

Leaving Rwandans to Die

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Introduction

Decimation means the killing of every tenth person in a population, and in the spring and early summer of 1994 a program of massacres decimated the Republic of Rwanda. Although the killing was low-tech – performed largely by machete – it was carried out at dazzling speed: of an original population of about seven and a half million, at least eight hundred thousand people were killed in just a hundred days. Rwandans often speak of a million deaths, and they may be right. The dead of Rwanda accumulated at nearly three times the rate of Jewish dead during the Holocaust. It was the most efficient mass killing since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.¹

On April 6, 1994, an airplane carrying the president of Rwanda was shot down by a missile before landing in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. In less than one hour after the president's death, the Hutu militia began mass killings of the Tutsi minority in the capital and the rest of the country. In three months, almost one million Tutsis and many moderate Hutus were brutally slaughtered.

The Western view of Africa as a continent where "primitive and savage" people kill each other in "tribal" wars was one of the main reasons, apart from the lack of economic and political interest, for the international community's deliberate indifference during the Rwandan genocide. During their world conquest, the former colonial powers created an image of backward Africa that had to be civilized – the image still prevalent today in many Western centers of power. In the case of Rwanda, the colonial power was Belgium, whose rule and legacies prepared the ground for the 1994 genocide.

On December 11, 1946, United Nations declared genocide a crime under international law. On December 9, 1948, UN adopted Resolution 260A(III), the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which obliged the "contracting parties to undertake to prevent and punish... acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group."² Starting in April 1994, the UN Security Council, the United States, France, Britain, and other powerful countries

¹ 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), 3.

² Gourevitch, 149.

watched the mass extermination of the Tutsis, but did nothing to stop them. For weeks, the United States government forbade its officials to call the mass murder “genocide,” even though they knew that the “acts of genocide”³ were taking place. At the same time when the fastest genocide ever recorded in human history was proceeding – the daily killing rate was at least five times that of the Nazi death camps⁴ – the international community removed UN troops from Rwanda while sending tens of thousands of soldiers to the former Yugoslavia, the country populated by white people and located in Europe.

Since 1994, many books and articles have been written about the causes of the Rwandan genocide. In *A People Betrayed*, Linda Melvern wrote an account of how the genocide unfolded and what role the West played. The premise of her book is that the Western governments and the UN Security Council knew what was happening in Rwanda but chose to do nothing. In *Leave None to Tell the Story*, Alison Des Forges and a team of researchers from *Human Rights Watch* presented the preparation for the genocide and mass killings. The study was based on Rwandan, UN, and diplomatic records, and interviews with survivors. In *Shake Hands With the Devil*, Romeo Dallaire, the Canadian General who commanded the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda, vividly recreated the Rwandan genocide that he experienced firsthand. In Dallaire’s own words, his book is an unsparing account of the failure of humanity to stop the genocide despite timely warnings.⁵ While many authors expose the Western indifference towards the Rwandan genocide, they do not openly connect their actions to the racist views of Africa created by the colonial powers that are still embedded in the minds of many Western decision makers. Historians and experts argue that the indifference was due to the lack of self-interest among the Western powers. I accept this argument but go further to claim that it was the view of Africa as backward and uncivilized continent that influenced the Western powers to ignore the genocide.

I will examine the Hutu-Tutsi origins, pre-colonial relations, the colonial period under the Belgians and the introduction of strict ethnic divisions, as well as post-colonial relations and ethnic violence. I will look at the post-Cold War period and the pressures from the international community to democratize Rwandan politics through the Arusha Accord. Finally, I will discuss the international community’s indifference during the genocide.

Creating Divisions in Rwanda

To understand why the genocide in Rwanda took place, it is crucial to see how the ethnic differences evolved with the arrival of the colonialists, but also to understand that the Western view of the Rwandan conflict as an ongoing “tribal” violence is false. The divisions in Rwanda were created by the Belgians, whose racist rule and legacies prepared the ground for the 1994 genocide.

Pre-colonial Rwandan society was linguistically and culturally homogeneous and divided into three groups, the Hutus, the Tutsis, and the Twa. They lived side by side, sharing the same language, and often intermarrying. The Hutus, who were mainly peasants, made up the majority of the population. The Tutsis, about 15% of the population, were mainly aristocrats. The Twa were the smallest group, never making up more than 1% of the population.⁶

³ John Berry and Carol Pott Berry. *Genocide in Rwanda: A Collective Memory* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1999), 6.

⁴ Gerard Prunier. *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 261.

⁵ Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), cover.

⁶ Prunier, 5.

Even today, there are disagreements on the origins of the Rwandan people. Some see the Hutus and Tutsis as people of different biological origin who settled in Rwanda from different parts of the world, while others see them only as different socioeconomic groups. John Hanning Speke, the first European to explore the Nile, published a "theory of conquest of inferior by superior races" in 1863, in which he discussed the "superior" civilization that arrived to Rwanda in the past. Without evidence, he claimed that the Tutsis were a "Caucasoid tribe of Ethiopian origin, descended from the biblical King David."⁷ Later white explorers claimed that the Tutsis were descendants of ancient Egypt or Asia Minor. One of the white missionaries, Father van den Burgt, went even further: "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 Rwanda."⁸

On the other side, there are many claims that the Hutus and Tutsis were only different socioeconomic groups. In an extensive research project by *Human Rights Watch*, Alison Des Forges, a historian whose expertise is Rwanda, wrote that the terms Tutsi and Hutu were based on people's wealth:

The word 'Tutsi' described the status of an individual – a person rich in cattle – and referred to the elite group as a whole, and the word 'Hutu' – meaning originally a subordinate or follower of a more powerful person – came to refer to the mass of the ordinary people.⁹

Helen Hintjens argued that differences between the Hutus and Tutsis are not as clear-cut as most historical and anthropological accounts suggest. Due to mixed marriages common through the centuries and tracing the ethnic identity only through the male line, many people in Rwanda resemble neither the physical stereotype of the Tutsis nor the Hutus.¹⁰ According to Gourevitch, due to centuries of marriage and clientage mixing, many ethnographers and historians agree that the Hutus and Tutsis cannot properly be called distinct ethnic groups.¹¹

Due to the colonial propaganda and "inherent difficulties of recreating the history of oral societies," there still exist conflicting opinions about the origins of the groups that live in Rwanda. Peter Uvin claimed that, over time, the issue of origins of the Hutus and Tutsis had acquired political stakes. The official Hutu position after the 1950s was that Rwanda had been invaded by foreigners (Tutsis), who installed in Rwanda systems of oppression. At the same time, the Tutsis and moderate Hutus claimed that the differences were only socioeconomic.¹²

Before becoming a Belgian colony, Rwanda was a part of German East Africa from 1890 until 1916. Prunier argued that the German presence introduced a colonial policy of indirect rule through Rwandan kings and officials, but due to the short period of time and German preoccupation with World War I, had not modified Rwandan society in depth.¹³ While World War I ravaged the world, the Belgians fought Germans over Rwanda, acquiring the territory and declaring it a Belgian colony in 1916.

One of the Belgian colonial legacies that highly influenced the future of Rwanda was a rigid interpretation of ethnic groups. They saw the Hutus and Tutsis as two distinct

⁷ Gourevitch, 51.

⁸ Prunier, 7.

⁹ Alison Des Forges. *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York; Paris: Human Rights Watch; International Federation of Human Rights, 1999), 32.

¹⁰ Helen Hintjens. *Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* (Journal of Modern African Studies 37, no. 2, June 1999), 247.

¹¹ Gourevitch, 47-48.

¹² Peter Uvin. *Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda* (African Studies Review 40, no. 2, Sep. 1997), 93.

¹³ Prunier, 25.

groups, officially separating them and creating two different ethnicities. In 1933, the Belgians instituted a system of identity cards that listed the ethnic group of individuals. Furthermore, the Belgians saw the Hutus and Tutsis as distinct races. The Tutsi were seen as "almost white," while the Hutus were seen as another African "tribe." According to Prunier, the race division was a product of Europeans insisting on the "superior race of aristocratic invaders."¹⁴ The racial ideology invented by the Europeans, known as the "Hamitic Hypothesis," claimed that "almost white Africans" from the northeast had brought civilization to the rest of the "primitive" continent.¹⁵

Like their predecessors, the white explorers and missionaries who "discovered" Rwanda, the Belgians were fascinated by the "nobleness" of the Tutsis. Even though they were in the minority, the Tutsis were given limited authority to rule Rwanda. Implementing "divide and rule" policies and giving the Tutsis certain powers, the Belgians stayed on the sidelines while the Tutsis were seen as first-hand oppressors in the eyes of the Hutu majority. "The local Tutsi chiefs were used by the colonial administration to requisition forced labor from the Hutu masses. Routine beatings and corporal punishment were administered on behalf of the colonial masters."¹⁶ Furthermore, the Catholic Church, education, administration, and army were organized around the assumed racial superiority of the Tutsis.¹⁷ Catholic schools openly discriminated against the Hutus, favoring only the Tutsis.¹⁸

In the 1920s, most of the Hutu chiefs were replaced by the Tutsis. This eventually led to a total dominance of the Tutsi minority in all important positions. "By the end of Belgian formal presence in Rwanda in 1962, 43 chiefs out of 45 were Tutsi as well as 549 sub-chiefs out of 559."¹⁹ According to John and Carol Berry, "Belgians played a decisive role by imposing European racial stereotypes, supporting the Tutsis to the detriment of the Hutus, and then shifting the blame for colonial oppression to the Tutsis and leaving them to their fate."²⁰

The rise of the nationalist feelings across the African continent in the 1950s did not pass unnoted in Rwanda. Pressured by the African rebellion against colonial rule and after the independence of some African countries, the Belgians instigated the idea of Rwandans governing themselves. Starting in 1960, the Belgians realized that, with the elections in the country the Hutus would emerge as winners, and they began replacing the Tutsi chiefs and sub-chiefs with the Hutus. The Belgian new official position was to give the Hutu majority the human dignity that had been denied to them for decades. As one Belgian official claimed, "it was the desire to put down the arrogance and expose the duplicity of a basically oppressive and unjust (Tutsi) aristocracy."²¹ The Belgians blamed the Tutsis for exploitation of the Hutus, trying to conceal the fact that it was the Belgian colonial policies that created the oppressive Tutsi aristocracy in the first place. In 1960, the colonial authorities organized the first municipal elections, where *Parmehutu*, an ethnic party for Hutu emancipation, won an overwhelming victory.

Like in other parts of the world, wars and violence had occurred in pre-colonial Rwanda, but contrary to the false Western views of centuries-long "tribal" violence, these conflicts were not caused by ethnic hatred between the Hutus and Tutsis. Gerard Prunier, a French journalist and African scholar, argued against the Western view of Rwanda as a

¹⁴ Prunier, 46.

¹⁵ Bill Berkeley. The New Killing Fields: Massacre and the Politics of Intervention (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 103.

¹⁶ Linda Melvern. A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide (New York: Zed Books, 2000), 10.

¹⁷ Hintjens, 253.

¹⁸ Gourevitch, 57.

¹⁹ Prunier, 27.

²⁰ Berry, 6.

²¹ Gourevitch, 60.

country with long history of “tribal” violence between the Hutus and Tutsis:

Although Rwanda was not a land of peace and harmony before the arrival of the Europeans, there is no trace in its pre-colonial history of systematic violence between the Tutsis and Hutus. There were plenty of wars, but they were either fought against foreign kingdoms or between local groups trying to gain power.²²

The first ethnic and political violence between Hutus and Tutsis happened in 1959, when a Hutu political activist was beaten by a group of Tutsi opponents.²³ According to Mahmood Mamdani, “the origin of violence is connected to how the Hutus and Tutsis were constructed as political identities by the colonial state, the Hutus as indigenous and the Tutsis as alien.”²⁴

As soon as they took power, the Hutu politicians immediately organized the vengeful persecution of the Tutsis. The events that followed proved that the Belgian strategy of putting the Tutsis on the forefront of repression gave results. The Hutus considered the Tutsis as their main oppressors, not the Belgians. The violence left thousands of Tutsis dead, prompting many to go into exile. By late 1963, some 130,000 Rwandan Tutsis took refuge in Burundi and Uganda.²⁵

The first couple of years after independence had been marked with constant attacks on the Tutsi minority by the Hutu government. The next stage in taking power was called “social revolution,” and its propagators argued that “Rwanda belonged to the Hutus, its original inhabitants, who had been brutally subjugated for centuries by the foreign masters, the Tutsis.”²⁶ For the next three decades, “Hutu politicians, not more democratic than their Tutsi predecessors, justified their rule by building on and reinforcing Hutu fears of Tutsi perfidy.”²⁷ As a way of balancing power with the percentages of the population, the Hutu government introduced ethnic quotas in every sphere of life. In the entire area of public service employment, the Tutsis were restricted to 9% of jobs.²⁸ The same was true with education. While the Belgian colonialists claimed that the Tutsis made up about 15% of the population, the Hutu government cut down the number to 9%, after hundreds of thousands of Tutsis took refuge in the neighboring countries.

Economically, Rwanda was doing better compared to other central African countries in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly due to the coffee exports that brought revenue into the country. While 90% of Rwandans lived in rural areas, the government was able to provide the majority of the population with road networks, electricity, drinking water, primary education, and basic health care.²⁹ When in the 1980s the price of coffee began to deteriorate globally, the ethnic quotas and redistribution of welfare came under growing pressure. “In 1986, the receipts from coffee sales tumbled from 14 billion to 5 billion Rwandan francs.” External debt soon started to accumulate, creating financial crisis.³⁰

The divisions that caused animosity and violence between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda had been installed by the Belgian colonialists. Oppression of the Hutus from the first part of the 20th century created the ground for reprisal after decades of Tutsi

²² Prunier, 39.

²³ Gourevitch, 59.

²⁴ Mahmood Mamdani. When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 34.

²⁵ Prunier, 51.

²⁶ Uvin, 98.

²⁷ Berkeley, 104.

²⁸ Berry, xvi.

²⁹ Hintjens, 256.

³⁰ Hintjens, 256.

domination. After the Rwandan independence in 1962, the ethnic divisions were nurtured by the Hutu extremists who saw the Tutsis as people who did not belong to Rwanda. The economic decline in the 1980s put additional pressure on the Hutu government to install more rigorous ethnic quotas and intensify oppression of the Tutsi minority.

The Negotiations and the Build-Up to the Genocide

After the end of the Cold War, the Western world became involved in a negotiation process to solve the conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. Unfortunately, the Western mediators often did not know enough about Rwandan history and their pressures to come up with an agreement created the ground for the genocide. The Western approach strengthened the Hutu radicals, who saw no other solution to the Hutu-Tutsi problem but to exterminate the entire Tutsi population in Rwanda.

During the Cold War, Rwanda was one of the countries that received large amounts of financial aid from the Western world. Even when the Hutu government killed thousands of Tutsis and Hutu moderates and forced hundreds of thousands into exile, the Western powers continued sending funds without questioning how the money was being spent and if the government was corrupt and unjust. "For decades, Western donors supported the Rwandan government's practice of ethnic violence and separatist politics by providing foreign aid."³¹ The goal was to keep Rwanda, together with many other African countries, away from the communists. Following the end of the Cold War, "the international community suddenly rediscovered a strong attachment to democracy, putting pressure on the regime to democratize, negotiate power sharing with the Tutsis in exile, and organize free elections."³²

The majority of the Rwandan Tutsis who fled the country in the 1960s and 1970s lived in the neighboring countries Uganda and Burundi. Some of them lived there for decades but were never accepted as equals. In Uganda, the Rwandans were the subjects of prejudice and discrimination on a daily basis.³³ This created frustration, especially among younger Tutsi refugees. Many of them joined the guerrilla army of Yoweri Museveni, who later became the president of Uganda. In Museveni's army, about 3,000 Tutsis gained military experience and some became top army officers.³⁴ Soon after Museveni's victory in Uganda, the majority of the Tutsis left his army, with plans of launching attacks on the Rwandan government. They called themselves the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

After the first attacks in early 1990 failed, the RPF regrouped under the command of Paul Kagame. "From a rag-tag band of fewer than 2,000 men, he created a 15,000-strong disciplined force."³⁵ Their goal was to destabilize the Rwandan government and force it to change its discriminatory policies and allow the Tutsi refugees to return. However, these attacks just created more problems for the Tutsis living in Rwanda. "The attacks offered the unifying specter of a common enemy – especially after hundreds of thousands of Hutus had to flee from the RPF. Soon, all Tutsis were seen as RPF accomplices."³⁶

After three years of sporadic fighting in northern Rwanda, the RPF was finally perceived by the international community and the Rwandan government as a legitimate participant in the political process.³⁷ At the same time, the Rwandan government invested most of

³¹ Berry, 70.

³² Uvin, 108.

³³ Melvern, 25.

³⁴ Melvern, 27.

³⁵ Melvern, 30.

³⁶ Gourevitch, 83.

³⁷ Melvern, 39.

its financial resources in expanding the army. Between 1990 and 1994, the Rwandan army grew from 5,000 to more than 30,000. The Hutu extremists, helped by the government, established their own militias. Between 1990 and 1994, about 50,000 unemployed Hutu youth were recruited by the militias and given military training and weapons.³⁸

With the everyday fighting, thousands of dead civilians, and tens of thousands of refugees fleeing the fighting areas, the international community pressured the Rwandan government to change from a one-party to a multi-party system. The opposition to the ruling party was finally legalized in July 1991.³⁹ Further international pressure led to negotiations between the government, RPF, and newly formed opposition parties about the future of the country. The talks began in August 1992 in Arusha, Tanzania.

After a year of negotiations and mediation by the Organization of African Unity, the United States, Britain, France, and Belgium, the Arusha Accord was signed on August 4, 1993.⁴⁰ The agreement ensured a right of return for the Tutsi refugees, promised the integration of the Hutu-controlled Rwandan army and the largely Tutsi RPF into a single force, and established a transitional government composed of representatives of all political parties, including the RPF. The agreement was to be monitored by a United Nations peacekeeping force (UNAMAIR).⁴¹

According to Alan Kuperman, even though the mediation at the Arusha Accord was a "virtual textbook case of modern conflict management,"⁴² it did not prevent the genocide. To the contrary, it is possible that the pressures applied by the international community on the Rwandan president to sign the Accord led to the 1994 genocide. In his article, *The Other Lesson of Rwanda: Mediators Sometimes Do More Damage than Good*, Kuperman argues that the Western mediators contributed to the Rwandan tragedy:

There is little doubt that the proximate cause of the genocide in Rwanda was that President Habyarimana signed and began to implement an agreement that threatened the privileged position of powerful extremists in his country. It was not until the Arusha Accord of August 1993 that extremists took the final steps necessary to implement the genocide... It was continuing international pressure that ultimately drove Habyarimana to agree to implement the Accord.⁴³

Herman Cohen, the American Under-secretary of State for African Affairs until 1993, said he was shocked after reading the final Arusha Accord, claiming that the Accord was "too favorable for the RPF. The international community's obsession with getting a peace agreement led to a lack of analysis and a failure to consider whether or not the Accord could be implemented."⁴⁴ With the full implementation of the Arusha Accord, many in Rwanda were concerned with losing privileges and positions. In the army, many Hutus would lose their power and relatively decent salaries after the planned demobilization and integration with the RPF.⁴⁵

As agreed in the Arusha Accord, the UN peacekeepers arrived in Rwanda by the end of October 1993, led by the Canadian General Romeo Dallaire. Planning the mission, Dallaire requested 4,500 troops but got only 2,548. The main obstacle were American diplomats at the UN, requesting a low-cost operation. Dallaire requested 8 helicopters

³⁸ Mamdani, 206.

³⁹ Mamdani, 208.

⁴⁰ Melvern, 52.

⁴¹ Gourevitch, 99.

⁴² Alan Kuperman. *The Other Lesson of Rwanda: Mediators Sometimes Do More Damage than Good* (SAIS Review. Baltimore. The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1996), 222.

⁴³ Kuperman, *The Other Lesson of Rwanda*, 230.

⁴⁴ Melvern, 101.

⁴⁵ Des Forges, 125.

and 22 armored personnel carriers (APCs), but received no helicopters and only 8 APCs.⁴⁶ With this force, Dallaire's job was to keep peace in Rwanda.

Between 1990 and April 6 1994, there were many signs that the extermination of the Tutsis in Rwanda would take place. Tutsi civilians had been frequently massacred – 400 people brutally slaughtered in Kibilira in 1990, 500 in Bigogwe in 1991, 300 in Bugesera in 1992 – and no one was ever held accountable.⁴⁷ During this period, Hutu extremists openly propagated hate towards the Tutsis. Peter Uvin wrote in *African Studies Review* that the propaganda against the Tutsi population had been supported by the Rwandan government and armed forces:

At political rallies and speeches, as well as in extremist newspapers and radio stations – foremost *Radio Libre des Mises Collines* and newspaper *Kangura* – the Tutsis were constantly the subject of the most hateful propaganda. This involved explicit and regular incitation of lists with the names of hundreds of people-to-be-killed and threats to anyone having relations with the Tutsis... These voices were not prosecuted, not contradicted by government officials, not denounced by the President, but had moral and financial support from the government and the military.⁴⁸

Reading Rwandan newspapers in the early 1990s, careful observers could easily sense that large scale violence against the Tutsis was being prepared. In December 1990, *Kangura* published the "Hutu Ten Commandments," attacking Tutsi women and any association with the Tutsis, calling on Hutus to "stop having mercy on the Tutsis," and considering all those who do otherwise as traitors.⁴⁹ The January 1994 issue of *Kangura* publicly discussed genocide as a political solution. It reported: "We will get rid of the enemies inside the country. The Tutsi 'cockroaches' should know what will happen, they will disappear."⁵⁰ The term "cockroaches" had been invented by the Hutu radicals as a euphemism for the Tutsis. According to Prunier, the notion of upcoming genocide had become common talk in Rwanda in 1993 and early 1994. In February 1994, *Kangura* predicted "the March War," claiming that the blood "will flow freely."⁵¹ In the March 1994 issue of *Kangura*, the banner headline read, "President Habyarimana Will Die in March." The following article, explaining that the president would not be killed by Tutsis but Hutus, was accompanied by a cartoon of the President portrayed as an RPF accomplice.⁵²

The reports from Kigali sent by diplomats and UN officers indicated that violence was being prepared in Rwanda. In the spring of 1992, the Belgian ambassador in Rwanda reported to his government that, "extremist groups were planning the extermination of the Tutsis to resolve the ethnic problem and crush the internal Hutu opposition."⁵³ One of the most powerful secret groups was called Akazu, and in its ranks were Agathe Habyarimana, the president's wife, her brothers, and many Hutu businessmen and military officers.⁵⁴ According to Kuperman, these extremists believed that, "killing all of the Tutsi civilians in Rwanda would prevent the rebels from conquering the country."⁵⁵

On January 11, 1994, a top-level Hutu militiaman came forward and told General Dallaire about the plans for the extermination of the Tutsis. He explained that he had

⁴⁶ Melvern, 85.

⁴⁷ Berkeley, 108.

⁴⁸ Uvin, 110.

⁴⁹ Berry, 115.

⁵⁰ Mamdani, 212.

⁵¹ Prunier, 222.

⁵² Gourevitch, 108.

⁵³ Melvern, 43.

⁵⁴ Melvern, 42.

⁵⁵ Alan Kuperman. *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 12.

trained 1,700 men who, in groups of 40, were capable of "killing 1,000 persons in 20 minutes." He told about extermination lists of the Tutsis, moderate Hutus, and Belgian peacekeepers. The Hutu extremists planned to kill a number of Belgian soldiers, expecting their government to pull out like the U.S. government in Somalia.⁵⁶ The informant asked for protection and safe passage for his family to a friendly Western country in exchange for providing locations of arms caches.⁵⁷

After meeting with the informer, General Dallaire sent an urgent letter to the UN in New York, warning about weapons and a plot to assassinate Belgian peacekeepers, Rwandan opposition politicians, and the Tutsi population. When Dallaire demanded to raid the arms caches, Kofi Annan, in charge of UN peacekeeping operations at the time, and other top UN officials, prevented him from doing so. Instead, in order to show UN transparency, they ordered Dallaire to share the information about the informant with the Rwandan government.⁵⁸ When the UN Security Council authorized the UN mission in Rwanda, they expected it to be an inexpensive, short, and low-scale operation. They thought that the Arusha Accord would bring peace, and that the UN peacekeepers would be there only to help the peaceful transition and return of the Tutsi refugees. The UNAMIR mandate, due to its small size and the fear of repeating the failure in Somalia, was only a "contribution to security," without the authorization to assist in tracking arms caches and neutralizing armed gangs. The UNAMIR soldiers had permission to use weapons strictly in self-defense.⁵⁹

Finally, in the mid-January 1994, the CIA predicted that, "in the worst case scenario, more than a half-million Rwandans could die in a war between the government and the RPF."⁶⁰ The CIA report to the State Department concluded that the Arusha Accord would fail, resulting in massive violence.⁶¹ Still, the many signs that large-scale violence was being prepared did not influence the international community, busy at this time with the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, to apply additional pressure and prevent the conflict in central Africa.

In the early 1990s, the situation in Rwanda worsened. The RPF built up its forces and continuously attacked from neighboring countries. Their attacks prompted the Rwandan Hutu government to expand its army and extremist militia. After months of negotiations and international pressure, the Arusha Accord was signed between the Rwandan government, the RPF, and opposition parties. The Accord was meant to serve as an exit from the crisis. In Rwanda, instead of full implementation of the Accord, the government was influenced by the Hutu extremists who planned the "final solution" for the Tutsi problem.

The International Indifference Regarding the Genocide

When the genocide began in Rwanda, the international community simply turned away and disregarded the reports of unthinkable brutality. The Western governments ignored the killings of more than 800,000 people in 100 days because they saw no economic and national security interests in saving Africans. The United Nations, depending on the member states and their contributions in money, equipment, and personnel, had no means to intervene. The false Western view of Africa as a "primitive" continent where people always killed each other in brutal "tribal" wars was one of the primary reasons for

⁵⁶ Dallaire, 143.

⁵⁷ Guy Martin. Readings of the Rwandan Genocide (African Studies Review 45, no. 3. Dec. 2002), 19.

⁵⁸ Dallaire, 146.

⁵⁹ Des Forges, 132-133.

⁶⁰ Alan Kuperman. The other lesson from Rwanda, 102.

⁶¹ Melvern, 91.

the international community's deliberate indifference during the Rwandan genocide.

On April 6, 1994, Juvenal Habyarimana, the president of Rwanda, and other regional heads of states attended a one-day meeting in Tanzania. During the meeting, Habyarimana was told by other participants that he should not delay the implementation of the Arusha peace agreement and that they feared that the crisis in Rwanda could threaten the entire region.⁶² The same evening, Habyarimana flew back to Rwanda. When his airplane approached the airport in Kigali, someone fired missiles and shot down the plane, killing the president and other people on board. To this day, there is no proof of who shot down the plane, even though many people point at the Hutu radicals. "Regardless of who killed Habyarimana, the fact remains that the organizers of the genocide were primed to exploit his death instantaneously."⁶³

In less than one hour after the president's death, the Hutu army and militia put roadblocks on every major road and began mass killings of the Hutu opposition and the Tutsi minority. Their first targets were the Hutu opposition politicians, who were likely to oppose the genocide if they were left alive.⁶⁴ On April 7, the Hutu army attacked the house of Agathe Uwilingiyimana, the Rwandan Prime Minister and the member of the opposition. She was killed on the spot, while 10 Belgian peacekeepers who were guarding her were taken hostage and later that day executed.⁶⁵ Belgium, having the largest number of soldiers in UNAMIR, announced full withdrawal after their soldiers had been executed.⁶⁶ The Belgians insisted to General Dallaire that "the Rwandans were not worth risking another single Belgian soldier."⁶⁷ Everything that General Dallaire learned from the informer on January 11, 1994 and reported to the UN headquarters in New York – the plans to kill the Rwandan political opposition, Belgian peacekeepers, and the extermination of the Tutsis – had become reality.

On the streets of Kigali and around the country, the Rwandan army, Hutu militia, and ordinary Hutu citizens began brutally killing Tutsis and all those who "looked" like Tutsis. Ethnic identity cards and the physical features that supposedly distinguished between the Tutsis and Hutus, both the legacies of Belgian colonial rule, were considered a sufficient basis for a death sentence. At roadblocks, the people whose ID cards said Tutsi were killed on the spot. "Many Hutus who had the misfortune to 'look Tutsi' were killed on the basis of the appearance alone, and many Tutsis who 'looked Hutu' had forged ID cards and managed to escape death."⁶⁸ Mistaking the Hutus for Tutsis and vice versa prove the falsehood of colonial impressions and policies that created divisions and hatred in Rwanda.

The first time anyone publicly used the term "genocide" when referring to the mass killings in Rwanda, was on April 11. Jean-Philippe Ceppi wrote an article in the French newspaper *Liberation*, after visiting a church in Gikondo, an industrial section of Kigali, where about 500 Tutsi civilians had been brutally massacred on April 9. He called the slaughter genocide.⁶⁹ In the next few weeks, the term "genocide" disappeared from the international news headlines. Instead, the Western media called the massacres "chaos and anarchy" and "centuries-old history of tribal warfare."⁷⁰ The view of Africa created by

⁶² Melvern, 115.

⁶³ Gourevitch, 113.

⁶⁴ William Ferroggiaro. The US and the Genocide in Rwanda 1994 - Evidence of Inaction (National Security Archive. George Washington University. 2001), <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB53/>

⁶⁵ Guy, 21.

⁶⁶ Michael Barnett. The UN Security Council, Indifference, and Genocide in Rwanda (Cultural Anthropology 12, no. 4, Nov. 1997), 560.

⁶⁷ Dallaire, 522.

⁶⁸ Hintjens, 272.

⁶⁹ Melvern, 137.

⁷⁰ Melvern, 137.

the colonial powers prevailed, and Western decision makers concluded that nothing could be done to prevent chaos in Rwanda. For them, the brutal violence was an African way of life. By asserting that, the Western powers tried to move away from any responsibility for the situation and possible solutions in Rwanda.

The Western media have the power to persuade their governments to intervene in cases of large-scale violence in other countries. The fact that not one recent conflict has been put on the international agenda without continued television coverage supports the finding that the "CNN effect" can be regarded as a necessary condition for military intervention or humanitarian enforcement.⁷¹ The "CNN effect" is a continuous pressure by the media in a way of presenting the images of atrocities and calling on the governments to do something at the time when a civil war or an event such as the Rwandan genocide is taking place. Otherwise, the brutality would often be ignored or presented as a way of life. In the case of Rwanda, the genocide had been portrayed in the Western media as just another outburst of "tribal" violence on African soil, with much less coverage compared to the war in the Balkans happening at the same time. In the first days of the genocide, "Reuters credited the 'new orgy of slaughter' to the 'age-old strife between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority.' *The New York Times* called the genocide 'tribal warfare' flowing from a 'centuries-old feud.'⁷² On April 14, a week after the beginning of the genocide, Eric Soblin, from Montreal's *The Gazette*, titled his article "Beyond Any Savagery You Could Imagine: Quebec missionary arrives with tales of terror after fleeing Rwanda."⁷³ On April 18, a journalist from *The Ottawa Citizen* wrote that "Rwanda plunged into barbarity."⁷⁴ These reports suggested that nothing could be done to stop "savages" from killing each other in their "barbaric" outbursts of violence. Susan Douglas wrote an article in *The Progressive* right after the end of the genocide, commenting on the American media's false views of Africa:

It took more than a month for the news media to stop dismissing the conflict as tribal warfare and to acknowledge that there were actually political and economic reasons for the bloodshed. But with the sensationalized obsession with the carnage – and there is hideous carnage – without any more in-depth analysis, the media legitimate Americans' sense that with people like these (savages), nothing can be done.⁷⁵

The major international powers knew that horrific slaughter was taking place in Rwanda, but they choose not to intervene and stop it. As soon as April 7, only a day after the president's plane had been shot down, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported to the U.S. government that organized mass killings of the Tutsis in Rwanda were taking place. In addition, still-present staff at the U.S. embassy in Kigali soon reported about mass slaughter of the Tutsis by the army and militia.⁷⁶ Still, these reports persuaded no one in the American government to get involved and try to stop the slaughter.

Western governments received information about the genocide not only from their agencies and the media, but also from some Rwandans who witnessed the killings

⁷¹ Peter Viggo Jakobsen. National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN: What Triggers UN Peace Enforcement After the Cold War? (Journal of Peace Research 33, no. 2. May 1996), 212.

⁷² David Norman Smith. The Psychocultural Roots of Genocide: Legitimacy and Crisis in Rwanda (American Psychologist, Vol. 53, 1998), 743.

⁷³ Eric Soblin. Beyond Any Savagery You Could Imagine (The Gazette, Montreal, April 14, 1994), A13.

⁷⁴ Allen Arthur. RWANDA: Reporter describes descent into barbarity (The Ottawa Citizen, Ontario, April 18, 1994), A6.

⁷⁵ Susan Douglas. A three-way failure - coverage of the Rwandan civil war (The Progressive, July 1994)

⁷⁶ Gregory Stanton, Could the Rwandan genocide have been prevented? (Journal of Genocide Research. Jun 2004. Vol. 6 Issue 2), 218.

firsthand. When Monique Mujawamariya, a human rights activist from Rwanda, arrived to the United States on April 21 to talk with the American officials about ways of stopping the genocide, a Congressional official responsible for Africa told her that, "the United States has no friends, only interests, and that America had no interest in Rwanda."⁷⁷ On the same day, the UN Security Council, under the pressure of the United States and Britain, demonstrated that no one was interested in the Rwandan genocide by ordering a reduction of UNAMIR to only 270 soldiers in the midst of the brutal slaughter.⁷⁸ A declassified diplomatic cable sent from the U.S. State Department to the American mission at the UN stated that keeping UN peacekeepers in Rwanda could not be justified and that the UN troops had to be removed as soon as possible.⁷⁹

The reason for American insistence on the removal of UN troops was a document called Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD), signed by President Clinton on May 3, 1994. The PDD's purpose was to reform multilateral peace operations in order to make "disciplined and coherent choices about which peace operations to support, both when voting in the Security Council for UN peace operations and when participating in such operations with U.S. troops."⁸⁰ From then on, the U.S. would officially only intervene in places where they had economic or national security interest. Moreover, PDD 25 could also be used to persuade other countries not to intervene in places the U.S. government did not want to get involved.⁸¹

While the UN had a problem to deploy troops for Rwanda, the international community was more than willing to send troops to the Balkans. On April 27, only six days after the reduction of UN mission in Rwanda to 270 soldiers, the UN authorized an increase of international presence in Bosnia, adding 6,550 troops to about 24,000 UN troops already there.⁸² In Bosnia, Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, different ethnic and religious groups, fought a civil war from 1992 to 1995. While opposed to any kind of intervention in Rwanda in the summer of 1994, President Clinton saw American self-interest in Bosnia. According to Joseph Biden, one of the most important foreign policy issues facing the U.S. Congress in the 1990s was the American involvement in Bosnia. "Helping Bosnia to create a viable multi-ethnic, free-market democracy sends a critical message to other would-be 'ethnic cleansers' that a repeat of such carnage will not be tolerated elsewhere in Europe."⁸³ In December 1994, Clinton offered 20,000 U.S. soldiers as ground troops in Bosnia to help evacuate the UN peacekeepers that were under threat.⁸⁴ While the Somalia debacle created fury in the United States and prevented the U.S. Administration from intervening in Rwanda, the deaths of 18 American marines in Mogadishu did not prevent the deployment of American soldiers into the brutal war in the Balkans. In an article published in the *Journal of Genocide Research*, Gregory Stanton explored the early warnings of the Rwandan genocide and the international indifference during the killings, claiming that it was a mix of the lack of self-interests and (hidden) racism that influenced the decisions of Western powers:

Although the U.S. and Britain were willing to commit soldiers and billions to save lives in Bosnia, where people are white, and the war was close to the interests of the European community, they were unwilling to do so in Rwanda, where people

⁷⁷ Ghosts of Rwanda, directed by Greg Barker, 2 hours, PBS Frontline 2004, DVD.

⁷⁸ Stanton, 221.

⁷⁹ Peter Goodspeed, U.S. ignored Rwandan slaughter: Diplomats were prohibited from using the word 'genocide' to describe situation (National Post, August 22, 2001), A10.

⁸⁰ President Clinton Signs PDD. The White House Press Statement (May 6, 1994)

<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm>

⁸¹ Gourevitch, 150.

⁸² Melvern, 174.

⁸³ Joseph Biden. Bosnia: Why the United States Should Finish the Job (SAIS Review, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1.

⁸⁴ Art Pine. U.S. Offers to Send Troops to Assist Bosnian Pull-Out (LA Times, December 9, 1994), 2.

are black and country has no strategic or economic interests.⁸⁵

The Western governments and particularly the U.S. government opposed using the term "genocide" since admitting that the genocide was taking place in Rwanda would obligate the UN members to intervene. On April 26, 1994, an intelligence estimate was issued in Washington, calling the Rwandan massacres genocide. When Prudence Bushnell, the Deputy Assistant of the Secretary of State, asked what the U.S. should do about the genocide, the Legal Advisors Office of the State Department gave her an opinion that "the word 'genocide' should be avoided because the killings might not possess the requisite intent and because use of the word would obligate the U.S. to take action to stop it."⁸⁶ Following this meeting, the U.S. State Department ordered the American mission at the UN to strongly oppose use of the term "genocide." The U.S. officials even changed the meaning of the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Instead of obligation to prevent genocides, the White House determined that, "the Convention merely 'enables' such preventive action. By neutering the word 'genocide' the American officials were able to finally use it without anxiety."⁸⁷

Declassified U.S. government documents show that the top U.S. officials knew that the genocide was taking place in Rwanda from the beginning. Under a Freedom of Information request, the National Security Archive project at George Washington University obtained 16 documents that show deliberate indifference during the genocide. "Despite the fact U.S. diplomats were pleading directly by telephone with the genocide organizers to end the murders, U.S. officials were still refusing to call it genocide for fear they would be compelled by international law to act." The documents show that the top U.S. officials knew exactly that the killings were not a two-sided fight but a planned extermination of the Tutsis.⁸⁸

While the U.S. government was opposed to any intervention in Rwanda and simply ignored the Rwandan genocide, the French assisted the Hutus during the preparations to exterminate the Tutsis. Since Belgium established colonial presence in Rwanda, the Rwandan people speak French. The French government backed the Hutu-controlled government after independence, sending money and arms in order to continue the French influence.⁸⁹ The French feared that, if the RPF from exile took over the country, France would lose its influence since the majority of Rwandans in exile lived in English speaking countries. Before the genocide, the French military instructors trained the Hutu army and militia. Right through the killings in 1994, the French government sent shipments of arms to Rwanda.⁹⁰ According to the panel assembled by the Organization of African Unity in 2000, "France was closer to the Rwandan Hutu regime in every way than any other government. They could have stopped the genocide before it began. They knew exactly what was happening."⁹¹

According to Michael Barnett, Boutros Boutros Ghali, the UN secretary general at the time of the Rwandan genocide, showed "troubling abdication of responsibility and leadership" when he chose to stay on his European trip in early April instead of going back to New York and organizing a response to the Rwandan crisis.⁹² An international panel of experts appointed by the UN issued a report in 1999, accusing the top UN officials for making "weak and equivocal decisions." The report also accused the Clinton administration for "persistently playing down the problem, setting the tone for the Security Council generally lacking the political will for a tougher response, and blocking

⁸⁵ Stanton, 226.

⁸⁶ Stanton, 219.

⁸⁷ Gourevitch, 153-54.

⁸⁸ Goodspeed, A10.

⁸⁹ Dallaire, 47.

⁹⁰ Gourevitch, 89.

⁹¹ Barbara Crossette. U.S. and Others Allowed Rwanda Genocide (NY Times, July 8, 2000), A4.

⁹² Barnett, 559.

any action in Rwanda."⁹³

The UN Security Council finally discussed the genocide in Rwanda on April 29. By this time, the reports from Rwanda claimed that more than 200,000 people had been killed.⁹⁴ On April 29, a draft of a resolution was presented to the Council which included the term "genocide." The British and American ambassadors at the UN protested against using the term, and after corrections issued a statement that "quoted directly from the Genocide Convention, but without using the word genocide."⁹⁵

The UN could not act on its own and intervene in Rwanda, since it does not have an army but depends on member countries sending troops and paying for peacekeeping operations. The U.S. alone paid 31.7% of peacekeeping costs. PDD 25 planned to cut that percentage to 25% by January 1996.⁹⁶ On May 17, the UN Security Council finally agreed to send 5,500 troops consisting of mainly African soldiers, asking the U.S. to supply armored personnel carriers. The Clinton administration agreed, but instead of lending military equipment to the UN (to whom the U.S. owes billions of dollars in membership dues), the U.S. government decided to lease it for 15 million dollars.⁹⁷ The UN agencies were slow in deciding who would pay for the lease and the additional troops never arrived to intervene. The genocide was stopped by the RPF rebel forces in July 1994.

Apart from the economic and national security interests, should racism be blamed for the international community's indifference in the case of Rwanda? Considering Rwandans and other Africans as "savages" who slaughter each other for no reason understandable to the "civilized" world is a racist notion. In 1994, the killings in Rwanda were seen as "tribal," something that Rwandans have done numerous times in the past. No one noted that the divisions that caused the bloodshed between the Hutus and Tutsis were installed by the Belgians. That would not fit with the colonial and post-colonial view of Africa as an "uncivilized" continent that needed Western help. Peter Beinart explored the race factor in decisions to conduct humanitarian interventions:

Americans are not indifferent to images of dying Africans, but most Americans are not analytically equipped to see African slaughter as aberrant. They lack an image of normal, healthy African civilization - partly because African countries are less stable and economically developed than Western ones, but also because those countries receive little U.S. media attention except when they are in crisis.⁹⁸

In a speech at Butare University in 2004, the place where thousands of people had been slaughtered during the genocide, General Dallaire suggested racism as the reason for the international community's indifference:

Superpowers had no interest in you. They were interested in Yugoslavia. Thousands upon thousands soldiers were sent there. The guiding principle was that in Rwanda it was tribalism, it was history repeating itself. In Yugoslavia, it was different - it was 400 years of historic conflict between great religions of the world. It was ethnic cleansing. It was European security. It was whites! Rwanda was black. It was in the middle of Africa. It had no strategic value.⁹⁹

⁹³ Barbara Crossette. UN Inertia in 1994 Worsened Genocide in Rwanda (NY Times, December 17, 1999), A1.

⁹⁴ Prunier, 262.

⁹⁵ Melvern, 180.

⁹⁶ President Clinton Signs PDD. The White House Press Statement (May 6, 1994) <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm>

⁹⁷ Gourevitch, 151.

⁹⁸ Peter Beinart. Humanitarian Stands and the Race Factor (Star Tribune, Minneapolis, May 17, 1999), 6A.

⁹⁹ Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Romeo Dallaire, directed by Peter Raymont, 90

Many experts argue today that a military intervention would not have stopped the 1994 genocide and saved the lives of the majority of the victims. Alan Kuperman claimed that 5,500 troops requested by General Dallaire as a means to stop the genocide would not have averted the killings in Rwanda.¹⁰⁰ Still, it is important to point out that most of the killings during the genocide had been “low-tech” – performed by machetes – and that a 5,500 strong military force could easily have prevented the Hutu militia and civilians from slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Tutsis. General Dallaire wrote that, if the UN headquarters positively reacted to his pleas for troops, equipment, and change of mandate in the first week of the genocide, the killings in Rwanda could have been stopped.¹⁰¹ In 1997, Dallaire’s plan was reviewed by international military experts at Georgetown University. The experts concluded that 5,500 well equipped soldiers would have either stopped or dramatically reduced the casualties of the genocide.¹⁰² “Give me 5,500 troops,” General Dallaire told Mark Doyle, the BBC journalist, during the genocide, “and I will secure every major church and football stadium.”¹⁰³ The churches and stadiums were the places where many Tutsis tried to hide. In such places where UN soldiers or unarmed UN observers remained, they were able to prevent the killing of thousands of Tutsis.¹⁰⁴ In an article titled *The U.S. Foreign Policy Trajectory on Africa*, Donald Rothchild quoted Suhrke and Jones and their book *Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda*, claiming that a relatively small force would have been able to stop the genocide:

What the decision makers in the United States did not see was the systematic killings carried out by lightly armed militia and civilians. To respond effectively to the situation need not necessarily require a massive intervention but a smaller force inserted with a mandate to protect civilians in designated sites.¹⁰⁵

Alan Kuperman suggested that foreign troops could not have arrived in Rwanda in time to save most victims.¹⁰⁶ However, when Western governments ordered the evacuation of their embassies and citizens in the first days of the genocide, over 1,000 French, Italian, and Belgian soldiers arrived in Kigali overnight.¹⁰⁷ When they made sure that all white people were on board to leave Rwanda, they left, leaving behind a large group of desperate Tutsis who were immediately slaughtered by the Hutu militia.¹⁰⁸ When the Hutus who committed the genocide fled to neighboring Zaire (today DR Congo) after the RPF liberated Rwanda in July 1994, the French government sent troops to create safe passages for them and prevent the RPF from capturing the Hutu government and army officials.¹⁰⁹ The French sent 2,500 soldiers equipped with over 100 armored vehicles, 10 helicopters, and combat aircrafts.¹¹⁰ The French president even considered a military occupation of Rwanda in order to block the RPF from liberating the country.¹¹¹ When a cholera epidemic spread among the 1.2 million Hutu refugees in Zaire, the Clinton Administration announced that 4,000 U.S. troops would aid the relief efforts. “President Clinton asked the Congress for \$270 million to help the refugees. All of this, four months

minutes, 2004, DVD.

¹⁰⁰ Kuperman. *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, 2.

¹⁰¹ Dallaire, 514.

¹⁰² Dallaire, 548.

¹⁰³ Mark Doyle. *Too Little, Too Late, Wrong Place* (BBC News website, April 6, 2004)

¹⁰⁴ *Ghosts of Rwanda*, directed by Greg Barker, 2 hours, PBS Frontline 2004, DVD.

¹⁰⁵ Donald Rothchild. *The U.S. Foreign Policy Trajectory on Africa* (SAIS Review, The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 192.

¹⁰⁶ Kuperman. *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, viii.

¹⁰⁷ Stanton, 222.

¹⁰⁸ *Ghosts of Rwanda*, directed by Greg Barker, 2 hours, PBS Frontline 2004, DVD.

¹⁰⁹ Gourevitch, 161.

¹¹⁰ Prunier, 291.

¹¹¹ Kuperman. *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, 44.

after the troops and money could have prevented the catastrophe in the first place."¹¹²

Due to the lack of interest of the Western powers, humanity failed in Rwanda. Still, there were individuals who did everything humanly possible to save the lives of innocent people. Their examples show that, if there were any political will and interest to intervene in Rwanda, even a relatively small military force could have saved many lives. One of those individuals, according to Dr. James Orbinski, the head of *Medecins Sans Frontieres* in Rwanda during the genocide, was General Romeo Dallaire. His actions and determination, despite the problems and ignorance from his own organization and the rest of the world, saved the lives of thousands of Rwandans.¹¹³ Unarmed Red Cross workers were able to save about 65,000 Tutsis. Carl Wilkins, an aid worker with the Adventist church and the only American who stayed in Rwanda during the genocide, saved more lives than the entire United States government.¹¹⁴

At a memorial conference at the UN in 2004, General Romeo Dallaire said that no one was interested in saving Rwandans in 1994. "If someone decides to wipe out mountain gorillas in Rwanda, there would be more reaction by the international community to stop that than to protect thousands of human beings from being slaughtered in the same country."¹¹⁵ Speaking at the conference in Kigali in 2004, ten years after the beginning of the genocide, Paul Kagame, the man who led the RPF rebels, accused the international community of deliberately failing to prevent the genocide. He asked how almost a million of killed Rwandans could be regarded as insignificant by anyone, raising the possibility of powerful Western nations having hidden racist agendas.¹¹⁶ While the governments of the United States, Britain, and France – the countries that prevented the UN Security Council from sending peacekeepers to Rwanda – expressed their regrets for the genocide that happened in 1994, none of the countries sent a senior government representative to the 10th anniversary ceremony that took place in Kigali in 2004.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

The divisions that set the ground for the violence that culminated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda had been created by the Belgians. Propagating the European racist views, they installed the Tutsis as superior and allowed them to oppress the Hutu majority for decades. In the post-colonial times, the roles changed and the Hutu majority began oppressing the Tutsis, forcing many into exile. When in the 1990s the international community pressured the Rwandan president to sign the Arusha Accord, the Hutu extremists feared that the return of the Tutsis from the exile would bring back the Tutsi hegemony. To prevent that, the Hutu extremists planned and executed the "final solution," hoping to once and forever end with the Tutsis in Rwanda.

The Hutu extremists are to blame for the 1994 genocide. They organized and implemented the extermination of the Tutsi population and Hutu moderates in order to prevent power sharing with the Tutsis and to stay in power. At the same time, the world knew what was happening in Rwanda but chose not to stop the gruesome killings. France had close ties with the Hutu government and even helped the training of Hutu extremists who committed the genocide. Belgium ran out as soon as its 10 peacekeepers were killed. The U.S. and Britain did nothing because they had no economic and national security interests in Rwanda. The UN Security Council had no means and will to react. It was overstretched in the former Yugoslavia, where white people were fighting and at the

¹¹² Milton Leitenberg, *Anatomy of a Massacre* (NY Times, July 31, 1994), A1.

¹¹³ *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Romeo Dallaire*, 2004, DVD.

¹¹⁴ *Ghosts of Rwanda*, directed by Greg Barker, 2 hours, PBS Frontline 2004, DVD.

¹¹⁵ *UN chief's Rwanda genocide regret* (BBC News Website, March 26, 2004)

¹¹⁶ *Rwanda genocide "failure" berated* (BBC News website, April 5, 2004)

¹¹⁷ Gareth Harding. *Commentary: Remember Rwanda* (Washington Times, April 7, 2004)

same time destabilizing Europe.

Jerry Large wrote in *The Seattle Times* that many suggested that the Western reaction during the Rwandan genocide was natural. Rwanda is one of the poorest countries in the world and it was in nobody's interest to lose time and money trying to save innocent Rwandans. "Does this mean humans are only worth what we can get out of them financially?" asked Large in his article. "Maybe Rwandan lives are not worth much on the international exchange. Does that thinking affect the value we put on our own poor, or on people who happen to look like Rwandans? If we have drawn a line in our hearts that excludes some people based on our judgment of their worth, then we have truly diminished ourselves."¹¹⁸

Apart from self-interests, the racist views of Africa created by the colonial powers that are even today embedded in the minds of many Western decision makers played an important role in choosing to ignore the Rwandan genocide. Many people still consider Africa an uncivilized continent where "savages and barbarians" kill each other for no particular reason. This is evident from the media reports about the genocide. Perhaps these views led the French President Francois Mitterand to say in the midst of the Rwandan killings that, "in such countries as this, genocide is not too important."¹¹⁹

"If Rwanda's experience could be said to carry any lesson for the world," wrote Philip Gourevitch, "it was that endangered peoples who depend on the international community for physical protection stand defenseless."¹²⁰ In 1948, the world said "never again" to genocides. In reality, "never again" meant only that the genocides would be prevented and stopped in places where the powerful countries have self-interest. Their self-interests dictate the involvement of the UN, since the UN depends on contributions from its member states.

Will genocides happen again? One is happening in Sudan since 2003. The major international powers agree that genocide is being committed in the Darfur region, but no one seems interested in stopping it. Rwanda and Sudan prove that self-interests of powerful countries and the color of victims' skin, not morals and compassion, play a major role in stopping large-scale exterminations of human beings.

¹¹⁸ Jerry Large. [Newsworthiness vs. the worth of human lives](#) (Seattle Times, Seattle, April 17, 1994), B11.

¹¹⁹ [Rwandan Genocide: How the World Responded - Francois Mitterand](http://africanhistory.about.com/od/rwanda/p/qts_Genocide1.htm). About.com, http://africanhistory.about.com/od/rwanda/p/qts_Genocide1.htm

¹²⁰ Gourevitch, 351.

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