselves as Hutus, Twas or Tutsis, because they had their own clans which contained Tutsis, Twas and Hutus.

Analysing the French specialist in history, Louis de Lacger, the report says that this historian was astonished by the way Rwandans of the 1930s were characterized by feeling that they were sharing the same country and really liked it (Patriotism/Patriotisme). For this writer, one element that was at the origin of that patriotism was the existence of one single language, Kinyarwanda, which is, up to now, spoken by all Rwandans all over the country. Indeed, De Lacger (1959) described Rwandans as indigenous of one country that have the feeling of forming one people, the Banyarwanda, which gives the name to this territory. De Lacger continues that this feeling is the same as the one noticed in civilized people who are attached to their land, to their family, to their district, and most importantly to their entire territory obeying to a same prince.

In his book, *Rwanda: Responsibilities for a Genocide*, Luc de Heusch (1995) discusses that before colonization the opposition between the Tutsi and the Hutu was evidently not a “racial problem”. This author adds that this opposition was the ideologies of colonizers who presented it in this fallacious way. I agree with Heusch that before colonization, Tutsi and Hutu were two strongly endogamous social classes, which was the reason why two phenotypes appeared quite frequently in each group. Not only Heusch, but also Ian and Jane Linden (1997) state that ‘ethnicity’, which was common in Europe for the nobility of a supposedly homogenous society to present class differences as if they had biological bases, can hardly be used as an objective description of the differences between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa in Rwanda.

That was the true identity of Rwandans before “the white man” western missionaries constructed and imposed what was going to be the unfortunate new ethnic identities of Rwandans. As mentioned by Caplan in *Univeristy for Peace* (2005), there has never been any violent conflict reported to have happened between the groups of Rwandans before colonization. Despite the fact that the identification of these three caste-like social classes with three races is patently senseless (Heusch, op cit), it was this false “racial question” that the so-called Hutu social revolutionists of 1959 used to define the minority Tutsi as oppressors and invaders, and engage in killing and expelling them out of the country instead of claiming the independence for all of Rwanda from the colonizers. The Belgian colonizers who had previously constructed, developed and strengthened the supremacy of the Tutsi elite, will not hesitate to back this new ideology of discrimination that will lead to a planned genocide inspired by a racist ideology.

Therefore, it is important to understand that Hutus and Tutsis are colonial constructed ethnic categorizations of Rwandans, and that there was not and there is no cultural, religious, linguistic, etc distinction among Rwandans, be they considered Hutus, Tutsis or Twas. The pre-colonial period indicates clearly that all Rwandans lived peacefully together, which proves that they are not naturally pre-determined to kill each other. In addition, what happened in Rwanda in 1994 should not be isolated from the current world’s incapacity to promote the culture of peace, because more than a million innocent Rwandans would not have been killed if the whole world had not kept silent, if the so called powerful countries through the United Nations did not decide to withdraw peace keepers leaving those poor black Tutsis and some Hutus in the hands of killers

whose well defined and known mission was to make sure future generations did not see a Tutsi in Rwanda. Last but not least, it is equally important for Rwandans to own their history, be it bad or good, as one people, because dividing themselves is the same curse that led them to what happened in 1994.

References

- De Lacger, L. (1995). *Ruanda Ancien et Ruanda Moderne*. In Rwanda Military Academy (2007). NUR Second Ingando, Ruhengeri: RMA.
- Heusch, L. (1995). *Rwanda: Responsibilities for a Genocide*. Retrieved May 5th, 2009, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2783105.pdf>
- Linden, I. and Linden, J. (1997). *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*. Retrieved May 5th, 2009, from <http://books.google.co.cr/books>
- Office of the President of the Republic of Rwanda (1999). Retrieved May 5th from <http://www.grandslacs.net/doc/2379.pdf>
- University for Peace (2005). *The Role of the Media in the Rwandan Genocide, Short Readings*, 3. San Jose, C.R.: University for Peace, 2005.

The Rwanda 1994 Genocide: Conceiving the Inconceivable

Prunelle Thibault-Bédard

Environmental Analysis

November 11 2006

The relatively recent development of the environmental security field allowed for the addition of a new level of analysis to the study of conflicts, thus reducing the risk of simplistic causal explanations bound to mislead policy making. However, enthusiastic adepts of the field should be careful not to repeat the same simplification mistake in their work. Strict Malthusian arguments holding that overpopulation and resource scarcity unavoidably lead to social conflict and communal violence fail to take into account coping strategies or the “intervening steps by which rural distress [can be] translated into political action”¹.

Keeping in mind the multifaceted nature of conflicts, this paper explores the contribution that the environmental security field can make to explaining one of the most tragic manifestations of communal violence: the 1994 Rwanda genocide. With regard to the various causes of the genocide outlined by scholars, what role have human-induced environmental change and population change played, if any, in causing the Rwandan genocide? This paper suggests a two-fold answer. First, it contends that environmental scarcity in Rwanda was a necessary yet not sufficient cause of the 1994 genocide. Consequently, explanatory theories of the Rwanda genocide, although they may successfully underline other necessary causes, are satisfactory to the extent that they explicitly or implicitly recognize the contributory role played by land scarcity in setting the stage for the tragedy. Second, it argues that this contributory role can only be accurately understood if looked at through the livelihood analytical lens.

To support this argument, three widely defended explanations of the Rwanda genocide will be assessed against the backdrop of the land degradation/population pressure dynamic. These explanations are: environmental scarcity, elite manipulation and historical ethnic divide.² But first, an account of the importance of land in Rwanda’s social organisation is necessary in order to understand the impact of the human-induced environmental change and population change variables on the livelihoods of Rwandans.

The Importance of Land to Livelihoods in Rwanda

Discussing land scarcity in Rwanda necessarily involves a discussion of livelihood. Rwanda is one of the least urbanized countries in Africa.³ Seemingly going against the urbanization trend that characterized the twentieth century, Rwanda saw its annual urban growth rate decrease from 5.6% in the 1955-1960 period to 4.9% between

1 David Newbury, “Ecology and the Politics of Genocide: Rwanda 1994” (1999) 22:4 *Cultural Survival Quarterly* n.p. [Newbury]

2 This typology is strongly inspired from Peter Uvin’s identification of the three main paradigms used by authors to explain the genocide: elite manipulation, ecological resource scarcity, and sociopsychological features of the perpetrators. See Peter Uvin, *Reading the Rwandan Genocide* (2001) 3:3 *International Studies Review* 75, 79. [Uvin]

3 Newbury, *supra* note 1, n.p.

1985 and 1990.⁴ The result is a deeply agrarian society, in which 95% of the active population derives its livelihood from the production of food crop and land is the most important asset one can hold.⁵ Consequently, Rwandans' relative wealth is almost always directly proportional to the amount of land they own. Even the few urban dwellers and off farm workers cannot claim to be independent from the agriculture economy, as their nourishment depends on supplies sent by relatives in rural areas and their job security depends on the disposable income of an agricultural clientele.⁶ The importance of agriculture, and thus of land, in Rwanda is not only domestic but also national. The state itself relies largely on agricultural exports to ensure its revenues, with coffee and tea production alone accounting for up to 80% of exports and 60% of government revenues.⁷

Because of this predominantly agricultural economy, human-induced environmental change and population change have a direct bearing on Rwandans' livelihood. In the years leading to the genocide, both factors were following trends that increasingly jeopardized the capacity of the land to sustain farming households. After years of abundance due to expansion of croplands area and reduction in fallow periods, over-cultivation and soil erosion finally culminated in diminishing soil fertility.⁸ The loss of wetlands and watershed following the plantation of eucalyptus, as well as several droughts in the 1980s and 1990s only aggravated the situation. Coupled with economic factors such as the fall of exports price, the dismantling of governmental agricultural services and structural adjustment policies,⁹ in less than a decade environmental degradation pushed Rwanda out of the top per capita food producers in Africa and back to a famine-fearing level.¹⁰

This supply-induced scarcity was exacerbated by demand-induced and structural scarcities, both largely due to population change. In 1993, Rwanda's population density and population growth rate were the highest in Africa, with approximately 290 persons per square kilometre, for a total population of 7.5 million people.¹¹ As mentioned above, the livelihood of almost the entire population depended completely on agriculture production and consequently put high pressure on the land. Population movements added to this pressure. Farmers in search of better land and thousands of people internally displaced as a result of the civil war contributed to worsening land and resources scarcity by moving to ecologically fragile upland and arid areas.¹² The population pressure on the

4 Valerie Percival and Thomas Homer-Dixon, "The Case of Rwanda" in Thomas Homer-Dixon and Jessica Blitt, eds., *Ecoviolence: Links Among Environment, Population and Security*, New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998, 201, 206. [Percival and Homer-Dixon]

5 Jean Bigagaza, Carolyne Abong and Cecile Mukaruguga, "Land Scarcity, Distribution and Conflict in Rwanda" in J. Lind and K. Sturman, eds., *Scarcity and Surfeit: The Ecology of Africa's Conflicts*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2002, 50, 56. [Bigagaza, Abong and Mukaruguga]

6 Newbury, *supra* note 1, n.p.

7 *Ibidem*.

8 Percival and Homer-Dixon, *supra* note 4, 205.

9 Catherine André and Jean-Philippe Platteau, "Land Relations under Unbearable Stress: Rwanda Caught in the Malthusian Trap" (1998) 34:1 *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization* 1, 3. [André and Platteau]

10 Leif Ohlsson, *Environmental Scarcity and Conflict: A Study of Malthusian Concerns* (Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University, 1999) [unpublished, online: Padrigu.gu.se <<http://www.padrigu.gu.se/ohlsson/files/4Rwanda.pdf>>], 93.

11 Percival and Homer-Dixon, *supra* note 4, 206.

12 *Ibid.*, 208.

land was such that the Habyarimana government used it as a reason to refuse refugees from the 1959-1963 revolution the right to return to Rwanda. In addition to an average decrease in the size of landholdings, the 1980 and 1990 decades saw a rise in the inequality of land distribution.¹³ This structural scarcity was largely due to what Baechler refers to as environmental discrimination, i.e. the embedding of discriminatory rules within the tenure and inheritance structures, the operation of which over time leads to increasing inequality in favour of the rulers. This institutionalized form of resource capture ultimately allowed the Rwandan ruling elite to exclude other groups from access to and use of resources.¹⁴ On a shorter term scale, the centrality of land to wealth also led to punctual resource capture, as people benefiting from complementary income would logically invest it in the purchase of land from economically distressed people, thus depriving the latter from their only valuable asset.¹⁵

The result of these environmental and demographic trends “was that income earned by farmers declined, that the number and proportion of extremely poor farmers increased, and that many young people were unable to afford marriage and foresaw a bleak future for themselves.”¹⁶ This shows the direct relationship between land, livelihood and wealth in Rwanda, a relationship that must be kept in mind when analysing the various theses aimed at explaining the Rwanda genocide.

Explaining the Rwanda Genocide – Environmental Scarcity

The environmental scarcity explanation poses land scarcity as the necessary root cause of the genocide. Whether it is also presented as a sufficient cause depends on the type of argument involved. In his exhaustive review of the literature on the Rwanda genocide, Peter Uvin identifies two ways in which the relationship between resource scarcity and conflict has been conceptualized: the hard and the soft Malthusian argument.¹⁷ According to the hard Malthusian argument, social conflict and communal violence are the unavoidable outcomes of overpopulation and land scarcity. Authors adhering to this deterministic approach, such as Robert Kaplan in his article “The Coming Anarchy”¹⁸, have been criticized for their reductionist and consequently inaccurate view of the complex circumstances giving rise to the genocide.¹⁹ The review of the elite manipulation and historical ethnic divide theories, below, will show that these critiques are justified considering the other necessary causes of the genocide that these theories have enlightened. A more nuanced yet still deterministic approach has been suggested by André and Platteau who argue that the “Malthusian trap” is bound to create serious social strains and stresses, and to establish the climate of violence that allowed for the genocide to happen.²⁰ However, this approach does not explain why the stress caused by resource scarcity was translated into violence rather than usual coping mechanisms, especially

13 André and Platteau, *supra* note 9, 11-12.

14 Günther Baechler, *Violence Through Environmental Discrimination: Causes, Rwanda Arena, and Conflict Model*, Boston, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, 143. [Baechler]

15 André and Platteau, *supra* note 9, 17.

16 Jennifer M. Olson, “Behind the Recent Tragedy in Rwanda” (1995) 35:2 *GeoJournal* 217, 219.

17 Uvin, *supra* note 2, 82.

18 Robert Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy” (1994) 273:2 *The Atlantic Monthly* 46.

19 See generally Newbury, *supra* note 1, n.p.

20 André and Platteau, *supra* note 9, 2 and 38.

when the authors themselves recognize that conflicts in the region under study were normally resolved through customary or official channels.²¹

The soft Malthusian argument fills this gap by acknowledging that other variables determine the final outcome of a situation of scarcity-induced social stress.²² This position is far less contentious than the hard Malthusian argument and many scholars subscribe to it. In most cases they do so implicitly, briefly acknowledging the role of land and population pressure in the conflict without supporting their statement with researched evidence, a situation criticized by Uvin.²³ Paradoxically, where more research has been done, results seem to cast a doubt on the causal relationship between land scarcity and the genocide. Homer-Dixon himself, leading scholar of the environmental security field, admits that “environment and population pressures had at most a limited, aggravating role”²⁴ in the Rwanda genocide. Dilution of the land scarcity factor among other necessary causes will of course decrease its relative causal weight. However, and contrary to what could be implied from Homer-Dixon’s statement, a study of alternate explanations for the Rwanda genocide shows that, when analysed from the livelihood perspective, land scarcity unmistakably played a necessary causal role in the events leading to the massacre.

Explaining the Rwanda Genocide – Elite Manipulation

This explanation, the most common among scholars,²⁵ identifies the desire of Rwanda’s elites to retain power as the *sine qua none* cause of the genocide. From the 1980s on, the dominant position of the ruling elites was challenged by a number of interrelated economic, political and international factors. The economic crisis of the 1980s, fall of exports prices, structural adjustment policies requiring the end of agricultural services, and a lack of political will²⁶ rendered the government unable to redress the problem of rural deprivation and undermined its credibility in the eye of the population.²⁷ Popular political opposition ensued and was reinforced by internal and international pressures for increased democratization.²⁸ More significantly, the Arusha Accords effectively withdrew power from the ruling party (National Republican Movement for the Defence of the Republic), assigning it only a weak minority position in both the transitional government and transitional national assembly, and giving the Rwandan Patriotic Front a powerful share of 40% of troops and 50% of officers in the future integrated national army.²⁹ This was perceived by the ruling elites as a complete loss of power. “From having oligarchic control over the state, they were to move to a position of weak minority in the power structure of Rwanda, and lose their capacity to

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²² Uvin, *supra* note 2, 83.

²³ *Ibidem.*

²⁴ Percival and Homer-Dixon, *supra* note 4, 201.

²⁵ Uvin, *supra* note 2, 79. See generally Bruce D. Jones, “Keeping the Peace, Losing the War: Military Intervention in Rwanda’s ‘Two Wars’”, Institute for War and Peace Studies, Department of International Relations, 1997. [Jones]; Helen H. Hintjens, “Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda” (1999) 37:2 *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 241, 247. [Hintjens]

²⁶ Bigagaza, Abong and Mukaruguga, *supra* note 5, 72.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁸ *Ibidem.*; Newbury, *supra* note 1, n.p.

²⁹ Jones, *supra* note 25, n.p. (section 1.2.2).

ensure their position through the military.”³⁰ According to the elite manipulation theory, the genocide was the “solution” found to eliminate opposition to the regime and restore its credibility by blaming someone else for the agriculture failure.

The livelihood analysis comes into play when one tries to understand what the impetus was for such a strong desire to retain power that it prompted a genocide. The reasons go beyond simple power-greed or self-importance. In a country where land is scarce and is the main if not only source of wealth, controlling the decision-making structures that determine the rights of access to and use of land is fundamental to ensuring one’s prosperity, especially considering that patterns of environmental discrimination exist that will exclude from resources access groups that no longer hold political power. In this perspective, the conflict becomes a competition over the control of Rwanda’s rapidly shrinking economy,³¹ which is probably what led David Newbury to conclude that “this was not first and foremost a struggle over land (...). Instead this struggle was over power.”³² Such statement seems to decrease the causal importance of the land scarcity factor. But can power and land really be separated in the Rwandan context? Considering that one is impossible without the other, this question can only be answered negatively. Newbury does recognize this close connection later on in his article and rectifies his previous statement by adding: “Ecology is political, and (...) human relationships with the ‘natural’ world are guided by questions of power, resources, markets and prices. (...) This was political conflict. But ecology, economy, and ethnicity are also part of the political arena.”³³ Land scarcity is thus a necessary component of the elite manipulation thesis for explaining the Rwanda genocide.

The manipulative aspect of the thesis comes into play with the translation of the elites’ desire to retain power into a discourse that justifies and prompts popular action congruent with that end. “The rule of dominant persons does not depend on political or economic power alone, but on persuading the ruled to accept an ideology that justifies the rulers’ privileged positions and convinces the ruled that their best interests are being protected.”³⁴ The ideology used by the ruling Hutu to further their political interests was that of ethnicity, set on the background of land scarcity. Through media broadcasted propaganda, Tutsi were accused of plotting an attempt to capture the state and whisk scarce land away from Hutu. Hutu were also led to believe that killing Tutsi would allow them to claim the land of the victims. Although this discourse goes a long way in explaining the incentives behind the mass murder of Tutsi, “[t]he capacity to blame Tutsi for all of society’s evil and to eventually consider eradicating them like a cancer from society does not materialize from thin air.”³⁵ This calls for the consideration of another causal factor of the genocide.

Explaining the Rwanda Genocide – Historical Ethnic Divide

This third and final explanation is the logical complement to the elite manipulation thesis. To understand how the elite could manipulate the masses to the

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ Paul Magnarella, “Explaining Rwanda’s 1994 Genocide” (2002) 2:1 Human Rights and Human Welfare 25, 33. [Magnarella]

³² Newbury, *supra* note 1, n.p.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ Magnarella, *supra* note 31, 33.

³⁵ Uvin, *supra* note 2, 81.

extent of turning them into tools of a genocidal war, it is necessary to understand the complex nature of Rwanda's ethnic cleavage.³⁶ “[E]thnic conflict is caused by collective fears of the future. As groups begin to fear for their physical safety, a series of dangerous and difficult to resolve strategic dilemmas arise that contain within them the potential for tremendous violence.”³⁷ Fears of the future were not lacking in Rwanda society prior to the genocide. As described earlier, the drop in agricultural revenues, due mainly to land scarcity, generated extreme economic hardship for the non-elites Rwandans, creating thousands of unemployed young people and forcing others to migrate to marginal areas, sale their land out of distress, or delay marriage for lack of sufficient fund. Elites tapped into these existing fears and, through ideology manipulation, reoriented them along ethnic lines.

Although there exist doctrinal debate as to the essentialist of social-constructivist nature of Hutu and Tutsi ethnical identities,³⁸ most authors adopt a non-polarized interpretation that recognizes the different historical origins of Hutu and Tutsi, while still contending that those were flexible categories, the meaning of which evolved over time and space.³⁹ This constructed feature of Rwandan ethnicity has historically left it open to re-articulation by political elites, who evoked perceived differences to rally their members for the maximization of particular interests.⁴⁰ Whereas the categories were used to contain complex and relational elements of ethnicity, lineage, clan, and social status, they were reinforced by Belgian colonizers in order to facilitate the ruling of Rwanda.⁴¹ Colonial institutions exclusively devoted power to Tutsi chiefs and political discontent grew among Hutu.⁴² Following independence, the situation was reversed and Tutsi “came to be confined to a strictly limited sphere of influence, as the [H]utu elite gradually took over the reins of power from the [T]utsi monarchy and the Belgian trusteeship power.”⁴³ The history of struggles in Rwanda is thus one profoundly marked by ethnic polarization and competition over power, a dynamic that clearly repeated itself in the 1994 genocide.

The contributory role of land scarcity is inherent to the ethnic conflict argument, as competition for scarce resources and the benefits they confer on individuals or groups typically lies at the heart of ethnic conflict.⁴⁴ Without the pre-existing fear of livelihood loss, media and elite propaganda could not have spread the fear of resources take over by Tutsi that easily. Political memories and myths derived from past occurrences of

36 Jones, *supra* note 25, n.p. (section 1.2).

37 David A. Lake and [Donald Rothchild](#), “Ethnic Fears and Global Engagement: The International Spread and Management of Ethnic Conflict” Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation Policy Papers, Paper PP20, 1996, online: eScholarship repository <<http://repositories.cdlib.org/igcc/PP/PP20>>, 6. [Lake and Rothchild]

38 The essentialist interpretation of these identities corresponds to the official Hutu discourse during the genocide and posits a radical difference in origins, histories, moral and ethical features between Hutu and Tutsi. The social-constructivist interpretation, followed by most recent scholars, argues that any distinction between the two identities is the product of colonial imagination and manipulation. (Uvin, *supra* note 2, 76.)

39 See *ibid.*, 78; Jones, *supra* note 25, n.p. (section 1.2.1); Hintjens, *supra* note 25, 249-251.

40 Jones, *ibidem*; Lake and Rothchild, *supra* note 37, 24.

41 Jones, *ibidem*.

42 Percival and Homer-Dixon, *supra* note 4, 209.

43 Hintjens, *supra* note 25, 248.

44 Lake and Rothchild, *supra* note 37, 9.

sociological and psychological violence magnified genuine fears of physical insecurity and led to a form of violence that some argue was culturally grounded in Rwanda society.⁴⁵

A weakness of the ethnic identity hypothesis is that it fails to account for the murder of non-elite Hutu.⁴⁶ In their study of an almost Hutu-homogenous area of the Gisenyi prefecture, André and Platteau observed that murders in the context of the genocide generally targeted persons with comparatively large land property, persons who had aroused jealousy and hatred owing to economic success and persons considered as troublemakers.⁴⁷ The economic focus of these findings emphasizes the purely pretextual nature of the ethnic organizational basis for the conflict⁴⁸ and strengthens the causal weight of the land scarcity-livelihood dynamic. According to Baechler's typology, the juncture of elite ideology manipulation and collective ethnic memory only acted as the necessary trigger for the unleashing of the genocide violence. However, it was not as strong a target as implied in the propaganda discourse.⁴⁹

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the social, economic and political situation prevailing in Rwanda in the years leading to the genocide was one of high stress for all stakeholders involved. While non-elite farmers were confined to ever-smaller landholdings and ever-smaller revenues, the ruling elite faced increasing opposition and challenge to its power. A study of the main explanatory paradigms for the genocide shows that the direct relationship between land, wealth and power in Rwanda is the common denominator behind motivations and the actions of all actors, thus making land scarcity a necessary cause to the genocide. However, the consideration of other factors is necessary to explain why violence was chosen as the path to solve the resource scarcity problem affecting the Rwandan population.

After more than twenty years of scholastic work on the 1994 Rwanda genocide, it is very unlikely that one of the fundamental causes of the tragedy has not yet been discussed. Numerous contributory factors have been identified and well documented: self-sufficient agricultural policy, high population density, land scarcity, economic inequalities, structural adjustment policies, drop of exports prices, pressures for democratization, peace negotiation, RPF invasion... the list is long. But even by adding all the elements up, the observer stays wanting for a better explanation to the atrocities that were committed during the 1994 Rwanda genocide. It is one of those cases where the whole is greater than the sum of all parts.

45 *Ibid.*, 6; Uvin, *supra* note 2, 85.

46 Magnarella, *supra* note 31, 29. As opposed to the murder of moderate elite Hutu, the rationale of which was to eliminate opposition to the extremist regime.

47 André and Platteau, *supra* note 9, 40 (Table 16).

48 John Steinbruner, "Remarks" in Fred Wehling, ed., "U.S. Intervention in Ethnic Conflict", Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation Policy Papers, Paper PP12, 1995, online: eScholarship repository <<http://repositories.cdlib.org/igcc/PP/PP12/>>, 3.

49 Baechler, *supra* note 14, 114.

References

- André, Catherine and Jean-Philippe Platteau. “Land Relations under Unbearable Stress: Rwanda Caught in the Malthusian Trap” (1998) 34:1 *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization* 1.
- Baechler, Günther. *Violence Through Environmental Discrimination: Causes, Rwanda Arena, and Conflict Model*, Boston, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999.
- Bigagaza, Jean, Carolyne Abong and Cecile Mukaruguga. “Land Scarcity, Distribution and Conflict in Rwanda” in J. Lind and K. Sturman, eds., *Scarcity and Surfeit: The Ecology of Africa’s Conflicts*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2002, 50.
- Hintjens, Helen H. “Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda” (1999) 37:2 *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 241.
- Jones, Bruce D. “Keeping the Peace, Losing the War: Military Intervention in Rwanda's 'Two Wars'”, Institute for War and Peace Studies, Department of International Relations, 1997.
- Kaplan, Robert. “The Coming Anarchy” (1994) 273:2 *The Atlantic Monthly* 46.
- Lake, David A. and [Donald Rothchild](#). “Ethnic Fears and Global Engagement: The International Spread and Management of Ethnic Conflict” Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation Policy Papers, Paper PP20, 1996, online: eScholarship repository <<http://repositories.cdlib.org/igcc/PP/PP20>>.
- Magnarella, Paul. “Explaining Rwanda’s 1994 Genocide” (2002) 2:1 *Human Rights and Human Welfare* 25.
- Mamdani, Mahmud. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Newbury, David. “Ecology and the Politics of Genocide: Rwanda 1994” (1999) 22:4 *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, n.p.
- Ohlsson, Leif. *Environmental Scarcity and Conflict: A Study of Malthusian Concerns* (Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University, 1999) [unpublished, online: [Padrigu.gu.se](http://www.padrigu.gu.se/padrigu.gu.se/ohlsson/files/4Rwanda.pdf) <<http://www.padrigu.gu.se/ohlsson/files/4Rwanda.pdf>>].
- Olson, Jennifer . “Behind the Recent Tragedy in Rwanda” (1995) 35:2 *GeoJournal* 217.
- Percival, Valerie and Thomas Homer-Dixon. “The Case of Rwanda” in Thomas Homer-Dixon and Jessica Blitt, eds., *Ecoviolence: Links Among Environment, Population and Security*, New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1998, 201.

Steinbruner, John. “Remarks,” in Fred Wehling, ed., “U.S. Intervention in Ethnic Conflict”, Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation Policy Papers, Paper PP12, 1995, online: eScholarship repository <<http://repositories.cdlib.org/igcc/PP/PP12/>>.

Ulvin, Peter. Reading the Rwandan Genocide (2001) 3:3 International Studies Review 75, 79.

No Small Mercy: How a Rwandan genocide survivor made peace with the man who almost killed her - Jina Moore, reviewed by Jean Bosco Habyarimana

Interview

April 21 2009



Fifteen years after Rwandan Hutu massacred hundreds of thousands of their Tutsi countrymen, one survivor and the man who cut off her hand tell the horrible truth about the genocide and explain how, even with so much suffering between them, they eventually made peace.

Soon after the 1994 genocide, the whole world was very sceptical on the possibility of having a single nation called Rwanda again. Even at the national level, it was quite difficult to believe Rwanda could rise again and stand as a country after what happened in this country. However, as proclaimed by Senator Aloysie Inyumba at Women@google (2007), the new Government of National Unity had to dig deeper in the history when all Rwandans lived in peace with each other without discrimination. Building on this neglected but motivating positive history, the government decided to start with national dialogues that involved almost all segments of the society: intellectuals, politicians, civil society, women, activists, etc. These dialogues led to the establishment of five programs of building the New Rwanda. Those programs are namely unity and reconciliation, gacaca courts, popular democratization, stabilization of national security, and poverty reduction, but the foundation being national security strengthened by the population unity and reconciliation.

With unity and reconciliation, we understand perpetrators who must reconcile with their victims who, not only do not really believe they are alive, but also to whom meeting their killers causes much traumatisation than healing.

Many people in the world do not know and understand the power of ‘forgive me’ or ‘I do apologize’, but people in the Reconciliation Queensland Inc (2007) do. They know what Jane, the little lady victim of the stolen generations in Australia, said after she read the word ‘SORRY’. She said: “*Then I looked up and the word ‘Sorry’ – Suddenly, tears began to pour down my cheeks. I even thought heaven opened its heart.*” Later on, continues the same article, Jane declared that she felt like she had reborn into a better place, and engaged gladly in developmental activities.

In this article, I present Jina Moore’s report on how Alice MUKARURINDA, a genocide survivor, managed to forgive Emmanuel NDAYISABA, a genocide perpetrator, who almost killed her during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda. Even though it is a heart-breaking interview report, I recommend you to read it up to the end.

* * *

My name is ALICE MUKARURINDA. My father was from a village in Ruhengeri, a region in North-Western Rwanda. In 1959, the government forced him to move, with thousands of other Tutsi, to Nyamata, a small, disease-ridden town between a swamp and

a forest. My father was forced to move because he was a Tutsi.

For hundreds of years, Hutu and Tutsi shared Rwanda. But being a Tutsi became important in colonial times. When the Belgian colonists came in 1916, they decided the Tutsi were more clever and more beautiful, taller and stronger than the Hutu. Later they introduced policies in Rwanda that turned these two groups into races and divided the country between them.

Jealousy grew between the two because Tutsi had cattle, while Hutu worked in the fields. Rwandese society sees people with cattle as rich. So the hatred between the two comes from being greedy.

When the Belgians left and the Hutu took over, Hutu started killing Tutsi. There were massacres in 1959, 1963, 1992, and 1994, but it feels like Hutu have always killed Tutsi. They killed Tutsi because Tutsi have things.

* * *

I AM EMMANUEL NDAYISABA. I am from Nyamata, too. Before the war, I was a metalworker. I never finished school; I was too poor to pay. I would have liked to study English, but why dream about things that can never happen?

As kids, we learned to hate Tutsi from our parents. They said Tutsi are not even from Rwanda. They demonstrated how to kill a Tutsi with a spear. They said we could tell who the Tutsi were because of how they are shaped.

But my mother was a Tutsi, so I was confused. My grandfather taught me all the ways Tutsi are bad; sometimes I interrupted him and said, "But we pray in the same church!" I'd tell him about a Tutsi friend who gave me sweet potatoes or milk. Then he would chase me and beat me with his walking stick.

* * *

Alice: In 1989, my brother and I passed the national exam for secondary school. We went to the district office to read a list that matched students to schools, and found our names covered over with a white line. When we went to the director to ask why, he spat in our faces. He told us that the ministry had decided the Tutsi had no right to education. "There is no Tutsi who has any value," he said.

With that, we knew we had no real future. My brothers decided to run away to the *inkotanyi*. This was the nickname for the Rwandan Patriotic Front, an army of Tutsi who grew up outside of Rwanda and wanted to return. They were fighting for the rights of all Tutsi.

Government soldiers were stationed along all the main roads in the country; everyone knew that if they caught you on your way to join the *inkotanyi*, they would tell you to dig your own grave and they would bury you alive. So the recruits would sneak through forests. But two of my brothers were killed anyway. They were fifteen and thirteen years

old.

Emmanuel: To me, the starting point of the genocide was March 1992. Hutu put banana leaves above their doors so their homes could be recognized. Even though my mother was Tutsi, we were a Hutu home, and the soldiers came to our house to recruit us to kill Tutsi. I hid, because I had Tutsi friends, but my father and brother went with them. When they returned, they had goats. They told us that they had only chased the Tutsi and found the goats.

Alice: The soldiers started a war of fire, burning our houses and anything next to them. Our father stayed home because he was too old to run away. He was seventy-two years old. They came and killed him, and then they took our cows. After everything that happened, I had to get married. It's not that I wanted to. Charles Wirabe was almost ten years older than me, and another woman and her family had already rejected his marriage proposal. But because my father was dead and I couldn't finish school, I didn't feel I had any choice. I got married in August, four months after my father was killed.

My husband and I tended a small farm. We told ourselves that the war was over, that we had seen the worst. What could be worse than 1992?

Emmanuel: The killings stopped after a few days, but the government continued to mobilize. Local leaders put together a night patrol because, they said, the Tutsi might kill us in the middle of the night. The government also trained a new militia, the *interahamwe*. They were not soldiers but young men trained to fight with machetes and guns. Some of them even had uniforms.

I didn't join the *interahamwe*, even though I was afraid of the Tutsi — not just because of what the government was telling us, but because of what we were hearing on the rpf radio. They broadcast the names of my neighbours, saying that they had blocked Tutsi from getting water at the wells. This was true, but how did they know that? I became convinced there were Tutsi informers among us.

Alice: I saw the *interahamwe* training in Nyamata. They practised slicing through banana trees with only one cut. "Just as we'll do to the Tutsi," I heard them say. Sometimes they came from Kigali in pickup trucks. They didn't have any weapons, just their drums and their song. They drove around the village singing, "Tubastembatsembe" ("We will kill you all").

In early April 1994, I was in Kigali visiting family. You could feel the tension. Buses were stopped at roadblocks. ID cards were checked, bags were searched. Local leaders were asking everybody not from Kigali to leave; they even organized buses for us. They wanted us to go back to our villages and join our families. They had lists of every Tutsi family. So I went home.

On the sixth, I heard on the radio that the president's plane crashed. I thought, "This is it, we're all dead."

Emmanuel: There were so many rumours about the crash; I didn't know what to believe. But I saw many, many Tutsi leaving their houses, pulling their cows and goats behind them. Four days later, the soldiers arrived.

Before I tell the next part, I want to apologize. Until now, we have been talking about soft things. Where I am going will be hard on all of us. I ask forgiveness, and I hope you can be patient and strong.

The soldiers told us to go with them to a house where Tutsi were hiding. A group of us surrounded the house so that no one could escape. I had a machete. One soldier told me, "Kill them so we will be able to take those cows." I went in. There were fourteen people huddled on the floor, and I killed them. A woman carrying a child on her back ran a little bit, but I caught her and killed her. I even killed a man I knew. His name was Rutase; he was my neighbour.

After this, we took the soldiers' cows to the top of a hill. There were more than fifty of them. When the soldiers left us, we decided to serve ourselves first. That's why, when the soldier gave me the order to kill, I did it. I wanted to do it, because I wanted to have cows. I thought I would never in my life have a cow. I took only one for myself. I was afraid, because it was stealing. Imagine if the soldiers found me taking their cows!

The next day, we were recruited again. We went from empty house to empty house, looking for Tutsi hiding inside and taking anything they'd left behind. I found one man, Rwikangura, and I killed him, because we were told to wipe them out. And because when I looked around, I saw things I wanted to take. And because after killing fourteen Tutsi, I no longer felt scared.

The third day, we went to another place, and I killed a child and his mother. The fourth day, I went to chase Tutsi in the Nyiragongo swamps. This is how I met Alice.

Alice: After the plane crashed, the road out of Nyamata was blocked by the soldiers and *interahamwe*. We couldn't escape, so my husband and I and our nine-month-old daughter, Fanny, fled to the church. It was packed with people. My mother was inside; she told me to stay outside so the baby could breathe.

There was a big mass of people outside the church, too. My husband was preaching. Some men asked him to go and fight the *interahamwe* with them, but he said he would fight them with his Bible. Everybody who could teach in the name of God was doing it. We preached, we sang. We prayed any way we could think of.

On April 11, the *interahamwe* attacked the church. They killed my mother and two sisters. My husband and I ran with our daughter to a bean field. That night, we slept in a school. For seven days, we hid among bean plants and banana trees during the day and slept in the school after the *interahamwe* left.



When the *interahamwe* set fire to the fields, we ran thirty kilometres to the swamps to hide in its grasses. My husband ran to one side, and I ran to the other. But the *interahamwe* were not far behind, slinging their machetes back and forth through the reeds, trying to hit anything. This went on for ten days.

I had Fanny on my knees, and my niece next to me, when a soldier finally found us. He looked at my baby and said, “She’s beautiful. She must be the child of Fred Rwigema,” who founded the RPF . “Where is this baby’s father? Did he run away?”

“I don’t know,” I lied. “I left him two or three days ago. He might not even be alive.”

Then he took all my clothes.

“You know,” he said, “your government has abandoned you. I can kill you.” He had a machete in one hand and a club in the other.

I told him, “Do what you came here to do.”

He shook his head. “My arms are not made for spilling the blood of people.” Then he left.

Later, a whole group of them came back. They took my baby from me. They threw her in the air, and they cut her in two, down the middle. I fell down, crying. They started hacking me with machetes. They drove a spear through my shoulder and struck my head with a club studded with nails. They left when they thought I was dead. I heard my niece cry, “This one, now she is dead, too!”

An old woman appeared; a Hutu neighbour who had run with us because her husband was Tutsi. She saw and heard everything that happened to me, and she took her head wrap and tried to reattach my hand with it. Then she took more fabric from around her waist, and we wrapped up my baby. I was too injured to move, so she left with my baby. From there, I can’t remember anything. I died for five days.

Emmanuel: Alice is the last person I cut. I cut off her hand and made a scar on her face. I thought I killed her. And then I stopped killing. Something had begun to bother me.

I was a singer in an Adventist church, and there’s one song that says when our time comes, all the riches we’ve accumulated are not going to follow us, and that the person who spends his life pursuing them will only attract Satan. Partly, I was afraid of Satan. I was also fed up. I saw the faces of all of the people I killed before me. I remembered I had sung in front of them in church. I thought, “How come I killed the same people I was singing for?”

It was time to stop. Still, I had already taken their things, and I decided those things

would stay in my house.

Alice: I woke up in the swamp, with lots of dead bodies around me. They smelled, and dogs were eating them. My husband found me there. He told me they had thrown him into a well; he'd had so much water in his body that they had to pump it out of him.

Then he showed me our baby. "We're going to have to bury her," he said. But there was no place to bury her properly. We could only cover her up. I still can't bury her, because I never want to go back there.

While I was unconscious, the *inkotanyi* had taken control of the district. Now they were asking the able-bodied to come out of the swamps and join them. Still very weak, I stayed there for two more weeks, until my husband could get me to a hospital. It was mid-May when he carried me out of the swamp on a door.

When I left the hospital two months later, we moved into a house shared between ten families. We eventually got a house of our own with help from the government, and some of my husband's relatives who had returned to Rwanda stayed with us. They didn't understand what happened; they didn't live through it. They told my husband I was handicapped and would not be any good to him anymore. They asked him, "Will you wash your kids' clothes? Will you be the one to raise them? Let us find you a new wife." My husband looked at me like I was useless. But he told them, "What happened to her could just as easily have happened to me."

Emmanuel: After the *inkotanyi* ended the genocide in Rwanda, they formed a new government. In 1996, I went to a district court to turn myself in. I started to tell the judge what I did, but I was talking so fast, like a crazy person, that he asked if I was sane. I said, "I can't cope with it anymore. I just want to be forgiven." Then he asked, "Who are you asking for forgiveness from? You killed almost everyone." I answered, "Since there is nobody left, I am asking forgiveness from the government, because I killed its people."

A month later, they sent me to prison. I went with my father. We were packed like beans, one under another. Of course, people were beaten. The police told the guards that I had confessed and that they should be nice to me. I was allowed to work outside, cooking and cleaning for the policemen. My father, who did not co-operate with the courts, died from sickness in prison. I was there for seven years, until the amnesty. Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda, said that anyone who had confessed could be freed.

Still, if somebody killed your family and then got out of prison, you would be unhappy. At the same time, if you had killed you would not be comfortable facing your victims. That's why four ordinary people in Nyamata started an organization called Ukuri Kuganze Guharanira Ubumwe n'ubwiyunge (May Truth Bring Unity and Reconciliation). I joined in 2005. We wanted to have a place to talk and to plan how we would build a future together, so we borrowed some land, and together — hundreds of us — we raised crops and animals and built houses.

Alice: I didn't expect to ever meet Emmanuel. I didn't even remember his face. My neighbours pushed me to join the association because I stayed at home too much. I lived in my thoughts about the genocide and about the problems I still faced. I knew this group was for people who survived and people who were getting out of prison for genocide. I wondered how we could accept these people into our communities again.

Emmanuel: I remembered Alice's face; I'd kept it in my mind. When I first saw her, we were making bricks for a new house. I wanted to talk to her. But I was also scared of her. Every time our eyes met, I wanted to run. I had no idea how to approach her.

Alice: One day, Emmanuel brought some sorghum beer and some sweet potatoes to the field where we volunteered. This was for ubusabane, or sharing, which gathers a crowd and puts them in a good mood. He started by grilling the potatoes; he took the biggest one and gave it to me, saying, "This is for our secretary." We all drank and danced.

Then he asked if he could talk to me. "I have something to tell you," he said. "I have a big problem." He kept repeating this. "I have a big problem, I have a big problem." After twenty minutes, he fell on his knees and asked me to forgive him.

"Why?" I asked him. "We are friends. What do I have to forgive you for?" He just kept saying, "Forgive me, forgive me," and I kept asking why. Finally, he said, "I'm the one who cut you."

"What did you say?" I asked him. He repeated, "I'm the one who cut you." I asked him to tell me where and when. He did; his story was all true. So I left him there, on his knees, and I ran for miles.

Emmanuel: I thought ubusabane would make it easier for Alice. After prison, before going home, we went to ingando, re-education camps where the government teaches unity and reconciliation. Some people who'd had a chance to ask forgiveness from survivors found they could be traumatized by it, acting like someone who's gone crazy. At ingando, they told us that when we asked for forgiveness we should find a way to do it so that they could be held by their friends if they needed them.

Alice: For Emmanuel, it was easy, because he was ready to ask. He had prepared his heart, and he had prepared a way to do it. I was in shock. I didn't say if I had forgiven him or not. I couldn't really answer either way. So I left him in a place that was not comfortable for him either.

After I left, a woman found me. She took my hand and led me home. She told my family what happened. My husband said, "This is your fault. Why did you join an association with killers?"

I spent one week thinking about it all the time. People sometimes asked who had hacked me, and I couldn't answer them. But I knew I wasn't born like this! I needed to know

who did this to me, because I was judging everyone around me. The people living across from us — they took a lot of our things, so maybe they were the ones? I wanted to forgive and live normally with people again.

Still, I had a hard time when Emmanuel revealed himself to me. It took me back to 1994. My husband reminded me, “You promised God that if you found out who did this to you, you would forgive him. Why are you hesitating?” So when I went back to work, I was the first one to greet him. I told him, “I forgive you. God will forgive you.”

Emmanuel: Even though I didn’t know if Alice would accept, after I said “Forgive me,” everything was easier for me, even eating. For the first time in a long time, I felt the food go into my stomach. Before, I had no appetite, even when my stomach was empty. It was like a huge stone was lifted off me and my neck could stretch and my head could rise up, because the stone was not there anymore.

Now we are close friends. When I need something and she has it, she will give it to me. If I have something more than she has, I give it to her. We can sit down and share food.

Alice: I forgive Emmanuel, but as Emmanuel, not as a Hutu. It’s not the same with all Hutu. I will not forgive those who have not come to ask. Some of them pray in my church. I know the ones who chased us from our home, and those who came to kill at the church. Others, I’ll never know. Like the one who killed my child.

My husband will not forgive Emmanuel. To forgive, you have to have something in common, like the projects we have in the association. My husband hasn’t shared that kind of experience. He dislikes anything that reminds him of those days. He still will not listen to Rwandan radio, only to international news. He doesn’t want me to talk about what happened either, but I don’t always have to do everything he says. For me, talking about it helps. This is why gacaca, the local court held outside on the grass in every community in Rwanda, has helped me. Since most Rwandans can’t travel to the international tribunal in Tanzania, these trials help us all learn what happened.

The surprising thing about gacaca is that when people like Emmanuel tell the truth, the survivors come to love them, while the Hutu who worked with them during the genocide start hating them.

Emmanuel: There is tension between those who have confessed and those who have not. Some months ago, my daughter was sick, and the hospital could not figure out what was wrong with her. The traditional doctor said she had been bewitched. I think it came from someone who is angry that I confessed. Before I went to prison, my wife heard me giving testimony about the house where I killed fourteen people, and she went home completely changed. Now when we argue, sometimes she says I might kill her. So we don’t talk about it.

I did tell my daughter about it. I told her that I fell into sin, a big sin, and she should know about it so that she does not fall as I did. I don’t give her details; I usually say we

were in a group and we killed some people. We didn't know it would haunt us.

Even today, I see the faces of the people I killed. They pass before my eyes without speaking to me. I think they are silent because the dead can't forgive. Can you imagine? You killed someone you don't even know, and he passes before your eyes, and he will never talk to you.

Alice: My kids ask what happened to my hand. I tell them the devil came to Rwanda. I say there was a war, and the government told the Hutu to kill the Tutsi. When they ask me how they can recognize a Hutu, I change the subject.

References

Jina Moore (2009). No Small Mercy: How a Rwandan genocide survivor made peace with the man who almost killed her. Retrieved April 19, 2009 from <http://www.walrusmagazine.com/articles/2009.05-no-small-mercy-jina-moore-rwanda-genocide/2/3/>

Reconciliation Qld Inc. (2007). *Brisbane's response to the stolen generation*. 10th Anniversary of "The Bringing Them Home Report" 1997-2007. Reconciliation Queensland Inc.

Sen. Aloysie Inyumba at Women@Google (2007). Retrieved November 20, 2008, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6siAmrd9EGs>

Some Similarities Between the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1923, and the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda - Jean Bosco Habyarimana

Essay

April 3 2009



The twentieth century witnessed systematic, state-sponsored killings of specific ethnic, nationalist, or religious groups across continents and cultures. Much can be learned from the individual ideologies of hate and insecurity that led to each genocide, but as Habyarimana argues, they also share significant similarities. Ultimately, genocide is not a problem that belongs to specific times and places, but a problem for all mankind. We all have a responsibility to understand what has happened, and build a future where such atrocities are an impossibility.

In 1915, thousands of Armenians who lived in the Ottoman Empire were deported and murdered in killings organized by the then Turkish government. In the same century, the whole world experienced not only the Holocaust but also the Rwandan genocide, organized by Juvenal Habyarimana's government against the minority Rwandan Tutsis in 1994.

As Stephan Astourian (1990) puts it, however different genocides may be, the nexus of psycho – cultural and socio – political processes from which they result is strikingly similar. Like this author stresses it, it has always been difficult to explain and or understand why some states resort to mass-killing and other methods "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group within the same state."

Even though Astourian states that only a deep analysis of the ideologies that prevailed in the periods when these atrocities happened can help interpret them, Robert Melson (1996) argues that partial explanations that can be provided by different researchers will not bring back to life innocent people who were killed, nor undo the cruelty of killers. For survivors particularly, adds Melson, doing this kind of study will at least help these people who have been struck forever by the terrible knowledge of these events to deal with their own memories and to become "an affirming flame", and if possible, to serve as warnings of possible human crimes and disasters that should be prevented.

The history of the Ottoman Empire divided the population into different classes. Astourian (1990) says that according to the Islamic law in this Empire, non-Muslim monotheistic believers, including the Armenians, were considered as belonging to the "Peoples of the Book." He adds that they were, therefore, granted the status of protected non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim state, or the second – class citizens. This status was followed by many restrictions, such as prohibition against carrying arms, riding horses or camels, etc, but mostly exaggerated taxes and unpaid labour for their masters Muslims. By polarizing people like that, Ottoman Emperors, especially Sultan Abdulhamit II

(1876-1909), expected to manipulate diverse ethnic groups against one another to maintain power over all of them.

For one reason, Turkism, a radical rejection of Ottomanism, excluded the Armenians not just from state power, which had always been the case, but also from society at large: Armenians were neither Turkic racially, nor Muslim religiously, and they had no share in the Turkish tradition. From a Pan-Turkism, irredentist viewpoint, the location of most Ottoman Armenians in eastern Anatolia was considered as a barrier between Turkey and the Turkic groups living in the Russian Empire, from today's Azerbaijan to Central Asia. The elimination of this barrier played no small part in the execution of the Armenian genocide.

After 1911, Ottoman Armenians were identified with liberalism, both politically, because of their collaboration with the liberal movement, and economically, because of their involvement in international trade. For the Young Turks who led the Ottoman Empire at that time, it was the period of revolution, and this revolution was based on nationalism which had no place for liberal ideologies. Thus, for discriminatory Unionist policies the exclusion of Armenians was a way of legitimizing their revolution by offering Turkish traders the lion's share of the market and forming a racially and culturally homogeneous nation.

Another strong point in the Turkish genocide ideology is the level of impunity for those who progressively participated in these massacres. Astourian (op cit) discusses that the fact that the state led by the Committee of Union and Progress failed to punish those who took part in daily extortions and acts of violence against some of its own citizens (Ottoman Armenians) and that itself promoted civil violence against them gives the social and psychological foundation of the behaviour of Turks and Kurdish peoples during the genocide: Armenians were fair game. To clarify this idea, the same author adds that “*any decrease in the perceived likelihood of retribution tends to increase the likelihood and magnitude of civil violence.*” He concludes that for Armenians, there could be no decrease, for there was no retribution at all. With this underlying ideology, the unforgettable human animosity was just waiting for the beginning of the World War I to start putting into practice the long planned genocide against unprotected innocent Armenians.

After the three months under which the Rwandan genocide officially took place, the whole world could not define what had taken away lives of more than 800,000 people. Gerald Caplan (2005) says that this small country in the heart of Africa was dominated by Tutsis until 1960. He adds that in the colonial era, under German (1897-1916) and Belgian (1916-1959) rule, Roman Catholic missionaries, inspired by the overtly racist theories of the 19th century Europe, arbitrarily and baselessly concocted a bizarre ideology of ethnic cleavage and racial rankings that attributed superior qualities to the country's Tutsi minority. In schools led by Roman Catholic missionaries, only sons of Tutsis were allowed as colonizers defined them as created for administration. But this was the “divide and rule” colonial system like in most of African colonized nations. After some years, “*soon many Hutu came to agree that the two ethnic groups, distinguished mostly by vocation in prior centuries, were indeed fundamentally dissimilar in nature and irreconcilable in practice* (Caplan, op cit, 93). This author adds that later

on Tutsis came to be demonized as a foreign invading power with no entitlements in Rwanda.

After independence, the new powerful Hutu leaders will continue the same discriminative ideology. Despite the fact that, as Caplan puts it, considerable intermarriage took place between the two groups that after all shared a common language, religion, geography and, often as not, appearance, the first President of the Republic of Rwanda, Gregoire Kayibanda, as mentioned by the Rwanda Military Academy (2007), surprisingly analyses the Rwandan society as *two nations in a single state, two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy, who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings as if they were dwellers of different zones, or inhabitants of different planets.*

In 1973, Juvenal Habyarimana, the second President whose ideology is deeply analysed by Philip Verwimp (1990), comes to power after a coup. Feeling that the first Republic failed to implement the Hutu Revolution initiated in 1959, this new leader's ideology is made clear by Verwimp.

According to Habyarimana's vision of an agricultural country, interprets Verwimp, the real value of manual labour has been neglected. He adds that those not performing agricultural work (Tutsi were believed not agriculturalists), the 'non-peasants,' are harmful to society, only the Hutu peasant, the one tilling the land, is productive and good for society. Indeed, this analyst warns that when dictatorial political power is legitimized with a peasant ideology, genocide becomes a political option (and indeed almost a necessity) because a peasant society does not tolerate the existence of non-peasants, in the same way as a communist society does not tolerate the existence of a capitalist class. The latter group is labelled "enemies of the revolution."

Thus, similarly to the Young Turks who considered Armenians as not fitting for the new developmental direction of the country, Juvenal Habyarimana said: *"In order to attack the development problems efficiently and to overcome the forces of evil, we have to rise, march and act as one person and the results shall be spectacular."* (Verwimp, 1990). As for the Armenian fate, Tutsis are killed for many years since 1959, 1960, 1961, etc, culminating to the shooting of Habyarimana's plane on 6th April 1994 that marked the formal beginning of deliberate, organized and well planned mass killings of Rwandan innocent Tutsis with the aim of *living none to tell the story* (Allison DesForges, 1999). To conclude, in the cases of Armenian and Rwandan genocides that were dealt with in this article, both the Ottoman Empire Sultans and Hutu governments in Rwanda manipulated various ethnic groups against one another for the sake of maintaining their power over all of them. Moreover, the two cases historical backgrounds laid a genocide ideology by favouring one ethnic group and considering the other group of the population as enemies of revolution, unfavourable to established paths towards development, thus meant to be eliminated in order to save the country from what they saw as internal enemies. The following two quotes from speeches given by two leaders from both sides illustrate more:

To do whatever is possible to do away with this danger [the Armenians] is a requirement for national security. To take this road may mean to go against the laws of the nation and of humanity. I am ready to pay the consequences [of this evil action] with my life. Whether I realize my goal or not, there will be many who will vilify me. I know that, but,

in the very distant future, there will appear also those who will understand that I sacrificed myself in the service of my country.

From a speech by Dr. Bahaeddin Sakir (strong member of the CUP) in Astourian (op cit).

We are expected to defend ourselves. The only way to go about it is to paralyse the Tutsi. How? They must be killed.

From a speech by Prefet, or Governor, Andre Nkeramugaba, a strong member of the Habyarimana's government, in Rwanda Military Academy, 2007.

References

Astourian, S. (1990). The Armenian Genocide: An Interpretation. Society for the History of Education retrieved 07/01/2009 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/494919>

Caplan, G. in University for Peace. (2005). The Role of the Media in the Rwandan Genocide, Short Readings. San Jose, CR: University for Peace.

Melson, R. (1996). Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. USA: University of Chicago Press. Retrieved 5/1/2009 from <http://books.google.co.cr/books?id=BnBELMBWaAYC&hl=en>

Rwanda Military Academy (2007). NUR Second Ingando. Ruhengeri, Rwanda, RMA.

University for Peace (2005). The Role of the Media in the Rwandan Genocide: Short Readings. San Jose, C.R.: University for Peace, pp. 91 – 114.

Verwimp, P. (1990). Development Ideology, the Peasantry and Genocide: Rwanda represented in Habyarimana's speeches. Retrieved 30/11/2008 from <http://www.yale.edu/gsp/publications/Rwanda.pdf>

Des Forges, A. (1999). Live None to Tell the Story. Paris: International Federation of Human Rights.

Memory and denial: The Rwandan genocide fifteen years on

Gerald Caplan

Analysis

Published in Pambazuka April 2 2009



While most of the world is familiar with Rwandan genocide, fifteen years later the influence of a small band of deniers is growing thanks to the embrace of the deniers' arguments by a small but influential number of left-wing, anti-American journals and websites, cautions Gerald Caplan.

April 2009 marks the 15th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda of most of its Tutsi population and of many Hutu who refused to embrace violent extremism.

Five years ago, the world marked the 10th anniversary of what almost the entire world regards as one of the definitive genocides of the 20th century. Perhaps it was somehow symmetrical that both the first and the last genocides of the 20th century took place in Africa. In 1904, soldiers representing Imperial Germany deliberately sought to exterminate the Herero people of Namibia, then the German colony of South-West Africa. Anxious to occupy the lands of the Herero, the German colonial army came precious close to achieving its grisly, racist goal. Before it ended, some three-quarters of 80,000 Herero were dead.

Exactly 90 years later, the racists were powerful Hutu extremists in Rwanda who conspired to annihilate the minority Tutsi people, largely to avoid sharing power and wealth with them. Like the Germans before them, the genocidaires in Rwanda were remarkably successful in executing their plot. Before they were defeated, about three-quarters of all the country's Tutsi had been murdered, often in the most sadistic ways imaginable. Exact numbers remain unknown to this day, but it is possible that as many as a million Tutsi were killed in the 100 days of the genocide.

But very like South-West Africa, outside influences were key to events in Rwanda. Had European missionaries not invented an ideology that blatantly set Tutsi against Hutu, had the Belgian colonial government not institutionalised this false ideology, had the French government not offered all possible support to the Hutu government of Rwanda in the years immediately leading to the genocide, the genocide might never have happened. Once triggered, it was the Security Council, urged on by the United States, that refused to take a single step to stop the slaughter.

Before the 10th anniversary, the international movement known as Remembering Rwanda was motivated by a fear that the genocide was being forgotten by the rest of the world. That concern has proved premature. Rwanda is probably as well known today as any tragic event very far from western countries, and causing direct harm to none of them, can be.

Tragically, one of the forces that revived the memory of 1994 was the conflict that began in Darfur, western Sudan, in 2003. When the secretary-general of the United Nations commemorated the 10th anniversary of Rwanda in 2004, his cry was that Darfur must not be allowed to become 'the next Rwanda'. And so Rwanda's international role was finally crystallised: It was the latest acknowledged failure of the solemn, eternally

repeated, never heeded, pledge of ‘Never Again’. Perhaps one day in the not too distant future, Rwanda's invidious distinction will be replaced by Darfur, and the international community will vow not to permit ‘the next Darfur’.

At the same time as Rwanda was being turned into symbol of betrayal by the international community, it was attracting the interest of western filmmakers. This entirely unanticipated phenomenon has also given the genocide a renewed lease on life, as it were. It is probable that more feature-length films and full-length documentaries have been made about the genocide than any other contemporary international crisis save Iraq or the so-called ‘war on terror’. Not all the films were of top quality and few bothered to show the critical and malevolent role of western influence in Rwandan history. The most popular film, *Hotel Rwanda*, the one that really dragged Rwanda into mainstream western consciousness, had as its hero a man who now trivialises the genocide. Nonetheless, his story, overblown as it may have been, combined with the others, has assured that the genocide in Rwanda is in little danger of being forgotten.

The Deniers

Yet at the same time, as in virtually every other genocide, denial is alive and kicking. Here is yet another common thread that binds the people that suffered through what many consider the three classic genocides of the 20th century – the Armenians, the Jews and the Rwandan Tutsis. The bitter and apparently never-ending fight against deniers, or revisionists, is a common cause among the survivors of all these genocides, one that will be highlighted in Rwanda in April 2009 as people from all over the world will gather to mark the 15th anniversary of the genocide of the Tutsi – Remembering Rwanda 15, or RR15.

If much of the world now remembers the genocide in Rwanda, the battle against those who deny that genocide is much less familiar though no less insidious than its Armenian or Holocaust equivalents. The persistence of Holocaust denial remains a reality everywhere in the world that anti-Semitism rears its head. In some countries it attracts elites. In the west it is the preserve of a lunatic fringe, and usually more an irritation than anything else. But there is always a well-earned fear that it could explode into something more ferocious, especially as anti-Semitism and opposition to Israeli policies sometimes become difficult to distinguish.

Denying the Armenian genocide is a decidedly more precise phenomenon. It exists only when attempts are made to recognise the genocide for what it is, either by resolutions of legislative assemblies or through education. And unlike either Holocaust or Rwanda denial, it is invariably orchestrated by the Turkish government and its acolytes, most of them on that government's payroll. By a terrible irony of real politik, among the most steadfast collaborators of the Turkish government in its hardball efforts to prevent recognition of the genocide is its close ally Israel and some powerful Israel support groups throughout the western world. Whether Turkey's unexpectedly vehement condemnation of Israel's recent aggression against Gaza changes these equations is still not at all clear.

Rwanda is a different case. For one thing, in much of the English-speaking world, denialism has been very much a fringe phenomenon, largely peddled by a motley coalition. There are anti-American left-wingers who are perversely convinced that Rwandan president Paul Kagame, in their eyes the evil genius behind the conflict (they

deny it was a genocide), was an American stooge. There are those who have ties of some kind with the defence at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Sometimes these are the same people. They are still largely unknown to most English-speakers who have seen the movies, or admire General Romeo Dallaire (another American puppet, in the twisted view of the deniers) and have no reason to doubt that genocide actually was carried out.

Naturally the small band of leading deniers are well-known to the Rwandan diaspora community, which is not only wounded by the denials but fails to understand why their lies are given any media attention at all. At least as ominously, the deniers' reach and influence has been spreading, metastasising like a malignant cancer, thanks to the anarchy of the blogosphere and to the embrace of the deniers' arguments by a small but influential number of left-wing, anti-American journals and websites.

Google Rwanda and you're quite likely get a deniers' rant featuring the tiny band of usual suspects – French Judge Bruguiere, former UN Rwanda chief Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, Robin Philpot, former Australian investigator Michael Hourigan, American academic Christian Davenport – each enthusiastically citing the others as their proof that the entire so-called genocide was really an American imperial plot. That there is no evidence for this assertion, that every single reputable scholar who has studied the genocide has categorically disagreed with it, carries no weight with this incomprehensible band of true believers. At the same time, the harsh criticisms of the present Rwanda government by respected human rights advocates have unhappily provided a certain illogical legitimacy to the deniers' pernicious cause.

Thanks to the reach of Hotel Rwanda, which has been seen by more people than all other Rwanda films combined, many ordinary English-speakers are likely to know of only one Rwandan, Paul Rusesabagina, and to believe him a hero of the genocide, a righteous man who saved Tutsi lives at great personal risk. That he now is the most prominent person in the world claiming Kagame's rebels were as deadly as the genocidaires, that he insists Rwanda today is comparable to Rwanda during the 100 days, and that he openly works with known genocidaires and western deniers against the Kagame government, is still not grasped by his western admirers. That's why the uncritical adulation in which he is held and his own fierce determination to spread his message makes him a serious threat that should not be underestimated.

In Europe and in French-speaking Canadian province of Quebec, genocide denial is more mainstream. In large part this is due to longstanding ties between the pre-genocide francophone Hutu elite and assorted government and church officials in Western Europe and Quebec. But as elsewhere, deniers in these areas reflect a miscellany of motives. A number are former genocidaires themselves, some being protected by political and religious allies of the old regime, others walking free and peddling their poison. All of these Rwandans and non-Rwandans cherish a fantasy of someday reviving 'Hutuland' and the 'demographic democracy' that prevailed from 1959 to 1994, in other words, a Hutu dictatorship based exclusively on Hutu constituting a large majority of the population. Others have acted on behalf of the defence at the ICTR (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda). Some simply cannot abide Kagame and his inner circle of former Ugandans. A few are well-known non-Rwandan academics, taking every advantage to disparage the Kagame government while consciously cultivating a

generation of Rwanda-hating Congolese. The harm being done will be felt throughout the Great Lakes region for decades.

So the final assault common to the classical genocides of the 20th century – the denial that it ever happened – continues to be an ugly shared reality for all those touched by the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the genocide of the Rwandan Tutsi. The 15th anniversary of the final genocide of the 20th century and of the millennium provides an opportunity to unite all those affected by the three of them in a sustained and systematic counter-attack against deniers of all kinds.

It also moves us into the new century/millennium. It should pre-empt the many friends of the Government of Sudan from insisting, as the al-Bashir government routinely does, that the crisis in Darfur is very much the responsibility of its own victims.

Congolese and Rwandan Forces Should Make Protecting Civilians a Priority

Human Rights Watch

In The News

April 1 2009



The rebel Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) brutally slaughtered at least 100 Congolese civilians in the Kivu provinces of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo between January 20 and February 8, 2009, according to Human Rights Watch reports.

Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed dozens of victims and witnesses who recently arrived from neighboring areas of Ufamandu and Walowaluanda (North Kivu province) and from Ziralo (South Kivu province) at displaced persons camps near Goma, the capital of North Kivu. Their accounts are the first reports of killings of civilians by the FDLR since joint operations between Rwandan Defense Forces and the Congolese army against the group began on January 20. Some of the civilians died during the fighting between these forces.

"The FDLR have a very ugly past, but we haven't seen this level of violence in years," said Anneke Van Woudenberg, senior researcher in the Africa division at Human Rights Watch. "We've documented many abuses by FDLR forces, but these are killings of ghastly proportions."

The joint military operations are intended to dismantle Rwandan armed groups that have been present in eastern Congo since 1994. Some leaders of the FDLR are accused of having participated in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

As Rwandan and Congolese coalition forces advanced toward the FDLR's former headquarters at Kibua, in Ufamandu, North Kivu, the FDLR abducted scores of local residents from neighboring villages and took them to their camp, apparently intending to use them as human shields against the impending attack. Witnesses said that when coalition forces attacked Kibua on January 27, the trapped civilians tried to flee. The FDLR hacked many civilians to death and others died in the crossfire.

One witness at Kibua saw FDLR combatants kill at least seven people, including a pregnant woman, whose womb was slit open. Another saw an FDLR combatant batter a 10-year-old girl to death against a brick wall.

As the FDLR fled the military confrontation, they abducted dozens of civilians, forcing them to carry their goods.

In Remeka village in Ufamandu, the FDLR rebels called a meeting at which they accused the population, local leaders and the Mai Mai armed group with whom they had been allied, of having betrayed them. A local resident present at the meeting said the FDLR told residents they would not be allowed to leave and that they were "sharpening their spears and machetes." Another said, "The FDLR told us that if they were shot at by anyone that they would hold us responsible and kill us."

Following the meeting, the FDLR erected barriers to prevent people from fleeing. When some tried to flee, the FDLR attacked them, killing dozens with guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and machetes. "As I ran, I saw bodies everywhere - men, women and children," said one witness. "They had all been killed by the FDLR."

FDLR combatants also raped more than a dozen women whom they accused of having joined the government side against them. For instance, in southern Masisi territory (North Kivu), on January 27, FDLR combatants raped and killed a woman and then raped her 9-year-old daughter.

The message given at the Remeka meeting was repeated in a letter sent from the FDLR to the governor of South Kivu in early February. In the letter, the group warned that if the local population collaborated with the Rwandan army they would be considered the FDLR's "mortal enemy" and treated as a "belligerent party."

Following the attacks in Ufamandu, FDLR forces fled through Walowaluanda in Walikale territory to the Ziralo region in South Kivu, where they continued to kill civilians. A woman from Lulere village in Ziralo told Human Rights Watch that the FDLR said they would not leave Congo without "first exterminating the Congolese people." The FDLR forces then killed her 73-year-old father and 80-year-old uncle by smashing their skulls with small hoes.

Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that FDLR forces abducted at least 50 civilians in early February in Lulere, Mianda, Kalingita, Katale, and Kirambo villages, on the border between North and South Kivu provinces. They were reportedly taken to Kinono forest in Ziralo, South Kivu. Their fate is unknown.

The Congolese government nominally leads the joint operations against the FDLR, but the coalition troops that attacked the FDLR in Ufamandu were largely soldiers from the Rwandan Defense Forces. These Rwandan soldiers were allegedly responsible for having raped several women since the start of operations against the FDLR.

"The Tutsi [Rwandan] soldiers accused me of being the wife of an FDLR combatant, just because I'm Hutu," said one woman who was raped by a Rwandan army soldier in Remeka. "After they raped me, they burned my house, saying it was the house of an FDLR. I was pregnant, but there's no more movement in my womb. I think I have lost my first child."

The United Nations Mission in Congo, MONUC, has a mandate to protect civilians and provides logistical support to the Congolese army, but it was not involved in planning the joint operation. Although the coalition forces say they are open to sharing information with MONUC about their campaign, such information-sharing has been scant and too late to permit the UN forces to be able to plan for providing the needed protection.

In November 2008, the UN Security Council authorized an additional 3,000 troops for the mission to help carry out its mandate to protect civilians. None of these additional troops have yet arrived.

International humanitarian law - the laws of war - applies to both states and non-state armed groups. Parties to a conflict must take all feasible steps to minimize harm to the civilian population, including permitting civilians to flee to safer areas. The laws of war prohibit murder, rape and abductions. Those who commit such acts are responsible for war crimes.

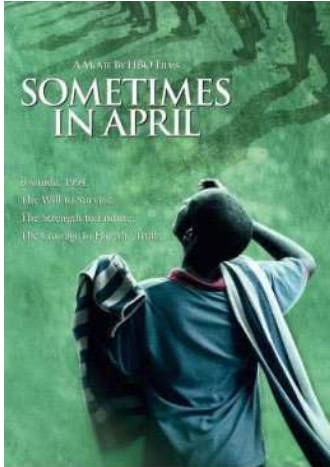
"Protection of civilians needs to be given a top priority in the military operations to help prevent, once again, Congolese civilians paying the highest price," said Van Woudenberg.

Sometimes in April: When one fails, we all fail

Elliot Waring

Film Review

April 3 2009



Elliot Waring reviews the 2005 film Sometimes in April, written and directed by Raoul Peck.

The backdrop of *Sometimes in April*, the Rwandan genocide that killed over 800,000 people 15 years ago, is not a new, unknown subject for most people, yet the film traverses the troubled landscape of Rwanda in 1994 with a startlingly frankness that makes watching it feel as if you're discovering these tragic events for the first time. The film offers a small glimpse into what life held and the decisions that some needed to make during that vicious and terrible time in human history. From the story of a man and his family to the backrooms and late night phone calls of international diplomacy the viewer is let into a world that seems almost too incredible to believe.

Sometimes in April is not a film you review in the typical sense. Any film that honestly depicts what happened during this period of time stands no matter what anyone thinks of it. As a fictional drama intent on giving outsiders some perspective on what life was like in Rwanda during the genocide, *Sometimes in April* succeeds unquestionably. What is contained within this “review” is a brief summary of the film and some of the questions which jump off the screen as you watch. Other than that, this reviewer can only say, watch this film. Watch this film and let it be a lesson to you to never forsake your fellow man, to never let humanity fail on such an epic scale again, to never sit idly by while atrocities are played out in front of you. Allowing violence and pain to pass by you unquestioned is an act of violence in and of itself.

Some of the first dialogue in the movie, between Augustin, a genocide survivor and now school teacher 10 years after that fateful April in 1994, and one of his students, paints a pretty clear picture that this is not going to be a film that offers the world any answers about why or how this could have happened. When asked if there was anything that they could have done to stop the violence, to stop the killings, Augustin takes a slow breath and says he doesn't know. This dialogue, followed by the onset of the heavy April rains, which signal the beginning of the Rwanda rainy season, set the tone for a film that is not made to create heroes or ease consciences. Rather, it sets the tone for a film that is going to take one of the darkest times in recent modern history and display it directly in front of your face, forcing you to confront humanity's failure full on, with no filters or pulled punches.

The story follows Augustin, a Hutu, and his family as they try to navigate their way through the initial onslaught of violence that erupted after President Habyarimana's plane was shot down. Honore, Augustin's brother and Hutu Power party member, is a radio journalist whose broadcasts are used to inspire members of the Hutu tribe to kill the

“cockroach” Tutsis. Complicating matters is the fact that Augustin is married to a Tutsi; a now punishable 'crime' by the hardliner Hutu Power group who wish to rid the country of the Tutsi. In an attempt to save his wife and children Augustin begs his brother to use his celebrity to help them evade roadblocks and escape to safety. Leaving Augustin behind they make it through roadblocks set up by drunken Hutu wielding automatic weapons and machetes but are stopped at an official Army roadblock. Honore tries to use his popularity but it proves ineffective and the car they are traveling in is attacked, leaving the fate of Augustin's wife and children unknown.

As the movie progresses it inter-cuts between the journey of Augustin through the killing fields of Kigali in 1994 and school teacher Augustin as he wrestles with his demons debating whether or not he should travel to Tanzania to observe his brother's trial before the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Unwilling to forgive, but desperate to get answers about the fate of his family, Augustin goes to the trial. While seeing the prison where the war criminals are held and watching the proceedings of the trial, Augustin's frustration overwhelms him and he can't help voicing his concern that the whole trial is nothing but a show to ease the consciences of the international community. A friend sagely tells him that this trial is better than nothing, that Rwandans need something to help them heal their wounds and move on past this tragedy. But, by the end of the film, after seeing the violence and chaos of Rwanda in 1994, it is hard to not share his frustrations wondering how the trial of roughly 80 people, 10 years after the fact, is truly going to help those who have lost everything to forgive. A trial may help heal international wounds and begin the process of forgiveness, but how do you begin the process of forgiveness when your family was killed by your neighbor?

Before the attacks start (and even for a little after they begin) we are shown a troubled yet hopeful Augustin who still firmly believes that the hostility between the Hutu and Tutsi will not boil over into a conflict that will threaten his family. The viewer, although knowing full well what is to come, can't help but sympathize with Augustin, for who would have truly believed what was to come? This clash (between off-screen after the fact truth and on screen pre-conflict hope) is nothing short of heartbreaking and as the cold reality repeatedly shows itself to Augustin, and you see him broken down, it is hard to not lose any hope for the world you may have had within you. How is it that an event like this, an event that happened so quickly, could sneak up on someone? How could mounting tension between two groups so instantly transform into such a spate of killings?

Honore, Augustin's brother, who eventually ends up arrested and on trial for war crimes, was a popular radio host on a Hutu Power station before and during the genocide. In the build up to April and the killings, his radio station ran a constant commentary describing the injustices inflicted upon the Hutus by the “cockroach” Tutsis. The power of these radio stations (and consequently the media as a whole) is shockingly apparent throughout the movie. The Hutu Power leaders, understanding the potential the radio had as a means of mass communication, gave out free radios to ensure that all Hutus could hear the same messages and get the same information. Consequently, any time you see Hutu Power party members, whether it is gathered around roadblocks or inspecting convoys, a constant stream of radio announcements can be heard in the background, a rallying cry that passionately inspires Hutus to kill Tutsis by whatever means they can, be it machete, fire arms, or their own bare hands. What becomes so abundantly clear through these media messages is that there is no alternative for the Hutus to hear, no other

broadcasts that may offer them a different perspective. Why is there not a single varying voice to help quell the storm and inspire reason over violence? Why is there only silence from others within Rwanda or those outside who have a voice?

While Augustin is traveling through Kigali desperately trying to find a safe haven we are shown the journey of Martine, a teacher at the Catholic school where Augustin's daughter, Anne-Marie, goes to school. Martine's journey in the film serves to display the struggles of those put face to face with guns and the brutal aftermath of that meeting. As Martine travels, with Anne-Marie and another student from the school, the depth and breadth of the killings, and the desperation of those wishing to survive, is shown with striking clarity. As they drag their broken, beaten bodies through the dirt it is impossible to put yourself in their shoes. As they seek refuge in a swamp littered with dead bodies you can't help but wonder what you would be willing to do to survive. What would you be capable of if the only choices you had ranged from a violent death to sleeping in a swamp filled with the dead?

As events are unfolding in Rwanda the film moves to Washington, D.C. to show the US government response to the crisis in Rwanda. As the Department of State, intelligence agencies, and the armed forces discuss the escalating conflict they remain unwilling to get involved. International politics, law, and recent events dictate the level of action (or inaction) the US is willing to commit itself to. In an interesting exchange, the Assistant Secretary of State threatens the Rwandan Army leader with "consequences" if he does not end the killings, to which he calmly replies, "Rwanda has no oil, we have no minerals, we have nothing you want", concluding that the US has no interest in getting involved in a situation in Rwanda. This aspect of US foreign policy seems to be a recurring theme in recent history and you can't help but wonder what might have happened if the US had made more of an effort to get involved. While the film only highlights the inaction of the US government, it is important to remember that countless other nations failed to intervene and end the conflict as well. What needed to happen for the international community to get involved? Was Rwanda, a small country in the heart of Africa, too tiny a place for anyone to care about?

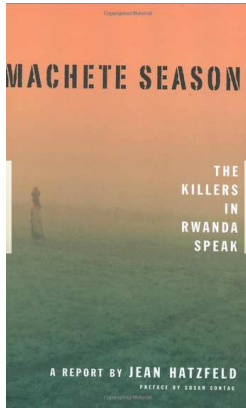
At the end of the film an on-screen message tells you that as of 2004 only roughly 20 people had been sentenced by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. As this fact fades from the screen, the one question, above all other questions, which consumes your thoughts and is sure to linger with you long after the credits have ended, so graphically displayed by the film on the inter-family level, inter-tribe level, and international level, is this: can trials and tribunals set up to hold people accountable for their crimes make up for the silence and inaction that allowed this tragedy to be carried out in the first place?

Machete Season

Sam Wolf

Book Review

July 17 2005



Why individuals willingly participated in the Rwanda Genocide is a question that has been widely asked and widely begged by multiple books on the subject. Consisting of transcribed interviews with ten different perpetrators of the genocide, Machete Season still only brushes the heart of the matter: that "why" that historians of such atrocities will always ask themselves.

Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak

Jean Hatzfeld

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux: New York

Translated from the French by Linda Coverdale

In reading a book like Jean Hatzfeld's *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*, it is difficult to avoid the feeling of voyeurism. The question of who Mr. Hatzfeld's audience is is a curious one: what sort of people want to read interviews with men who slaughtered their neighbors? And why? Some, presumably, who for one reason or another are interested in the history of genocide; people with a particular interest in Rwanda; and those with an interest in the psychology of violence on a grand scale.

Many books in the decade since the horror of the Rwanda genocide have examined one aspect or another of it: from Philip Gourevitch's journalistic effort to understand the magnitude of the tragedy to Linda Melvern's detailed—even clinical—analysis of those several months in 1994; Elizabeth Neuffer examines attempts towards justice, contrasting Rwanda with Bosnia; Colin Tatz attempts to compare and contrast various genocides in search of some kind of understanding. The common theme throughout these works is the incomprehensibility of genocide: they all begin (and ultimately end) with a *why did they?* and a *how could they?*

Given this apparent desperation to understand, it seems odd that none before (to my knowledge) have taken Mr. Hatzfeld's approach, asking those responsible to explain it to us. The structure of the book answers our hope that these men, who swung machetes day after day against those with whom they had formerly lived peaceful (if uneasy) lives, will explain it to us. In each chapter, Mr. Hatzfeld first explores a particular question that arises in the face of an event such as this one and then provides the responses from his interviewees. The feeling is one of snapshots on a particular theme: "The First Time" "Group Spirit" "And God in all This?" and so on. In this way he conveys the feeling of a group conversation, though in some cases the interviews were carried out one on one.

The question, of course, is: Did it work? Does hearing the thoughts of these men after their crimes, sitting in jail, explain to us what they did?

Ultimately this isn't really a fair expectation; the oft-repeated claim that such crimes *defy comprehension* is not an idle one. Hearing a man's honest description of what

it's like to kill an acquaintance with a machete doesn't get us any closer to understanding why he did it. If the book leaves us feeling no closer to understanding the event, the reason lies in the incomprehensibility of the event itself, rather than with Mr. Hatzfeld. More than answering questions, the book raises them, and interesting ones.

In some cases, it nearly appears that the men are incapable of understanding the question in the terms in which we would like to have it answered. In response to *why*, they make statements like this one: "...the judge announced that the reason for the meeting was the killing of every Tutsi without exception. It was simply said, and it was simple to understand...so the only questions were about the details of the operation."

This quote comes from the beginning of the book, and fairly makes one want to scream: no, the details of the operation are *not* the only questions—what about the question of whether or not one ought to follow such orders? About where the orders were coming from? About what such a course of action would accomplish? There are myriad questions: and yet the men responsible—the ten interviewed here at least, and likely many others—fail to ask any which don't relate directly to the "details of the operation".

Mr. Hatzfeld notes that when he asks the prisoners he interviews (most of whom have fake names) questions about their activities using the singular *you* (interviews were conducted in French), he gets nothing: *I* always worked in the fields, *I* didn't see anything at all. When he switches to the plural *you*, however, things change significantly: "We went up to the soccer field at around nine or ten o'clock... and we would go off on the attack. Rule number one was to kill. There was no rule number two."

This dissociation and apparent failure to take, or even comprehend, personal responsibility is a common and recurring theme throughout the book. The men so often repeat the claim that the genocide was something that simply *happened*, rather than something that was *done*, that it appears universal among them. Religion plays into this somewhat: one man notes that "...I did not choose this, it was God. I massacred some Tutsis, and then the Tutsis killed some Hutus."

Though there is some understanding that this event was different, there is frequent reference to the fact that ethnic massacres were not unknown in Rwanda prior to 1994. The sense we are left with is of a quiet insistence that it was the scope, and not the nature, of the 1994 events that were extraordinary. Given that the men interviewed come from a region in which 50,000 out of a population of 59,000 Tutsis were killed, it is not only difficult to countenance this claim but nearly nauseating. The quote above implies that it's just a simple back and forth: "I massacred some Tutsis, and then the Tutsis killed some Hutus." This kind of simplistic and ultimately misleading description of the genocide comes only from the killers; by playing down the exceptional nature of their own actions, there seems to be a hope that it will be perceived that they were only playing a role that from time to time one group or the other must play. One killer even says, "Each morning there were those who had to die and those who had to kill."

It is perhaps not surprising that those who committed these atrocities tend to view it as something they simply got caught up in, rather than something that they were personally responsible for: untangling the combination of subconscious self-preservation and calculated denial would likely be impossible. Some are aware of the need to avoid awareness of what they did: "Even in your heart of hearts, it's riskier to remember than to forget." The solution appears to be to insist that the genocide was unstoppable, a force of nature rather than a piece of history.

Is it true? Is it possible that those thousands who killed really had no other choice, that anyone in the same situation would have acted essentially the same, and carried a machete day after day against neighbors, acquaintances, sometimes even friends?

Whether it's human nature or simply my own, I feel drawn to believe that if only people had made conscious choices not to be involved, if only they had refused to go along with the crowd, then perhaps the tragedy could have been averted. But Hatzfeld's book leaves this hope in question: the killers' constant repetition that it was God who made this genocide, and that there was nothing they could have done to avert it, ultimately becomes convincing. Those who refused to participate were killed; from our moral perspective, perhaps a better choice than to take part in the killings themselves. But how can we judge such a situation, not having been in it? Many of the killers make the same point: insisting that those who were there simply cannot understand and have no right to judge them. Many claim that they will be judged by God, and by no other; that we who were not there cannot understand or pass judgment upon those who were.

One of the most disturbing aspects of many of the killers' attitudes is their near-disregard for the importance of reconciliation with the survivors. Many of them indicate that they know they have to apologize; but feel that after that, their duty is done: one man says "I wrote short notes of apology to some families of victims I knew and had them delivered by visitors." This is perceived as enough; he knows that it may be difficult for the survivors to accept his apology, but doesn't see what else he can do.

As readers, the book leaves us feeling sort of unsettled: partly, of course, because of the nature of the material and the simple impossibility of really understanding what seems so alien to us. But the worst of it is the feeling towards the killers, the men interviewed who we feel we've just spent a couple of hours talking to. We expect to feel repugnance, disgust, distaste—and these emotions are all there. But not to the extent that we expect; as Mr. Hatzfeld says, "This is awkward to admit, but curiosity wins out over hostility." And this is true: it is in many cases difficult to dislike these men, even if we find their actions and their descriptions of them horrifying and incomprehensible. It takes a conscious effort to remain horrified: it's easy to slip into viewing these men as they view themselves, as essentially good people who got caught up in something bad, and were helpless to resist.

I have been to Nyamata

Chipochedenga Mercy Jumo

Poetry

March 5 2004

The author wrote this poem on her return from Nyamata, Rwanda where 2,500 people had been slaughtered in 1994 to her home in Zimbabwe (June 2000).

Dear Friends,

I have been to Nyamata

And will forever carry the lingering smell of death, a repugnant reminder of the peace we take for granted back home, a reminder of how the world turned away as blood desecrated the soil that sustains life

I have been to Nyamata, to the church, a national shrine, riddled with bullets, stained with the blood of her children,

Believers razed as they huddled below the gentle virgin, the mother of peace

I was at Nyamata And walked through the vaults of death Tears streaming down my face as skeletal remains met the eye, mouldy heads with cavities, gaping in vindication, the last laugh, for they did not die in vain

I've been to Nyamata...

Where children breathe the rancid smell of human decay and cling to the iron bars separating them from death which glares at them daily, the sacred bones of their fathers, mothers, siblings, some their amputated limbs

I keep wondering what this exposure will do to these little minds that have already experienced so much in so few years.

Will seeing and living amongst corpses really teach our children Never Again or are we the so called development workers, human rights activists, government and international aid agencies experimenting with the children only to evaluate unforeseen results and go conferencing on the lessons learnt long after the damage has been done?

As terrorism winds its way around the world can the open graves of Rwanda be recommended for replication elsewhere with the hope that non burial teaches us the important message of how not to?

I am just thinking, just wondering

I've been to Nyamata...

I saw acres and acres of dusty mounds, each adorned with a cross, fields where Rwanda planted her children

I crossed rivers that once flowed of human bodies on their way to Lake Victoria.

I spoke with the unsung heroine, the living ghost of Nyamata, physically and spiritually scarred, maimed by horror, the woman who survived extermination twice buried and shielded by corpses of family and friends a week long at a time, the one who was eaten alive by maggots and bears permanent scars on her face and leg, I remember her.

Will she ever see those stories told about her? If she does what other use than to rekindle a fire within her soul?

Her way of life is no better for the countless times she has lifted up her skirts for sympathisers to see the scars.

Just a dull pain private yet public of the interviews she has given about the husband and children she lost that day and the countless rapes that planted a seed of death in her body. Have we turned sacred places into museums with the affected peering through the fence as they do at Nyamata relegated to the margins of their own story?

The ceremony around the genocide worries me. I am wondering how much is spent in telling the story at expensive forums and in glossy publications. Would it make a difference to forego the pomp and ceremony, the aeroplanes, conferencing, hotels and cocktails, just this once, in respect of the dead

I thought I should tell you of the Dusty red soil roads of Rwanda coloured by the blood of her children, neighbours turned vile by war killing and raping their own

Rwanda, how your womb wept and wrenched,

They preserve Nyamata, Rwanda's vaults of shame yet hope for regeneration and healing, so mankind may remember, 'never again!'

I went there, with sisters for peace who wept as if Nyamata had just happened and vowed to claim their place and raise their voices higher than the army generals and heads of states in discussions of war and peace

I have learnt from you Mary, you too Abdu that we are one. This is an important message. How do I bring Nyamata home so that like the children of Rwanda, being Ndebele or Shona becomes less central to our lives as Zimbabweans? I have also been wondering, maybe if ever, through bringing Nyamata to each person here, and you to others,

the ghosts will be laid to rest and Nyamata will live in our memories and never happen again?

Three tales of Rwandan Genocide

Collected by Ferdinand Katendeko

Diaries

April 19 2004

Ferdinand Katendeko writes:

Whenever the month of April approaches, I recall what happened in my neighbouring country, Rwanda. What policies should governments put in place to avoid this genocide? How should the international community prepare itself to avoid such an occurrence? What role should the local community in such circumstances of brother killing a brother? What about the regional community? These are some of the questions that I would pose for every one to ponder as they read the testimonies given below.

Living among the dead

Flora Mukampore

In 1994 in the village of Nyarubuye, Rwanda, the Hutu majority went on a killing spree in the local church, slaughtering neighbours and friends. Flora Mukampore lost 17 members of her family and saw her neighbour doing the killing. This is her story.

We used to go to church with them and they taught us together that committing murder is a sin and God punishes those who kill.

We thought that no one would dare come to attack us at the church because the church is a holy place.

When the killers arrived our men were ready to fight, even though they didn't have any weapons, so they died standing. You would not think that they were all going to get killed because they were very many. We did not think they would get killed.

Drenched in blood

My neighbour Gitera was there. Imagine someone leaving their home, knowing the possible victim's name and their children's names.

They all killed their neighbours' wives and children.

All the people they were cutting fell on me because I was near the door. I had too much hair but it all was washed with blood.

My body had been drenched in blood and it was getting dry on me so killers thought I had been cut all over. They thought I was dead.

I lay down on one side with only one eye open. I could hear a man come toward me and I guess he saw me breathe. He hit me on my head saying: "Isn't this thing still alive?"

Immediately I heard my entire body say "whaa". Something in my head changed forever. Everything stopped.

Afterwards, when the cold wind blew. I woke up. But I did not realise that there were bodies around me. I did not remember what had happened.

I just thought they were normal people and so I slept among them like we had slept before the killers came.

Suicide

Later I heard the girl say, "She is rotten. It's all over for her. Does she look human to you? "

Then I realised that all the people around me had decayed.

When they sat me up I realised there were maggots and I started removing them off myself.

Can you imagine living with the dead? At some point God helped me and made me unconscious because if I wasn't, there is a possibility that I would have committed suicide.

But, I wasn't conscious and anyway killing oneself needs energy. Can you imagine, people died on the 15 April and I lived among them until the 15 May?

Massacre at Nvarubuye church

Fergal Keane

The killers came on a spring afternoon, as many as 7,000 men crowding down the narrow lane towards Nyarubuye church.

Nine days earlier the plane carrying Rwanda's Hutu President, Juvenal Habyirimana, had been shot down flying into the capital Kigali.

Within hours the slaughter of members of the Tutsi minority as well as moderate Hutus had begun.

Among the killers marching to the church were Gitera Rwamuhuzi and his friend Silas Ngendahimana.

The Tutsis, including Flora Mukampore, had fled to the church believing they would be safe.

The local Mayor, Sylvestre Gacumbitsi, gave orders to the police to shoot, and then the peasants moved in to kill - hacking, slashing and bludgeoning their neighbours to death. Between five and ten thousand Tutsis were killed.

Rotting bodies

When I reached the scene weeks later the rotting bodies lay twisted terribly, skulls smashed open, faces frozen in the last terrible expression of violent death. How could men do this, I asked myself.

It is a question that has haunted me for a decade. Ten years after the slaughter I met some of the killers. Most are in jail but will soon be released under the government's Gacaca programme after confessing their crimes and apologising.

Gitera Rwamuhuzi is the most confident of his group and the natural leader. He smiled and shook my hand warmly.

He is an intelligent, complex man - and a ruthless killer. Before the genocide he was a local criminal gang enforcer and is said to have killed as many as 100 people, with his gang responsible for 300 deaths.

He has confessed only to three murders. "Whoever is telling you that story is exaggerating to try to make my name look bad," he says.

Gitera describes lying on the ground at Nyarubuye while the soldiers opened fire. He saw a Tutsi man trying to escape from the church and ran over and struck him on the head, killing him.

He blames Satan, a common theme among the prisoners. Responsibility is passed out of their hands to some supernatural force. There are no guilty men, only victims of dark forces.

But he also believed he was going to be killed by the Tutsis. "We thought that if they had managed to kill the head of state how were we ordinary people going to survive?" he says.

Gitera describes killing his next door neighbours.

"They looked traumatised. They were people who had lost weight because they had not eaten for days. After killing the mother the toddler fell by her side," he says, crying. Cyasa Habimana refuses to be photographed with the others, believing he is a man of greater substance. He also reads from his diaries, believing they justify him.

The Interahamwe militia group leader says he was a tool of more powerful men. He is cunning but with no imagination, an ex-army sergeant with a reputation as a hard man and a good organiser. He was persuaded to train the Interahamwe by an army colonel.

Cyasa does not blame the devil. He says the colonel gave him a new set of tyres for his truck and threatened to kill him if he did not comply.

He says he was not at Nyarubuye but was involved in attacks elsewhere in the area in which thousands of Tutsis died.

To the survivors, Cyasa was a monster, devoid of pity. He is now under sentence of death.

Narrow Escape

Justin Kiyimba

I was staying in a rented three-bedroomed house in Remera near Amahoro National Stadium, and hardly five kilometres from the airport. I had a houseboy who was a Hutu.

On April 6, 1994, I was in the house in the evening when I suddenly heard a very loud bang, followed by absolute silence. Hardly an hour later, shooting started everywhere. I rang a friend who was staying in Kicukiro suburb of Kigali. He told me there was shooting going on around his place as well. By 10:00pm, there was shooting all over.

At around 3:00am, a friend called and asked me: "Have you heard the news? It looks like president Juvenal Habyarimana has been killed." I immediately developed cold feet. In the morning, the Interahamwe-armed Hutu youth were on rampage. They had started the ritual killing that very night. They sought for people everywhere including under the beds. They even snatched their victims from the hands of UN forces.

There was a radio station that used to incite people - that: “You people, what are you doing? The graves that we dug are not yet full.” It seemed like the Habyarimana government was preparing for the eventuality of a massacre.

From the weapons they used, the clubs they flaunted and the machetes they carried against the Tutsis and moderate Hutus, it could not have been hatched overnight. Not all Hutus were bad, though. Only there was already this animosity between the Hutus and the Tutsis mounting.

Unfortunately, one’s identity card indicated whether he or she was Hutu, Tutsi or Twa... There were also particular features to show that one was either Hutu or Tutsi.

They went an extra mile to know in which house each Ugandan or any other foreigner was staying. That was how bad the situation was for us. My houseboy then told me that Suudi, a driver of Kagera River Basin, had been killed. Later I learnt that Suudi used to move with the Tutsis, and because of that, he was regarded an outcast among the Hutus. The same day, I heard people screaming from my neighbour’s home. There was wailing. The shooting reigned supreme. My neighbour had seven kids, a wife and his mother, most of them were massacred, but he managed to escape.

Before the genocide, soldiers of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) were stationed at the parliament building. But they had now been moved to occupy a place near my house, which had a brick fence. We could not dare come out all this time. After three days hiding in the house, I heard people banging my door almost breaking in and shouting “Omugande alimo” (is this Ugandan in?). Somehow, I summoned enough courage and in the little Kinyarwanda I knew, I told them to wait for me to open for them. On opening, I met six soldiers armed to their teeth, their fingers hungry on the trigger and raring to go. Their magazines were swang around themselves like necklaces.

About six Interahamwe youth, well armed with machetes, guns, axes and clubs with nails on them gave guard to the soldiers. After leading them through the back-door into the sitting room, I knelt at my coffee table and started praying. My end had finally come, so I thought. I waited for the last hour that never came. But I heard one of them say in Kinyarwanda that “let us not kill this man, but let him show us where the RPF are.” I had a Uganda flag on my television. As a Ugandan, the soldiers thought I was hiding the RPF soldiers.

The Interahamwe remained in the sitting room as I led the soldiers into the bedroom. By the time the genocide broke out, we were only three in the house - the houseboy, myself and our dog. (His wife, Margaret and family were in Uganda.) The soldiers and Interahamwe spent over two hours ransacking the house, turning it upside down and pulling down all sorts of things, wardrobes, wall units and anything they could set their eyes on. When they were leaving finally, they took away a big radio and many other things. When they took my small radio, I thought oh my God, I am going to be in darkness, no radio, and no telephone.

My telephone was now cut off, the last telephone I had was with my son in the United States, and I was cut off from the outside.

Thank God! Hardly an hour later, they (soldiers) came back saying: “We are bringing back this radio so that you don’t think we had come to steal your things.” They had fidgeted with the radio and broken something. But good enough I later managed to get it working.

I used to tune only to BBC Focus on Africa and switch it off to save the one set of battery I had.

There was no electricity and no water running anymore. Good enough, it was a rainy season and we used rainwater. We had some little food in the house and at the time, the soldiers were only interested in looting beers and not any foodstuffs. This saved us from possible starvation had they chosen to loot the food.

For the little food we had, beans, posho, rice and sugar, we had to bury them and were using them sparingly. I used to take porridge at about 11:00am with my houseboy and dog, and some light meal at 3:00pm. I could not bathe everyday.

We were living in a government-controlled area; and there were roadblocks and shooting going on everywhere. I could not go out. All the time I was lying down in the sitting room, always reading the Bible.

I stayed in Rwanda like a person who had been sentenced to death, only waiting to die, though never knowing when. There were bullets and bombings throughout the place, everytime.

They were stray bullets, not aimed at me. At one time sitting behind the house, a long range bomb dropped near me. I was covered with soil.

Another time I was standing by the door when a bullet ripped through the door and missed me narrowly. I don't know how I survived. Anybody could have walked in and killed me. I could have died of hunger if we didn't have some little food stocked in the house. And my blood pressure had shot up.

My rescue was as miraculous as those of Peter and Daniel in the Bible. After over two months indoors, I wrote a letter to the UN forces, who were always driving past my house, to rescue me.

I had arranged all the things that I wanted to carry, including the diary on which I had been writing all the daily incidents. But when the time came, I picked only my blue jacket, leaving all the things remaining in the house.

They first took me to the airport where I stayed in the lounge (glass house) as the battle went on, bullets shattering the glass windows. The Ghananian soldiers gave me good food.

I was in the airport for a week, until the RPF took over the airport. Then they went to check the runway to see if it was safe for the plane to take off or land. It was in the first week of June when we left Kigali in a UN transport plane to Nairobi, before connecting to Uganda on Kenya Airways. Everybody could not believe I had left Kigali alive. They thought I was long dead.

I did not believe it either. Never did I think I would ever walk out of the place alive.

Ignoring Genocide, One More Time

Benjamin Hess

Comment

March 1 2006

The world watched with a mixture of horror and lethargy during the various genocides of the 20th century, later wondering why no one tried to stop it. But as the grimness in Darfur, Sudan, continues to unfold, the cycle is repeating itself.

The world stood by while six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust during World War II. It watched as over 800,000 Tutsis were murdered in just three months in Rwanda. It permitted “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia, even in United Nations “safe areas” such as Srebrenica. And now the international community is employing the same strategy of inaction in Darfur, Sudan, that has characterized its previous responses to genocide. When will it learn from its mistakes?

Since February 2003, when the Sudanese government initiated its brutal campaign of ethnic violence on non-Arab tribes in the Darfur region, hundreds of thousands have died from hunger and disease, thousands more have been savagely killed, and over two million people have been forced to flee their homes. The Sudanese government, through the Janjaweed, or Arab militias, has sought to control unrest and possible rebellion among the non-Arab tribes (which was a result of earlier massacres of their people by the Janjaweed) by killing as many of their members as possible. The government has done everything it can to facilitate the Janjaweed’s mission: it has set up training camps, provided weapons and equipment, and offered logistical support.

The Janjaweed’s tactics are truly heinous. Villages are razed to the ground, which has led to the massive displacement of the population mentioned in the previous paragraph. Women are gang-raped; men are forced to watch the rapes of family members before they are killed. In an excellent article for *The New York Review of Books*, Nicholas Kristof writes that the negative stigma attached to a rape victim and her family as well as the physical damage and risk of HIV transmission has made rape one of the most effective tools to instill fear among the tribes and force them to leave the area. At first, the Sudanese government rejected charges that rapes were occurring and even imprisoned rape victims who became pregnant for committing adultery. Though the government has been forced to soften its line, rape and murder are still a common occurrence in Darfur. On April 8, 2004, the Sudanese government signed a humanitarian ceasefire agreement with two rebel groups in Darfur – the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement – which gave the African Union the mandate to provide military observers to monitor the ceasefire. Since then, the AU mission has been expanded to over 7000 personnel with new responsibilities for promoting confidence building measures between the two sides, facilitating humanitarian assistance, and ensuring security in the region. Nevertheless, despite the valiant efforts of the AU peacekeepers, the mission has been unable to protect civilians and the violence in Darfur continues unabated.

Recently, there have been renewed calls for a strong United Nations peacekeeping force to intervene. On January 31, 2006, Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group sent a joint letter to U.S. President George Bush calling for the United States to

push for intervention in Darfur when it assumed the presidency of the U.N. Security Council in February. They also pushed for a UN peacekeeping force at least 20,000 strong with a Chapter VII mandate that will enable the peacekeepers to protect civilians by force if necessary and disarm Janjaweed forces that pose threats to civilians. Others have urged NATO to enforce a no-fly zone over Sudan to neutralize the Sudanese Air Force.

Nevertheless, there are still several issues that may block UN intervention. First, Sudan has powerful allies on the Security Council in Russia and China. As permanent members, both can veto any resolution that calls for UN peacekeeping in Darfur. Second, there is little support in Sudan or at the African Union for replacing an all-African force with a UN or NATO force composed of non-Africans. Third, the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the more general “war on terror” require massive financial resources and manpower from countries like the United States and Great Britain, which are unlikely to divert these resources to Darfur. Fourth, despite Sudan’s oil supplies, most countries view any possible intervention on purely humanitarian grounds rather than for strategic interests, and thus may be less willing to become involved.

Finally, there are still those who wish to debate whether the violence in Darfur can be considered genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention. In the Genocide Convention, genocide is defined as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such.” This definition should leave no room for doubt that the Janjaweed’s targeting of non-Arab tribes in Darfur constitutes genocide. However, the convention also requires all signatory parties to intervene to prevent genocide from occurring. Therefore, many politicians have been loath to use the term for political reasons.

Sadly, while the international community debates its next move, the tragedy continues in Darfur. Every day, the Janjaweed terrorize the civilian population by raping, looting, burning, and killing innocents. Now the conflict has crossed the border into Chad and threatens to erupt into civil war there. Inaction or weak measures in dealing with Darfur would be a terrible mistake for the international community. Still smarting from its recent failures to intervene in Rwanda and Bosnia, it cannot stand by while genocide occurs again. Let us hope that the world has learned from its past mistakes. The time to act is now. If not, we condemn Darfur to remain the hell that it has become.