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WITNESSES TO MURDER: THE WORLD'S REACTION TO GENOCIDE IN
RWANDA

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By
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In October 1945, representatives from fifty nations throughout the world met in San Francisco to work together for world peace. As World War II came to an end, several nations including the United States, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and China, which would constitute the permanent members, formed the United Nations. The premise of the UN was that the world community could peacefully negotiate solutions to issues that arose in the global political sphere in order to avoid continual war and further global strife. This mandate became stronger in 1948 when the assembled nations agreed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document, drafted by nine individuals from all regions of the world, intended to enumerate the rights that the signatories believed all people held as a birthright. However, while steeping itself in universalism, this document was grounded in Western traditions. Indeed, it relied heavily on the beliefs of political philosophers such as John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, who created their own theories in reaction to the atrocities innocent people faced during earlier generations. While the UDHR had lofty and righteous goals, unfortunately the beliefs forwarded in this document have not always driven the work that the UN has done. One of the most tragic instances in which the United Nations did not live up to the call of the UDHR was during the 1994 genocide in the East African nation of Rwanda. In Rwanda the observer can see a clear historical example of an instance where the world and the UN watched while hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children were slaughtered, simply because of their ethnic background. As Robert Morgenthau stated

when talking about a similar world tragedy, the Armenian Genocide of World War I, “When principle succumbs to expediency, the inevitable result is tragedy.”¹

This research focuses on the deficiencies of both the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda as well as the UN hierarchy. The main questions this research attempts to answer are, in what ways were the UN, the United States, and European colonizers complicit in over 800,000 deaths in Rwanda in 1994 in light of the ethnic tensions that had occurred in that nation throughout the twentieth century? After being given several reports about the bloodshed from various sources including Romeo Dallaire and Allison Des Forges, why did the Western powers continue to do nothing to stop it? If the UN was founded on the principles of world peace and human rights, how can the organization sit idly by while hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were killed due to the fact they were Tutsis? The following research utilizes primary source material of individuals who were on the ground in Rwanda experiencing the killing for themselves as well as decision makers at both UN headquarters and within the government of the United States. It also includes a brief introduction to the nation of Rwanda itself and how the ethnic divide became so wide as a result of European colonization in the twentieth century.

Historical Origins of the Crisis

The issues in Rwanda stemmed from the discord between the Hutus and the Tutsis. Whereas much of the international community saw the Rwandan violence as just another example of African tribal violence, John Berry and Carol Pott Berry noted that,

¹ Robert M. Morgenthau, “Will Trump Tell the Truth About the Armenian Genocide?” *Wall Street Journal*, January 26, 2018

“the genocide in Rwanda had as much to do with tribalism as the Holocaust did in Europe.”² Saying that what occurred in Rwanda was just “Africa being Africa” was a huge misinterpretation of those events. It also does the people that suffered a great injustice and gives an excuse to the world community for standing by and doing nothing. As told by the people that were on the ground and witnessed the killings, the 1994 Tutsi genocide was a calculated, political act meant to permanently exterminate an entire ethnic group in Rwanda.

Much of the divide can be traced back to the African arrival of “racially-obsessed nineteenth century Europeans,”³ who became, “quite smitten with the Tutsi, whom they saw as definitely too fine to be negroes”⁴ based on their European-like appearance. While the Hutu made up the majority of the population, they typically held lower status jobs working primarily as small-scale farmers. In addition to their different social roles, some Europeans claimed the Tutsi were different in their appearance, with the Tutsi being very tall and thin while the Hutu were shorter with a stocky build. Father van den Burgt, a twentieth century European missionary to Rwanda described the Tutsi in an almost romantic way when he stated, “We can see Caucasian skulls and beautiful Greek profiles side by side with Semitic and even Jewish features, elegant golden-red beauties in the heart of Ruanda and Urundi.”⁵ The prevailing ideas that permeated throughout the land focused on the Tutsi being both physically and intellectually superior to the Hutus. The arrival of these Europeans began the separation of the Hutus and the Tutsis.

² John A. Berry and Carol Pott Berry, introduction to *Genocide in Rwanda: A Collective Memory*, ed. John A. Berry and Carol Pott Berry (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1999), 3.

³ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

Previously they had lived and worked peacefully without giving much thought to their ethnic differences.

Ultimately, it was the German and later the Belgian colonizers that turned the Hutus and Tutsis against each other. The Germans, though they were not in Rwanda for very long, promoted the theory that the Tutsi were a superior race. The Belgians were “awarded” Rwanda by the League of Nations following the Allied victory in WWI, and by the 1930s had set up a system of chiefdoms and sub-chiefdoms that entrusted Tutsis with most of the political clout in East Africa. This is also the time period when identity cards were introduced that further separated the Hutu and Tutsi population so that it was clear who belonged to each ethnic class. Ethnic stratification was also reinforced by the colonizers through the educational system. Because of their perceived superiority, it was the Tutsis who were given the most Western-style education by missionaries in Rwanda. The Hutu were then blamed for their low levels of Western academic achievement. As was noted by Alain Destexhe, “The colonizers blamed the imbalance in the schools and resulting low social standing of the Hutu on Hutu passivity making no acknowledgement of their own role in the situation.”⁶ The program of inflating the standing of the Tutsi by the Belgians due to their physicality would eventually lead to the violence that sprouted midway through the twentieth century. This favoritism led to, “a very dangerous social bomb,”⁷ that, “was almost absent-mindedly manufactured throughout the peaceful years.”⁸ There is no way to ascertain whether there would have been violence in Rwanda

⁶ Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 41.

⁷ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*

regardless of the existence of the Belgians, but their system absolutely contributed to the violence that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. The programs that the Belgians put in place played a major role in laying the groundwork for killings of Tutsis and the failure of the UN and other Western nations, including Belgium, during the genocide of 1994.

As the 1950s wore on, groups of Hutu intellectuals banded together to question the superiority of the Tutsi elite. There thus became a belief, popular among the Hutu majority, that the Tutsi were co-colonizers in Rwanda. “This confusion of a social problem with an ethnic problem during the period leading up to independence was attested to in an important document produced in 1957 by nine Hutu intellectuals, the *Bahutu Manifesto*.”⁹ This document became among the first major examples of Hutu resistance and public questioning of the idea of Tutsi superiority. One of the things that became clear during this period was that the Hutu could use their superior numbers to establish a show of force against the Tutsi, if the population backed such ideals. “This position was further reinforced in 1959, when the Belgian administration decided that it would from now on support the educated Hutu rather than the Tutsi.”¹⁰ This was another example where the European colonizers seriously impacted domestic affairs in a way that they calculated to benefit themselves. The Belgians having had created a situation in which the Tutsi held positions of power, now feared “Hutu Power” and attempted to pacify the Hutu masses through educational reforms and new social policies.

⁹ Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

The Belgians ultimately created a system where they gradually ceded power to the Hutu elite in response to being chastised in the UN for their previous policy in which a small portion of the population held power. “The democratic principle of majority rule was cited as justification for the removal of the Tutsi from their previous positions of influence; a complete reversal of previous political policy.”¹¹ The Belgians even went so far as publicizing their decision by saying that they supported the Hutus who had, “been dominated for so long by the Tutsi.”¹² This was another example where the UN got involved in a situation, but actually made the situation worse instead of solving the inherent problem. A notion that will repeat itself in 1994.

By this time, the Hutus were well aware of their superior numbers and they used this fact to their advantage. Multiple riots broke out against the Tutsi chiefs in 1959, which were permitted by the Belgians to escalate into the mass killing of more than 20,000 Tutsis. A vast number of Tutsis went into exile to escape the violence that had rocked the country. Rwanda declared independence in 1962, and at that time the Hutus used their majority to take control of the government. Gregoire Kayibanda, a Hutu, was elected the first president of the newly independent Rwanda. A group of Tutsis from the neighboring nation of Burundi attempted to cross the border with the intention of ousting President Kayibanda. The campaign was a massive failure that resulted in the massacre of Tutsis living in Rwanda, once again resulting in over 20,000 deaths. The Nationalist Hutus wanted to establish their authority and, “there were further massacres of Tutsis the following year.”¹³ “A year later Kayibanda warned that if the Tutsi ever sought to obtain

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 44.

political power again they would find that the whole Tutsi race will be wiped out.”¹⁴ The ruling government blamed the Tutsis when any hardships befell the nation from that point forward.

While the remainder of the 1960s saw relative calm in the nation, President Kayibanda continued the use of national identity cards among the country’s citizenry. By the start of the 1970s Kayibanda began to institute a quota system that limited the number of Tutsis that could be educated and put in civil service positions. The racial divide in the tiny land-locked nation of Rwanda had come full circle. Now the Hutus ruled supreme and hoped to bolster the international interest of their state using their connections to the French speaking world. Meanwhile, many Tutsis fled to nearby Uganda, a former British territory, setting up colonial interests that would again shape the nation’s future.

Another genocide occurred in 1972 that would have a direct affect on the citizens in Rwanda. The Tutsis had retained their power in Burundi, and after a failed coup led by a group of Hutus in that nation, the systematic slaughtering of Hutus in Rwanda commenced to the tune of 200,000 massacred. As was reported, “The U.S. State Department estimated that an attempt had been made to kill every Hutu male over the age of fourteen.”¹⁵ After a few commissions were set up to talk about the Burundi situation, the international community allowed that nation to sink back into obscurity. This situation had a profound impact on Rwanda, though. “Kayibanda used the tragic events in Burundi to conduct a further crackdown against the Tutsi in Rwanda and started a campaign to ‘purify’ the country.”¹⁶ Hutu men took to the streets with megaphones to

¹⁴ Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London: Verso, 2004), 9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

tell Tutsi children to stay away from their schools. The ethnic quota system was ramped up, with lists of Tutsi citizens posted all over the walls of schools and public buildings. “There was killing, violence and intimidation and the campaign was sufficient to cause another wave of Tutsi emigration.”¹⁷ All of the violence that was occurring masked the issues that were prevalent throughout the leadership in the government. These issues would never be solved, thus leading to the genocide twenty years later. Again, due to the fact that it was an African nation with no main resources to plunder, the people of Rwanda were made to suffer without the aid of the UN and the Western world.

Juvenal Habyarimana, a career military man, and his followers overthrew Kayibanda in 1973, which marked a long period of relative peace in Rwanda with no major killing sprees between 1973 and 1990. Though there was a relative peace, “the ethnic question remained very much alive.”¹⁸ These ethnic tensions came out in force as a result of an economic downturn, which occurred due to a precipitous drop in coffee prices coupled with bad weather. Habyarimana was faced with a number of protests focusing on democratic reform in the wake of French President Francois Mitterand calling for, “African countries to open up to the democratic process...and showing that he was prepared to put pressure on francophone African countries in order to achieve this.”¹⁹ Other factors included the organization of the Tutsi Diaspora, which had moved on to many of the neighboring African countries to escape the persecution in Rwanda. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which had settled in Uganda, was one of the groups that organized to oppose Habyarimana.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, 45.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The RPF made plans to return home to Rwanda, pleading with President Habyarimana to allow them legal entrance. Eventually he reluctantly agreed to negotiations with the leaders having the goal of, “setting-up of a national committee to identify what the concept of democracy signifies for the majority of the Rwandan people.”²⁰ This tiny olive branch of hope was quashed when a military arm of the RPF launched an offensive against Habyarimana on October 1, 1990, to illustrate the possible alternatives to his leadership. Yoweri Museveni, the President of Uganda, promoted this invasion. The Tutsis had earlier helped Museveni overthrow the government of Uganda. “Once in power, President Museveni rewarded them by encouraging and enabling the invasion of the homeland of their parents.”²¹ The troops, led by Paul Kagame, felt as though they could go back to their ancestral homes and create a new Rwanda. Throughout Hutu-led Rwanda, though, this was seen as an attempt to return the Tutsis to power. Ethnic tension returned and mistrust between the two groups intensified as Habyarimana announced a series of pogroms against the Tutsi people. Throughout 1991 and 1992, thousands of Tutsi men, women, and children were slaughtered based on their ethnicity. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis fled Rwanda in an attempt to escape the massacres.

International Peacekeeping Failures in the Lead-Up to Genocide

²⁰ Ibid., 46.

²¹ Stanley Meisler, *Kofi Annan: A Man of Peace in a Time of War* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2007), 88.

The killings that occurred in the early part of the 1990s led to the establishment of the Arusha Accords, which were signed on August 4, 1993. The goals of the Accords were, “aimed at reconciliation and the establishment of democracy in Rwanda.”²²

Cosponsored by the United States, the Organization of African Unity, and France, the talks addressed a number of key issues: power sharing between Hutu and Tutsi via the establishment of a transitional government, the dismantling of the military dictatorship of President Juvenal Habyarimana, the establishment of the rule of law in Rwanda, the repatriation and settlement of refugees, and the integration of the RPF and FAR (Forces armees rwandaïses) into one Rwandan military force.²³

There were also plans made to include UN assistance in the peace process in the form of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, or UNAMIR. Unfortunately, the only part of the Arusha Accords that came into existence was the UNAMIR. The sponsors of the Accords did nothing overt to try to make sure that they were successful. This was a precursor to the apathy that occurred in 1994 that led to the killing of over 800,000 people. Had the UN or the U.S. worked harder to enforce the terms of the Accords, it may have saved thousands of lives. There was considerable resistance to the Accords coming from a number of camps. President Habyarimana was against giving up his power and the extremist Hutu parties did not want to allow the President to continue leading. They felt that, “Habyarimana had given away far too much.”²⁴ Of course the

²² Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, 46.

²³ Samuel Totten and Rafiki Ubaldo, introduction to *We Cannot Forget: Interviews With Survivors of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda*, ed. Samuel Totten and Rafiki Ubaldo (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 7.

²⁴ Meisler, *Kofi Annan*, 90.

Tutsis still felt that their needs were being ignored as well. UNAMIR had a very difficult job ahead due to the opposition to the Accords. This also made a situation that was ripe for another massacre. “Despite this pact, the Hutu-led government set up militias, called the Interahamwe, which began attacking Tutsis and committing atrocities.”²⁵ The racism that was rampant throughout the twentieth century in Rwanda was about to come to a head in the form of genocide. The Arusha Accords did nothing to solve the inherent problems that had prevailed in Rwanda, which included leaders that needed, “ethnic divisions in order both to reinforce and justify their positions.”²⁶

Racism was rampant throughout all walks of life in Rwanda. It went from the lowest of the peasants, to the leaders in charge of the nation. The elite units of the armed forces when the genocide began were led by Colonel Theoneste Bagosora. From prison following the end of the genocide and the rounding up of many of the *genocidaires*, Bagosora proclaimed, “The Tutsi never had a country of their own to make themselves into a people.”²⁷ He continued by saying, “They are a people who came to Rwanda and were naturalized.”²⁸ He describes how neighboring countries welcomed the Tutsis into their lands, but they insisted on coming to Rwanda to, “impose their supremacy on the Hutu.”²⁹ Bagosora described the two groups and summed up the reason for the genocide when he explained, “the Tutsi were proud, arrogant, tricky and untrustworthy and were convinced that the only good Tutsi was a Tutsi in power. The Hutu were modest, honest,

²⁵ Adam Lebor, *Complicity With Evil: The United Nations in the Age of Modern Genocide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 165.

²⁶ Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, 47.

²⁷ Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

loyal, independent and impulsive.”³⁰ It just became a matter of time before things came to a head and the genocide was to begin.

Though the United States was one of the nations that sponsored the talks that led to the Arusha Accords, it was clear that they were taking a back seat in leading the discussion. They offered suggestions on how to transition the nation to a democratic state in which all of the belligerents would have a voice. Their stance was to remain deferential to nations like France, which had a much more vested interest in the peace process. While the representatives from the U.S. remained cordial throughout the process and offered help, “Rwanda was perceived as lacking exploitable resources and as being peripheral to the geostrategic interests of the United States.”³¹

The situation in Rwanda was made even more difficult when Melchoir Ndadaye, a Hutu, was elected President of Burundi in July 1993. Three months later, Ndadaye was assassinated by a group of Tutsi soldiers. A civil war immediately commenced between the Hutu and the Tutsi in Burundi over the death of their president. Coincidentally, President Ndadaye was a moderate who, “really wanted Hutu and Tutsi to live together.”³² The Hutu Power movement, which would later lead the genocide in Rwanda, grew out of the civil war that followed the death of President Ndadaye. The Central Intelligence Agency even warned of possible violence in Rwanda as a result of the assassination.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Frank Chalk, Romeo Dallaire, Kyle Matthews, Carla Barqueiro, and Simon Doyle, *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene: Leadership to Prevent Mass Atrocities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 25.

³² Totten and Ubaldo, *We Cannot Forget*, 8.

Lieutenant General Romeo Dallaire was the Force Commander of the UN Assistance Mission to Rwanda. He was a Canadian soldier put in charge of trying to figure out what to make of the mess in Rwanda. In the beginning, Dallaire was the leader of what was referred to as the United Nations Observer Mission in Uganda and Rwanda (UNOMUR). Their mission grew out of the fact that the president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, asked the UN to send a small force of troops, "to monitor the border to ensure that weapons and soldiers were not crossing from Uganda into Rwanda to reinforce the RPF."³³ Dallaire knew next to nothing about Rwanda, nor did his second in command, Major Brent Beardsley, which made this appointment very intriguing. He had no idea about the political and social issues that permeated throughout Rwanda in terms of the clash between the Hutus and the Tutsis. As Dallaire noted, "Brent and I managed to piece together a rough history from newspaper accounts and a few scholarly articles, which reduced a highly complex social and political situation to a simple inter-tribal conflict."³⁴ This clearly was not the information that Dallaire needed to run a successful mission. He continued, "A few short weeks of snatching at whatever material that came our way was not about to make Africanists of either one of us."³⁵ Dallaire was doomed from the start, though it was not his fault. In fact, Dallaire felt that his mission was not even that important when he noted, "Though Maurice and others talked about Rwanda being a chance to redeem the reputation of UN peacekeeping, it was clear to me that the

³³ Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2003), 43.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

mission was still considered a sideshow to the main event, which was always going on somewhere else far more important.”³⁶

Dallaire tried numerous times to get the UN to send more troops to Rwanda. One major attempt to ramp up the commitment of UN troops occurred as a result of an informant known as Jean-Pierre. Dallaire sent a cable to his countryman, Major General Maurice Baril, the military adviser to the UN Secretary-General. Baril reported to Kofi Annan, the head of the UN peacekeeping office, who would later become the secretary-general of the UN. Dallaire noted that the informant was a top level trainer in the militia known as the Interhamwe, which means “those who attack together.”³⁷ The informant reported that he was ordered to register all of the Tutsis in Kagali. He believed that this order came down as a way to recognize the Tutsi so they could be exterminated. Jean-Pierre mentioned in his report to the UN that his group of men alone could, “kill up to a thousand Tutsis in twenty minutes.”³⁸ These lists could then be read off on the hate radio that broadcast throughout Rwanda, Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLMC).

The cable also included plans the Interhamwe had for starting the mass killings. “They wanted to kill Belgian soldiers and thereby provoke Belgium into withdrawing its troops from the UN force.”³⁹ The Belgian soldiers were the most experienced and best equipped of the UN force within Rwanda. Dallaire counted on them for their professionalism, among other traits. Also, “The Interhamwe wanted to assassinate deputies from the opposition parties...and goad the rebel Tutsi soldiers in to a bloody

³⁶ Ibid., 55.

³⁷ Meisler, *Kofi Annan*, 92.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

confrontation with Hutu demonstrators, reigniting the Civil War.”⁴⁰ The informant concluded with information about a secret weapons cache that the Interhamwe planned to use against any opposition to their plans. Dallaire requested UN protection for Jean Pierre and his family as a thank you for this information. Dallaire finally had a sense that his force could do something positive in Rwanda and take the initiative to slow down the momentum of the Interhamwe.

The UN and the world failed the nation and the people of Rwanda miserably at this point. The reputation of the United Nations had faltered due to some massive failures. “The UN had taken on more peacekeeping operations in the five years between 1989 and 1993 than it had in the previous forty.”⁴¹ The United States was often at the forefront of UN missions in terms of decision making and money contributions, especially due to its status as a permanent member of the Security Council. There were also many arguments that there was no strategic importance of Rwanda and its surrounding nations. As was made very clear to Dallaire, “The United States did not favor either direct or United Nations military intervention to stop the killings as it maintained that the process of peacemaking had become dangerously overutilized, and that Rwanda was of marginal strategic importance.”⁴² The Rwandans fate was sealed.

World turmoil reached a fever pitch in the early 1990s and the United States found itself in the middle of most of it. There was a military takeover occurring in Haiti. The United States failed to keep the takeover from occurring. The U.S. also participated

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Carrie Booth Walling, *All Necessary Measures: The United Nations and Humanitarian Intervention* (Philadelphia:University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 119.

⁴² Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The International Dimension of Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 91.

in other UN missions in Macedonia and Bosnia. Haiti was close to home, and Bosnia was in Europe, so, “The Yugoslav and Haitian problems thus competed with the Rwandan genocide for Washington’s attention.”⁴³ These issues also piggybacked off of a major hiccup for U.S. and UN peacekeeping forces. One of the main failures of the UN, and specifically the United States, occurred only three months prior to the cable sent by Dallaire to the UN offices. “The specter of Somalia hovered over Annan and his aides in the peacekeeping offices of New York.”⁴⁴ Eighteen Americans were killed and over seventy were injured in a mission to apprehend several top advisors to Somali warlord, Mohammed Farah Aideed. Indeed, the United States did not want to advance into Rwanda for fear of what they had branded as mission creep; a mission changing from its original intention into something else entirely. As was explained by members of the government, Somalia was, “A humanitarian mission originally designed to deliver food to a starving population, the U.S.-supported UN intervention in Somalia had been slowly transformed during 1993 into a campaign to help the country rid itself of warlords and build the foundations for democracy.”⁴⁵ Congress made it very clear that they would not support military intervention into Rwanda. This was vocalized by Harry Johnston, a Democrat from Florida, who was the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, when he stated, “The U.S. would not commit troops to another African country such as Rwanda due to the lingering image of a dead American soldier being dragged through Mogadishu.”⁴⁶ A *New York Times* article

⁴³ Ibid., 95.

⁴⁴ Meisler, *Kofi Annan*, 94.

⁴⁵ John Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire: Human Rights Wars and America’s Response* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 25.

⁴⁶ Klinghoffer, *The International Dimension of Genocide*, 96.

continued the argument when it stated, “Somalia provides ample warning against plunging open-endedly into a ‘humanitarian mission’ and demonstrates the problems of ad hoc force under multinational command carrying out an ill-defined mission.”⁴⁷ John Shattuck, the chief human rights official in the Clinton Administration, ran into John Podesta, the man who became the Chief of Staff for President Clinton in the White House on December 10, 1993. Podesta’s message to Shattuck was simple, “No more Somalias.”⁴⁸

Lt. Gen. Dallaire was excited about the possibility of learning about the inner workings of the Interhamwe and halting their plans, but he was met with orders to stand down from the New York headquarters of the UN. The failure of the UN in Somalia did not even register in the mind of Dallaire. He thought only of his mission, and not of the political ramifications of leading a search-and-seizure mission on a supposed secret weapons cache. After hearing of the report from Jean-Pierre, Dallaire believed, “After months of frustration, of being forced to act after the fact, we had a chance to seize the initiative.”⁴⁹ This was not to be, though.

The response back from Kofi Annan, signed by Iqbal Riza, Annan’s second-in-command, explained in no uncertain terms that Dallaire was not allowed to raid the weapons cache. He was told that, “Not only was I not allowed to conduct deterrent operations in support of UNAMIR, but in the interests of transparency, I was to provide the information that Jean-Pierre had given to us to President Habyarimana

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ John Shattuck, *Freedom on Fire*, 22.

⁴⁹ Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, 144.

immediately.”⁵⁰ Dallaire knew that his hands were tied at this point. Dallaire did not get support from his UN superiors to act on viable intelligence, regardless of the fact that the Arusha Peace Agreement was on tenuous ground at best. Furthermore, he had to turn over all of the intelligence that he had gleaned from Jean-Pierre to the perpetrator of past violence, President Habyarimana. He also knew that the Rwandan UN Ambassador, Jean-Damascene Bizimana, held a seat on the UN Security Council. “Dallaire sometimes thought the extremists were better informed than he was about what was being decided in New York.”⁵¹ Dallaire sat back and waited for the inevitable without the ability to do anything offensive to prevent a massacre. Though he tried on several occasions to change the minds of his superiors, his pleas fell on deaf ears. He was on his own, and he knew things were about to get very ugly in Rwanda.

As Dallaire noted, “April 6 would turn out to be the longest day of my life.”⁵² These are words that went through many minds in Rwanda. “The genocide began on the night of April 6, 1994, when the presidential plane, carrying President Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi was shot down as it prepared to land at Gregoire Kayibanda International Airport near Kigali.”⁵³ Within hours, elite squads rounded up moderate Hutus in the government as well as high level Tutsis that had been placed on watch lists that were circulating throughout the country as well as broadcast on the RTLM. Dallaire immediately met with members of his staff as well as the leaders of the Rwandan military, including Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, the Chef de cabinet of the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 146.

⁵¹ Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 202.

⁵² Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, 220.

⁵³ Jennie E. Burnet, *Genocide Lives in Us: Women, Memory, and Silence in Rwanda* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 60.

minister of defence, Rwandese Government Forces, who was a well-known Hutu extremist. A phone call in the room of the meeting confirmed that both presidents were killed in the plane crash. Dallaire realized after this phone call that Rwanda was in for a long period of violence. He described the tone of the staff officer that relayed the message of the phone call when he said, “He began to smile as he told us that the plane had crashed in the backyard of Habyarimana’s own home near Camp Kanombe, but caught himself. Bagosora gave him a dirty look, then turned to me for a response.”⁵⁴ Dallaire quickly responded that Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana was legally in charge of the nation based on the transfer of power rules in Rwanda. This did not sit well with Bagosora, who of course was against the moderate Hutu leader. Dallaire realized that things had reached a critical point and were quickly spinning out of his control.

UN Failures During the Genocide

The death of President Habyarimana was the signal throughout Rwanda that the killing should commence. Hutu extremists were quick to blame Tutsi rebels for the attack on the plane using RTLMC to spread their message. They used violence and intimidation to seize control of the government. Many meetings were held between the men who would later be the perpetrators of the violence throughout Rwanda. At one of the meetings, men listened as the burgomaster of the town explained that many Tutsi tried to run away because they were under suspicion as the reason for the death of the president, and he wanted them to patrol the streets in order to keep the peace. It was noted that, “while he was speaking, some policemen and interhamwe were dragging their

⁵⁴ Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, 224.

thumbs across their necks, as if cutting throats.”⁵⁵ The men left the meeting and began their ‘patrols.’ “Within hours, they commenced the genocide of Tutsi, as well as an assassination campaign against all moderate opposition politicians, whether Hutu or Tutsi.”⁵⁶ Within two days the extremists wiped out all of their political opposition and had established an interim government that would serve their needs and continue their campaign of violence against the Tutsis.

Perhaps the most brazen of the assassinations, as well as the most brutal, was that of Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana. The story of her death was told by Thomas Kamilindi, a journalist that worked at Radio Rwanda. He had heard it from Eliezer Niyitegeka, who was the former minister of information. Kamilindi explained how hearing the story of Uwilingiyimana’s death had cemented his decision to resign from the radio station. He no longer wanted to work for the monsters that were perpetrating these horrible acts. Government soldiers attacked her in her home and in the process killed the soldiers that were there to protect her, including ten Belgian peacekeepers that were part of UNAMIR. The prime minister attempted to hide, but she was found by the soldiers and dragged with her family into another room. This is where her nightmare began. The soldiers told the prime minister to spread her legs after they had forced her to take her clothes off. Kamilindi then explained, “The soldiers then penetrated her vagina with their bayonets in the presence of her family. They kept stabbing her until the bayonets stabbed through to her throat.”⁵⁷ She was then finished off with several gunshots and her husband

⁵⁵ Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Other Press, 2006) 176.

⁵⁶ Alan J. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001) 12-13.

⁵⁷ John A. Berry and Carol Pott Berry, *Genocide in Rwanda*, 14.

and mother were shot as well. Her children managed to escape and found their way to Europe after being protected by UNAMIR officials.

The assassination of Uwilingiyimana and the killing of the ten Belgian soldiers that were protecting her on the raid of her house were two of the key components of the start of the genocide. One of the points that Thomas Kamilindi made clear during his recollection of the events in Rwanda was the, “Extremely minute detail with which these events were prepared.”⁵⁸ The murderers planned to kill the Belgians from the very beginning. Their deaths were perpetrated in order to try to create fear among not only the people of Rwanda who they were there to protect, but also fear among the powers in the UN Security Council. As was explained by Romeo Dallaire, “The aim was to secure first a Belgian, then a UN withdrawal.”⁵⁹ The Hutu extremists were well aware of the UN failures that had occurred only months prior in Somalia. “They knew that Western nations do not have the stomach or the will to sustain casualties in peace support operations.”⁶⁰ They knew that the UN would rather allow thousands of innocent Rwandans to die than have a few of their own soldiers get injured or killed protecting them.

The killing throughout Rwanda was quick and organized. The killing began after word of the President’s plane going down spread throughout Rwanda. Tutsis ran and congregated in large areas in the hopes that their vast numbers would save them. At first this was a sound strategy. Many of the extremists in the remote areas of Rwanda were armed only with rudimentary weapons such as knives, machetes, or clubs. The Tutsi that

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, 240.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

gathered were generally able to fend off any attack with rocks and their sheer numbers. The Hutu were hesitant to attack out of fear that the large numbers of Tutsi could overtake them. They were content to allow them to stay huddled in the churches, stadiums or schools where they gathered. They knew that eventually the small rations they possessed would run dry. The tide changed about a week later as more heavily armed militia made their way into the outskirts of towns. Once this happened, the fact that many of them congregated together in large areas actually hastened their deaths during the second week of the violence. One of the strategies described by the kill squads was, “Typically, a few grenades would be tossed in on the Tutsi, followed by light arms fire.”⁶¹ This would then be followed by men going into the carnage and hacking any survivors with machetes to finish them off. Researchers estimated the number of dead reached, “perhaps 250,000 in just over two weeks. That rate of killing would make it the fastest genocide in recorded history.”⁶²

The kill squads were extremely brutal and efficient. As one perpetrator of the violence later stated, “Rule number one was to kill. There was no rule number two. It was an organization without complications.”⁶³ There was one instance when a municipal judge called for a gathering of Hutus in Kibungo. “There 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.”⁶⁴ The men were admonished by the Interhamwe

⁶¹ Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, 15.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶³ Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season*, 10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

if they came to the kill meetings without their machetes. One perpetrator remarked that, “nobody ever forgot his machete again.”⁶⁵

The machete and other garden implements became the most used weapons during the killings. They were easy to acquire and easy to wield. Philip Gourevitch, a staff writer with the *New Yorker*, explained the use of the basic weapons succinctly when he wrote, “it almost seemed as if, with the machete, the *masu*- a club studded with nails- a few well-placed grenades, and a few bursts of automatic-rifle fire, the quiet orders of Hutu Power had made the neutron bomb obsolete.”⁶⁶ Bagosora did a lot of the work to acquire the weapons and the garden tools used in the killing. Bagosora’s brother, Pasteur Musabe, who was a director of the Banque Continentale Africaine Rwanda, helped him get many of the weapons as well. Most of the weapons were acquired in 1993 from China, “When half a million machetes and other agricultural tools were purchased and distributed throughout the country, including hundreds and thousands of hoes, axes, hammers, and razor blades.”⁶⁷ Studies of invoices that were found after the genocide showed that, “A total of US\$725,669 was spent on 581,000 machetes; one machete for every third adult Hutu male.”⁶⁸ While many of the killers carried some type of gun or rifle, the vast majority of them used the machete.

The propaganda used by the killers was another important characteristic of the swift and deadly nature of the genocide. It was not something that just erupted quickly

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 23.

⁶⁷ Linda Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda’s Genocide* (London, Zed Books, 2000), 64-65.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 65.

because of a few violent acts. The genocide was, “well-planned, and its preparation manifested itself via a visible radicalization in the country: the establishment of militias, an extremist and discriminatory propaganda campaign, and large-scale massacres.”⁶⁹ The two major forms of propaganda were RTLMC and the newspaper *Kangura*. The RTLMC became a major tool in the fight against the Tutsi, and it was controlled by the individuals at the very top of the power structure for the Hutus. The purpose of the radio station became quite clear from the beginning, “to prepare the people of Rwanda for genocide.”⁷⁰ “Funded by members and friends who gathered around the person of the president’s wife and constituted a key power group referred to as the *akazu* (little house), RTLMC began broadcasting from Kigali only four days after the signing of the Arusha Agreement.”⁷¹ Starting on the day it began broadcasting, RTLMC warned against the Tutsi *Inyenzi*, or cockroaches. The station waged a war of fear, telling the Hutus throughout Rwanda that the Tutsi didn’t care about the Hutus and the only thing they were interested in was gaining power back and lording over the Hutus. Fearmongering was one of the main weapons in the early days of the genocide. Kiruhara, an illiterate Hutu peasant, was one individual that was greatly influenced by the broadcasts. As he explained, “The stations were always telling people that if the RPF, the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front, comes, it will return Rwanda to feudalism, that it would bring oppression.”⁷²

⁶⁹ Daniela Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 1-2.

⁷⁰ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 71.

⁷¹ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 190.

⁷² Mandalbid., 191.

The radio broadcasts were a genius move for the killers to influence a mostly illiterate populace. Transistor radios inexplicably became extremely cheap and easy for individuals to acquire. Felicien Kabuga, the president of the board of directors for RTLMC, was also the head of the import company, “that was used to purchase machetes from China.”⁷³ This was just one more example that showed the immense planning that went into the genocide. Kabuga was also the financier of the newspaper, *Kangura*. There was a small readership of the paper due to the nation’s high level of illiteracy, but it spread similar messages that were being broadcast on the radio station. One particular article denounced the Arusha Accords calling them a, “Tutsi plot.”⁷⁴ Another article was a precursor to the genocide when in 1991 they wrote about the consequences for Tutsis and their sympathizers by saying, “Let us learn about the Inkotanyi (Tutsi) plans and let us exterminate every last one of them.”⁷⁵ *Kangura* was also the source of the Hutu Ten Commandments that spoke of the reasons and ways to discriminate against the Tutsis. Many of the Hutu Ten Commandments described ways in which the Hutus should act towards the Tutsis, and how there should never be mixes of Hutus and Tutsis in certain social and political situations. One of the Commandments was very clear in its intentions when it proclaimed, “The Hutu should stop having mercy on the Tutsi.”⁷⁶

The transmissions took a horrific turn as soon as President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down. The broadcasters began to read off the names, addresses, and even license plate numbers of prominent Tutsis and moderate Hutus that needed to die. These

⁷³ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 71.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Samantha Power, *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 339.

lists were prepared well in advance of the plane being shot down. As one Tutsi said, “I listened to [it] because if you were mentioned over the airwaves, you were sure to be carted off a short time later by the Interhamwe. You knew you had to change your address at once.”⁷⁷ The roadblocks became a major tool for the perpetrators because as the Tutsis tried to run, they were stopped and killed for not being Hutu. The propaganda was blasted over the airwaves to keep the slaughter going. The propaganda touted the Hutus as victims of previous Tutsi transgressions. Once his plane was shot down, “President Habyarimana himself would become the ultimate symbol of Hutu as innocent victim,”⁷⁸ as the Tutsis were declared the perpetrators of that violence.

Unfortunately, action against RTLMC never came. Individuals brought forth ideas to attempt to come up with solutions to stop the hate transmissions that were being broadcast by the station. Those solutions were usually met with inaction. This was especially true when it came to the U.S. government and military. Some of the solutions that were discussed in various stages and between various people included jamming the radio broadcasts, flying over the country in aircraft transmitting counterpropaganda messages over loudspeakers, and destroying the radio antennas of the station itself. Many individuals in the U.S., especially in the military, did not believe that the radio broadcasts had anything to do with the killing that was going on. Many argued that the people in Rwanda had long heard how bad the Tutsis were, and they felt that the radio broadcasts were not transmitting new information.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 333.

⁷⁸ Allison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 81.

Clearly, though, there was danger in allowing the radio broadcasts to continue. For the U.S., the argument remained that doing anything to the radio transmissions could ultimately lead to getting more involved in the situation, which many officials stated could not happen. One of the roadblocks that the U.S. faced with deciding on action against the radio transmission was the fact that the U.S. still had ongoing diplomatic relations with Rwanda. As was mentioned in several meetings, “Policymakers and UN representatives engaged in a legal debate over whether or not the UN or the U.S. had the legal authority to interfere with the communications of another nation with which it still had diplomatic relations.”⁷⁹ It was hard for the U.S. and the UN to consider these types of alternatives considering one of the members of the UN Security Council was from Rwanda. There were still diplomatic resources being used to quell the rampage that was occurring. This was definitely a sticky situation for many of the U.S. officials at the time, though after the fact many of them changed their beliefs. As was noted later by Madeleine Albright, “she thought it disgraceful that Rwanda’s lawless regime was still permitted to sit in the council.”⁸⁰ It was pointed out, though, that she never did make an attempt to get rid of him. On the topic of radio jamming and the legal ramifications of doing so, Vince Kern, head of the Rwanda Task Force and Director for African Affairs at the Pentagon, said, “Without cutting off relations with the government of Rwanda, jamming RTLMC would have technically been the same as jamming the BBC.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Jared Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 154.

⁸⁰ Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 202.

⁸¹ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence*, 154.

There was a big disconnect between the U.S. State Department and the Department of Defense in terms of their beliefs on radio jamming, which is why nothing got done by the United States in this regard. While the State Department continued to believe it was a viable solution, the Defense Department was adamant that it either could not be done, it wouldn't make a difference, or they didn't want to be entrenched in another Somalia situation that had no positive ending for the U.S. and its military. In their minds, committing to radio jamming would force them into something they did not want to deal with. Although, it was pointed out that, "Given the fact that the radio was used to declare where specific Tutsis were hiding, living, and trying to escape to, it seems that the radio served as an important mechanism for facilitating the genocide."⁸²

In retrospect, many officials stated that jamming the radio transmissions may not have been able to stop the genocide, but it should have at least been attempted. Like everything else, though, for the U.S. there just wasn't a push to do anything. As was stated by Prudence Bushnell, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, "they talked about radio jamming a lot at the interagency conferences and the excuse about international law was bogus. We just didn't want to do anything."⁸³ It wasn't just the U.S. that had issues with ambivalence. The Belgian ambassador in Kigali, Johan Swinnen, warned officials in Brussels several times about the way the RTLMC had the ability to persuade the masses to commit unspeakable horrors. When he asked for help to translate some of the broadcasts from Kinyarwanda he was told there was a shortage in the amount of people that could help. Lieutenant Mark Nees, a Belgian military

⁸² Ibid., 155.

⁸³ Ibid., 154.

intelligence officer, “remains convinced that if RTLMC had been prevented from broadcasting the genocide could have been limited, if not avoided.”⁸⁴ Unfortunately, that never happened and the genocide continued unchecked with the help of the hate radio, which was able to continue.

Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis were slaughtered as the radio station continued its transmissions and the roadblocks became firmly entrenched. Most of the killings were not a quick gunshot to the head. They were brutal murders that involved the garden implements financed by Felicien Kabuga. Most of the stories from the survivors are of horrific ordeals no human being should have to endure. Nobody was spared the atrocities. Women and children were victims just as much as men were. War rape was a common occurrence throughout the genocide. One little boy described his ordeal in vivid terms. He explained how he hid in a church with other members of his family and village. Many Tutsis thought they would be safe from the Interhamwe if they hid together. He described how they, “rushed into the church and started slicing people up with machetes and spears.”⁸⁵ Another survivor explained how the Interhamwe would advance on the people and announce their arrival with songs and other noises. She noted, “They would beat drums, seeming quite delighted to kill all day long.”⁸⁶ The slaughter did not end once it began.

Many perpetrators of the violence offered up their testimony to what happened as well. Many of them talked about the violence as if it was just another normal day in the

⁸⁴ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 72.

⁸⁵ Hatzfeld, *Life Laid Bare: The Survivors in Rwanda Speak*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Other Press: 2006), 13.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

city. The individualized violence and the ambivalence toward it was very different from even the genocide that was inflicted on the Jews by the Germans. The mass murder of the Jews began with individualized killing by the Einsatzgruppen, “and then later they were concentrated in the death camps for gassing, rather than shooting, which allowed the executioners to remain anonymous from their victims.”⁸⁷ This ultimately did two things for the Germans. One, it allowed for more killing at once, and it also took some of the emotional trauma of killing away from the executioners. The Rwandese killers thrived on the individualized killing. One perpetrator described how he was walking down the street near the market when he came upon a running Tutsi. When the man came near him he, “gave him a machete blow at neck level, on the vulnerable vein. It came to me naturally, without thinking.”⁸⁸ He went on to say, “I felt nothing, just let him lie.” The brazenness and brutality of the killing did not even faze the men who committed these atrocious acts. They simply acted to rid their nation of the cockroaches that were the Tutsis.

A man serving in Dallaire’s unit described a scene on the street: “he just held him by his shirt and started dragging him...and just raised his machete and hacked him on the head...he did that twice and we were standing there watching him...after that he just rubbed his bloodstained machete on his buttocks, and then searched the victim’s pockets.”⁸⁹ This senseless killing epitomized the tragedy occurring all around Rwanda.

One woman, Jeanette Uwimana, told a harrowing account of her experience during the genocide. She and her husband were Tutsis who lived peacefully for many

⁸⁷ Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, 26.

⁸⁸ Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season*, 26.

⁸⁹ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 133.

years among Hutus in Kigali. They were not extremely wealthy, but they did quite well. The night of April 6, 1994, changed their lives forever. Her husband was taken by the Interhamwe that night and she never saw him again, assuming he was killed immediately. Jeanette was beaten with guns until a neighbor begged for mercy for her and she was spared. Her nightmare did not end there, though. Later the next day, five Interhamwe came to her house demanding she give them all of her guns. She explained that she was not a soldier so she did not have any guns. They ordered her into her bedroom and tore her clothes off. One of the soldiers raped her while the other men pointed their guns at her. She continued, “After he was finished, another one raped me, and then another, until all five had had their way with me.”⁹⁰ She was treated horribly and raped for two months. Sometimes the men came alone, but usually they came in groups. After the genocide was over, she found out she was HIV positive. Her children also tested HIV positive, probably due to the fact she breastfed while being infected. She later explained, “my daughter and my in-laws were beaten with a nail-studded club then thrown in a ditch, where they spent two days in agony.”⁹¹ Stories like this were prevalent throughout the genocide. People were being slaughtered just because of their backgrounds. The world vowed “never again” with the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, yet it seemed the world couldn’t care less about the thousands of stories dealing with mass butchery coming out of Rwanda.

⁹⁰ Jeanette Uwimana, “Jeanette Uwimana,” in *The Men Who Killed Me: Rwandan Survivors of Sexual Violence*, ed. by Anne-Marie Brouwer and Sandra Ka Hon Chu (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre Publishers, Inc., 2009), 52.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

The United States and the rest of the world failed the people of Rwanda in a major way. What became ironic about the fate of many of the people of Rwanda, is that many who were there believed a small show of force by the world community would have prevented much of the bloodshed. A witness of the genocide said, “Ten days into the crisis and many streets in Kigali were empty save for the dump trucks picking up the bodies.”⁹² A once thriving marketplace and city were turned into places of horror for thousands of citizens, but there definitely was a belief even a little effort by the world powers could have prevented all of the bloodshed. One of the reasons for that belief was what happened during the first couple of days of the genocide when many of the Tutsis fled to churches, stadiums and schools. As was noted, “Hutu extremists generally avoided perpetrating large-scale massacres when international observers were present, as part of a comprehensive strategy to hide the genocide from both the outside world and Rwanda’s Tutsi until it could be completed.”⁹³ Even a small force of foreigners tended to keep the Interhamwe from hacking up the Tutsis. This was explained to Madeleine Albright by Alison Des Forges of Human Rights Watch, who had just returned from Rwanda. “Des Forges recalls pleading with Albright: ‘We said very, very, very explicitly, there are at least 20,000 people in the Amahoro Stadium. If you withdraw all of the troops, all of those people will be killed and that will be on your head.’”⁹⁴

Dallaire constantly pleaded with his superiors in New York because he knew even a small foreign presence had the effect of keeping much of the Interhamwe at bay. Unfortunately, the Western powers continued to ignore his calls for more men. Instead of

⁹² Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 202.

⁹³ Kuperman, *The Limits of Human Intervention*, 16.

⁹⁴ Chalk, Dallaire, Matthews, Barqueiro, and Doyle, *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene*, 31.

keeping the peace and fighting to keep innocent men, women, and children from being massacred, Dallaire and his soldiers were used to make sure all foreign dignitaries and their families were safe as they abandoned Rwanda. What most of the Western powers failed to realize was that fighting the Interhamwe would have been quite different from fighting the Somali militia in the streets of Mogadishu. While those men fought with guns and RPGs, most of the men who fought with the Interhamwe were simply armed with knives and machetes. Madeleine Albright to this day is, “still haunted by Rwanda.”⁹⁵ Even when the Security Council looked like it was about to commit troops to the situation to stem the flow of blood, the U.S. bogged down the discussions with debate on how to actually deploy troops. As Colin Keating, New Zealand’s Ambassador to the Council, noted, “While thousands of human beings were being slaughtered every day, ambassadors argued fitfully in New York for weeks about military tactics.”⁹⁶

What was perhaps the most telling in terms of the U.S. and its reaction to the killing, was the blatant attempt to not call it a genocide. Dallaire began to use the term in late April during his cables and communiqués after speaking with Philippe Gaillard, who ran the International Committee for the Red Cross mission in Rwanda, and searching through an international law book that explained the genocide convention and the Geneva conventions. The Americans refused to call it genocide though. “Even after the reality of genocide in Rwanda had become irrefutable, when bodies were shown choking the Kigali River on America’s nightly news, the brute fact of the slaughter failed to influence U.S. policy except in a negative way.”⁹⁷ They knew if they acknowledged it was in fact

⁹⁵ Lebor, *Complicity With Evil*, 179.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 358-359.

genocide, they would have to act to stop it under the terms of the 1948 genocide convention. They also were aware if they admitted to knowing or believing genocide was occurring, doing nothing about it would irreparably harm the credibility of the United States government.

For two months after the start of the killings, the U.S. State Department and its officials tip-toed around the use of the word genocide. Press conferences became a game to see how administration officials would answer when faced with genocide questions. One interesting exchange occurred between Reuters correspondent Alan Esner and State Department spokesperson, Christine Shelly. Secretary of State Warren Christopher had authorized his staff to acknowledge “acts of genocide” had taken place. Esner asked Shelly to clarify the difference between “acts of genocide and “genocide.” After some bumbling in trying to clarify her position, Esner asked Shelly, “How many acts of genocide does it take to make genocide?”⁹⁸ This was a masterful question posed to a nation and an administration that had failed innocent people in a faraway land that unfortunately nobody in the Western world cared about.

Unfortunately, the guilt and remorse from world leaders came too late for the people of Rwanda. President Clinton, visiting Rwanda in 1998, made a speech to offer up a form of apology from both he and the American government. During his speech he commented, “all over the world there were people like me sitting in offices, day after day after day, who did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror.”⁹⁹ Romeo Dallaire also realized what he did

⁹⁸ Ibid., 364.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 386.

was too little for the Rwandan people, yet he acknowledged he was hamstrung by the decisions made by men much more powerful than he. As he explained, “the missing piece in the puzzle was the political will from France and the United States to make the Arusha accords work and ultimately move this imploding nation toward democracy and a lasting peace.”¹⁰⁰ Kofi Annan, speaking later about his lack of strength in responding to the original cable from Dallaire, mentioned, “the fundamental failure (to prevent the massacres) was the lack of political will, not the lack of information.”¹⁰¹

There was definitely an odd reaction to the outbreak of genocide in Rwanda during the spring of 1994. One of the reactions was outrage. There was an acute sense of disbelief that the world community could basically ignore the Genocide Convention of 1948 as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and allow the slaughter of over 800,000 men, women, and children. The other reaction that permeated throughout the major world powers was one of indifference. Their belief was, “Rwanda was a small and strategically unimportant country, the cold war was over and there were no economic interests involved, and for many of the ordinary men in the street Africans were savages from whom one could expect nothing better anyway.”¹⁰² The people of Rwanda were expendable because there was no oil in Rwanda and the United States was reeling from their massive failure in Somalia. So while the UN promised genocide would never happen again, it did happen in a swift and brutal manner. The genocidaires were

¹⁰⁰ Meisler, *Kofi Annan*, 102.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁰² Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 29.

calculated and precise in their plans, and they worked those plans to perfection to rid their nation of what they called cockroaches.

Conclusion

In the late 1940s, the UN vowed “never again” in response to the Holocaust and other atrocities that occurred during WWII. Perhaps the UN should change its tagline to “Never again, unless it’s an African country that has nothing to offer the Western world in terms of resources, then we’ll think about it because there is probably another way we can spend our money.” In light of what happened in Rwanda, this seemed to be the thinking for the UN and the United States. If that is the belief of the U.S. and the UN, and all evidence points to that being the case, then the UN should cease all of its peacekeeping missions, because they clearly are not doing what was intended, which is keep the peace.

The UN cannot claim to want to protect innocent men, women, and children if it is going to allow hundreds of thousands of these individuals to die in certain areas of the world. Either the organization claims to be a peacekeeper for everyone, or it has to be a peacekeeper for no one. It is ridiculous that the genocidaires targeted the Belgian soldiers because they knew their deaths would likely make the UN pull troops out. This instigation should have prompted the UN to send in more troops to put an end to the uprising. In fact, immediately after their deaths, “the Belgian PM asked Boutros-Gali to strengthen the UN contingent.”¹⁰³ Unfortunately, this never happened. The U.S. instead voted for a full UNAMIR withdrawal, which is proof of the weakness inherent in the UN and its “peacekeeping” forces.

¹⁰³ Chalk, Dallaire, Matthews, Barqueiro, and Doyle, *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene*, 30.

If the U.S. refuses to commit to UN peacekeeping missions, then it needs to consider withdrawing from the UN. There is no reason to pay dues to an organization that, based on its charter, promotes peace throughout the world, yet does nothing when innocent lives are being slaughtered on a mass scale. If the U.S. wants to continue in the UN, it needs to commit to supporting the organization's mission, meaning the U.S. needs to commit money and troops to the UN. If the U.S. is not willing to do this, and the genocide in Rwanda shows that is the case, then the U.S. needs to respectfully step down from the organization. Clearly, the UN cannot protect every single innocent life that is snuffed out in the world, but if it cannot stop the murder of over 800,000 lives in a month and a half by men with machetes, there needs to be large scale changes in the organization. These changes need to start with the U.S., its biggest contributor as well as a major reason why the Rwandan genocide occurred.

Many noble individuals tried to stop the brutality, such as Romeo Dallaire, but in the end the people of Rwanda were just not that important. The one conversation that summed up the whole mess in Rwanda was presented by Dallaire when he mentioned, "Engraved still in my brain is the judgment of a small group of bureaucrats who came to 'assess' the situation in the first weeks of the genocide: 'We will recommend to our government not to intervene as the risks are high and all that is here are humans.'"¹⁰⁴ That mindset allowed over 800,000 innocent lives to be brutally butchered by machetes and machine guns. That mindset is why the UN has often failed in the pursuit of protecting humanity. That is the mindset that when choosing between dollars and people,

¹⁰⁴ Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, 6.

dollars were more important. Unfortunately, it was not the first time the world community took that mindset, and it absolutely will not be the last time, either.

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