

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Rwanda revisited: in search for lessons

HOWARD ADELMAN

DesForges, Alison. *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999). 789 pp, \$35.00, paperback.

Gourevitch, Philip. *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with all our families: stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1998). 353 pp, \$25.00, hardback; \$15.00, paperback.

Joseph, Richard, ed. *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999). 525 pp, \$65.00, hardback; \$23.50, paperback.

Klinghoffer, Arthur Jay. *The International Dimension of Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: New York University Press, 1998). 219 pp, \$40.00, hardback.

Leyton, Elliott with photographs by Greg Locke. *Touched by Fire: Doctors Without Borders in a Third World Crisis* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1998). 212 pp, \$29.99, hardback.

Moore, Jonathan, ed. *Hard Choices: Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998). 315 pp, \$65.00, hardback; \$24.95, paperback.

Uvin, Peter. *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1998). 273 pp, \$59.00, hardback; \$24.95, paperback.

Weiss, Thomas G. *Military-Civilian Interactions: Intervening in Humanitarian Crises* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999). 279 pp, \$55.00, hardback; \$18.95, paperback.

In 1994, between April 6 and mid-July, a period of 99 days of mayhem, approximately 500,000–800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were slaughtered in Rwanda in a systematically planned genocide. (Alison des Forges, who provides the only analysis of numbers, suggests a figure of 507,000. Surprisingly, she does not take into consideration the counts based on bodies found in burial sites and estimates of corpses that were thrown into Lake Victoria. The latter produces a much higher total.) Like the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews, this genocide was a highly organized and centrally directed one. As indicated in the famous January 11, 1994 cable that the UN Force Commander in the field,

General Romeo Dallaire, sent to UN headquarters four months before the genocide began in earnest, the genocidists, based on their practice runs, calculated that they could kill 1,000 every twenty minutes. This was the only genocide since the Holocaust that had occurred on such a scale. But it took place over three months and not three-and-a-half to four years. Largely executed with machetes, it was a low-tech affair, not a highly industrialized operation. Further, there was plenty of information in advance that the genocide was being planned. What most stands out, however, is that the genocide took place in a poor small country with a United Nations (UN) military force present. That peace force continued to control the airport in the Rwanda capital of Kigali throughout the civil war, a war that served as a semi-cover for the genocide.

Why had the genocide occurred? Why had it not been prevented? Why, once it started, had it not been mitigated? What roll did the outside "good guys" play in preventing, mitigating or, perhaps, even facilitating the genocide?

These are major questions lurking behind the spate of recent books on the Rwandan genocide. The UN was created after World War II, in part at least, to prevent genocides. This was the most easily preventable genocide one can imagine. There was advance notice. The UN was in military control of the key center—the airport. International law sanctioned intervention in the case of genocide and, in any case, the UN had already been given a mandate to protect civilians in Rwanda. Finally, those organizing the genocide were only a relatively small group, at most 400 people in the extended extremist high command. Those executing the genocide were poorly equipped. General Dallaire, in an interview with me, suggested that a well-equipped company with armored personnel carriers and helicopters could have stopped virtually the whole slaughter if the intervention had occurred at the right point. And even once the genocide started, a well-equipped military battalion could have done the job. Why did we stand by and do so little to stop or even mitigate the genocide?

Why did the genocide occur in the first place? Can we learn anything from the Rwanda slaughter that can advance our knowledge of why genocides take place? If so, perhaps then future ones can be anticipated and then prevented.

The UN sent troops in July 1994 to protect and save the refugees (including many of the genocidists) who fled Rwanda when the Hutu extremists were defeated by the Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF). When the UN-sanctioned French troops of Opération Turquoise landed in June on only several days notice, it was ten weeks after the genocide had started and after it had almost run its course. Why had troops not been sent earlier to stop and hamper the genocide?

One explanation is that we are morally at war ourselves. On one side stand the morally righteous humanitarians who help refugees but have no control of military forces. They berate the political powers for failing to do their duty. On the other side stand the political realists who work for states that control military forces and frequently argue that the only reason intervention is warranted is if self-interests and/or the balance of power are affected. In fact, the realists often argue that intervention is part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

There are, of course, philosophers like Michael Walzer (1996) who claim that the above two options pose a false dichotomy. What is needed is a principled conception of politics and an application of principle to crises that takes politics fully into account. Elsewhere, I have dubbed that approach as humanitarian realism. The "thin" universal morality that unites all humanity has to be combined with the "thick" history and culture particular to the various peoples, including ourselves, that populate this globe and which nations stand ready to defend. [See Michael Walzer's (1996) *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*.] The application of such a moral outlook is particularly acute when it comes to Rwanda, for the Tutsi and the Hutu practice the same religions, have the same culture, speak the same language and, with the exception of some members of each group, most are physically indistinguishable. The conflict between the extremist Hutu and the rest of the Rwandan population was over the "thin" morality which supposedly unites all humanity rather than over the "thick" cultural differences which divide peoples. On the level of "truth" and "justice" minimally understood, most people in Rwanda and in the West shared the same values. However, on the level of "thick" morality, Rwanda was not a place where one could find a "return of the tribes," an assertion of particular ethnic, religious and national identity that has become so much a sign of our times.

However, "the return of the tribes" was the lens through which most of the media misread the conflict in Rwanda. There was no intractable differences between the Hutu and Tutsi. Yet this was the context where such a horrific and preventable genocide took place. The conflict was not between those with different "thick cultures." On one side stood a small determined group manipulating identities without even significant cultural differences in the name of what Professor Melissa Orlie (1997) of the University of Illinois has called "unmixed difference" or "the desire for purity." On the other side of the "thin red line" stood the rest of us who recognize that purity is a delusion inappropriately applied from physical hygiene to issues of identity.

Though one might expect a wide variety of interpretations, the books discussed in this essay offer variations on only a few explanations to account for both the genocide and the failure to intervene in a timely and effective fashion. One answer is moral bankruptcy. It is taken as self-evident that the genocidists were morally bankrupt. One does not expect to read that the organization that led the intervention and its members are also morally bankrupt. But this is precisely the charge laid by the Canadian Force Commander of the peacekeepers in Rwanda. General Romeo Dallaire, in his essay, "The End of Innocence: Rwanda 1994" in the Moore collection, saw himself and his UNAMIR forces as "attempting to balance moral concerns with practical considerations" in the Walzer spirit (p 85).

The sovereign states who are members of the UN, on the other hand, not only abandoned the Rwandese, but even abandoned its own emasculated UN forces to face the tragedy without a mandate, without military equipment to defend themselves (let alone the Tutsi being slaughtered) and without supplies. The

survival rations were rotten and inedible. What is Dallaire's explanation? The states suffered from an "inexcusable apathy," "inexcusable by any human criteria" and "completely beyond comprehension and moral acceptability" (in Moore, 1998, p 79). In other words, the depth of moral depravity was more in evidence and more incomprehensible when the treatment of their own troops was put under the microscope, for even self-interest was not in play. This was already evident in the radical difference between the complex and desperately critical crisis that the troops were asked to deal with and the totally inadequate resources that they were given to accomplish their task. It was also evident in the fact that "70 percent of my and my principal staff's time was dedicated to an administrative battle with the U.N.'s somewhat constipated logistic and administrative structure" than with the crisis they were sent over to address (in Moore, 1998, p 73). Dallaire does not detail that logistic nightmare in his essay, but one example should suffice. The troops were sent over and never received a budget to cover expenditures until six months after they were sent and only two days before the genocide exploded.

Apathy that is morally and cognitively incomprehensible is one interpretation of the moral failure of the West and the international agency that is supposed to embody our highest values—the UN. Tom Longman ("State, Civil Society & Genocide in Rwanda" in the Joseph collection) has a different explanation. It was not apathy and moral indifference in not stopping the genocide but the involvement of Western states in building state power that carried out the genocide. The West allowed the growth of a militant opposition to seize state power at the expense of the civil society. In his book *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda*, Gourevitch holds the same view. He argues that the genocide was not the result of the chaos of a collapsed state, but rather that it was the result of the exact opposite—meticulous administration and planning. Not apathy, but a strong and activist state structure without a counterbalancing civil society, all reinforced by Western economic support—these were the conditions that fertilized the ground for the genocide.

Like virtually all the scholars who have studied the Rwandan genocide, Longman observed that the problem was not the result of a release of primordial tribal divisions as a result of a failed or weakened state. Rather, "the genocide was organized by state officials and their allies and was carried out using the instruments of the state" (in Joseph, 1999, p 353). The West with their support of the Habyarimana regime made possible the increased coercive capacity of the state. And the civil war was not only the cover for the genocide. The civil war allowed the regime to expand its weaponry and military personnel, to monitor and more effectively control the population and to organize and carry out criminal violence with rhetorical resources. (Presumably, this refers to Radio Mille Collines and the variety of extremist newspapers that led the racist propaganda campaign against the Tutsi.) The logistics were, in effect, supplied by Western support. In initiating the civil war, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) bears some of the responsibility for the genocide in Longman's view,

particularly since, without the war, Longman believes that Rwanda was headed towards increased democratization. But that does not mean that democratization would have included the repatriation of the refugees who initiated the war.

Peter Uvin (*Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*,) shares Longman's view on the role of the West in creating what he dubs "structural violence." Most of the book is spent documenting that structural violence in contrast to the image of Rwanda perpetrated by the aid agencies as the ideal recipient of aid until the late 1980s. Rwanda had been portrayed, certainly by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), as the best user of aid (for example, relatively little of the Rwandan state funds went to the military) until the crash of coffee prices in the late 1980s. Gourevitch puts the case succinctly. In the 1980s,

Rwanda was tranquil—or, like the volcanoes in the northwest, dormant; it had nice roads, high church attendance, low crime rates and steadily improving standards of public health and education [though Uvin claims it was very unevenly distributed]. If you were a bureaucrat with a foreign-aid budget to unload, and your professional success was to be measured by your ability not to lie or gloss too much when you filed happy statistical reports at the end of each fiscal year, Rwanda was the ticket. (p 76)

In the Galtung tradition, structural violence entails conditions which offer radically different life chances to different groups because of great inequality, injustice, discrimination, and exclusion which negatively affect a person's physical, social and psychological well-being. Those in charge of or attached to the state sector enjoyed enormous privileges. Most of the population were poor, suffering economic and social exclusion. They lacked information, education, or access to health services and other basic needs in spite of the macro-indicators that registered economic growth in the 1980s. Structural violence results in frustration, anger, ignorance, despair and cynicism because the images of the good life turn the poor into self-haters without self-respect so they become vulnerable to manipulation and simplistic ideas. The civil society committed to moderation, pluralism and tolerance was weak. At the same time, development aid strengthened the state sector without any effective or persistent countervailing political conditionality placed on that aid or sufficient counterbalancing efforts to reinforce the civil society or, in the end, adequate provision from the donor countries for its peacekeepers. In any case that is the argument.

Uvin unites the thesis of Dallaire and Longman, but treats their observations as symptoms of a deeper problem. On the one hand, the wealthy countries did not provide either a mandate or sufficient resources to intervene effectively in the genocide. On the other hand, aid was part of the process creating the conditions for structural violence when that same aid could have been used to prevent its possibility or to counteract its effectiveness once it became immanent. As Uvin documents, when conditionality was placed on aid, the Rwandan government did temporarily change its behavior. Rather than apathy among donor states, the issue then is one of misplaced support to those who were themselves under threat of losing their power and privileges and susceptible to

employing scapegoating strategies to deal with stress and lack of self-esteem. When combined with a lack of external constraints, a recipe for disaster had been created.

Thomas Weiss (*Military-Civilian Interactions: Intervening in Humanitarian Crises*) largely accepts the Uvin thesis and reinforces it by recalling the earlier colonial efforts that reified differences between Tutsi and Hutu and created the basis for the construction of rigid ethnic divisions. Further, Weiss documents the huge expenditures in aid following the genocide. This economic support stands in such sharp contrast to the meager effort provided to the peacekeepers and the misdirected aid prior to the outbreak of civil war. For Weiss, the problem was not apathy or even a misdirected aid ideology, though the latter sewed the conditions for the civil war and the ethnic scapegoating. Rather, the focus is on the peacekeeping and its failure when the warnings of genocide were present or even once the genocide had commenced. According to Weiss, the tardiness and meagerness in responding is rooted in domestic politics: "Allocating and disbursing billions of dollars of humanitarian aid after violence has erupted is easier for risk-averse politicians and policymakers than moving precipitously to commit armed forces early in a conflict cycle" (p 204).

Elliott Leyton (*Touched by Fire: Doctors Without Borders in a Third World Crisis*) also accepts the thesis that genocide is the use of violence by those who hold power in a modern state to "galvanize its citizens, divert public attention from the regime's defects, steal the victim's wealth and status, and terrorize the survivors into submission" (p 8). Leyton's book begins where most of the others left off—the mass return of the refugees from Zaire in 1996 when they are freed from the clutches of their oppressors—the genocidists—by the Rwandan-backed rebellion in Zaire. The book includes pictures of the skeletal remains of the genocide in the Nyarama church. States seemed so unwilling to risk the lives of armed soldiers to prevent or mitigate the genocide. Leyton's book is a personal account of doctors and medical personnel of Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF) [Doctors Without Borders] who voluntarily accept risks to their health and well-being, and sometimes their lives. Leyton does not portray them as heroes but as individuals motivated by relatively mundane reasons. They needed jobs. They were bored with just dispensing pills to the secure and overfed. They liked adventure. According to Martin, a Canadian ten-year veteran of MSF, MSF's historic and ethical responsibility "is first to bear witness to these genocides and famines for the world, then to help, and finally to assess more efficient ways of getting aid to the suffering" (Leyton, 1998, p 51).

Though the book appears to include nothing about prevention and concentrates on the issues of documenting, helping and providing humanitarian assistance, in fact, Martin accepts the Galtung/Uvin thesis that humans deprived of needs and dignity bear grudges and are bent on revenge. MSF tries to reduce the need for vengeance. Though of various backgrounds and skills, and pushed by a variety of different motives, what seems to unite MSFers is that they are free spirits, impatient with bureaucracies as they build their own in order to be effective. As Leyton observes, "MSF is hierarchical" and is "run along military

lines” in spite of the sincere effort to be consensual and participatory (p 136). Repelled by the impersonalism of modernity, for Leyton, MSF volunteers are searching for disalienation:

Membership [in MSF] liberates them as human beings, allows them to explore fully their potential as they seize the opportunity to act. With that liberation comes a profound conviction of purity of what they do, of the moral superiority of their agency and themselves—a belief so powerful, a satisfaction so intense, that it sustains them through whatever they must do. To witness atrocity and fear, to treat vile diseases, to heal terrible wounds, to dig the latrine or deliver clean water are all part of a process in which they confront reality and construct their identities. In acting thus with such purpose and moral clarity, all other dilemmas dissolve. To act without ambivalence or regret, to cut through the mindlessness of conventional life, to revel in what one does is for them the only way to become whole. (p 72)

As distasteful as I found the idea, I could not help reading this and thinking about the search for purity and meaningfulness of the genocidists. They, too, had a sense of moral superiority and were willing to take great risks and face atrocities—ones they, of course, committed, however. They too had a sense of purpose and moral clarity in their own terms. But the MSFers were dedicated to doing good, mending the world, while the genocidists were intent on committing evil and destroying others. What line differentiated the two groups? What unites them?

Gourevitch has an answer. Or, at least, the Hutu, Paul, has one, and his explanation reads as if Gourevitch endorses it. The genocidal leadership understood that in order to move a huge number of weak people to do wrong, it is necessary to appeal to their desire for strength—and the gray force that really drives people is power. Hatred and power are both, in their different ways, passions. The difference is that hatred is purely negative, while power is essentially positive; you surrender to hatred, but you aspire to power. In Rwanda, the orgy of misbegotten power that led to the genocide was carried out in the name of Hutuness, and when Paul, a Hutu, set out to defy the killers, he did so by appealing to their passion for power: “‘they’ were the ones who had chosen to take life away and he grasped that that meant they could also choose to extend the gift of retaining it” (Gourevitch, 1998, p 129). A simple answer. Power is creative. Power is misbegotten when it is motivated by hatred and then used destructively.

But then why did the genocidists engage in hatred. And why did Western states contribute to a system that fostered such hatred and then did virtually nothing when that misbegotten power was used to destroy a million people? Peter Uvin claims to offer a deeper answer. The genocidists are victims of the process of modernity from the perspective of a neo-Marxist critique. If the genocidists are the victims of modernity, the humanitarians are the saviors. According to Leyton, MSFers are in search of liberation from the mindlessness of modernity, performing righteous penance for racist imperialism in a world run on fear and greed and a tissue of lies. While genocidists act on the basis of

resentment, MSFers combine their own self-serving desires and the needs of those in their care. But then their satisfaction is totally dependent on a horrific world and, unconsciously, to obtain any satisfaction, it would mean they had a vested interest in perpetuating misery. An obscene thought?

Leyton's book is a *parti pris* work for the dedicated and committed humanitarians of MSF. They deserve to be applauded. James Orbinski, an MSF Canadian physician who is also lauded by Gourevitch, deserves great praise. But the dedicated medical and other personnel who serve with MSF do not need the silly asides on the nature of the world derived from a simplistic leftist view of the current state that Leyton provides. The combination suggests that the author is using MSF sacrifice and dedication to advance his own purist vision and the sense of ecstasy he obtains with such moral clarity.

I have the same sense in reading Philip Gourevitch's interviews with the survivors of the genocide, though his account is by far the best written of the books under discussion. He is a moralist though his moral purity is not found in the humanitarians in MSF, but in Paul Kagame, the real leader of the RPF and current Vice-President of Rwanda. Widely and justly praised for capturing the horror of the genocide in Rwanda through the voices of the survivors, Gourevitch also provides an intellectual horror show in his own right. Though he does recognize the simplicity and moral absoluteness of the genocidists, he seems to be totally oblivious to his own simplifications and puritanism. If MSFers are intent on giving witness and healing, Gourevitch focuses on the witnessing largely by letting the victims speak.

Further, unlike the moral purists who speak with a pre-modern voice, Gourevitch speaks with a post-modern one. He sees Rwandan history as successive struggles for power, and the successful parties are able to force others to adopt their version of reality. In fact, this is Gourevitch's definition of freedom. Freedom belongs in the imagination. "We are, each of us, functions of how we imagine ourselves and of how others imagine us" (Gourevitch, 1998, p 71). Insofar as others project an image onto us, we are entrapped by their projections. We are free only insofar as we have freedom to imagine ourselves. As Gourevitch advises gratuitously, "... if others have so often made your life their business—made your life into a question, really, and made that question their business—then perhaps you will want to guard the memory of those times when you were freer to imagine yourself as the only times that are truly and inviolably your own" (p 71). But since this schema provides no basis for differentiating truths from lies, the issue is not the lies of the state, but the narrative the state projects.

But if freedom is merely the function of how we imagine ourselves, then the genocidal leaders are most free when they imagine the Tutsi are all out to murder them and they see themselves engaged in a rite of purification. Similarly, when the UN Secretariat imagines itself to be governed by reluctant and unsupportive states, then apologist UN officials can assert of the famous January 11 cable that, "We get hyperbole in many reports ... If we had gone to the Security Council three months after Somalia, I can assure you no government would have said,



‘Yes, here are our boys for an offensive action in Rwanda’ ” (Gourevitch, 1998, p 106). Gourevitch feels no reportorial responsibility to check whether the cable was, in fact, treated by the UN Secretariat as just another hyperbolic report. Evidence (see Adelman and Suhrki, *Early Warning and Conflict Management: The Genocide in Rwanda*, Copenhagen: DANIDA, 1996) had already been published that the UN did not regard this as just another false alarm before Gourevitch wrote his series of *New Yorker* articles which constitute the book. Elaboration on this evidence can be found in Alison DesForges’ book for Human Rights Watch, *Leave None To Tell The Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. More specifically, Iqbal Riza, on behalf of Kofi Annan, the head of The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), immediately cabled Dallaire denying him permission to initiate the operation to seize the arms caches and informing Dallaire that UN protection could not be offered to the high-level informant. Further, UN headquarters was informed the next day of the demarche issued by UN Special Representative to Rwanda, Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, and General Dallaire to Habyarimana. Headquarters was also told of the briefing given to and the response of the French, Belgian and American ambassadors. This was not an ordinary cable. Everyone at the highest levels were involved. The Belgian ambassador put pressure on UN headquarters to reverse the decision. The French, however, opposed this, and, after a great deal of communication back and forth, the Secretary-General himself weighed in on the matter (itself proof that this was not just another ordinary cable). Boutros Boutros-Ghali reaffirmed the refusal to confirm the location of the arms caches concerned, as he was, about possible political repercussions. Does this sound like the information was treated as simply another possibly hyperbolic statement? Does this not suggest that, at the very least, an investigative reporter has a responsibility to investigate such claims and not take them at face value?

But Gourevitch is not a researcher. He is just an interviewer and storyteller. Otherwise, he would have known that when Iqbal Riza suggested that the cable was seen as an expression of hyperbole, it was not, in fact, viewed as such at the time. Gourevitch notes, without comment, that Riza looked surprised. “Its astonishing—an amazing document” (Gourevitch, 1998, p 106). But the UN Secretariat had recognized the cable for the astonishing document that it was from the beginning. After the genocide, they had engaged in a cover-up. And Riza’s feigned surprise was possibly part of the same cover-up.

Thus, though Gourevitch is a great storyteller, he is a poor investigative journalist. And when he offers interpretations of historical events, he is self-contradictory and confused. For example, Gourevitch tells the following story. In May of 1994, there was a threat by a military intelligence officer of the genocidal regime to kill all the Tutsi and moderate Hutu who had taken sanctuary in the Hotel Milles Collines. The hotel manager called on all his contacts to lobby with the regime. Those taking sanctuary in the hotel were not killed. Why not? Gourevitch’s explanation is that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) facilitated a deal between the RPF, who held government prisoners, and the government. There was a trade-off. The RPF

would spare their prisoners if no one in the hotel was killed. In other words, two coercive powers faced each other and made a bargain facilitated by UNAMIR. The latter, according to Gourevitch, had not saved the refugees as widely reported at the time; rather, "they were saved by the RPF's threat to kill the others" (Gourevitch, 1998, p 143).

I do not know what all the factors were that saved those who had taken refuge in Hotel Milles Collines. I do know that Gourevitch presents his answer with total self-assurance and without evidence. And the fact that this realist, power-politics account seems to contradict his major theme not only does not faze him, he seems to be utterly oblivious to that fact. He has little interest in separating out fiction from truth. In fact, his post-modernist outlook makes such discrimination largely irrelevant. And his explanations, and the moral blame he distributes so easily based on those simplistic explanations, are as much a mixture of fiction as truth. For example, Gourevitch says that, "The desertion of Rwanda by the UN force was Hutu Power's greatest diplomatic victory to date, and it can be credited almost single-handedly to the United States" (p 150). It is certainly true that the US wanted to avoid another Somalia and was wary of becoming involved in the midst of a civil war. The US also deliberately chose to call the massacres "genocide-like." However, the French journalists were keen to portray France as the key accomplice of the genocidists. Further, if the Belgians had not decided to withdraw their troops in response to the mutilation and killing of ten peacekeepers, if they had not lobbied that everyone else should withdraw, the crisis over UNAMIR would not have been up for discussion. If the UN Secretariat had properly informed the Security Council of the warnings of the planned genocide, preemptive steps might possibly have been taken.

The reality is that there were many actors and all played their respective parts in the disaster. But tellers of fables are prone to love a genre which focuses on the irresponsible cops (in this case, the USA), the simple hero who takes direct action (Paul Kagame) and a horrific villain—the genocidists. Further, the reading of the Genocide Convention as enabling rather than legally obligating intervention is not "an inventive new reading" by the USA, but is one of the standard interpretations. It is peculiar how the person who believes that freedom is merely a product of how we imagine ourselves is so quick to see everyone else's views that disagrees with his own as being not only a product of their imaginations, but a totally unwarranted one.

Gourevitch does not restrict this treatment to the USA, even if he holds the US to be virtually singularly responsible for the genocidist successes. He engages in the same sort of judgment when it comes to France. When he discusses *Opération Turquoise*, the French intervention in July of 1994, he says that, "wherever they went, the French forces supported and preserved the same local political leaders who had presided over the genocide," regarding the RPF as their enemy and the Hutu genocidists as the legitimate power (p 158). The fact that the foremost authority on French action in Rwanda, Gérard Prunier, provides a quite different account, is of no interest to Gourevitch, even though he credits Prunier in his acknowledgements.

But Gourevitch has not written an academic book. It should not be read for adequate explanations and judgments. They are the distractions for those who have a detailed knowledge of the genocide. Instead it should be read for providing the best taste and feel and horror of the genocide from a very humanistic and sensitive perspective.

Klinghoffer (*The International Dimension of Genocide in Rwanda*) has written a tightly written and extremely well footnoted account of the international role in the genocide, but, unfortunately, it too is marred by a plethora of errors. Some are trite. For example, Bruce Jones, though completing his PhD at the London School of Economics, is a Canadian and not a British specialist. The almost one million "refugees" displaced by the civil war prior to signing the Arusha Accords are not refugees at all but internally displaced. The famous Dallaire cable was dated 11th not 10th January. Some errors, however, are much more serious.

His account of UNAMIR is flawed in a number of respects. First, the evidence does not support any claim that Boutros Boutros-Ghali was "determined to strengthen UNAMIR" except after the end of April (Klinghoffer, 1998, p 51). Though the statement appears at the appropriate time, there is no qualification that this was a reversal of an earlier position. Further, in the introductory chapter, Klinghoffer openly states that Boutros-Ghali worked persistently in New York to organize collective action. This is demonstrably false, though Boutros-Ghali and the documents he had the UN issue would want one to draw precisely this conclusion.

Earlier, Klinghoffer stated that UNAMIR, since its mandate did not extend to protecting civilians, "kept a low profile as the violence escalated" (p 44). First, UNAMIR did have a mandate from the parties to the peace agreement to protect civilians, but the UN determined that the mandate would only be carried out with the cooperation of the gendarme and Rwandan military forces, who happened at the time to be controlled by the genocidists. The lack of a mandate was not the reason for not protecting civilians. Rather UN headquarters determined that the UNAMIR forces could not take an initiative in protecting civilians, though soldiers did so actively at great risk and continued to provide passive protection at several large locales, including the stadium in Kigali. The reasons were many. This interpretation of the mandate was the result of other factors and not the explanation for the limited action. Trying to initiate a cease-fire may have been stupid and futile, but it was not maintaining a low profile. Organizing the protection and exodus of the ex-pats in Rwanda perhaps should not have been its primary task. But UNAMIR was not maintaining a low profile. Regrouping and maintaining control of the airport was not maintaining a low profile. UNAMIR did not confine its troops to barracks after the death of the Belgian peacekeepers.

Part of the problem with Klinghoffer's account is that it suffers from terseness. It is written as if the book is a series of notes strung together. But the errors aside, it does string the key items together in an easily read account that is well documented in its footnotes. It echoes the unanimous view of all these

books that the genocide was a systematically organized effort to eliminate the Tutsi population in Rwanda by Hutu extremists. The international complicity in the genocide is seen to result from the Belgian colonial legacy, foreign manipulation of the economy and, Klinghoffer adds, the population pressure and "triage," the use of elimination techniques to respond to population pressures. But if Klinghoffer had read Homer-Dixon's (1995) study—Homer-Dixon is one of the major proponents of the population and ecological pressure thesis as a prime cause of conflicts in Africa—he would have seen that even the staunchest proponent of the thesis found that the evidence in the Rwanda case did not support such an interpretation. Nevertheless, in spite of my differences with some of the factors cited, Klinghoffer does try to explain the many and varied factors that interacted to help bring about the conditions that fostered the genocide.

What are we left with in the end? The genocide was caused by immoral Hutu extremists. The genocide was caused by a system that built in structural violence. The genocidists were driven by hatred and revenge in a misbegotten use of power. The major Western powers failed to intervene because they were complicit, to different degrees, in building the genocidal regime. Unwilling to sacrifice their troops to save others, according to General Dallaire, the dominant powers were quite willing to put troops in harms way to give the appearance of action without the will or the moral fiber to do anything effectively.

I happen to find the range of explanations limited and too simplistic in general. The reasons were more complex than even Klinghoffer suggests, and he includes some factors that have little merit as explanatory ones. Nevertheless, Uvin has written the best-documented account of the economic factors behind the genocide. Gourevitch has written a most moving and compelling account of the feel and effects of the genocide. Klinghoffer has synthesized a large body of material in a very concise way but one marred by too many errors of fact and interpretation. The volunteers of MSF deserve a better written analysis of the context of their self-sacrifice and dedication, though Leyton's praise is well-deserved. And the chapters in other books make their own valuable contributions. The problem is that not one of them is adequate in explaining and accounting for both the genocide and the impotence of those who could so readily have saved the day.

The best, longest and least simplistic book is saved for dessert: Alison DesForges' *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. One of "a small number of foreigners [who] did fight passionately to stop the slaughter," DesForges, modest beyond belief about her own role (her own name does not even appear on the cover of the book), proves that intellect can complement passion (p 771).

DesForges provides one of the briefest and best histories of the emergence of Hutu and Tutsi as distinct groups. The bureaucratization of differences, the solidarity of the oppressed and the opportunism of an elite combined to turn those differences into radical divisions. She describes in meticulous detail how Bugosora outfoxed the internal opposition within the army and the political

establishment to pull off both the coup and the genocide. Though the RPF has to be credited with saving most of the Tutsi who survived, DesForges goes into great detail regarding the role of the RPF in committing atrocities of its own—from 25,000 to 40,000. If Dallaire did not spell out the UN logistic nightmare, DesForges does. And DesForges is the first to document how the head of the Canadian Armed Forces, General Baril, then at UN headquarters, continually undermined his fellow Canadian, General Dallaire. However, DesForges does claim, erroneously I believe, that the UN representative accepted Bagosora's efforts to install his puppet extremists as the legitimate government following the coup. Her evidence indicates only that he failed to report on the extent and organized nature of the genocide underway.

Unlike Gourevitch, DesForges checks her facts and recognizes that the January 11 cable was put in a black file (actually, a box) because it was recognized as important. She confirms the accuracy of Gourevitch's account of how the Tutsi were saved in the Hotel Milles Collines, but she leaves out the heroic genre for framing the tale. Her explanations are subtle and complex. Her emphasis is on the West's failure to stop the genocide once that state power was seized to be used for genocidal purposes—an outcome far more contingent and uncertain than suggested by the other accounts. For DesForges agrees with Dallaire, and explains in excruciating detail the reasons that the genocide could have been stopped with ease in the first two weeks after it had commenced. Unlike Gourevitch, DesForges not only distributes the responsibility for failing to prevent or mitigate the genocide, but explains the different motives for the various failures. Belgium was concerned with extricating its peacekeepers with a minimum of dishonor. The US was unwilling to commit resources in a country without strategic interest. France concentrated on protecting its clients and Francophonie. The UN leadership was preoccupied with not being blamed for another failure.

DesForges presents reams of evidence to suggest that the specter of the Tutsi as an absolute menace requiring eradication was a strategic technique rather than a given psychological state binding Hutu leaders and followers. Far more organizational skill and effort were required to execute the genocide than simply repeated appeals. In fact, state machinery, the use of the media for propaganda purposes, intimidation and coercion of dissidents or those who tried to stand aside, all were used brilliantly and efficaciously. Yet only a significant but small portion of the population, in the end, were induced or forced into killing their co-nationals. And they did so for many more reasons than Leyton suggested—not only power and pillage, but virulent hatred, real fear, ambition, and to save their own skins or for more mundane reasons—they wanted to avoid the fines levied for non-participation.

Why had the genocide not been prevented or mitigated? Many reasons combined and came together, but none of the reasons excused those who had a role. DesForges would have the bystanders as well as the perpetrators brought before a commission of truth if not a court of justice. She has been the strongest

and now establishes herself as the most articulate force in advancing the effort to bring understanding as well as justice to the Rwanda genocide.

The extent to which these books will contribute to the creation of a moral framework which will allow a more immediate and less-confused response to future crises remains to be seen. What is clear is its dire need.

### **Bibliography**

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