

# RWANDA 1994



*A Failure of Leadership  
and a Preventable Genocide*

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Paolo Tripodi

Foreword by Lieutenant General Rodolfo Sganga, Italian Army

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To Captain Mbaye Diagne,  
    who died doing what was right;  
and to Major Stefan Steć,  
    who died because he could not do what was right.

*Ad Antonino, mio padre,*  
    *ad Antonio, mio figlio.*  
*Ad Ausilia, mia madre,*  
    *a Jenny, mia moglie.*



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# Foreword

I am glad to see that Dr. Paolo Tripodi has finished a project on which he has invested a significant amount of time and energy. I experienced the beginning of this work when I arrived at Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia, to attend the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College. Paolo was the chair of ethics and leadership. His main research effort—and passion—was identifying the ethical challenges that military leaders at all levels face in a number of different environments, from humanitarian operations to low-intensity conflicts. Paolo's objective was to help small unit commanders deal with ethical challenges. His main area of interest was on the events of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions in Srebrenica and Rwanda. Both missions saw plenty of complex ethical decisions and dilemmas. Those in command were faced with decisions that had to be made in an extremely compressed timeframe, with major consequences for their own troops and the civilians they protected. I found, in discussions with Paolo, the role that commanders play in these missions to be extremely stimulating and valuable. While I could see how deeply Paolo had researched the topic, he was also eager to learn from my experience. In our conversations, I offered him my professional reflections on such an important subject. At the time of my arrival in Quantico, I was an Italian Army major with 14 years of experience. I had commanded units from the Lagunari Regiment and the Folgore Brigade, and I had deployed in a variety of different environments, both in Italy and abroad.

The experience of small unit command as a military leader had been extremely formative for me. My tactical understanding of unconventional environments was strong. I believe that leadership is the main and central

component for units to perform well. Leaders should be able to motivate their organization and its members to make sound choices and act out of initiative when a situation is complex, constantly changing, and unpredictable. Since the 1980s, Italian soldiers have operated in environments in which the line between friend and foe was blurred; there was a significant number of civilians suffering the consequences of long-term civil war and other major plagues, from a lack of food to an extremely unsafe environment. In these environments, which resemble Rwanda in the days before the genocide, tactical leaders serve as a point of reference for all personnel, while operational leaders set the tone for how everyone in the chain of command is going to operate.

The ways that tactical and operational leaders behave, the decisions they make, and how they motivate their units all play an important role in the outcome of the mission. In this book, Paolo successfully explains the challenges faced by senior military leaders in a difficult mission such as that in Rwanda.

Before providing my reflections on this book, and on the situation faced by UN military leaders in Rwanda, I want to stress that I do not intend to judge the decisions made by fellow military leaders who were placed in such a difficult environment. Only those who, like Paolo, have invested time in detailed research can assess their decisions. Even so, Paolo has rightly emphasized that his study is a professional exploration and not an evaluation of character. My reflections are from my own experience.

This book has many merits, but its greatest value is its focus on those UN military leaders who faced an overwhelming challenge when the violence started in the Rwandan capital of Kigali. At critical moments, their decisions had an impact on the entire mission. Paolo provides a sympathetic explanation of how and why many decisions were made and their consequences.

Paolo suggests that, had these military leaders taken a different course of action, they could have slowed down or even stopped the genocide. In

his exploration of leadership at the end of the book, he provides a number of sound explanations that help readers understand why many decisions were made. Reading the book, I was prompted to reflect on my own experiences and consider additional factors that might influence leaders who find themselves in circumstances similar to the one in which Canadian Army general Roméo Dallaire, Belgian Army colonel Luc Marchal, and Ghana Army general Henry Kwami Anyidoho were placed.

Some consideration probably needs to be given to the fact that commanders, and military leaders in general, have an extreme sense of confidence and comfort when their actions and guidance are in line with their chain of command. What commanders experience in this situation is ideal. The situation is significantly different when operational and tactical commanders feel that their decisions, and their potential courses of action, might no longer be supported or be in line with their chain of command. These are situations in which commanders become even more isolated than normal, and when they have to take on greater responsibility themselves. In this case, their relationship with their chain of command goes from an acceptable friction to a possible fracture. Operational and tactical commanders, however, often remain the best placed to understand what the most effective military decisions are.

In Rwanda in 1994, UN military leaders should have appreciated better than anyone else the potential for violence and its escalation. Yet, they were part of a chain of command that failed to recognize what was really happening in the country. It is in such a situation that commanders have to make instant decisions that may make them feel extremely uncomfortable. Particularly difficult is the decision to use force, as this has major implications for the mission and the soldiers involved. Commanders are indeed aware that their decisions have major consequences. Yet, the decision not to use force might have equally or even worse negative consequences. Commanders possess a professional understanding that hesitating in certain circumstances can compromise the mission while making their soldiers an easy target. Therefore, a balance needs to

be found between following orders and directives and reacting in a timely fashion to a changing situation on the ground. The more senior the commander, the more responsibility they have in the way they understand and follow orders and directives. In my view, when there is a clear conflict between orders and the actual situation, subordinate leaders should have a clear understanding of their commander's intent, of their broader mission, and of the purpose of their troops' presence on the ground. As an operational leader inserted in a UN or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) chain of command, my main effort has always been aimed at developing and communicating my intent in the most effective way, making sure that it is well received and understood. I have never issued prescriptive orders, instead allowing my subordinate commanders a certain amount of freedom of thought and action in which they could assess the situation, make a decision, and act accordingly. I always expected from them a good amount of disciplined initiative and a strong professional understanding of the situation they faced. I expected them to depart from my orders, if necessary, while pursuing my intent. This approach reflects how I understood my role both as an operational and a tactical leader. I have always been an advocate of mission command and the creation of a strong trust-based relationship between all the elements of the chain of command. These essential elements for a successful mission outcome were probably missing in Rwanda in 1994.

Paolo's book is an excellent resource to help understand the complexities of decision making in highly confusing and unpredictable environments. Future generations of leaders should use the events in Rwanda as a case study—not to judge, but to learn from the terrible experience those leaders faced.

Rodolfo Sganga  
Lieutenant General, Italian Army

# Acknowledgments

When Major Robert Rehder and I met with Brigadier General Thomas V. Draude in 2008 to ask him if the Marine Corps University Foundation (MCUF) would support us on a research trip to Rwanda, we were surprised at how quickly he told us yes. General Draude had always been supportive in pushing Marine Corps University (MCU) faculty and staff to break new barriers, but we thought that we were asking to cross a bridge too far. With his blessing, Bobby and I headed to Rwanda. Bobby was working on a phenomenal project evaluating the military capability of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) since its invasion of Rwanda in 1990 to the creation of the Rwanda Defence Force in 1994. A few years earlier, General Draude had approved MCUF funding for my first research trip to Rwanda. Major General Donald R. Gardner, president of MCU and former chief executive officer of the MCUF, was also enthusiastically supportive. He was surprised when I told him that Jenny, my wife, would accompany me to help me in case I needed a French interpreter. Arriving in Kigali and traveling through the north of Rwanda was an amazing experience. I spoke with many Rwandan military leaders and civilians and learned much about the four-year-long war. Those wonderful trips would have been impossible without the support of General Gardner, General Draude, and the MCUF. My first trip would not have been as effective without my wife Jenny; during my second trip, Bobby provided me with an accurate understanding of the tactical situation on the ground.

During the nearly 20 years that I have worked on Rwanda, I was blessed with meeting people who were instrumental to the progress of my research. I remember when my interest in Rwanda first began. I was

an ethics fellow at the U.S. Naval Academy Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics. George Lucas, another fellow and an amazing scholar, and I began working on a project about the ethical challenges of peacekeeping. While my main area of interest was the 1995 massacre in Srebrenica, George suggested that the 1994 genocide in Rwanda was also an important case. He thought—and he was right—that both cases would be valuable for the ethical development of the midshipmen. I was immediately fascinated by Rwanda. I am so glad that George put me on an important path that determined significantly the future of my research.

It was at MCU that I used Rwanda as a case study at a number of different schools. It was also part of my elective. I did not miss a chance to engage many tactical leaders about the ethical challenges they faced in operations other than wars. As the MCU chair of ethics and leadership, I was lucky to have many of these leaders attending my elective. There we could discuss the many challenges faced by the military leaders in Rwanda and other missions. From their professional experience and practical wisdom, I learned a lot. I also established with many of them professional relationships that are now solid friendships. Much of the thinking behind this book is the product of my conversations with Italian Army major Rodolfo Sganga and Marine Corps majors Dan Yaroslaski, Brian Christmas, and Frid Fridriksson. I learned very much from them, not only tactically but also ethically.

Clearly this book would not have been possible without the amazing work and commitment of the entire crew at Marine Corps University Press (MCUP). They are an impressive small organization able to work miracles. This book has greatly benefited from their editing, suggestions, and revisions. They have one of the best, most effective, and ethically sound academic peer review processes. They also have something rare among university presses—they are fully dedicated to their authors. MCUP director Angela Anderson offered many valuable suggestions as I was preparing for the submission of my manuscript. In addition to those suggestions, she also supported and encouraged me throughout all the

stages of the publication process. After the manuscript was accepted for publication, I worked very closely with managing editor Christopher N. Blaker. Chris has greatly improved the quality of the manuscript. He has also been very good at dealing with my many queries and partial responses. I owe him much. Finally, I am appreciative of graphic designer Emily Howard for her creativity in producing the layout and book cover.





# Select Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Terms

AML	<i>Auto Mitrailleuse Légère</i>
ANC	<i>Armée Nationale Congolaise</i>
APC	armored personnel carrier
BBTG	Broad-Based Transitional Government
CGSC	U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
CLADHO	Collective of Human Rights Leagues and Associations
CND	<i>Conseil National de Développement</i>
CTM	<i>coopération technique militaire</i>
CVRT	combat vehicle reconnaissance, tracked
DMZ	demilitarized zone
DPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ESM	<i>Ecole Supérieure Militaire</i>
ETO	<i>École Technique Officielle</i>
FAR	<i>Forces Armées Rwandaises</i>
FAZ	<i>Forces Armées Zaïroises</i>
FRONASA	Front for National Salvation
HAC	humanitarian assistance cell
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
KIBAT	Kigali Battalion
KWSA	Kigali Weapons Secure Area
LAW	light antiarmor weapon

MDR	<i>Mouvement Démocratique Républicain</i>
MRND	<i>Mouvement Révolutionnaire National Pour le Développement</i>
MSF	<i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i>
NCO	noncommissioned officer
NEO	noncombatant evacuation operation
NMOG	Neutral Military Observer Group
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
Parmehutu	<i>Parti du Mouvement de l'Emancipation du Peuple Hutu</i>
PSD	<i>Parti Social Démocrate</i>
QRF	quick-reaction force
RANU	Rwandese Alliance for National Unity
ROE	rules of engagement
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RTL	<i>Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines</i>
RUTBAT	Rutongo Battalion
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMO	United Nations military observer
UNOMUR	United Nations Observer Mission Uganda–Rwanda
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

# RWANDA 1994



# Introduction

The quiet night in the Rwandan capital of Kigali on 6 April 1994 was suddenly shaken by the loud detonation of explosions as Rwandan president Juvénal Habyarimana's airplane was shot down. The city fell into a state of unnatural suspension. When the news quickly spread that the president and several dignitaries, to include Burundi president Cyprien Ntaryamira, were dead, many wondered about the possible implications. Members of the Tutsi community feared that the death of Habyarimana, an ethnic Hutu, would create a situation of chaos and violence in which they would be the primary target. The moderate Hutus, who had been active in negotiating the Arusha Accords (officially the Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandan Patriotic Front) with the Tutsi-founded Rwandan Patriotic Front, did not suspect that they would become the most immediate target of violence.

Angélique Numukobwa, a young Tutsi girl who lived in Kigali's Kicukiro neighborhood, fled her house with her family. Angélique's younger brother, however, decided to stay behind, trusting that his strong faith would protect him from the senseless violence that was about to happen. In a matter of hours, the Presidential Guard went looking for them with the intent to kill them. When the soldiers realized that Angélique's family had already left, they looted and then blew up the house; her brother was murdered. Angélique's family desperately looked for protection. They thought that the best and most reliable option was a nearby United Nations (UN) military post. They headed to the *École Technique Officielle* (ETO), where one of the largest UN contingents, about 100 Belgian paratroopers, was stationed. On the way to the school, with the UN flag already in sight, they were attacked by militia. They ran for their

lives and were able to climb the fences around the ETO. Once inside, they were safe—or so they thought. “We thought the UN soldiers would protect us,” Angélique said sometime later, after the genocide was over.<sup>1</sup>

The militia that was actively involved in conducting the genocide, the Interahamwe, a Hutu organization, used to pass by the ETO compound and often harassed and provoked the Belgian soldiers there. They shot in the Belgian soldiers’ direction, probably trying to understand how the soldiers might react; the Belgian soldiers did not respond. The militia did not disguise their intentions—they wanted to slaughter the Tutsi and moderate Hutus who had found shelter inside the compound, and the only deterrent was the presence of the Belgian soldiers.

In a village near Kigali, Venuste Karasira, a 42-year-old father, learned of Habyarimana’s death on the radio on the morning of 7 April. “We are done for, we are finished,” he thought. Venuste’s family and neighbors, like Angélique, headed to the ETO confident that they would be safe there, rather than being isolated in a neighborhood or a village in or near Kigali. The presence of the Belgian troops was a strong reassuring factor for their protection. They were among a few thousand women, children, men, and elders who, beginning on 7 April, headed to the school to flee the wave of violence that was crossing the country.

Angélique, Venuste, and all those inside the compound enjoyed a sense of protection, but this lasted only a few days. On 11 April, the Belgian troops who had been instrumental in protecting the lives of so many defenseless people abandoned the school, fully aware that after their departure all the refugees inside the compound would face a horrible death. As the last white-painted truck departed the ETO, the militia went into the school and began the killing. They herded several thousand frightened people together and took them to Nyanza, a few kilometers from the school. Along the journey, they continued the killing. It was, in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold, Part 2: We Were Cowards*, directed by Danièle Lacourse and Yvan Patry (Montreal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1996).

view of the few survivors, a “death march.” In Nyanza, the militia began a systematic and frantic killing. Grenades, guns, knives, machetes, clubs, and any improvised “killing tool” were used. Venuste, who was lucky to lose only his right arm during the slaughter, remembers that “we were lying in pools of blood.”<sup>2</sup> Covered by the bodies of slaughtered people, Angélique and Venuste were among the approximately 100 people who survived. They were saved by advancing soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Angélique was taken to Byumba, where her life-threatening wounds were treated.

It is impossible to imagine what it must have been like for those people to go from a relieved sense of safety to a terrible slaughter. When some of the refugees understood that the UN peacekeepers would abandon them to a horrible death, they begged the Belgian soldiers to kill them all and spare them from a terrifying death. Edouard Kayihura stressed that “nothing causes more fear than the thought of slow, agonizingly painful death by machete or other blunt instrument.”<sup>3</sup>

Carl Wilkens, a Christian missionary who had arrived in Rwanda in the early 1990s, bravely decided to stay in the country during the genocide to help those who were targeted by the violence. Wilkens explained that the presence of the UN troops “during the months before the president’s assassination gave us the sense that they were becoming a permanent part of the landscape. . . . In the weeks preceding April 6 UNAMIR [United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda] troops started patrolling the streets on foot in an effort to calm the mounting tensions. Seeing squads of Belgian soldiers . . . caused people to fall into a false sense of security. This false sense of security contributed greatly to the enormous losses that were soon to be experienced.” Wilkens rightly noted, “I suspect that if UNAMIR had not come across as protectors, many Rwandans would

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Abramowitz, “We Were Lying in Pools of Blood,” *Atlantic* (April 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Edouard Kayihura and Kerry Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story . . . and Why It Matters Today* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2014), 29.



have taken necessary precautions to safeguard themselves and their families. Many would probably have fled toward the borders when they saw the warning signs and heard the RTLM radio station blasting across Rwanda its hate radio—full of hate musicians, hate comedians, and hate speech makers.”<sup>4</sup>

Retired Royal Netherlands Marine Corps major general Patrick Cammaert, an experienced peacekeeping leader, stressed how critically important it is for all in the UN Department of Peace Operations and those participating in peacekeeping missions to fully understand that to the local population, UN peacekeepers are deployed to protect civilians. When the local population becomes the target of violence, “they run to the nearest UN compound. In Srebrenica, Adigrat, Abyei, Goma, or Rutshuru, they knock at the gates of UN compounds. They don’t know about mandates. They only expect the UN to protect them from death and sexual violence.” Cammaert continued, “If the UN is deployed and fails to act or even to make an attempt to act, the result will be not only a loss of credibility and confidence in the mission but the international support in peacekeeping will be weakened.”<sup>5</sup>

Regretfully, the ETO, like countless other places in Rwanda, serves as a strong testimony to the UN failure to protect the defenseless. For several decades, the genocide in Rwanda has been the subject of important research conducted by scholars who have identified the failure of the international community to take appropriate action to stop the violence.<sup>6</sup> Samantha J. Power, Linda Melven, Alison Des Forges, and many others have offered enlightening analysis of the international community’s fail-

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<sup>4</sup> Carl Wilkens, *I’m Not Leaving* (Spokane, WA: World Outside My Shoes, 2011), 17–18.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Cammaert, “MONUC as a Case Study in Multidimensional Peacekeeping in Complex Emergencies,” in *The UN Security Council and the Responsibility to Protect: Policy, Process, and Practice*, eds. Hans Winkler, Terje Rød-Larsen, and Christoph Mikulaschek (Vienna: Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, 2010), 108.

<sup>6</sup> For a better understanding of the challenges and divisions of research conducted on Rwanda, see Jonathan Beloff, “The Limitations of Research Space for the Study of Rwanda,” *SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research* 10 (2016–17): 48–60.

ure to intervene to stop the genocide. They have clearly identified where and how the UN and several major world powers betrayed the people of Rwanda and the commitment to “never again” as they allowed something as horrible as the Holocaust of 1941–45 to be repeated.

This book acknowledges those critical studies and keeps the failure of the international community in the background while taking a tactical focus with the objective to investigate whether the UN mission that was deployed in Rwanda on 7 April could have actually stopped the genocide. Canadian Army general Roméo Dallaire, who commanded the mission, has often stated that with a stronger and much larger deployment the mission might have been in a better position to stop the genocide.

In *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda*, Alan J. Kuperman strongly suggests that a more robust deployment of troops in the days following 7 April, after the violence started, might have required a significant amount of time and would have been of little effect to save the lives of many Rwandans. On 10 April, Dallaire requested more troops—about 5,000—from the UN. Kuperman wrote that “5,000 troops would have been insufficient to stop genocide without unacceptable risks of failures or casualties.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Dallaire wanted to request 5,000 or more troops in 1993, at the beginning of the mission. Yet, discouraged by his colleague, Canadian Army general Maurice Baril, then a military advisor to the UN secretary-general, he only asked for about 2,500. Kuperman maintained that of the 5,000 troops that might have been deployed in April, “only 1,000 likely would have been available for policing Kigali—some three per thousand of population, which is grossly inadequate for a city in the throes of genocide.”<sup>8</sup> In his view, had the UN decided to strengthen the mission in Rwanda, “reinforcement probably could not have begun a serious effort to stop the genocide before April 20,

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<sup>7</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 86.

<sup>8</sup> Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, 87.

by which time half of the ultimate victims of the genocide already were dead.”<sup>9</sup> Many, to include this author, might argue that, even assuming that Kuperman is right—and this book will show that he is not—it would have been absolutely worthwhile to deploy a force that might have been able to stop the genocide from 20 April on and save the remaining “half of the ultimate victims,” probably a few hundred thousand human beings.<sup>10</sup>

In an earlier article published in *Foreign Affairs*, Kuperman had already addressed the claim that a mission of 5,000 troops would have been able to prevent the genocide. He states that “the hard truth is that even a larger force deployed immediately upon reports of attempted genocide would not have been able to save even half the ultimate victims.”<sup>11</sup> In this article, he explores how a large deployment of troops would have been ineffective before and after the beginning of the genocide. He argues that “such early reinforcement of UNAMIR is the only proposed action that would have had a good chance of averting the genocide.”<sup>12</sup> Kuperman’s article is relevant for the discussion presented in this book, not only because

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<sup>9</sup> Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, 85.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion on the number of the victims of the genocide, see Jens Meierhenrich, “How Many Victims Were There in the Rwandan Genocide?: A Statistical Debate,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 22 (2020): 72–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2019.1709611>; Omar Shahabudin McDoom, “Contested Counting: Toward a Rigorous Estimate of the Death Toll in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 22 (2020): 83–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2019.1703252>; Marijke Verpoorten, “How Many Died in Rwanda?,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 22 (2020): 94–103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2019.1703253>; David A. Armstrong II, Christian Davenport, and Allan Stam, “Casualty Estimates in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 22 (2020): 104–11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2019.1703251>; Damien de Walque, “Relative Measures of Genocide Mortality: Benefits and Methodological Considerations of Using Siblings’ Survival Data,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 22 (2020): 112–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2019.1703254>; Roland Tissot, “Beyond the ‘Numbers Game’: Reassessing Human Losses in Rwanda during the 1990s,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 22 (2020): 116–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2019.1703250>; and André Guichaoua, “Counting the Rwandan Victims of War and Genocide: Concluding Reflections,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 22 (2020): 125–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2019.1703329>.

<sup>11</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, “Rwanda in Retrospect,” *Foreign Affairs* 79, no 1 (January/February 2000): 94–95.

<sup>12</sup> Kuperman, “Rwanda in Retrospect,” 117.

of the assertion he made but also because of the reaction it generated from scholars and practitioners who are very knowledgeable of Rwanda and the situation on the ground before and during the genocide. For example, Alison Des Forges, one of the sharpest scholars on Rwanda, reacted to Kuperman's article in *Foreign Affairs*. In her response, "Shame: Rationalizing Western Apathy on Rwanda," she states that "U.N. peacekeepers and the evacuation force [which deployed to conduct noncombatant evacuation operations in the days after the genocide began] could have deterred the killings had they acted promptly. Belgian military records show cases in which they did just that when permitted to use their weapons." She goes on to dismantle many of Kuperman's key arguments and concludes that Kuperman "slides without explanation from discussing the genocide to speculating about intervention in an 'internal war,' arguing that helping the 'weaker' side may spur it to reject compromise and escalate fighting."<sup>13</sup>

Des Forges' claim that UN peacekeepers might have stopped the genocide is extremely important for this book. Despite many arguing differently, it should be noted that the UN peacekeepers were indeed permitted to use force.<sup>14</sup> UN peacekeepers, as it will be discussed here, had no limitations when using force in self-defense. However, General Dallaire had made the application of such rules so complicated that they became confusing to the peacekeepers, even though the soldiers deployed in Rwanda had no restrictions in the process of defending themselves and those under their protection.

The true problem on 7 April, more than the small number of troops or the limited amount of resources, was about military leadership and senior military leaders' ability and understanding to timely employ military force. Looking closely at the events of 7 April and the days that

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<sup>13</sup> Alison Des Forges, "Shame: Rationalizing Western Apathy on Rwanda," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 3 (May/June 2000): 142.

<sup>14</sup> Phillip Drew and Brent Beardsley, "Do Not Intervene: UNAMIR's Rules of Engagement from the Inside," *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 22, no. 1-4 (2020): 116-35, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18754112-0220104008>.

followed, it is unclear if—but probably unlikely that—General Dallaire would have ordered a more vigorous course of action to his peacekeepers even if he had 10,000 or more troops available. As the force commander, more than missing soldiers, he lacked the mindset and probably the experience necessary to understand when employing force was necessary or inevitable. As General Cammaert rightly emphasized, “A mission can have the strongest mandate, [a] robust ROE [rules of engagement], [and] well trained troops and equipment, [but] if its commanders do not have the will or determination to take action, nothing much will happen.”<sup>15</sup> Many UNAMIR small unit leaders did understand the situation and had the right mindset. They did not hesitate to use force to deal with attacks brought against them by a combination of Rwandan presidential guards and militias. In all cases, the attackers fled, often taking casualties.

The case of the 10 Belgian peacekeepers who were brutally slaughtered on 7 April after they surrendered to a team of elite *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) soldiers is tragic, but it is also evidence of this unsuitable mindset. Lieutenant Thierry Lotin, the young Belgian Army officer in charge of the small unit responsible for the protection of Rwandan prime minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, was confronted that morning by a hostile unit of presidential guards.<sup>16</sup> Lotin and his troops were surrounded at the prime minister’s residence. With little knowledge of the environment,

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<sup>15</sup> Cammaert, “MONUC as a Case Study in Multidimensional Peacekeeping in Complex Emergencies,” 108.

<sup>16</sup> In Rwanda the names of newborns are decided by both parents. They normally make their decision based on their religion, their overall background, or the aspiration they might have for the future of their child. Rwandans normally do not have a family name. In this book, the author will identify some of the Rwandan personalities using their names, but also the names they are best known and recognized for in Rwanda and in Rwandan studies. For example, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, the prime minister killed on 7 April 1994, was also known as Madame Agathe. Landoald Ndasingwa, the vice president of the Liberal Party and the minister of labour and social affairs in the transitional government who was also killed on 7 April, will also be referred to as Lando. In the case of Fred Gisa Rwigema, the charismatic Rwandan Patriotic Front leader who launched the invasion of Rwanda on 1 October 1990 and was killed the next day, the author will use both Rwigema and Commander Fred. In the literature, a different spelling, *Rwigyema*, is sometime used. The author of this book has opted for the use of *Rwigema*.

a poor appreciation of the situation (he had deployed to Rwanda with his unit just a few weeks earlier), and only a few hours of rest (he had been escorting a group of very important persons to the Akagera National Park when he was assigned this new mission), he relied on the confusing guidance provided to him by the UNAMIR deputy commander, Ghana Army major general Henry Anyidoho; by the Kigali Sector commander, Belgian Army colonel Luc Marchal; and by his battalion commander, Belgian Army lieutenant colonel Joseph Dewez. These military leaders were unable to fully grasp what was truly happening at the prime minister's compound and probably did not understand that the only course of action left—and also the most effective—was for Lotin and his unit to defend themselves as a military unit was supposed to do. Indeed, they only did so after they had surrendered and were taken to a FAR compound, where a mob of rogue soldiers violently attacked them. With one pistol and an AK-47 assault rifle taken from a FAR soldier, the Belgian paratroopers resisted for hours until they were finally overrun, only after hand grenades were thrown inside the one-story building where they had managed to stage their final fierce resistance. They were all horribly killed. The reader must wonder whether any or all of them would be alive today if they had used their weapons to defend themselves at the prime minister's compound, where there were also five Ghanaian peacekeepers and a few Rwandan gendarmes.

The problem was that on 7 April, the UN mission fell into a state of confusion. The decision to use force in the face of violence was made by isolated small unit leaders who proved to be effective at resisting attacks. Several Belgian units and an outstanding Tunisian unit did so in a reactive but also proactive way. The determination of the Tunisian soldiers—a small unit of highly motivated conscripts—and the mindset of their commander were instrumental in making them the most successful organization on the ground in Rwanda throughout the deployment of the UN mission. According to Uruguay Army general Willie Purtscher, then a lieutenant colonel serving as a UN military observer in Kigali during

the genocide, after the violence began in Kigali, a few Uruguayan officers were wounded and treated at a local hospital. At that time, Purtscher and several other UN military observers had been confined for their own safety in the Meridien Hotel, where the Kigali Sector headquarters was located. Purtscher wanted to visit the hospital to check on his wounded Uruguayan comrades. When he asked Colonel Marchal for permission to visit the hospital, he was told that the situation in Kigali was such that it was only safe to travel using one of a few armored vehicles, none of which were available at that time. Purtscher went back to his room and accepted that he might not leave the compound for some time. A few hours later, a softcover vehicle arrived at the hotel. Purtscher ran out to talk to the soldiers in the vehicle, which drove the commander of the Tunisian contingent, Major Mohammed Belgacem. When Purtscher asked Belgacem whether it was safe to drive around Kigali, the latter told him that by now his vehicle was recognized by potential attackers, who knew that an attack against it would be faced with an immediate forceful response. The vehicle displayed the UN symbol and the Tunisian flag. The Tunisians drove Purtscher to the hospital and back with no problems.<sup>17</sup>

The simple presence of determined military observers, UNAMIR soldiers, or civilians working for international organizations in Rwanda was often enough to stop the violence. Even Kuperman acknowledges such a reality: "Hutu extremists generally avoided large-scale massacres when international observers were present, as part of a comprehensive strategy to hide the genocide from both the outside world and Rwanda's remaining Tutsi until it could be completed. Wherever Tutsi were congregated under the watch of outside observers, the extremists favored an alternate strategy of slow, stealthy annihilation."<sup>18</sup> Many isolated UN soldiers, in some cases unarmed, meant the difference between life and death, as they were able to deter potential attackers from carrying out

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<sup>17</sup> MajGen Willie Purtscher, interview with the author, 21 November 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect," 98.

their bloody plans. Gregory “Gromo” Alex, the head of the UN Development Programme team in Kigali, remembers the bravery displayed by many such soldiers. Alex stresses that, amazingly, some of the peacekeepers deployed in difficult places “were very brave, [and] managed . . . to prevent armed people from coming in, saying, ‘Stop. You’re not allowed in here. This site is protected by the U.N.’ You ask yourself, well, here’s one guy with no gun, sitting on a wooden chair all day and all night, not sleeping, and he’s able with no gun to convince people that they’re not allowed in here to kill people. . . . I mean, there were some powerful, brave things that were being done by U.N. soldiers, completely devoid of any support from New York.”<sup>19</sup>

During those months of brutal violence, there were plenty of individuals who risked their lives to protect the defenseless. They did not hesitate to face the violence. Senegalese Army captain Mbaye Diagne, an unarmed UN military observer, was among the many who saved hundreds of civilians by relying mainly on themselves. Mbaye’s main weapons were his “toothy” smile and a sharp sense of humor, which helped him pass through many check points. The first lives he saved were the prime minister’s children on 7 April.<sup>20</sup> Regretfully, Mbaye’s luck ended on 31 May, when a fragment of a grenade that exploded close to his vehicle killed him on the spot.

This book provides evidence that, although small in number, poorly equipped, and in some cases—the Bangladeshi contingent, for example—poorly motivated, the military force deployed in Rwanda as part of UNAMIR could have stopped the genocide. Yet, they failed to appreciate and properly deal with the military situation on the ground while also being “distracted” by political and diplomatic events. What was missing at some crucial point was not manpower or ammunition but the determina-

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Gregory “Gromo” Alex, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Alex interview.

<sup>20</sup> Alex interview.



tion, competence, and professional experience of key senior leaders to use force when it was necessary, to provide clear guidance, and to fully appreciate the tactical situation and its requirements. Military leaders failed to understand that what they were facing on 7 April was a military situation and not a political and/or diplomatic one. During that crucial day and those that followed, a military response to the crisis would have sent a strong message to the perpetrators of the genocide.

Exploring and reflecting on the failure of key military leaders to act is not an exercise in apportioning blame. It is more than clear that General Dallaire, General Anyidoho, and Colonel Marchal wanted to do all they could to protect the people of Rwanda. Their failure was the outcome of a mindset mainly shaped by lack of awareness and competence.

Eventually, General Dallaire understood that the initial course of action he took—saving the mission through an impossible dialogue with the leaders of the Rwandan government, to include Théoneste Bagosora, the mastermind of the genocide—proved to be ineffective and “morally” inadequate. As thousands were slaughtered, Dallaire confronted UN leaders in New York and firmly told them that he was going to do all he could to protect the people of Rwanda. By then, however, it was too late, as his force had been greatly reduced in number and, more important, the perpetrators of the genocide understood that the UN mission would serve as only a minor obstacle on the path to the genocide.

When exploring senior military leaders’ decision-making processes and their consequences, intended or unintended, it is important to clearly identify and separate the professional from the personal dimension. This book places a significant focus on the three senior leaders of the UN mission: General Dallaire, the commander; General Anyidoho, the deputy commander; and Colonel Marchal, the commander of the Kigali Sector. What should be emphasized before conducting an analysis of the many decisions made since the night of 6 April is that these men showed great empathy to those being killed. They appear to be individuals of great integrity driven by sound moral values. Reading their memoirs, in which

they describe their pain for the slaughter that took place under their watch, is compelling. When General Dallaire realized that his mission was no longer to rescue the Arusha Accords but to save the lives of ordinary Rwandans—and, more important, understood that nothing was coming from the UN—he decided that he would not abandon the people of Rwanda. When he discussed with General Anyidoho the UN decision to withdraw the entire mission, he found that the Ghanaian general was ready to stand his ground with the UN and to keep the Ghanaian contingent deployed. They decided that they would not abandon the Rwandans protected in UN sanctuaries. “We are not going to ‘morally fail’ the people of Rwanda,” Dallaire said after receiving Anyidoho’s reassurance that he was committed and ready to stay. Dallaire called the UN in New York and told them that “we are not moving.”<sup>21</sup> As Colonel Marchal became aware of the carnage taking place in Kigali, he did all he could to delay the departure of the Belgian contingent. The presence of Belgian troops was particularly important to protect the airport, the UN mission’s main lifeline. Going against the instructions he received, Marchal delayed the departure of the Belgian troops from Rwanda until the Ghanaian soldiers, initially deployed in the north of the country, were able to arrive at the airport.

General Dallaire has been praised by many. What Stephen Lewis, the Canadian ambassador to the UN from 1984 to 1988 and a former UN senior diplomat, said about the general is extremely appropriate:

There is something tremendously ennobling about Romeo Dallaire. There is a core of unwavering principles he is subject to human frailty, God knows we all are, and he may not have made the right judgment every single instance in Rwanda, who can tell after the event, but there is something so profoundly good about the man and how

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<sup>21</sup> *The Last Just Man*, directed by Steven Silver (Toronto, Canada: Barna-Alper Productions, 2001).

strongly he tempted to resist the forces of evil. It's a very memorable moment in human history Dallaire's conduct in Rwanda . . . He was the only reasonable figure in the midst of this chaos of Machiavellian behavior.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, criticism for the decisions made by Dallaire have wrongly confused what might have been his personal beliefs and values with his professional ability to make timely, sound choices as a force commander. It is indeed in the professional sphere where those senior leaders, very likely in good faith, made some critical mistakes that affected their ability to deal with the violence in Kigali during the first crucial hours and days of the genocide. Their mistakes, from which we should all learn, belonged to the professional and leadership role they played during those days, and they should not be confused with their personal beliefs and their integrity as individuals. Many of the decisions made on 7 April indicate that their ability to understand and analyze the situation they faced was inadequate and that they showed poor competence in the way they exercised their leadership and reacted to the violence. In many cases, these leaders were passive or too conciliatory with the perpetrators of the genocide at a time when they should have showed greater determination and a strong commitment to face violence with force. This book provides an analysis of those decisions and the damaging impact they had on the mission.

It has been a challenge to separate the professional sphere from the personal when working on such a very sensitive topic—and, more important, when exploring the actions and decisions of “just men.” In the end, this author was able to do so by applying an analogy borrowed from the medical field. Imagine a situation in which a surgeon conducting a difficult operation makes a mistake and, as a result, their patient dies. One would not question the surgeon's intention and commitment to save

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<sup>22</sup> *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*, directed by Peter Raymont (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004).

the patient's life; one would instead analyze the mistake from a professional point of view to understand whether such a mistake was caused by incompetence or by an unexpected complication for which the surgeon was not prepared. In addition, if the patient's death was caused by the surgeon's mistake, the medical field would try to learn as much as possible from that mistake to prevent similar errors from happening again.

It is critical to reflect on the fact that, during the attempt to save his mission, when it became clear that there was no mission to save but rather defenseless people to protect, General Dallaire decided and probably felt compelled to shake hands with the devil. We are left wondering what might have happened had he decided instead to shoot the devil and live with the consequences.



# Chapter 1

## THE BIRTH OF TWO MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

*The Forces Armées Rwandaises and the Rwandan Patriotic Front*

The story that led to the formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front in the 1980s, the “rebel” force that on 1 October 1990 entered the north of Rwanda and established a formidable military confrontation with the government of President Juvénal Habyarimana, is still rather mysterious. In this story, there is a mix of pain, sadness, adventure, and desperation. It began during the days that followed the tragic events of the late 1950s, when Belgium, the former colonial power and then trustee of Rwanda, introduced several new policies that were supposed to help Rwanda transition from a colony to an independent state.<sup>1</sup> Yet, such policies actually compromised Rwanda’s ability to begin a peaceful process toward independence.

As a colonial power, Belgium had promoted in Rwanda a system in which the minority ethnic group, the Tutsi, were given considerable power, while the Hutu, who made up more than 80 percent of the population, were treated as subjects. However, as independence approached, Brussels felt the pressure coming from Rwanda’s leadership, mainly Tutsi, to leave

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<sup>1</sup> From the late 1890s to 1918, the geographical regions that are now known as Rwanda and Burundi were under German colonial administration. Both regions, with territories from Tanzania and Mozambique, formed German East Africa.

and allow Rwanda to continue its journey to independence without Belgium's interference. However, the Hutu, who had never had a chance to become seriously involved in power sharing, felt that they were not prepared to take leadership of the country, as they hoped to do. Therefore, they made it clear that they wanted the Belgian departure to be delayed, as they wanted and needed additional time to develop the skills necessary to manage and lead the country. The Hutu position was in line with what Belgium believed should be its future role in Rwanda. In addition, Tutsi leaders had given clear signs that they had subscribed to the pan-African and anticolonial ideologies that were quickly spreading across the African continent. Brussels probably felt that if the Tutsi retained a major role in Rwanda's leadership and institutionalized an anticolonial approach in managing the country's affairs, relations between Belgium and the newly independent Rwanda would be negatively affected. Consequently, the easiest solution for Belgium was to strip Rwanda's current leadership of power and prevent them from holding any key roles, even in an independent Rwanda. Brussels' course of action was shortsighted, as it shifted power from the Tutsi minority to the Hutu majority without giving any serious consideration to the possible consequences that such an action might have on future relations between the two ethnic groups. As René Lemarchand rightly notes, "It was the Belgian administration which made it possible for the Hutu to rid themselves of Tutsi chiefs and subchiefs; which ceaselessly denounced the sins of feudalism while deliberately ignoring the murders, thefts and provocations of its protégés; and which, in the end, joined hands with the republicans to bring the downfall of the monarchy."<sup>2</sup>

This new situation in Rwanda created a lot of tension. The Hutu realized that they would enjoy greater power than they had ever done in the past. Tutsi individuals became the target of ethnic violence that culminated in the 1959 "Social Revolution." These were extremely tense years

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<sup>2</sup> René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 197.

for Rwanda. In 1957, a group of young Hutu led by Grégoire Kayibanda, a Hutu from Tare in the country's south, founded the *Parti du Mouvement de l'Emancipation du Peuple Hutu* (Party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement, or Parmehutu).<sup>3</sup> In 1962, Kayibanda became the first elected president of Rwanda. By 1959, Tutsi families targeted by the ethnic violence generated by the Social Revolution initially looked for safer places to relocate inside Rwanda, and when they realized that such places were difficult to find, they became refugees or went into exile.

As a result of the Social Revolution, several thousand Tutsi were killed, and more than 100,000 fled Rwanda to settle in Uganda, Burundi, Zaire (present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo), and Tanzania. Their experience in these host nations was difficult, with the only exception being Tanzania. Initially, the refugees believed that they would be able to return to Rwanda in a short period of time, probably less than six months. Yet, it soon became clear that their departure from Rwanda was to last much longer. In the early 1960s, the refugees began planning ways to return to Rwanda, even if it meant fighting against the government that had forced them to flee the country. Their initial attempts were poorly organized and reflected a rather difficult situation in which the refugees dealt with significant shortcomings and limitations. A full-scale campaign against the government in Rwanda was simply unconceivable under the circumstances.

Indeed, when preparing Rwanda for independence, the Belgian administration invested much in the creation of a reliable military organization. The Rwandan Territorial Guard, soon to be renamed *Garde Nationale* (National Guard), was well trained and motivated and possessed a strong morale. The process that paved the way to the creation of the new military was quickly and efficiently put together by the Belgian Army's *Résident Militaire* (military resident), Colonel Guillaume "Guy"

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<sup>3</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 103–31.



Logiest, and Major François Vanderstraeten.<sup>4</sup> In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Rwanda's journey to formal independence begun, the two Belgian Army officers understood the importance of providing the new state with a strong military.

The Territorial Guard for Rwanda-Urundi was created on 13 June 1960. Initially, officers and soldiers who belonged to the National Guard were trained by Belgian Army instructors. They enjoyed a quality of life that was significantly better than that of average Rwandans. Patrick Lefèvre and Jean-Noël Lefèvre noted that soldiers of the National Guard received good meals every day, a luxury in a country as poor as Rwanda, and that they also received their salary in Belgian francs, another strong advantage in comparison to the average Rwandan. Yet, this did not stop the soldiers from complaining and asking for pay raises, as the police received a much better salary.<sup>5</sup>

The first commander of the Rwandan Territorial Guard, Major Vanderstraeten, was a Belgian Army special forces officer with significant experience in Africa, and he enjoyed Colonel Logiest's full trust.<sup>6</sup> Logiest believed that the creation of the new military institution was extremely important to support Rwanda as an independent state, as well as to reduce the number of Belgian troops deployed in the country as quickly as possible. For Logiest, the issue of reducing the number of Belgian soldiers in Rwanda was not only financial or political but also pragmatic. Logiest had acquired much experience in public order and crowd control in the Congo, and he was keen to avoid having Belgian troops become

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<sup>4</sup> René Lemarchand, "Arts and Literature: Looking Back at the Roots of Genocides in Ex-Belgian Africa," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 16, no. 2 (2022): 111, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.16.2.1892>. Lemarchand noted that Logiest's "critical first step in November 1959 was to dismiss all Tutsi chiefs and sub-chiefs and replace them with appointed burgomasters (the equivalent of mayors). In anticipation of Tutsi unrest, units of the Congo-based Force Publique were called to join the Belgian paratroopers already on the ground."

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Lefèvre and Jean-Noël Lefèvre, *Les militaires belges et le Rwanda, 1916–2006* [Belgian Soldiers and Rwanda, 1916–2006] (Brussels: Racine, 2006), 149–50.

<sup>6</sup> Guy Logiest, *Mission au Rwanda: un blanc dans la bagarre Tutsi-Hutu* [Mission in Rwanda: A White Man in the Tutsi-Hutu Fight] (Brussels: Didier Hatier, 1970), 158–59.

responsible for such tasks in Rwanda. In Logiest's view, Rwandan troops would be significantly better suited to perform such tasks.

Logiest's objective was to establish an organization possessing a strength of more than 1,000 troops, which would be able to control the entire Rwandan territory. The troops would be organized in platoons that each had responsibility over a portion of the territory, as well as one battalion to provide a reserve unit ready to intervene if any of the platoons were confronted by an overwhelming threat.

The process of creating a new military organization from scratch presented several challenges. Everything needed to be provided, from weapons, to transportation, to communication systems. The commissioned officer and noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps needed to be established, developed, and trained. The Rwandan section of the NCO school that was established in Urundi was transferred from Usumbura (present-day Bujumbura) to Astrida (present-day Butare) in the south of Rwanda. In November 1960, the first seven officer candidates were admitted at the newly created officer school in Kigali. Six among them graduated as second lieutenants the following year. These officers were destined to play a key role in the future of Rwanda. Only one—Epimaque Ruhashya—was Tutsi, while the other five—Juvénal Habyarimana, Pierre Nyatanyi, Aloys Nsekaliye, Sabin Benda, Alexis Kanyarengwe—were Hutu. Even more important, all six were from the north of Rwanda. The seventh officer candidate, Bonaventure Ubalijoro, was expelled from the school by the director, Belgian Army captain Leon de Paeuw.<sup>7</sup>

The officers who graduated from the school in December 1961 rose to the highest ranks in the National Guard and the Rwandan Army, and some assumed senior political positions. Nsekaliye served as Rwanda's foreign minister from 1973 to 1978. The most distinguished among

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<sup>7</sup> Eugène Shimamungu, *Juvénal Habyarimana: l'homme assassiné le 6 avril 1994* [Juvénal Habyarimana: The Man Assassinated on April 6, 1994] (Lille, France: Editions Sources du Nil, 2004), 36–37.

them, Habyarimana, became the first commander of the National Guard and, following a coup in 1973, the president of Rwanda.

Relations between the Rwandan cadets and the Belgian officers were extremely good and, in a few cases, rather close. Major Vanderstraeten established an excellent personal relationship with Habyarimana. In 1963, Vanderstraeten recommended the young Rwandan for the position of commandant of the National Guard. Habyarimana was 26 years old when he was promoted to captain and assumed this major responsibility. Although the Rwandan military was supposed to be open to all ethnicities, it soon became dominated by Hutu mainly from the north.

Indeed, the dynamics that affected Rwanda during this period were both regional and ethnic. Hutu from the social elite in the south joined the ranks of the state bureaucracy and administration and participated actively in Rwandan politics. The most affluent Hutu elites from the south found in Grégoire Kaybanda, also a southerner, a strong advocate at the head of the government. However, the military became a stronghold for the Hutu from the north.

While these dynamics were taking place, the large diasporas of Tutsi expatriates invested their energies into finding ways to return to Rwanda. Frank Rusagara provided a detailed account of the initial attempts launched by the Rwandan refugees to return to their country. According to Rusagara, early incursions against the Rwandan government were isolated and led by individuals who targeted Parmehutu members and activists.<sup>8</sup> Burundi, where a large community of refugees was located, became the base of operations for the group, which was led by François Rukeba and his son Jean Kayitare. Their incursions into Rwandan territory were rather irrelevant and ineffective. However, the repercussions of these attacks were immediately felt by the Tutsi population in Rwanda, which often became the target of retaliation for casualties caused by the

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<sup>8</sup> Frank K. Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation: A History of the Military in Rwanda* (Kigali, Rwanda: Fountain Publishers, 2009), 127–55.

raids. On 25 March 1962, following an attack in which four Hutu were killed in Nkana, the Hutu population in the region decided to take revenge on the local Tutsi. On 26–27 March, between 1,000 and 2,000 Tutsi were killed.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the most extremist leaders of the Tutsi diaspora were aware that the consequences of their actions would be deadly for the Tutsi in Rwanda, but they did not stop conducting their attacks.

In November 1963, the leaders of the *Union Nationale Ruandaise* (Rwandese National Union) decided to launch a massive and, they hoped, decisive attack against the Hutu government. They planned to conduct several simultaneous attacks against Rwanda from members of the diaspora in Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, and the Congo. Yet, the plan did not materialize, as diaspora leaders during a meeting in Bujumbura decided that they would not take part in such an operation. Nevertheless, the Rwandan Tutsi in Burundi decided to attack the south of Rwanda. The initiative was in part compromised by the intervention of local authorities who stopped them. Several refugees were arrested. Rukeba had been detained a few days before the set dates for the attack. These difficulties, however, did not discourage the Tutsi “rebels,” and less than a month later, on 21 December, a new attack was carried out. Again, the intent was to launch a concerted series of offensive raids into Rwanda from neighboring countries. Yet, the assault from Tanzania did not materialize, the attack from Uganda was stopped by Ugandan militaries and the Rwandan National Guard, and the raids from the Congo were suppressed by the Rwandan National Guard. According to René Lemarchand, more than 90 prisoners captured during the operation were executed.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the offensive operation launched from Burundi by a small rebel force was initially successful. The rebels who crossed the border into Rwanda on 21 December were able to overcome the military base in Gako and were joyfully welcomed by the Tutsi population in Nyama-

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<sup>9</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 219.

<sup>10</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 222.

ta.<sup>11</sup> Although the force was small and poorly armed—many of the rebels were carrying bow and arrows—they managed to gain ground and generate serious panic among the political leadership in Kigali. At the moment of the attack both Habyarimana, the National Guard commander, and Calliope Mulindahabi, the Rwandan minister of defense, were out of the country, the former in Israel and the latter in Europe. With the military leadership away, the Rwandan government asked Lieutenant Colonel Vanderstraeten, who was still in Rwanda as a technical advisor to the government, to take command of the National Guard and deal with the rebels. When the Belgian officer met with President Kayibanda and several more leaders to report on the development of military operations, he found a group of extremely frightened individuals who were panicked to learn that the rebels, although small in number and very poorly armed, were able to advance to 15 kilometers from Kigali. Vanderstraeten was able to organize an offensive that successfully stopped the rebels, pushing them back to Burundi and regaining the lost territory.

In Kigali, a few hundred Tutsi were arrested, and several were taken to Ruhengeri and executed. In the south of Rwanda, mainly in the prefecture of Gikongoro, a few thousand Tutsi, probably between 5,000 and 8,000, were killed.<sup>12</sup> This was an important test for the young Rwandan Army, and clearly the absence of key leaders became a major problem.

For the expatriates, this was another serious setback. After the initial euphoria generated by their easy, though ephemeral, success, the rebels were forced to withdraw. They became conscious of the serious limitations that a small and poorly armed rebel group had when facing a regular army. The main issue for the refugees was the failure to create a united front among all the organizations and groups that opposed the government of President Kayibanda. They were scattered across several countries and on more than one continent, and by the middle of the 1960s there had been

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<sup>11</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 222.

<sup>12</sup> Lefèvre and Lefèvre, *Les militaires belges et le Rwanda*, 152–54.

a proliferation of competing organizations. These included the *Front de Liberation Rwandaise* (Rwandan Liberation Front), under the leadership of Gabriel Sebyeza; the *Mouvement Populaire Rwandaise* (Rwandan Popular Movement); the *Jeunesse Nationalist Kigeli V* (Nationalist Youth); and the *Congres de la Jeunesse Rwandaise* (Rwandan Youth Congress). Some of these groups had established relations with other rebel movements such as the *Lumumbist Mouvement Nationale Congolais* (Congolese National Movement). Rusagara also noted that the fighting spirit among many veterans had declined.<sup>13</sup>

During these difficult years, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many of the future leaders of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and key players for the future of Rwanda were very young. Several among them were born outside of Rwanda. Commander Fred Rwigema, who became the charismatic leader of the RPF, was born on 10 April 1957 as Emmanuel Gisa in Gitarama, an important Rwandan city south of Kigali. His family was among the many that fled Rwanda as a consequence of the ethnic violence generated by the 1959 Social Revolution. They entered a refugee camp in Nshungerezi, in the Ugandan region of Ankole, when Commander Fred was just three years old. A few years later, in 1966, they were relocated to Kahunge in southwest Uganda. Like many other refugees, they had to adapt to a dramatically different life, culture, and language. From a young age, Commander Fred showed great interest in the history of Rwanda and probably read about such revolutionary figures as Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah, Chinese leader Mao Zedong, and Cuban president Fidel Castro. Gérard Prunier described Commander Fred as having “an extrovert[ed] and happy-go-lucky personality.”<sup>14</sup> Those years were difficult for the Rwandan refugees in Uganda, as relations between them and the Ugandan people were tense. The Uganda People’s Congress, the party

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<sup>13</sup> Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation*, 143, 148–49.

<sup>14</sup> Gerard Prunier, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” in *African Guerrillas*, ed. Christopher Clapham (Oxford, UK: James Currey, 1998), 125.

of Milton Obote, who became Uganda's prime minister in 1962, targeted the Rwandan expatriates. There was no attempt to integrate the refugees.

Paul Kagame, another key leader for the future of Rwanda, moved with his family several times inside Rwanda before eventually ending up in a refugee camp in Uganda. Kagame's father, Deogratias Rutagambwa, was a wealthy businessman from Rwanda's Gitarama province. When ethnic violence began, he left for Burundi and then Zaire, but by 1961 he was back in Rwanda, living in the northeastern town of Mutare. It was then that he decided to cross the border into Uganda. He first tried to settle his family in the Ugandan border town of Kamwezi, but in 1962 they entered the refugee camp of Nshungerezi. Kagame, who was born on 23 October 1957, was then four years old, just a few months younger than Commander Fred. The two young men, although possessing very different personalities, developed a close friendship that was strengthened by their common objectives. Their major concern in the 1970s was how to deal with the poor living conditions that the Rwandan refugees had been subjected to in Uganda.

Commander Fred and Kagame grew up together. "We were almost like brothers, people actually thought we were born of the same family," Kagame said.<sup>15</sup> In 1976, Commander Fred left his family and closest friends, to include Kagame, to follow a Ugandan revolutionary leader, Yoweri Museveni, and a small group of revolutionaries of the Front for National Salvation (FRONASA) to receive military training in Montepuez, Mozambique. Museveni had created FRONASA in the early 1970s to fight the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. During these years, Museveni understood the value of developing a group of well-trained leaders who were also dedicated to the cause of Pan-Africanism.

While undergoing training and then fighting against Amin's troops, Commander Fred developed a close friendship with Salim Saleh, Musev-

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<sup>15</sup> Philip Gourevitch and Paul Kagame, "After Genocide," *Transition* 72 (1996): 170, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2935367>.

eni's younger brother. They were destined to become two key leaders of the revolutionary force that was instrumental in Museveni's rise to power in Uganda in 1986.<sup>16</sup>

In 1979, after the fight against Amin ended, Commander Fred and Kagame were reunited. Two years later, they were among the few who joined Museveni in a guerrilla war against Uganda's new leader, Milton Obote. For the two young Rwandans, their support for Museveni's guerrilla force did not simply stem from a desire to pursue an adventurous life—their strongest desire was to improve the condition for the Rwandan diaspora in Uganda. Kagame explained his decision as a process that involved his friend Commander Fred: “[E]ven as a kid, when I was in primary school, we would discuss the future of the Rwandese. We were refugees in a refugee camp. . . . So this was always eating up our minds, even as kids. The political consciousness was there. We had ideas of our rights. Fred and I used to read stories about how people fought to liberate themselves. This was on our minds all the time.”<sup>17</sup>

For many young Rwandans, the country they did not remember or had never even seen was an amazing place, a country where they could do all the things they could not while living in a foreign land. Robert E. Gribbin III, a former U.S. ambassador to Rwanda, noted that for Rwandan refugees, “home became a place of mythical illusions where everything was perfect.”<sup>18</sup> Even if they had been ready and willing to move away from the idea of returning to Rwanda, they were always reminded of their status. They would never have been allowed to integrate and become part of Uganda. Kagame said, “You were always reminded . . . that you did not belong there [in Uganda], that you were not supposed to be there. You have no place that you can call yours. You have no right to speak, so you

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<sup>16</sup> Muhoozi Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan Resistance* (Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers, 2010), 51.

<sup>17</sup> Gourevitch and Kagame, “After Genocide,” 171.

<sup>18</sup> Robert E. Gribbin, *In the Aftermath of Genocide: The U.S. Role in Rwanda* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), 55.



keep quiet. Everything reminds you that you're not where you belong. It had almost become normal, but nothing anyone would get used to."<sup>19</sup>

Joan Kakwenzire and Dixon Kamukama explain that the Rwandan expatriates "never were fully accepted in Ugandan society; they were still looked at as foreigners in spite of their contribution to National Liberation and development. This feeling of not being wanted in your host country nor in your own country made these young men and women a determined lot. This feeling created fearlessness and a determination that did not tolerate anything short of invading and 'going back home' by force."<sup>20</sup>

This reality for the Rwandan refugees, already difficult in Uganda, became even more so when the Ugandan government of Obote decided to address the "Rwandan issue" by forcefully moving the expatriate back to their own country. In the early 1980s, large numbers of expatriates were pushed from Uganda toward and beyond the border with Rwanda. As a result, and in opposition to such a policy, several Rwandan refugees joined Museveni's rebel force. Commander Fred and Kagame were among the founders of Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM).<sup>21</sup> At the time of the creation of the NRM and its military wing, the National Resistance Army (NRA), the main requirement for recruitment was a sincere desire to fight against Obote's government. Nationality did not present an impediment; in fact, it was often the case that the national belonging of many fighters was not easily identifiable.

Morale among Museveni's rebel group was high. Everything else, such as weapons and transportation, was missing. In early February 1981, the

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<sup>19</sup> Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 15.

<sup>20</sup> Joan Kakwenzire and Dixon Kamukama, "The Development and Consolidation of Extremist Forces in Rwanda," in *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, eds. Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 88–89, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315133744>.

<sup>21</sup> W. Cyrus Reed, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise of the Rwandan Patriotic Front," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, no. 3 (September 1996): 484–85.

men of the NRA sought to address this problem. With a limited number of weapons available, they planned to take over the Uganda Army training base in Kabamba. While the attack failed, as the group was unable to reach the armory and could only seize several vehicles before they had to retreat, it proved a psychological success, as Museveni and his men understood how ill-prepared their enemies were for a fight. Obote was forced to acknowledge that the attack against Kabamba probably marked the beginning of a long confrontation.

During those years of guerrilla warfare, Commander Fred distinguished himself as an outstanding warrior gifted with strong leadership skills. Museveni appreciated Commander Fred's ability and gave the young Rwandan a key role to play and growing responsibilities. In 1982, Museveni organized a unit of the NRA called the "First Mobile Force." Commander Fred was given command of the unit, and Salim Saleh became his deputy. The unit was initially organized as four companies, but it expanded rapidly. The companies soon grew to the size of a battalion, and the unit became the "Mobile Brigade."<sup>22</sup> Commander Fred proved to be an effective and charismatic leader. In July 1983, he and Saleh led the unit in a successful attack against Luwero.<sup>23</sup> In March 1985, following the successful Third Battle of Kabamba in January, Museveni decided to open a second front in that region of Uganda and tasked Commander Fred with leading the rebel troops into this new large-scale operation.<sup>24</sup> In just a few months, Commander Fred attacked Mbarara, the most important city in the west of Uganda. The battle became a long siege, but the NRA was eventually able to succeed, and Mbarara fell in January 1986.

A few days later, on 26 January, Museveni's troops took the Ugandan capital of Kampala and defeated the short-lived regime of President Tito Okello. By the end of the war, the number of Rwandans serving in the

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<sup>22</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan Resistance*, 81.

<sup>23</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan Resistance*, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan Resistance*, 127.

NRA had grown to more than a thousand. Many among them were serving in important leadership positions, and a large number of them had been instrumental in the creation of the NRA and had been by Museveni's side since the very beginning of the five-year guerrilla war.

Commander Fred and Kagame were probably the most prominent members of the Rwandan component inside the NRA. In 1986, the NRA had not adopted a formal rank system, yet Commander Fred was second only to Museveni. In 1988, when ranks were introduced, Commander Fred, then just 31 years old, was appointed major general. Kagame, who was considered a key leader in charge of the NRA intelligence service, was given the rank of major. In addition, several more Rwandan officers and NCOs were instrumental to the success of the NRA. Major Dr. Peter Bayingana served as the director of medical service. Lieutenant Colonel Adam Wasswa commanded the NRA units deployed in southwest Uganda. Major Chris Bunyenyezi, one of the most distinguished NRA warriors, commanded a brigade stationed in Mbale in the country's east. Major Steven Ndugute commanded an elite unit. Major Samuel Kanye-mera, known among his troops as "Sam Kaka," commanded the military police. Several more Rwandan officers held important junior positions, including two young lieutenants, James Kabarebe and Charles Kayonga, who were in charge of training and were destined to have outstanding military careers. After participating in the 1990–94 Rwandan Civil War, Kaberebe rose through the ranks to become a full general, the chief of the Rwanda Defence Force, and Rwanda's minister of defense from 2010 to 2018. Kayonga later became a general and commanded the Rwandan Army. During the Rwandan Civil War, Kayonga was a young but very experienced battalion commander who deployed in Kigali in January 1994.<sup>25</sup>

Although the Rwandan warriors had played an important role in Museveni's success in Uganda, they remained essentially a group of out-

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<sup>25</sup> Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza, *Rwanda: l'histoire secrete* [Rwanda: The Secret History] (Paris: Editions du Panama, 2005), 96–99.

siders. The fact that they had served and sacrificed for the success of the NRA did not pave the way for them to be accepted and more integrated in Ugandan society. Even Museveni found it difficult to allow his closest Rwandan allies and friends to remain in high-visibility senior leadership positions. In the perception of the Ugandan public, those positions were to be filled by fellow nationals. It was a difficult and uneasy situation for both Museveni and his Rwandan comrades. As a result, even a key figure such as Commander Fred was carefully, but painfully, pushed aside. After receiving the honor and rank he deserved, the young leader was “promoted” to deputy defense minister.

By the late 1980s, Commander Fred might have felt satisfied with his many achievements. His reputation as a warrior and a charismatic leader was very strong in Uganda and among the Rwandan community. In 1987, he married Jeannette Birasa, with whom he had two children. He continued to lead the NRA in the domestic war against the Lord’s Resistance Army in the north of the country. According to John Rucyahana, Commander Fred “had never been a great advocate of returning in power to Rwanda.”<sup>26</sup> In 1989, Museveni significantly reduced Commander Fred’s military responsibilities, which seriously compromised his leadership status and image. For a proud warrior who was very likely ready to assume a more stable role, it was a difficult and almost unacceptable situation. However, Museveni probably understood that failing to find a way to settle the Rwandans—particularly high-profile Rwandans such as Commander Fred—in Uganda was a ticking time bomb. He was well aware of their resilience in combat, their commitment, and their determination.

While this group of expatriate Rwandans was fighting more than a decade-long war to help Museveni gain power, the political situation in Rwanda had changed significantly. Of particular importance was the growing tension generated by the sharing of power between the dignitar-

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<sup>26</sup> John Rucyahana, *The Bishop of Rwanda: Finding Forgiveness amidst a Pile of Bones* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 46.

ies in the south, whose most powerful member was President Grégoire Kaybanda, and those in the north, who were led by Juvénal Habyarimana, the commander of the National Guard. The latter group continued to assume many key positions inside the young Rwandan military, thereby controlling one of the country's most important elements of power. Tension between northern and southern Hutu, between the military leadership and the political cadres, culminated in 1973 when Habyarimana led a military coup that deposed Kaybanda. Habyarimana, the now-dictator of Rwanda, established a one-party system in which the party he created, the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (National Revolutionary Movement for Development), demanded mandatory membership for all citizens.

After Museveni took power in Uganda, relations between Kigali and Kampala improved significantly, with Museveni and Habyarimana establishing cordial relations. In the early 1980s, and even more after Obote had returned to power in 1982, Habyarimana's government had probably sympathized with the guerrilla war launched by the NRA. According to Gaspard Musabyimana, after Museveni's troops took Kampala, there was a moment of jubilation in Rwanda. Many Rwandans believed that the chief of the NRA was a Rwandan, which was enough to make him a popular figure. However, what many underestimated was the fact that a large number among those fighting by Museveni's side were exiled Rwandans who wanted to return to their own country. In 1985, during a meeting in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, Museveni made clear to the Rwandan government delegation, led by Minister André Ntayerura, that his key commander and most distinguished Rwandan refugee, Commander Fred had no intention of returning to Rwanda.<sup>27</sup> Museveni was aware of how difficult the regional situation was for his young and still-fragile government; it was important for him and his country to be on good terms with Hab-

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<sup>27</sup> Gaspard Musabyimana, *La vraie nature du FPR/APR d'Ouganda en Rwanda* [The True Nature of Uganda's RPF/APR in Rwanda] (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 33.

yarimana and neighboring Rwanda. Habyarimana enjoyed good relations with Mobutu Sese Seko, the president of Zaire, and Daniel arap Moi, the president of Kenya, both of whom had serious reservations about Museveni. Habyarimana was also interested in establishing good relations with Museveni, and therefore he was inclined to help the Ugandan leader develop good relations with both Nairobi and Kinshasa. Habyarimana wanted to establish and maintain a stable region to prevent Rwandan refugees from finding fertile terrain from which they could begin a military campaign against his government. A few days after the end of the war in Uganda, on 29 January 1986, Habyarimana successfully organized a regional meeting hosted in Goma, Zaire, attended by Mobutu, Moi, Burundian president Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, and Museveni. This began a dialogue among key leaders in the region. The exchange of visits between the Ugandan and Rwandan leaders continued and became increasingly more friendly. When, in October 1986, Museveni arrived in the Rwandan city of Gatuna for a three-day visit to the country, the crowd gathered to welcome him appreciated the fact that he addressed them in *rukiga*, a dialect spoken both in Rwanda and southern Uganda. In the following days, Museveni felt safe enough that he decided not to use his security detail when he traveled to Butare. A few months later, in February 1987, Habyarimana became the first head of state to visit Uganda.<sup>28</sup>

While Kampala and Kigali were improving relations, the Rwandan expatriates in Uganda, emboldened by the critical role they played in Museveni's success, became more assertive in their demand to play a more relevant role in Uganda. A significant number among them had a strong desire to return to Rwanda. In the late 1970s, members of the Rwandan diaspora established the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (RANU), a regional organization that was committed to find ways for the expatriates to return to their country. The RANU, which was initially based in Nairobi, operated clandestinely and worked to cast a wide network

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<sup>28</sup> Musabyimana, *La vraie nature du FPR/APR d'Ouganda en Rwanda*, 34–35.

among other organizations of expatriates that were also dedicated to improving conditions for the diaspora and to ultimately return to Rwanda. During 1986–87, following Museveni's success in Uganda, the RANU experienced a significant morale boost and became more ambitious in the pursuit of its objectives. The RANU relocated from Nairobi to Kampala and began the process of transforming from a political and social group to a political and military organization. The RANU adopted a new name, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), and established a military wing, the Rwandan Patriotic Army. Commander Fred was the natural choice for president of the RPF.<sup>29</sup>

The creation of the RPF placed significant pressure on Museveni's government in Uganda. Attempting to defuse what was becoming an extremely tense situation with the Rwandan diaspora, Museveni explored any option that could alleviate such pressure. He did not wish to have a major tension on the southern border with Rwanda. Nevertheless, the presence of such a large community of Rwandan expatriates in Uganda was and would remain a constant source of friction and instability with Habyarimana's government in Kigali.

The results of several talks that Museveni had with Habyarimana about the future of the Rwandan expatriates had been disappointing. The two leaders had great limitations on their latitude to find a viable and satisfactory solution for such a problem. Museveni would have liked to see the large Rwandan community in Uganda repatriated to Rwanda. Despite all they had done for the NRM during the war, the Rwandans were viewed by Ugandans at best as foreigners and more often than not with hostility. Yet, Habyarimana had made clear to all Ugandan leaders, including Museveni, that his government would not allow large numbers of refugees to return to Rwanda. For example, when Obote had launched

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<sup>29</sup> Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation*, 173–74.

a forced repatriation campaign of Rwandan refugees in the early 1980s, Habyarimana had vigorously opposed it.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, in the late 1980s, the United States saw an opportunity to improve relations with Uganda. Following a period during which Washington had criticized both Idi Amin and Obote's governments, relations with Museveni were rather cordial. In early 1990, Museveni approached the U.S. embassy in Kampala to explore whether the United States would provide training to his senior military officers, mainly his generals. Museveni's view was that, although they were quite experienced in running a guerrilla war, none of his extremely young and yet senior officers had received formal military education, and it would be beneficial for them to receive that education and be prepared to transform the NRA into a professional military organization. Museveni made a convincing point with the U.S. diplomats in Kampala.

Robert E. Gribbin III, the U.S. embassy's deputy chief of mission in Uganda, was in charge of one of the most popular U.S. State Department programs, the International Military Education and Training program. Gribbin joined the U.S. embassy staff in Kampala in 1988, bringing with him an interesting and valuable background. He had already spent a few years as deputy chief of mission in Rwanda, where he acquired a good understanding of the country's regional and ethnic dynamics. He found Museveni's request compelling and decided to support it with the U.S. Army. After a few administrative issues had been addressed—the U.S. Army requested that Ugandan officers attending its Command and General Staff College (CGSC) wear the rank of colonel—Gribbin was ready to send one Ugandan senior officer to the United States to attend CGSC in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

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<sup>30</sup> Johan Pottier, *Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511491092>.



Museveni had already decided—indeed, he insisted—that Commander Fred attend CGSC. At a time when Museveni was quietly diminishing Commander Fred's role in his government, this course of action makes it difficult to understand why he was interested in investing in an individual whose future role in the armed forces was marginal. It is likely that this offered a great opportunity to keep the RPF leader away from his network for nearly one year. Museveni must have known that sending Commander Fred to the United States would only postpone dealing with the problem, but this was probably good enough at the time, as there was no easy solution available. In addition, Museveni may have hoped that the international community might have persuaded Habyarimana to accept the return of the Rwandan refugees in that time. Yet, this could only have happened under enormous pressure and the willingness of France—a country not sympathetic to Uganda and a key ally of Habyarimana—to play a major role. In this extremely complicated situation, Paris had no interest in seeing an infusion of English-speaking Rwandan refugees returning to their homeland and, more important, becoming involved in Kigali's political life.<sup>31</sup> Although they were a minority, it was impossible at that time to estimate how their presence would have impacted the small Francophone country. The overall situation was one of a very dangerous stalemate. Ultimately, Commander Fred's absence would have bought time but probably achieved nothing else.

Gribbin and Commander Fred made all the necessary arrangements for the latter to attend CGSC—or at least the U.S. diplomat thought they did. Commander Fred had different plans. The night before he was scheduled to leave Uganda, Commander Fred Rwigema went to Grib-

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<sup>31</sup> For an analysis of France's important role in Rwanda, see Jonathan R. Beloff, "French-Rwandan Foreign Relations: Depth and Rebirth of Diplomatic Relations," *African Review* 50, no. 4 (2023): 441–66, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1821889x-bja10070>; Andrew Wallis, *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014); Daniela Krosiak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: Hurst, 2007); and H. Cameron, "The French Connection: Complicity in the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda," *African Security* 8, no. 2 (2015): 96–199, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2015.1036669>.

bin's house and informed him that he was not going to go to the United States. Commander Fred told Gribbin that he had convinced Museveni that he needed to take care of his family now that he had been relieved of some responsibilities and was no longer involved in combat. Gribbin was disappointed after working so hard to create this opportunity for Commander Fred, but he was not ready to simply give up. He asked Museveni to help identify an alternative candidate, and Museveni did not hesitate to nominate Paul Kagame. Museveni was well aware of how close Kagame and Commander Fred were, as well as that they were the key leaders among the Rwandans in the Ugandan armed forces. Moreover, Kagame had been in charge of the NRA intelligence service. He had performed in an excellent way, demonstrating professionalism and competence, and was probably extremely knowledgeable of much information that might have been of great help for a campaign against the Habyarimana's regime in Rwanda. By July 1990, Kagame was on his way to CGSC. Gribbin remembered, "From the Ugandan side, if President Museveni was happy, I was happy."<sup>32</sup>

The selection process for participation in the U.S. Army's CGSC shows how complex the situation in Rwanda and Uganda was in the late 1980s. What could be considered a minor event was actually a clear indication of how difficult it was for Museveni to deal with his Rwandan allies and friends while remaining a popular leader in Uganda.

Nearly 20 years later, in 2007, Kagame provided more details about the CGSC decision. He explained that when Commander Fred told him about the orders he had received to attend CGSC, he persuaded Commander Fred against going to the United States. Commander Fred had an important role to play as the leader of the Rwandan liberation fight, which they had been planning together and was just about to begin. "I told him that he was our leader, and if he went, probably it could derail

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<sup>32</sup> Gribbin, *In the Aftermath of Genocide*, 60.

the plan,” Kagame said.<sup>33</sup> The problem they faced was how to turn down the offer to attend CGSC without generating the perception among other military leaders that Commander Fred was insubordinate. That is why Commander Fred provided the excuse that family problems prevented him from attending the course. Kagame was then selected to attend the course in the United States, even though he was already slated to attend a similar school in Nigeria.<sup>34</sup>

Clearly, this situation must have created a great amount of tension between Museveni and the “Rwandans.” Several years later, Kagame, by then Rwanda’s vice president and minister of defense, told Gibbon that the events related to the selection for CSGC were a major turning point in the relations between Museveni and the Rwandan leaders. Gribbin wrote, “President Museveni was suspicious that the Rwandans were up to something, but he was not sure exactly what. Kagame said that the RPF made it a point to keep secret its talks and hopes from all nonmembers—Museveni especially. Nonetheless, sending Commander Fred out of the country was a legitimate effort by Museveni to decapitate the plotting—whatever it was.”<sup>35</sup> In 1990, Kagame began what became a short-lived experience in the United States. As soon as he arrived at CGSC, he immediately immersed himself in student life.

It is difficult to assess with certainty whether the RPF had already made plans to attack Rwanda in October 1990. Considering how events unfolded, the Rwandan leaders probably had not selected a date for the invasion. The fact that at the beginning of their attack against the government of Habyarimana a key figure such as Kagame was not present is a clear indication that rather than beginning at a concerted and favorable moment, events probably forced the RPF to initiate the invasion. It is therefore not a surprise that the RPF’s initial military operations were rather

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<sup>33</sup> James Munyaneza, “When Kagame Turned 50,” *New Times*, 31 December 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Munyaneza, “When Kagame Turned 50.”

<sup>35</sup> Gribbin, *In the Aftermath of Genocide*, 60.

unsuccessful. There are many reasons for the difficulties encountered by the Rwandan warriors at the beginning of the invasion, the most evident being that they were not fully prepared. Commander Fred, the charismatic leader of the RPF, was killed just 48 hours after the operation began.

Another major consideration that very likely pressured the RPF leaders to launch the invasion was the stalemate that affected the implementation of any acceptable solution to the "Rwandan problem." Negotiations between the Rwandan expatriates and Habyarimana's government had been a total fiasco. Indeed, in Rwanda two alternative approaches to Habyarimana's had developed. On the one hand, a large number of Hutus had taken an even more extreme approach against the Tutsi inside and outside the country. On the other hand, a significant number of moderate Hutus had begun working to support the idea that both Hutu and Tutsi shared a common identity and belonged to the same nation: Rwanda. Therefore, for the latter group, the problem of the refugees abroad was not a Hutu-versus-Tutsi issue but rather one of Rwandans inside the country and Rwandans outside the country. Their message was one of unity, and they intended to create the necessary conditions to share in harmony the land they all belonged to. Distinguished political personalities such as Landoald "Lando" Ndasingwa and Madame Agathe Uwilingiyimana, who would be brutally murdered during the violence of 7 April 1994, were committed to a process of repatriation of Rwandans abroad and to open for them the possibility of having access to key roles in Rwanda's political life. However, until the early 1990s, such views had been repressed by a regime that did not tolerate the presence of political parties other than that of President Habyarimana.

In July 1990, after political activity had been crushed for nearly 20 years, Habyarimana announced that he would allow Rwanda to move from a one-party system to a multiparty-system democracy. For many in Rwanda, this was a sign that the political environment was moving in a direction that would allow greater political participation from those who disagreed with the president. What remained unclear was whether

Habyarimana truly believed that such a decision would be beneficial for Rwanda and its people, or if he was simply giving in to a combination of domestic—and more importantly international—pressure.

The Rwandan expatriates probably had a different understanding of Habyarimana's real intentions. The president's new opening might have indeed strengthened the argument that he was truly committed to transition Rwanda to a more democratic system and that this was an initial step toward a solution for the Rwandan refugee problem. Yet, Habyarimana was buying time, a strategy known well among expatriate Rwandans.

# Chapter 2

## FROM THE INVASION TO ARUSHA

The decision to launch the attack in northern Rwanda on 1 October 1990 was probably made as a result of several factors over which the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) leaders had little to no control. Yoweri Museveni's decision to send Commander Fred Rwigema and Paul Kagame to attend military schools abroad made clear the Ugandan leader's intention to take care of the "Rwandan problem" by pushing it aside. Museveni's approach revealed, if it was necessary, that the presence of the Rwandans and the role they wanted and believed they deserved to play in his government and armed forces was a major political liability. The serious risk for the Rwandan expatriates and for those who had fought side by side with Museveni was to fall back into the limbo of constant expatriate/refugee at a time when they felt that they had a legitimate expectation that they deserved a different and better status.

The situation for the Rwandan expatriates in Uganda precipitated during summer 1990, and in October they decided to invade Rwanda. It appears that the RPF's decision to launch military operations was not the outcome of a calculated and well-prepared plan. In his book, *Rwanda: l'histoire secrète*, former RPF member Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza noted a few circumstances that might have pressured Commander Fred to begin

active preparation for the attack late in September.<sup>1</sup> He mentioned the fact that both Museveni and Rwandan president Juvénal Habyarimana were out of their respective countries on a diplomatic trip to the United States. Their absence would have slowed down the reaction time from both governments to stop the RPF's attempt to gain vital ground in Rwanda. Ruzibiza also noted that Salim Saleh, a distinguished Ugandan military commander and a very close friend of Commander Fred, was deployed with a few large Ugandan military units in the north of the country. Finally, because on 9 October Uganda celebrates its independence, the movement of troops in the country would have been considered normal.<sup>2</sup>

These explanations, however relevant, probably do not tell the full story. Commander Fred very likely found all those circumstances as additional favorable conditions, but the overall indication is that he felt compelled to act and that to delay military operations was no longer possible. In addition, RPF military activities, training, and preparations might have become unsustainable inside the National Resistance Army (NRA), particularly at a time when Museveni was forced to increase the number of Ugandans in the ranks. It was not clear for how much longer Rwandans would have been able to continue training while remaining a cohesive group inside the NRA.

The RPF launched the attack when one of its key commanders, Kagame, was away from the decision-making center. Although Kagame must have been aware of what was happening, it is reasonable to be-

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<sup>1</sup> Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza was a controversial RPF junior officer who broke with Paul Kagame's military and wrote a book in which he accused the Rwandan leader of wrongdoing. He retracted his story and eventually maintained that he did not write the book, and that it had been written by several authors, but he never disclosed by whom. Although the credibility of Ruzibiza in relation to the accusations in his book are questionable, his story is helpful in understanding the tactical movement of the RPF troops during the war and on the RPF's military development. For an explanation of Ruzibiza's position while serving with the RPA and after his separation, see Klaus Bachmann, *A History of Rwanda: From the Monarchy to Post-genocidal Justice* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza, *Rwanda: l'histoire secrète* [Rwanda: The Secret History] (Paris: Editions du Panama, 2005), 104.

lieve that Commander Fred would have been more comfortable to have Kagame by his side at the very beginning of military operations.

It is also very likely that on 1 October, Commander Fred was in some sort of disagreement with his senior commanders on how to conduct military operations. According to Stephen Kinzer, "Few wanted to say so openly, but in planning this invasion, Commander Fred seemed to have turned his back on a basic principle of guerrilla warfare. Rather than prepare for a prolonged campaign, he had chosen to challenge the Rwandan army head-on in an open savannah and then charge toward Kigali. . . . Whatever his reasons, he made a lamentable strategic choice."<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, it is likely that Commander Fred wanted to launch a conventional military campaign against Rwanda's regular army, the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR). Commander Fred, with his lengthy experience of warfighting, appreciated the value of enjoying the support of the local population to succeed in a guerrilla-style campaign. He was aware that the population of Rwanda, particularly in the north, would not have provided the type of support his troops needed to conduct a guerrilla war. Indeed, it was very likely that they would have been hostile to his troops. In addition, since the late 1980s, the quality of the FAR had degraded significantly. Therefore, Commander Fred might have felt confident that his troops, tested by several years of successful warfare and despite their limited resources and small numbers, would succeed in a conventional confrontation with the FAR. However, although the FAR's military reputation was poor at the time, they could rely on much larger resources than Commander Fred. It is therefore likely that there was some disagreement among RPF commanders about the best strategy to adopt for the invasion, and that Commander Fred probably imposed his vision without the full support of his senior commanders. The dilemma was ultimately that conventional operations would have required more troops, more materi-

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 79.



al, strong logistics, and a reliable supply, while a guerrilla-style campaign would have needed the support of the local population, something that was highly unlikely in northern Rwanda.

Finally, it is also possible that after many years of successful combat and leadership, Commander Fred might have developed a sense of invincibility that made him overconfident. He was charismatic, highly respected, and extremely sharp in his decision making. On the one hand, he might have underestimated the FAR's ability to sustain an attack; on the other hand, he might have overestimated his ability to launch a decisive and deadly blow to the enemy.

At the end of September 1990, Commander Fred's troops began moving toward the town of Kagitumba in northeastern Rwanda. Commander Fred decided to launch the attack over a difficult terrain in one of the least inhabited regions of the country. Kagitumba is located north of the Akagera National Park, one of the beautiful national parks of Rwanda, but also one of difficult access for soldiers. Kagitumba is also strategically located on the border with Uganda and just a few kilometers from the Tanzanian border. This helped Commander Fred's troops in two ways: it would have been difficult for the FAR to conduct operations on the left flank of the RPF troops, as they would have to cross into Tanzanian territory, and perhaps the closeness of a potentially friendly country might have been used as an escape route had military operations taken a catastrophic turn.

In a few days, hundreds of Rwandan NRA members took as many weapons as they could and began moving toward the border from where they were gathering to attack Kagitumba. What happened in the space of a few hours came as a surprise to many Ugandan military leaders and regular troops. Probably just a few NRA officers may have known what the Rwandans were about to do. It was also difficult to believe that the Rwandans could simply move away from the ranks of the NRA and at the same time remain organized and easily regroup into temporary military units. Many Ugandans were surprised to find that some of the officers they had

believed to be fellow nationals were actually Rwandans. Frank Rusagara offers a good example in Lieutenant Colonel Adam Wasswa, who had a typical Kiganda name, had grown up in the Luwero Triangle and was a distinguished NRA commander. Rusagara wrote that Wasswa “joined the RPA [Rwandan Patriotic Army] to the surprise of his colleagues in the NRA who never suspected that he was Rwandan.”<sup>4</sup> Wasswa’s story was common to many of the soldiers and officers who were about to enter Rwanda.

On the Ugandan side of the border, Major Chris Bunyenyezi, the senior officer on the ground, did not waste any time. While waiting for the arrival of Commander Fred, he organized the troops available to him in two temporary battalions: the 1st Battalion, under the command of Captain Sam Byaruhanga, and the 3d Battalion, under the command of Captain Edison Mico. On 1 October, the 1st Battalion launched the attack against Kagitumba and managed to take the town in just a few hours. The FAR soldiers, taken by surprise, were unable to offer a serious resistance. Former Rwandan Army colonel Léonidas Rusatira wrote that on that day at the FAR headquarters in Kigali, they received a message from the radio station in Kagitumba saying, “We are under attack . . .” and followed by silence. Any attempt to establish contact again failed.<sup>5</sup> While the FAR officers in Kigali were overwhelmed by the situation, Nyabwishongwezi, a small town in the north of Rwanda, was taken by the 3d Battalion. By that evening, hundreds more Rwandans had arrived in the area of operations.<sup>6</sup>

This initial success provided major morale boost, but it was ephemeral. The following day, 2 October, Commander Fred was killed. Many speculations surround the circumstances of his death, but the most reliable version is that he was killed by a bullet fired by a FAR squad.

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<sup>4</sup> Frank K. Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation: A History of the Military in Rwanda* (Kigali, Rwanda: Fountain Publishers, 2009), 177.

<sup>5</sup> Léonidas Rusatira, *Rwanda: le droit à l'espoir* [Rwanda: The Right to Hope] (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 132.

<sup>6</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 107.

Commander Fred simply exposed himself for too long, as he did not believe that the enemy was in position to fire at him. According to Eugène Shimamungu, Commander Fred arrived at the front line with his security detail; he was the tallest among them. As he began walking toward a better point for observation, he was spotted by a FAR patrol commanded by Second Lieutenant Innocent Sagahutu. The FAR soldiers opened fire when the small group of RPA officers were close enough, and Commander Fred was killed instantly.<sup>7</sup> General James Kabarebe, whose brother was a member of Commander Fred's security detail at that time, confirmed that this was how Commander Fred was killed.<sup>8</sup> For the RPF, this was a major blow. Commanders close to Commander Fred were fully aware of how devastating such an event would be for morale, so they decided to delay releasing the news to avoid affecting the troops who were already facing stiff resistance from the FAR.

On the night of 2 October, the most senior RPF officers decided that Major Peter Bayingana, a medical doctor who had been in charge of the medical service in the NRA, would take provisional command of military operations. He would be assisted by Major Bunyenyezi.<sup>9</sup> Early in November, Tito Rutaremara informed the international press in Brussels that Commander Fred had been killed in action.<sup>10</sup>

In October 1990, when the RPF began military operations in Rwanda, the FAR numbered between 5,000 and 6,000 troops. The army was structured in small units, the largest of which was a battalion with a force of 600 soldiers. The FAR had some heavy weapons, including about 20 armored personnel carriers and 12 helicopters. After the war began, both the army and the gendarmerie grew quickly in number to 40,000.

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<sup>7</sup> Eugène Shimamungu, *Juvénal Habyarimana: l'homme assassiné le 6 avril 1994* [Juvénal Habyarimana: The Man Ssassinated on April 6, 1994] (Lille, France: Editions Sources du Nil, 2004), 223–24.

<sup>8</sup> Gen James Kabarebe, interview with the author, 20 March 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 109.

<sup>10</sup> Shimamungu, *Juvénal Habyarimana*, 222.

Such a rapid increase had serious consequences. It should be noted that the Rwandan economy and finances, already significantly stretched, could barely sustain a large military organization. However, the main consequence of this sudden troop increase was probably the poor quality of the new recruits, the large majority of whom were poorly trained. French National Gendarmerie captain Paul Barril, a former advisor to President Habyarimana, said, "When you take a peasant, a farmer, and you put him in uniform, that does not make him a soldier. These Hutus are not fighters. They have no training, no motivation, no commandos, no special forces . . . they are a balloon full of wind."<sup>11</sup>

Colonel Rusatira provided several enlightening explanations to help understand the bad state of the FAR in the 1990s. In his view, the decline of the Rwandan armed forces began in 1973, when Habyarimana created a chain of command that allowed him to retain nearly total control of both the gendarmerie and the army. Habyarimana continued to micromanage both institutions, imposing a high level of rigidity and a significant amount of improvisation.<sup>12</sup> Rusatira also noted that Habyarimana placed great emphasis on the role that the military played in domestic repression rather than training and equipping it to dissuade—and, if necessary, fight—a foreign enemy. As a result, the Rwandan military's ability to resist an attack launched by an enemy from outside the country was weakened. The officers, even those who were educated in military schools abroad, fell into what Rusatira described as a "sclerotic routine." Training was not maintained, and in a short period of time it became useless. Among the officer corps, too many were more concerned about their personal business rather than their professional duties. Meritocracy was compromised by a mechanism that allowed officers with personal and "regional" connections, mostly from the north, to be promoted to senior positions. Clearly this caused a negative impact on the effectiveness of the

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<sup>11</sup> *The Bloody Tricolor*, directed by Steve Bradshaw (London: BBC *Panorama*, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Rusatira, *Rwanda*, 172.

army and its ability to perform any task that went beyond routine.<sup>13</sup> Rusatira stressed that the FAR was not up to the task of providing Rwanda with a reliable force and the protection it needed. He noted that the main problem was very likely that political and military leaders were not committed to create a strong army and gendarmerie.<sup>14</sup>

Both Baril and Rusatira provided a rather accurate description of the status of the Rwandan military. The FAR was poorly led; its officers, with a few exceptions, were mostly incompetent; morale was rather low; and training was poor. However, during the first days of October 1990, the FAR could count on several factors that gave it a significant advantage over the RPF: it was better equipped; it could count on large human resources; and it enjoyed the support of the local population. In addition, Habyarimana successfully portrayed the war as an invasion launched by Uganda against Rwanda. He asked for international support against the invading force and was able to secure military assistance from France, Belgium, and Zaire.

Under pressure from the invasion, Habyarimana called the president of Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko.<sup>15</sup> The two leaders had established a strong personal relationship that dated back to the early 1960s when, after receiving his commission in December 1961, as a young lieutenant Habyarimana was given command of Rwanda's southwest military region. Habyarimana was stationed in Cyangugu, a city separated from the Congolese city of Bukavu by the Ruzizi River. It was during this time that Habyarimana met Colonel Joseph Désiré Mobutu, the commandant of the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (Congolese National Army, or ANC). According to Eugène Shimamungu, since June 1963, when Habyarimana became the commandant of the Rwandan *Garde Nationale* (National Guard), he instructed his troops to support the ANC and its successor,

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<sup>13</sup> Rusatira, *Rwanda*, 194.

<sup>14</sup> Rusatira, *Rwanda*, 195.

<sup>15</sup> Shimamungu, *Juvénal Habyarimana*, 222–30.

the *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (Zairian Armed Forces, or FAZ). The two armies would join efforts to fight against Congolese rebel leader Pierre Mulele's forces in the Battle of Kamanyola in June 1964.<sup>16</sup>

Mobutu did not hesitate to deploy two FAZ battalions led by General Donatien Mahele Lieko Bokungu to Rwanda. These two units played an active role in fighting side by side with the FAR against the RPF. Zairian soldiers participated in the Battle for Gabiro and in northeast Rwanda, where the RPF had launched its main attack. These first weeks of war in October were crucial to determine the outcome of military operations. The largest contingent of Zairian troops went directly from Goma to Gabiro and Nyagatare and provided the FAR the help it needed to prevail over the RPF.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the FAR was also able to attack RPF columns using helicopters. On 8–9 October, the RPF was engaged in harsh combat with Zairian troops in Rwagitima and Nyakayaga, while other RPF units were engaged in heavy fighting in Gabiro and Nyagatare.<sup>18</sup>

In mid-October, the two FAZ battalions, after suffering a significant number of casualties, were withdrawn.<sup>19</sup> According to Shally Gachuruzi, "The Zairean army was not paid by either the Zairian government or the Rwandese government for their involvement in the battle against the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Zairean soldiers engaged in systematic pillage and rape of women and teenagers. Given their propensity for destruction, at the request of Habyarimana, Zairian troops were sent home after the RPF incursions had been halted."<sup>20</sup>

On 4 October, 500 Belgian troops arrived in Rwanda. In a public statement, Brussels presented the deployment as a "humanitarian operation" aimed at providing protection for the small Belgian community in

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<sup>16</sup> Shimamungu, *Juvénal Habyarimana*, 38–39.

<sup>17</sup> Shally B. Gachuruzi, "The Role of Zaire in the Rwandese Conflict," in *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, eds. Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 51–60, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315133744>.

<sup>18</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 112–16.

<sup>19</sup> Shimamungu, *Juvénal Habyarimana*, 230–31.

<sup>20</sup> Gachuruzi, "The Role of Zaire in the Rwandese Conflict," 58.

the country. Operation Green Bean lasted just a few weeks and was over on 31 October. The Belgian contingent, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Vandeweghe, was formed by three companies of the 2d Battalion Para Commando, one company of the 3d Battalion Paratroopers, one reconnaissance platoon, and one mortar platoon.<sup>21</sup>

In response to Habyarimana's request for help, France launched Operation Noroit. On 4 October, 135 legionnaires of the 4th Company, 2d REP Foreign Parachute Regiment, based in Bouar, Central Africa Republic, deployed to Kigali.<sup>22</sup> Though the mission of the small French contingent was to protect the French expatriates in Rwanda, it provided the FAR with an important morale boost.

A few days after the RPF troops crossed the border from Uganda into north Rwanda, a fake "attack," probably orchestrated by the Rwandan Army, was staged in Kigali. On the night of 4–5 October, an intense firefight, supposedly started by a RPF attack, took place. This was a charade that was very likely organized by extremist elements. The government in Kigali wanted its powerful international allies to believe that the RPF, just a few days into the war, was able to pose a serious threat to the capital. Habyarimana's government needed to secure the support of France and its military. The loud sounds caused by the "firefight" in the early hours of 5 October was heard in most of the city; interestingly, the French school and embassy were in the line of fire.<sup>23</sup>

As a result of the "attack," the Rwandan government detained more than 8,000 individuals, mainly Tutsi, accused to be RPF agents and supporters. James Gasana, a moderate politician from Habyarimana's party, the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National Pour le Développement* (MRND), who became the country's defense minister from April 1992

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<sup>21</sup> Patrick Lefèvre and Jean-Noël Lefèvre, *Les militaires belges et le Rwanda, 1916–2006* [Belgian Soldiers and Rwanda, 1916–2006] (Brussels: Racine, 2006), 158.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l'armée française et le Rwanda* [François Mitterrand, the French Army, and Rwanda] (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2005), 55.

<sup>23</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l'armée française et le Rwanda*, 57.

to July 1993, noted that the arrests of such a large number of people were conducted in a climate of terror. The detainees were kept in conditions of hardship, and in many cases their families were seriously abused. Gasana stressed that the Rwandan military and the local justice administration made a “disastrous mistake” that undermined the country’s social cohesion and national politics.<sup>24</sup>

Gasana provided an interesting analysis and a firsthand perspective of the ongoing conflict in the north. In his view, the RPF attack offered Colonel Laurent Serubuga, the then-chief of staff adjunct, a pretext to marginalize even more the already small number of FAR officers from the south.<sup>25</sup> According to Gasana, the pressure that the RPF invasion placed on the government made even more evident the regional tensions that characterized Rwanda’s political life from its existence as a state. The beginning of the conflict in 1990 only heightened these tensions inside the Rwandan government. With time, these tensions became deadly, but they were not easily detectable even to the most knowledgeable political observer. In many ways, two conflicts took place simultaneously in Rwanda—one mostly along ethnic lines, another along regional lines. The first conflict was fought against an external force, while the other was mostly internal. Consequently, Habyarimana had to deal with a clash of formidable and powerful forces inside and outside the country.

From a military perspective, during this initial phase of the war, the RPF did not have the resources to sustain several simultaneous tactical engagements. It was spread thin, and often its small battalions had to move quickly from one engagement to another and back. On 23 October, the FAR launched a successful attack against rebel troops in Ryabega, close to Nyagatare. The clash was violent; Majors Bayingana and Bunyenyezi were among the fatalities. The RPF lost two key leaders and

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<sup>24</sup> James Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-état à l'état-garnison* [Rwanda: From Party-state to Garrison-state] (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2002), 66.

<sup>25</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 66–67.



once more had to deal with a major leadership problem. In a few days, Kagitumba was again under FAR control. The RPF troops, defeated and demoralized, were scattered between Uganda and Tanzania; clearly, they could not stay there for longer than a few days. It was at this point that it became clear that Paul Kagame's return to Rwanda could not be postponed.

While in the United States, Kagame had grown increasingly worried during the first days of October, as he had not received any news about Commander Fred and had been unable to talk to him directly. After he was informed that Commander Fred was killed, Kagame decided to leave the United States and began his trip back to Rwanda. It took him several days and a combination of good contacts and luck to be able to join the RPF survivors of the initial fight against the FAR. When he was finally reunited with his troops, the sight he was greeted with was harsh. Kagame stressed the state of confusion and disarray he saw: "There was nothing in the right place. . . . Casualties were lying in the road. . . . Even the commanders in charge—one senior one, when he saw me, he just broke down in tears."<sup>26</sup>

James Kabarebe, a RPF junior leader at the time, explained that "at the beginning of the war we made many mistakes that were very costly in terms of losing people. There are questions about the manner in which we moved from Uganda to Kagitumba, the choice of Kagitumba itself, the lack of cohesion among the troops, the leadership problems that cost the death of most of the leaders themselves."<sup>27</sup> Kabarebe noted that during this initial phase of military operations, the RPF had a poor understanding of the enemy and underestimated them. He also acknowledged that their preparation was not adequate, which "cost us a lot in the beginning to the extent that we had completely lost the war in the first

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<sup>26</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 66–69.

<sup>27</sup> "Kabarebe on Why RPA Prevailed Despite Early Setbacks," *New Times*, 3 July 2014.

two or three weeks, and recovery was very difficult. We had been defeated totally, completely and wiped out of the area we held in Umutara.”<sup>28</sup>

Kabarebe had a distinct memory of the initial moments of the war:

In the first week and the first day itself, I and many others would see some form of disorganisation that would inevitably put us at risk, we could see it but we didn’t have the guts and the power to influence things. Even after we struck Kagitumba, the very first day and the next day, you could see total disorganisation, lack of control of the situation, lack of proper planning, to the extent that if the enemy was smart, even on the first day or second of October he would have wiped us out in that state in which we were. . . . Because of the poor command, control and management of the whole force, we lost so many people.<sup>29</sup>

A major turning point in Kabarebe’s view was the arrival of Kagame and the change he implemented at all levels. According to Kabarebe:

He came with a new strategy altogether, he changed the tactics, he changed the operational concept and did not approve of sending soldiers to an open grassland to be bombed by anti-aircraft, aircraft and tanks. This reorganisation gave hope to the fighters who were scattered and those who had run away. As a result, he organised successful operations. For example, on October 28, 1990, the Habyarimana regime recaptured Kagitumba successfully and reached the borderline, but a week earlier Paul Kagame had organised a fresh force and sent it to Gatuna to open a new front. As Habyarimana was celebrating the recapture of Kagitumba on October 28, the RPF, on

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<sup>28</sup> “Kabarebe on Why RPA Prevailed Despite Early Setbacks.”

<sup>29</sup> “Kabarebe on Why RPA Prevailed Despite Early Setbacks.”

October 30, struck and captured Gatuna. That reengineered the morale of the fighters and sent a message to Habyarimana and to the international community that the struggle was still alive.<sup>30</sup>

Kagame focused on two main efforts. He restructured and reorganized the RPF and redefined its mission and strategy, all while continuing, though with a limited scope, military operations against the FAR.

Kagame faced a daunting challenge. He had to instill confidence in the RPF soldiers and leaders and, even more important, provide a plan of action for the RPF's immediate future, as they could not remain in Uganda for too long. Kagame made a daring choice, moving the largest number of troops to the Virunga National Park in northwest Rwanda. The Virunga National Park, famous for hosting some gorilla families, was an inhospitable environment, extremely cold and with scarce food resources. Yet, because of its inaccessibility it became a sanctuary for the RPF. Sam Kaka remembered the difficult conditions: "at the mountains . . . it was like living in a fridge, it was very cold." Jean Baptiste Karega, a RPF soldier, said, "It was so difficult because it was a life we were not used to." For Regis Rurangirwa, another RPF soldier, "it was the first time I felt hunger. It was the first time I felt cold, and we did not have enough clothes."<sup>31</sup>

Kagame's troops struggled with the harsh climate and with starvation. Many died. Morale, already extremely low, crashed. Yet, Kagame provided the leadership necessary to take the RPF through such a difficult test. He understood that engaging the FAR and its allies—by then only the French—in a conventional style of war was not a viable course of action. Kagame stressed to his commanders the importance of adopting

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<sup>30</sup> "Kabarebe on Why RPA Prevailed Despite Early Setbacks."

<sup>31</sup> *The 600: The Soldiers' Story*, directed by Laurent Basset and Richard Hall, written by Richard Hall (Piedmont, CA: Great Blue Production, 2019).

a guerrilla war. Ndore Rurinda, a veteran and an officer with the RPF, said that attacks against the FAR were to be executed at night, under the conditions most favorable to the guerrilla force. As Rurinda explained, "the FAR owned the day, we owned the night!"<sup>32</sup> The difficult months spent in the Virunga National Park were crucial for Kagame to reorganize his troops, boost their morale, and inspire both soldiers and leaders. He began holding a series of frequent meetings with his commanders.

After those initial weeks of combat, young exiled Rwandans decided to join the RPF. Until then, the RPF had been staffed nearly entirely by Rwandan veterans of the NRA. As soon as these exiled Rwandans learned that a force was fighting to allow them to return to their motherland, they wanted to be part of the effort. Initially, this was a welcomed sign to the RPF leadership. Yet, as numbers continued to grow, the initial euphoria among senior leaders began to fade, as they now had to provide supplies for numbers that they had difficulty sustaining.

Kagame appreciated the benefit of conducting small raids simultaneously. In November, the RPF attacked Gatuna, Rwempasha, Kaniga, Rushaki, Cyungo, and Kanyantanga. On 24 and 25 December, his force attacked Nkana.

In the middle of December 1990, Kagame reorganized the RPF. He created new units, smaller than battalions, that were called columns. The 1st Column was commanded by Charles Musitu; the 3d Column was commanded by Twahirwa Ludovic (alias Dodo); and the 6th Column was commanded by Sam Byaruhanga. Kagame also directed all RPF officers and noncommissioned officers not to wear their ranks.<sup>33</sup> During the next few months, the RPF again became a well-disciplined and well-led organization. This was clearly an outstanding result considering the hardship the troops had to endure.

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<sup>32</sup> Maj Ndore Rurinda, interview with the author, 19 March 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 129.

Kagame knew that what he had been able to achieve in such a short period of time was not enough. The RPF needed a military success to increase morale and boost confidence. Kagame decided to launch a hit-and-run attack against the FAR garrison in Ruhengeri, one of the most important cities in the north of Rwanda, not too far from Virunga. On 23 January 1991, Ruhengeri was attacked. According to Kabarebe, "We did not give the enemy breathing space."<sup>34</sup>

Kagame explained that with this attack against Ruhengeri, he wanted to make the Rwandan government aware that the RPF was still alive and capable of creating a havoc if it so desired.<sup>35</sup> In the months that followed the RPF withdrawal in the Virunga mountains, there might have been a mistaken perception that the guerrilla force had vanished after losing some of its key leaders and a significant number of troops. Clearly, Kagame's initial objective was directed at the Rwandan government, but it is also very likely that with the action against Ruhengeri he wanted to attract the interest and support of the large Tutsi diaspora whose support was crucial to the future of the war effort. Indeed, it was among the Tutsi diaspora that funds were raised and young men and women were recruited to join the war against Habyarimana.

The other purpose of the operation was to take as many weapons as possible from the military armories in Ruhengeri.<sup>36</sup> In planning the attack on Ruhengeri, Kagame probably had his mind set on a past experience when, in February 1981, at the beginning of the guerrilla war in Uganda, he was among those who attacked the military police school in Kabamba to steal badly needed weapons. Finally, Kagame stressed that another key objective in Ruhengeri was the liberation of several political prisoners that could be helpful to the RPF. Among the most prominent prisoners were former FAR officers Lieutenant Colonel Theoneste Lizinde, Major

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<sup>34</sup> "Kabarebe on Why RPA Prevailed Despite Early Setbacks."

<sup>35</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 87–88.

<sup>36</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 88.

Stanislas Biseruka, and Captain François Muvunanyambo. Indeed, Biseruka and Muvunanyambo immediately joined the RPF high command after being freed. It should be noted that the RPF had no evidence that these political prisoners would be sympathetic to its cause. All three were former FAR officers who had been imprisoned for conspiring against Habyarimana. The failed coup attempt that they launched in April 1980 did not provide any indication that, had they been successful, they would have introduced policies that would have benefited the Rwandan expatriates. However, jailed in Ruhengeri, the prisoners represented one of the main internal oppositions to Habyarimana. As a result, if they decided to join forces with the RPF, they would provide Kagame's army with more legitimacy in the war against Habyarimana. From its initial steps, the RPF had always promoted an interethnic approach. Indeed, it would be more correct to say that their approach was not ethnic. Kagame stressed that "we understood if we had them in our hands, it would also hurt Habyarimana's government politically and create some kind of new dynamics."<sup>37</sup> According to Frank Rusagara, these former FAR officers and prisoners who joined the RPF would be "instrumental in persuading Hutu recruits inside Rwanda to join the RPA."<sup>38</sup>

During the period when the FAR was successful against the rebels, its leadership became confident that they could easily manage the conflict. They did not give any serious consideration to the fact that new and more effective attacks might be conducted against their positions. Even in the country's north, where the potential for confrontation was high, the FAR remained oblivious to the fact that they needed to strengthen their presence. In January 1991, Colonel Charles Uwihoreye, the FAR commander in Ruhengeri, could count on just 300 gendarmes, which made Ruhengeri an easy target since the RPF easily overrun the small garrison. As it became clear that the RPF's tactical focus was capturing weapons

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<sup>37</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 88.

<sup>38</sup> Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation*, 177.

and supplies—and, more important, the liberation of several political detainees that were jailed in the Ruhengeri prison—Colonel Elie Sagatwa, Habyarimana's personal secretary, ordered Colonel Charles Uwihoreye to execute all detainees. However, Uwihoreye decided not to carry out the order. All detainees were freed, and in the coming days several of them joined the RPF. Uwihoreye was later accused of treason and arrested.<sup>39</sup>

The RPF attack against Ruhengeri was a success; the battle was over in just a few hours. The RPF had time to free the political prisoners, take the weapons they desperately needed, and seize several vehicles before leaving the city. Government troops arrived the following day and immediately imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew. For a period of several months, the RPF attacked the government troops nearly every night.<sup>40</sup>

According to James Gasana, the attack on Ruhengeri came as a shock to Rwanda's political and military leaders. They now realized that they were facing a resilient force that was organized, well led, and determined to continue the fight in places that were vital to the Rwandan political establishment. The Ruhengeri attack proved that the RPF campaign was no longer a localized issue of which the prefecture in Byumba could take care, but rather that it was a serious national threat.<sup>41</sup>

The attack on Ruhengeri can be considered the turning point in the war between the rebel force and the Habyarimana regime as well as the beginning of a long phase during which the RPF and the FAR battled with one another. However, neither the RPF nor the FAR were capable of launching a decisive blow. During a period of several months, the RPF was able to consolidate its presence in the Rwandan territory.

In 1991, the RPF invested most of its time and resources in strengthening its organization. Kagame focused mainly on working with his senior leaders to introduce a solid and reliable chain of command and

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<sup>39</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 84.

<sup>40</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 89.

<sup>41</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 84.

to become more effective at accomplishing his mission. During the first part of the year, RPF military operations were limited, with minor attacks being carried out to keep the pressure on the FAR. Those initial months were mainly used to identify members of the staff who would be, together with Kagame, instrumental in leading the RPF. According to Abdul Ruzibiza, in June, Kagame introduced a new chain of command structure. He was to serve as the chairman of the high command and his staff officers as members of the high command. The officer corps were organized to include the ranks of senior officer (SO), junior officer 1 (JO1, the equivalent of captain), junior officer 2 (JO2, the equivalent of first lieutenant), and provisional junior officer 2 (PJO2, the equivalent of second lieutenant).<sup>42</sup> With this new chain of command in place, Kagame felt that the RPF could become more aggressive. For months, they had decided to attack the enemy by adopting typical hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, as they were fully aware that they did not have enough resources to hold and control portions of the territory.

Beginning in July 1991, Kagame ordered a series of attacks against FAR positions and small villages in northern Rwanda. The FAR conducted a number of counterattacks that forced the rebels to withdraw. However, the FAR was rather ineffective at maintaining control of the territory that it had been able to regain. "The tactic adopted by the FAR confused us," Ruzibiza wrote. "They would fight all day long and suffer many losses, yet, as soon as the day turned into night, they would abandon the position they had been able to gain and would return back behind their original lines."<sup>43</sup> Very likely, the FAR felt that the darkness of the night gave the RPF an operational advantage with which they had a difficult time dealing. Therefore, rather than defend the portion of territory they had gained, they instead withdrew to where their defensive systems were stronger.

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<sup>42</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 139.

<sup>43</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 148.



During the second half of the year, the RPF continued to attack the positions held by the FAR. In the last days of 1991 and early into 1992, the RPF maintained its objective to continue to keep pressure on the enemy, but by then its leadership was beginning to feel confident that they could hold and defend portions of the territory. Many of the towns and small villages in the north of Rwanda and close to the Ugandan border, such as Butaro and Nyagatare, became targets of the RPF.<sup>44</sup> In March 1992, several simultaneous attacks were launched in the area north and south of the Muvumba River in the Nyagatare District.<sup>45</sup> Although the FAR was taken by surprise, it took weeks for the RPF to consolidate its position, and by May the front line they were struggling to hold passed through Rukomo and Rurenge, just a few kilometers from the Ugandan border. Even if the success of these new RPF operations was modest, the psychological impact on the morale of the FAR was significant. The number of desertions in several FAR battalions grew to more than 50 percent. Often, because of the FAR's strong regional composition, members from the country's south were reluctant to fight to defend the north.<sup>46</sup>

On 16 April 1992, Habyarimana appointed James Gasana, a politician from his party, as Rwanda's minister of defense. Gasana immediately realized how precarious the situation of the FAR was. His immediate focus was on the poor quality of the large number of recruits who had enlisted since the war began in 1990. In less than two years, the army had grown from a few thousand soldiers to nearly 40,000. This was a sudden expansion that created many problems, the most notable being discipline. Gasana noted that much of the FAR's recruitment was done among youths with a criminal background, as local administrators actively tried to send such troubled young people into the army to get them away from their neighborhoods. In addition, basic training was very rushed and of

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<sup>44</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 151–52.

<sup>45</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 157.

<sup>46</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 102.

a poor quality, with new recruits receiving a total of 15 days of training.<sup>47</sup> French instructors continued to train several FAR battalions.<sup>48</sup> When, at the end of April, Gasana visited the army and gendarmerie headquarters, he was stunned by the incompetence of both chiefs of staff and their staff officers.<sup>49</sup>

It is likely that the RPF had a good understanding of what was taking place inside the Rwandan Army. In June 1992, Kagame decided to launch a major attack against the FAR to expand the area controlled by the RPF toward Byumba. After taking Kiyombe and Kivuye, the RPF managed to defeat the FAR troops in Byumba and took the city. However, just two days later, Kagame ordered his troops to abandon the city, with the objective of establishing a defensive line in a tactically advantageous position in the hills of Kivuye. Kagame was an extremely wise tactician who always made careful and pragmatic calculations about the terrain he could hold, how defensible it was, and what resources were available to him, both in terms of troops and equipment. He was aware of what his troops needed to mount successful campaigns, whether offensive or defensive, and understood that the conflict he was waging was part of a broader strategic and political effort. Consequently, his focus was simultaneously on both the battlefield and the ongoing negotiations with the representatives of the Rwandan government. He possessed the ability to evaluate tactical short-term gains versus tactical and, more important, operational and strategic long-term success.

The RPF's achievements in the north of Rwanda dealt a significant blow to the morale of the Rwandan Army. Gasana noted that the fall of the highland of Kivuye demoralized the FAR and increased regional tensions within the institution. The number of deserters increased to such a point that several battalions deployed to confront the RPF were as small

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<sup>47</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 101–2.

<sup>48</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 105.

<sup>49</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 122.

as 100 personnel, nearly all of whom were from the north.<sup>50</sup> The impact of the RPF offensive had important tactical and strategic consequences. Just a few weeks after the RPF consolidated its position, the Rwandan Army realized that it would not be able to regain the lost territory. The French government, which had continued to provide support to Habyarimana, determined that negotiations would be a more successful way to deal with the conflict in Rwanda. In July 1992, the peace process began in Arusha, Tanzania. It should be noted that talks between the two sides had already taken place. For nearly two years, several ceasefires had been agreed on and broken. In Arusha, however, the negotiations were intended to achieve a more stable agreement. Several key actors—including prominent political figures, members of the opposition, French officials, and members of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)—were directly involved.

For Gasana, the beginning of the Arusha negotiations, which initiated a pause in military operations, became a good opportunity to launch a modernization process of the Rwandan Ministry of Defence. He began a procedure to replace several senior officers—to include the chief of staff of the army and the chief of staff of the gendarmerie—with younger, better prepared, and more motivated officers. This was a difficult task due to the resistance that it encountered, not only from the powerful officers who were about to be retired but also from conservative politicians, including the president, with whom they had strong ties. Gasana was also determined to cut the number of troops serving in the army to 10,000. He rightly believed that Rwanda's financial resources were too stretched, and that such a large army and gendarmerie were simply not sustainable, as the existing structure could not support nearly 40,000 troops. There were not enough officers, and the quality of training was quickly deteri-

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<sup>50</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 121.

orating. Indeed, the 15-day training period for new recruits was awfully inadequate.<sup>51</sup>

The beginning of the Arusha peace process provided even more evidence of how deep and complex the divisions in Rwanda were. The conciliatory position adopted by Boniface Ngulinzira, the Rwandan minister of foreign affairs and the government's chief negotiator in Arusha, generated a hostile reaction from the more conservative parties, who believed Ngulinzira to be too friendly toward the RPF.

Anjali Kaushlesh Dayal noted that "the negotiating table at Arusha was populated by desperate negotiators who had to settle because they could no longer fight; by hardliners, who used the negotiation process to pursue tactical, material, and symbolic goals other than peace; and by spoilers, who ultimately strove to break the peace."<sup>52</sup> Indeed, an effective peace process would have significantly changed the distribution of power in Rwanda, and many, including the president, would have lost some of the privileges that they had enjoyed for decades. The government was deeply divided between those who did not want to give up any power and those who were keen on sharing power. The former had a short-term focus, while the latter maintained a long-term approach, believing in a modern Rwanda that was able to overcome ethnic divisions. While this latter group was genuinely committed to the peace process, members of the conservative and extremist wings felt that they had been forced to accept the negotiations with the RPF.

Inside the RPF, debate about the negotiations was also intense and heated. Paul Kagame said that within the RPF, many questioned whether it would be possible to govern Rwanda together "with killers like these who we oppose so strongly, whose ideology is so different, and who don't

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<sup>51</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 127.

<sup>52</sup> Anjali Kaushlesh Dayal, *Incredible Commitments: How UN Peacekeeping Failures Shape Peace Processes* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 83.

see the country the way we see it?" Kagame's position was that "we have to do it."<sup>53</sup>

In this rather unstable and uncertain environment, it is not surprising that, even after a new ceasefire was agreed to on 19 July 1992, small-scale fighting between the RPF and the FAR continued to take place. The deployment in August of a small contingent of military observers provided by the OAU, the Neutral Military Observer Group I, was admirable but proved to be of little help. The political situation in Rwanda—and, in particular, the relationship between the conservatives and moderates inside the government camp—became tense. Habyarimana felt an enormous pressure to push back against the "concessions" that negotiators had made during the peace process in Arusha. In November, he publicly declared that the Arusha agreement was just "scrap paper."<sup>54</sup> Such a harsh rhetoric was matched by concrete actions that aimed to increase tension and compromise the feeble peace agreement. The Interahamwe, the MRND youth organization-turned-militia, became increasingly more politicized and violent. Attacks on civilians remained a major issue. The Interahamwe organized several rallies in Kigali that often ended in violence and acts of civil disobedience. On the political side, the MRND remained strongly opposed to the creation of a transitional government that would exclude the participation of extremist parties. However, on 9 January 1993, the RPF and government negotiators signed a protocol of agreement that continued to exclude the extremist parties from active participation in the government and further reduced the share of power that the MRND would receive. This protocol exacerbated tensions with the RPF, but it also compromised relations between the government's conservatives and moderates. The conservatives' perception that the moderate political forces had taken a lenient and very favorable position toward the RPF was reinforced by the events of January 1993. Rallies organized all over

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<sup>53</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 97.

<sup>54</sup> Ruzibiza, *Rwanda*, 176.

Rwanda by the conservatives against the protocol often became violent ethnic confrontations.

In many parts of the country, the violence generated by these rallies added new tensions to an already tenuous balance. The RPF, emboldened by the divisions inside the “Hutu” camp, probably felt that it could count on the support of the moderates in pursuing a more favorable peace agreement. On 8 February, the RPF broke the ceasefire agreement and launched a major attack against several key cities in the north of the country. The offensive became a defining moment for the future of the Arusha treaty and the relations between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnicities and the conservative and moderate coalitions. In just a few days, RPF troops were in a position to threaten Ruhengeri and Byumba. They were able to cut vital transportation arteries such as the Ruhengeri–Kigali and the Ruhengeri–Gitarama roads. The inability of the government forces to contain the RPF offensive allowed Kagame’s troops to advance to just a mere 25–30 kilometers from Kigali. It appeared that the RPF was ready to deal a deadly blow to the FAR and defeat the Habyarimana regime. Once again, the FAR was very demoralized, and many troops deserted.<sup>55</sup>

Despite this immediate and resounding success, the RPF offensive stopped. Kagame’s troops consolidated their positions and, against all predictions, did not attack the Rwandan capital. Kagame’s decision has several explanations. While the RPF was on the offensive, France offered more military support to Habyarimana and his demoralized army. The first French military contingent to deploy in Rwanda—20 officers and several “specialists” from the French Army’s *1er Régiment de Parachutistes d’Infanterie de Marine* (1st Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment, or RPIM), commanded by Colonel Didier Tauzin—arrived on 22 February.<sup>56</sup> The deployment of the French, who acted mostly in an advisory role, galvanized the FAR and made a positive impact on the tactical situ-

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<sup>55</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 183.

<sup>56</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l’armée française*, 127.

ation. Tauzin has provided a detailed and eye-opening account of the role played by the French contingent in support of the FAR at such a crucial time. He was in charge of 67 commissioned and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) from the RPIM as well as about a dozen officers and NCOs from the 35e Régiment d'Artillerie Parachutiste (35th Artillery Paratrooper Regiment). These individuals possessed a strong professional background, expertise, and excellent knowledge of Africa in general and of Rwanda in particular.<sup>57</sup> The mission that Tauzin and his detachment were to perform would significantly affect the tactical and operational levels in Rwanda, as the French colonel was “to take indirect command of the FAR.”<sup>58</sup>

To properly assess the situation on the ground, Tauzin immediately visited the FAR troops deployed in Ruhengeri—the contingent that faced an immediate threat from the RPF—and met with the officer in charge of the sector, Lieutenant Colonel Augustin Bizimungu. Back in Kigali, Tauzin met with General Déogratias Nsabimana, the army chief of staff. According to Tauzin, Nsabimana gave Tauzin “de facto” authority to lead all military operations. On 23 February, a small French military team joined the FAR staff.

Kagame had already declared a unilateral ceasefire on 20 February, two days before French troops deployed to Rwanda. The RPF commander explained his decision not to attack Kigali:

The whole idea in my mind was not to capture Kigali. My mind was on destroying government forces, capturing weapons, and after that extending the territory, and after achieving that, deciding what to do with it. . . . It surprised me how effective the whole thing became. The [government] forces were totally defeated, and our forces

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<sup>57</sup> Didier Tauzin, *Rwanda: Je Demande Justice pour la France et ses Soldats* [Rwanda: I Demand Justice for France and Its Soldiers] (Paris: Éditions Jacob-Duverniet, 2011), 68.

<sup>58</sup> Tauzin, *Rwanda*, 70.

were just moving. . . . If we had wanted we could have taken it—no question about it.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, the RPF, although probably capable of prevailing over the FAR in a short-term military confrontation, was not in a position to sustain a protracted military maneuver with extended logistic and supply lines. As a result, the choice to stop just short of attacking Kigali was in line with what the RPF could accomplish, as any additional unplanned military operation might have weakened the RPF and exposed it to counterattack. Kagame was aware of this. His February offensive exceeded expectations and achieved all the objectives he hoped to attain. The RPF had inflicted a resounding defeat to the FAR, it had showed evidence of its military strength, and the RPF representatives in Arusha had acquired significantly more negotiating power in the peace process. It was a success not only at the tactical level but also at the strategic and political levels. Pushing further toward Kigali might have jeopardized these important achievements. A few weeks later, on 7 March, negotiations for a ceasefire began in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, between the Rwandan government and the RPF. The RPF agreed to withdraw its troops to the positions it held before the offensive began, and the government agreed that the French troops would leave the country. A demilitarized zone was established.

For many RPF leaders, such a decision was difficult to understand and even harder to accept. Kagame explained to the recalcitrant RPF negotiators that “while you are there negotiating, people on the ground are fighting, dying, injured. I am the one there with them. You don’t know that they don’t even have enough ammunition. You think they should be fighting all the way to Kigali, but that’s not how to fight. . . . [T]hings in politics or diplomacy . . . are not always black and white. Sometimes there are things in the grey area.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 104–5.

<sup>60</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 107.



Indeed, while negotiations were taking place, Tauzin's team was working with Rwandan senior military leaders on Operation Miyove, a FAR counteroffensive to be launched against the RPF. Miyove's objective was to push the RPF troops back and inflict on them a decisive defeat. Tauzin was sure that the FAR, supported by large numbers of French "advisors" and French artillery, would have been able to succeed. More than 3,000 fresh troops, a strategic reserve, were deployed in Kigali. On 28 February, General Nsabimana issued the order to launch the operation. Despite a number of delays due to the poor transportation available to the FAR, everything was in place to attack the RPF lines in a few days.<sup>61</sup> The day before the operation was to be executed, however, it became clear to Tauzin that France was going to play a significant role in the negotiations in Arusha and the "ceasefire" that was about to be agreed in Dar es Salaam. Beginning a military operation at such a time would have made a major impact on the negotiation process. While Tauzin favored the military option at the tactical level, he did not want to interfere with the strategic and diplomatic objectives set by the French government. To the disappointment of Nsabimana, Tauzin decided to call the operation off. A significant component of French troops soon began withdrawing from Rwanda.<sup>62</sup>

Kagame's greatest success was to see most of the French military contingent leave Rwanda. Gasana noted that the withdrawal of Tauzin's troops negatively affected Rwanda's military leaders, who probably saw the possibility of defeating the RPF vanish with the French. In Gasana's view, France's decision to stop supporting the FAR, while continuing to pressure Habyarimana to remain engaged in the peace process, was detrimental and had negative consequences on the overall military campaign.<sup>63</sup>

While the last elements of the French contingent were waiting to depart Rwanda, Tauzin decided to use the time available to assess the

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<sup>61</sup> Tauzin, *Rwanda*, 78–79.

<sup>62</sup> Tauzin, *Rwanda*, 80–81.

<sup>63</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 186–87.

state of the FAR. The outcome provided serious evidence that the state of the Rwandan armed forces was extremely poor and that they would be easily defeated by the next attack conducted by the RPF.<sup>64</sup>

Many of the shortcomings identified by Tauzin had already been pinpointed and addressed by Gasana. Yet, many of the initiatives that Gasana began to improve the quality of the armed forces were met with resistance by conservative officers. The most challenging reform was to provide a more balanced regional composition to the officer corps that, since then, had been dominated by officers from the north. At the end of March 1993, the Rwandan Army was led by 578 officers, 307 of whom were either from Ruhengeri or Gisenyi.<sup>65</sup> Gasana also wanted to reform the system through which officers were selected and promoted to senior leadership positions. Before, the main requirement had been regional belonging and nepotism rather than competence, merit, and leadership skills.

In June 1993, the Rwandan Army promotion board chaired by Gasana provided the government its recommendations for the advancement and retirement of several senior officers. Most notable was the decision to retire Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, one of the most powerful officers in the army. The impact produced by such a recommendation was significant. Several officers from Gisenyi were adamantly against it. Yet, Gasana was equally determined to uphold the decision made by the promotion board. As a result, he became increasingly more isolated from the presidential staff and the president himself. The hostility that Gasana faced was often rather violent, to the point that he began fearing for his life and the safety of his family. In July, after having sent his family out of the country, Gasana submitted his resignation. On 30 July, Habyarimana appointed Augustin Bizimana, a Hutu extremist, to succeed Gasana as minister of defense. Bizimana immediately implemented policies that undermined the peace process—for example, distributing weapons to

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<sup>64</sup> Tauzin, *Rwanda*, 87–88.

<sup>65</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda*, 192.

extremist militias. Bagosora did retire in September, but he became a civil servant and continued to serve as chief of staff to the Ministry of Defence, an important and powerful position that he had already held since June 1992 while serving on active duty.<sup>66</sup> As a result, Bagosora was able to retain great influence over the armed forces and Rwandan politics. Unlike Gasana, Bizimana had no interest in continuing the process of modernization and professional development for officers. The state of the Rwandan armed forces remained extremely poor, with even the best units experiencing significant leadership and discipline problems.

The final phase of the Arusha negotiations took place in an extremely toxic environment in which only a minority of idealist political leaders were truly committed to making the process a success. The nomination of a temporary prime minister, Madame Agathe Uwilingiyimana, in July was indicative of a rather uncertain and difficult situation. Her nomination, proposed by the president, was strongly opposed by her own party, the *Mouvement Démocratique Républicain* (Republican Democratic Movement, or MDR), and by the extremists. In reality, Habyarimana had probably suggested Madame Agathe because he believed that she could be easily controlled and manipulated. He would be proven wrong. Despite the great hostility she faced, Madame Agathe was adamant to continue pushing the peace process forward. In a few weeks, on 4 August 1993, the Arusha Accords were signed. Many parts of the treaty were contested by the extremists and conservatives, who particularly opposed the way power would be redistributed among political parties and the role that the RPF would play in governing the country. One of the most disputed provisions was about the reorganization of the military. The new Rwandan Army would be created by integrating the FAR and the RPF, with a new force of 13,000 troops comprising 60 percent FAR and 40 percent RPF. However, the officer corps would be made up of 50 percent FAR and 50 percent RPF. This provision was a major roadblock for the implementa-

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<sup>66</sup> "Profile: Col Theoneste Bagosora," BBC News, 18 December 2008.

tion of the peace process. Once more, it was clear that the conservatives and extremists were not ready to lose their privileges. They remained uncommitted to an effective peace process and to the transition to an inclusive government in which the RPF would be treated as an equal partner.

The Arusha treaty negotiators requested the deployment of a United Nations (UN) mission. The situation was so fraught with tension that they asked for the mission to arrive in Rwanda in a matter of weeks, something that, despite the UN's best intention, was simply not possible. It would be a few months before the UN contingent could deploy to Rwanda in its entirety.



# Chapter 3

## SETTING UP THE MISSION

On 27 June 1993, Canadian Army brigadier general Roméo Dallaire was attending a parade when the military area commander for Quebec informed him that it was very likely that, in a few months, he would be deployed overseas in charge of a UN peacekeeping mission. Dallaire was thrilled by the news. In his own words, he “almost floated back to the ceremony, I was that exhilarated.”<sup>1</sup>

Dallaire was offered command of a UN mission at a time when the number of peacekeeping operations throughout the world was growing fast. To be given command of a mission was a lifetime opportunity for ambitious senior military leader. For decades, the tensions caused by the Cold War had created an environment that had paralyzed the UN Security Council (UNSC) in its ability to intervene to resolve local conflicts. As a result, during the post-World War II period the UN peacekeeping commitment was minimal. The UN was able to deploy only a few missions and a small number of peacekeepers. Those missions had limited mandates, mainly monitoring ceasefires or assisting a peace process. Peacekeepers were often unarmed or lightly armed. The first two missions established at the end of the 1940s, the UN Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East and the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan, had observing and monitoring mandates.

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<sup>1</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), 42.

The end of the Cold War marked a critical moment in history that generated major enthusiasm for achieving a more stable and peaceful world. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw this enthusiasm materialize in a large number of UN missions. There was much idealism behind many of these missions but often few resources, inadequate mandates, and an insufficient commitment from the nations that provided troops. Probably even more important was the fact that there was very little experience to support the ambitious objectives that many missions wanted to achieve. According to Jim Terrie, “In the post-Cold War period the opportunity existed for the international community to take a more direct role in attempting to solve conflicts. One of the consequences was an increase in the intervention of military forces for humanitarian purposes. This had a direct impact on the scale and scope of UN peacekeeping missions which soon found themselves, especially in Somalia and Bosnia, in situations that they were unprepared to respond to.”<sup>2</sup>

By the mid-1990s, the UN had deployed 20 missions, and the number of peacekeepers had grown from 11,000 at the end of the 1980s to more than 70,000.<sup>3</sup> The largest number of these missions were authorized under Chapter VI of the UN Charter. Lise Morjé Howard and Anjali Kaushlesh Dayal explain that “in the absence of a formal international agreement governing the conduct and purposes of peacekeeping, the UN developed three doctrinal ‘rules.’ (1) Missions may use limited force (in self-defense); (2) missions must obtain the consent of the warring parties before deploying; and (3) peacekeeping operations must maintain impartiality in the implementation of agreements, akin to the functioning of a judge who is not neutral or passive, but delivers judgments impartially.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jim Terrie, “The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping: The Experience of MONUC,” *African Security Review* 18, no. 1 (2009): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2009.9627512>.

<sup>3</sup> “Our History,” United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed 18 December 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Lise Morjé Howard and Anjali Kaushlesh Dayal, “The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping” *International Organization* 72, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 74, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818317000431>.

When Dallaire was approached to take command of one of these missions, enthusiasm for peacekeeping was still strong. However, while a few missions showed positive results, others were beginning to present peacekeepers with significant challenges. The situation in the former Yugoslavia, where the UN had deployed the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), was deteriorating quickly. The UN deployment in Somalia, meanwhile, was confronting the determination of a warlord, Mohamed Farrah Aidid, who opposed the UN and U.S. presence in the country. In October 1993, just a few months after Dallaire arrived in Rwanda, a U.S. operation launched with the objective to contain Aidid ended in a bloodbath that caused several casualties among the U.S. force and ultimately determined the faith of the deployment in Somalia.

Dallaire was motivated and committed to make his command a successful endeavor. A distinguished officer in the Canadian Army, Dallaire had spent most of his military life preparing Canadian soldiers to deploy in peacekeeping operations, but he had never had the opportunity to experience and lead an actual mission.

Dallaire had joined the Canadian armed forces in 1964, when he was 18 years old. He had inherited his passion for military life from his father, a Canadian Army senior noncommissioned officer (NCO) and a veteran of World War II. Dallaire graduated from the Royal Military College Saint-Jean and the Royal Military College of Kingston in 1969. His career was brilliant. He commanded units at all levels.<sup>5</sup> He had risen through the ranks at a time when the Canadian Army's main strategic commitment was to be prepared to fight the Soviet Army and the Canadian government in Ottawa was taking on an increasingly greater peacekeeping role. Canadian soldiers had been deployed with UN missions in the Congo, Cyprus, Lebanon, former Yugoslavia, Angola, Somalia, and more. From the early 1990s, the peacekeeping commitment became increasingly more

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Castonguay, *Les Casques bleus au Rwanda* [Peacekeepers in Rwanda] (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1998), 23.



central to the mission of the Canadian armed forces. Dallaire was an important element to the success of those soldiers deployed abroad wearing the blue beret. However, he had no experience commanding a mission.

When Dallaire was informed that he might be given such an important task, he was surprised to learn that Canada's commitment to the mission was limited to the force commander. Dallaire was not to receive any additional help from Canada, at least during the initial phase of the mission. Yet, using an administrative loophole, he was able to get one Canadian Army officer to deploy with him as his assistant. His search started immediately, and he finally selected Major Brent Beardsley, a 39-year-old infantry officer from the Royal Canadian Regiment who was working on the development of Canada's peacekeeping manual. Beardsley had graduated from the Royal Military College and during his nearly 20 years of military service had completed four tours of regimental duty with deployments in Norway, Germany, and Cyprus.

In preparation for the mission, Beardsley's task was to collect as much information as possible to provide Dallaire and the mission leadership with a clear understanding of the situation in Rwanda; this included Rwanda's historical background, political context, present conditions, and possible evolution. Beardsley's task became a rather frustrating one, as he was unable to find good sources. He later said, "So we had very, very little information, knowledge of the background to Rwanda, its history, its culture what had taken place in the country since independence or even before independence, and especially even in the last couple of years. So we went in quite blind."<sup>6</sup>

However, from the early 1990s, after military operations had begun in the north of Rwanda, several organizations had investigated and analyzed a number of cases of human rights violations. Since 1 October 1990, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched its attack

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Maj Brent Beardsley, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Beardsley interview.

against the regime of President Juvénal Habyarimana, acts of violence against the country's population had increased.

Several insightful reports investigating the volatile and difficult situation in Rwanda had recently been released. In April 1992, Amnesty International published *Rwanda: Persecution of Tutsi Minority and Repression of Government Critics, 1990–1992*, and in March 1993, Africa Watch made available its *Report of the International Commission of Investigation on Human Rights Violations in Rwanda since 1 October 1990*.<sup>7</sup> Even the UN published a report on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions that was prepared by special rapporteur Bacre Waly Ndiaye on his mission to Rwanda during 8–17 April 1993. Such a document would have been of great use to Beardsley and Dallaire. The report, dated 11 August 1993—a few months before the mission began—described Rwanda as a country under a strong “climate of mistrust and terror,” where violence was “a feature of everyday life.”<sup>8</sup> Ndiaye’s report also noted:

[M]assacres of civilian populations have been perpetrated either by the Rwandese security forces or by certain sectors of the population. Killings have taken place not only in combat zones during or after clashes, but also in areas situated some distance from the hostilities. In the latter case, it has been shown time and time again that government officials were involved, either directly by encouraging, planning, directing or participating in the violence, or indirectly through incompetence, negligence or deliberate inaction. The number of victims has sometime reached tragic proportions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Rwanda: Persecution of Tutsi Minority and Repression of Government Critics, 1990–1992* (London: Amnesty International, 1992); and *Report of the International Commission of Investigation on Human Rights Violations in Rwanda since 1 October 1990* (New York: Africa Watch, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Bacre Waly Ndiaye, *Special Rapporteur on His Mission to Rwanda from 8 to 17 April 1993* (New York: United Nations, 1993), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ndiaye, *Special Rapporteur on His Mission to Rwanda from 8 to 17 April 1993*, 10.

The situation in Rwanda was volatile indeed. Following the ceasefire agreement signed on 22 July 1992 in Arusha, Tanzania, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) established a small monitoring mission, deploying a 50-member Neutral Military Observer Group (NMOG I) led by Nigerian Army general Ekundayo Opaleye.

During the coming months, the Rwandan government accused Uganda of supporting the RPF. As a result, both countries sent letters to the president of the UNSC to request the creation and deployment of a UN mission along the border. The UNSC approved the UN Observer Mission Uganda–Rwanda (UNOMUR) on 22 June 1993 to be deployed on the Ugandan side of the Uganda–Rwanda border to “verify that no military assistance reaches Rwanda.”<sup>10</sup> The UN mission deployed 81 observers by September 1993. Additionally, NMOG I was replaced in August 1993 by an expanded NMOG II, which comprised approximately 130 personnel.<sup>11</sup>

After the Arusha Accords were signed early in August 1993, Dal-laïre and Beardsley were called to the UN headquarters in New York. A UN peacekeeping mission was to be deployed in a matter of weeks and a reconnaissance mission at this point was necessary. It was critical to the future of the UN mission that a political and military analysis of the actual situation was carried out in Rwanda. The reconnaissance mission was prepared in a few days. The objectives were to explore the role that the UN was about to play in conjunction with the OAU, to determine the role that the deployment of an international force would play, and to provide an estimate of the personnel and financial resources required.<sup>12</sup> The outcome of the mission had significant potential to determine success for

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<sup>10</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 846 (22 June 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Amare Tekle, “The OAU: Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution,” in *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, eds. Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 111–30, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315133744>. See also “Uganda-Rwanda-UNOMUR,” United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed 18 December 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Castonguay, *Les Casques bleus au Rwanda*, 31.

the future UN deployment in Rwanda. For Dallaire and the other officers and civilians assigned to the mission, it was an opportunity to execute a field evaluation of the military requirements for the deployment of an international force. In addition, for those who would later serve with the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), it was a unique opportunity to acquire a direct and better understanding of the complexity of the situation in the country. The mission team gathered for a meeting in New York before heading to Rwanda. It was the first time many of them met each other. Beardsley noted that “within the reconnaissance team, there was no one that was an expert on Rwanda; they were all green on it, and they were all there for the first time, just like we were. One or two had paid previous visits, but there was no Rwanda expert. So we had to take a lot of stuff on face value; what they told us we had to accept.”<sup>13</sup> Macaire Pédanou, a UN diplomat from Togo who had been an observer of the Arusha peace process, served as the head of the reconnaissance mission. Dallaire remembers that “even Macaire Pédanou, a slightly-built African with a pensive manner who had been the political observer in Arusha and had been appointed head of the reconnaissance mission, had little to offer in the way of a plan of action.”<sup>14</sup> Michael Barnett noted, “Those who were dispatched to the field were selected because of their availability and not because of their deep knowledge of the conflict.”<sup>15</sup> Pédanou was probably the most knowledgeable member of the group. However, just before the team left New York, Pédanou was held back by an emergency surgery. With an extremely shortsighted approach, the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs decided that he would not be replaced. Dallaire took temporarily responsibility for the mission, later writing that “I was still naive enough to be pleased.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>14</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 55.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 59.

<sup>16</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 56.

Dallaire was placed in an extremely challenging position. In a short period, he was to take on the role of diplomat and policy decision maker without an adequate understanding of the situation in Rwanda. It was clearly irresponsible and a major mistake on the part of the UN not to provide the necessary resources and understanding to conduct a vital fact-finding mission and to give political and diplomatic responsibility to the man whose expertise was military and whose main task was supposed to focus on the assessment of the military requirements for the mission.

Dallaire expressed his frustration about becoming the head of the mission. "I had to split my time to cover political and humanitarian aspects as well as the military and meet the leading politicians of the seven parties who would be involved in forming the transitional government," he later wrote. "As a result, I had to delegate several military reconnaissance tasks to Brent, Tiko, Miguel Martin and Brigadier Paddy [Blagden], a retired U.K. Army officer."<sup>17</sup> Despite the fact that this was a major issue, the greatest problem was ultimately Dallaire's limited knowledge of the political landscape in Rwanda at a time when circumstances forced on him a role that he probably should not have played.

The team arrived in Kigali on 19 August 1993, and for 12 days they held meetings with key political and military actors all over Rwanda. After their arrival, they were received by Anastase Gasana, the minister of foreign affairs and cooperation, who acted as a guide for the 18 UN military and civilian officers. In Kigali, Dallaire met with President Habyarimana, Prime Minister Madame Agathe Uwilingiyimana, future designated prime minister Faustin Twagiramungu, and representatives of the diplomatic corps, in particular those who were involved in and had invested much in the peace process.

During the reconnaissance mission, the UN team conducted a careful evaluation of what was necessary for the peacekeeping operation to succeed. The team took several days to identify the most sensitive areas in

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<sup>17</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 59–60.

the country. They also explored and evaluated what type of deployment would be the most effective, as well as what number of troops, equipment, and other resources would place the UN contingent in the best position to accomplish the mission. Dallaire was also concerned about logistics and supply for the mission. Rwanda is a small landlocked country. The main communication to Kigali, where the UNAMIR headquarters would be located, was provided by the excellent system of roads that crosses the country from the southern border with Burundi to the northern border with Uganda. However, the road system could be easily cut off by any significant escalation of the conflict and leave the UN mission “hijacked” in Kigali. The other main point of entry into Kigali, the international airport, was considered a key lifeline for the UN mission.

The team was fascinated by the Rwandan capital. Historically, Nyanza had been the city in which the king resided, while Butare was the most important city during the colonial administration. Kigali, although an important trading center in the early 1900s during German colonial rule, had become the capital only after Rwandan independence in 1962. In the early 1960s, Kigali “was no more than a small outpost with dirt roads and one very modest hotel.”<sup>18</sup> The choice of Kigali as the nation’s capital was not only determined by its geographical location, as Rwanda is a rather small country, but was also the outcome of a few additional considerations. According to Paul Rusesabagina, Kigali “was chosen as a new seat of government, mostly because it was a place that had no pre-colonial history, and therefore no baggage.”<sup>19</sup> Rosamond Halsey Carr noted that the choice of Kigali was made “in a move to distance the seat of government from the royal city of Nyanza.”<sup>20</sup> The truth was probably a little bit of both.

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<sup>18</sup> Rosamond Halsey Carr and Ann Howard Halsey, *Land of a Thousand Hills: My Life in Rwanda* (New York: Plume, 2000), 136.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Rusesabagina and Tom Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man: An Autobiography* (New York: Viking, 2006), 40.

<sup>20</sup> Carr and Halsey, *Land of a Thousand Hills*, 136.

Amadou Deme, a Senegalese Army captain, arrived in Rwanda in July 1993 to join NMOG I, the OAU monitoring mission deployed in the north of the country. On his way to Busogo, a small village in the Virunga region, he had a chance to see Kigali. In his view, that part of the country “was simply astonishing, simply breathtaking.” While driving through Kigali with a few other military observers, he saw “a buoyant and lively city, and the population already knew that new guests have arrived, and people cheering us welcomed us.”<sup>21</sup>

At the end of 1993, Kigali was a city of about 300,000 people that, despite three years of war, remained very attractive. From the restaurant on the top floor of the Hotel des Mille Collines—the location made sadly famous by the movie *Hotel Rwanda*—the view was typical: a city laid on many of Rwanda’s “thousands hills.”<sup>22</sup>

In the early 1980s, Rwanda had experienced the positive effects of strong economic growth. The country developed new systems of transportation and communication and transformed the old Kanombe airport into a new and efficient international hub.<sup>23</sup> For Rusesabagina, Kigali was “one of Africa’s more relaxed capital cities, with a modern airport, a pleasantly unrushed market district, wide avenues shaded with jaracanda trees, and a notable lack of desperate slum quarters that tarnish so many other African capitals.”<sup>24</sup>

Beardsley noted that the reconnaissance mission spent a significant amount of time driving around Rwanda. They “bounced from one meeting to another and one tour to another. We came back at nights, and then would try to assemble what we had learned that day for our report.”<sup>25</sup> In a few days, the international officers were confident that they could prepare

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<sup>21</sup> Amadou Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission: The Whole Truth* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2010), 14.

<sup>22</sup> *Hotel Rwanda*, directed by Terry George, written by Keir Pearson and Terry George (Beverly Hills, CA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Carr and Halsey, *Land of a Thousand Hills*, 140.

<sup>24</sup> Rusesabagina and Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man*, 39.

<sup>25</sup> Beardsley interview.

a plan of action for the mission. They identified where UN peacekeepers needed to be deployed and how many troops would be required to execute the mission. This last point was to become an extremely controversial one.

At the time that the reconnaissance mission was conducted, Rwanda showed the detrimental signs of nearly three years of an uncertain civil war that had displaced thousands of people. While traveling to the country's north to meet with RPF leaders, Dallaire decided to get a firsthand impression of the living conditions in a refugee camp. It was a powerful experience. The smell of the camp was a "toxic mixture of feces, urine, vomit and death." As the Canadian officers and the rest of the delegation stepped out of the vehicles, they "were swarmed by a thick cloud of flies . . . it was hard not to gag with the smell." For Dallaire, "it was the first time I had witnessed such suffering unmediated by the artifice of TV news."<sup>26</sup>

Dallaire continued his trip to Mulindi in the RPF-controlled territory, where he met with several RPF leaders, including Alexis Kanyarengwe, the RPF chairman; Pasteur Bizimungu, a senior political officer who had acted as the head of the RPF delegation in Arusha; and Major General Paul Kagame, the RPF commander. For Dallaire, this was an opportunity to not only meet with the leaders of the RPF but also take a direct, although partial, look at the rebel force. In his view, the RPF soldiers "were clearly well-led, well-trained and motivated. . . . The rank and file tended to be young, sometimes even boys; the officers, too, were young but clearly knew how to work their troops. When not training, soldiers had lectures to attend and equipment to clean and maintain. This was a combat-proven and battle-ready army."<sup>27</sup> What Dallaire saw on the government side could not have been more different. The *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) "was a pronounced contrast."<sup>28</sup> The elite units, and in particular

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<sup>26</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 63–64.

<sup>27</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 68.



the Presidential Guard, were a main concern for Dallaire. While the Presidential Guard “was made up of highly trained officers and NCOs and soldiers, and was the best equipped and staffed of the elite units, as well as the most aggressive . . . they acted with arrogant self-assurance. I did not appreciate their standard of discipline.”<sup>29</sup> The bulk of the army’s front-line units “were composed of poorly trained recruits who lacked weapons, food, medical supplies and, above all, leadership and morale.”<sup>30</sup> Their living conditions were so bad to cause a high level of desertion. According to Dallaire, “There was a double standard in this army: high for the elite units and low for the rest of the army.”<sup>31</sup>

Although Dallaire considered the initial contacts he had with political leaders in Kigali to be positive, he already sensed some uncertainty about the future. In the end, he concluded that the situation in Rwanda could benefit from the immediate deployment of a Chapter VI peace-keeping mission.<sup>32</sup>

While the reconnaissance team returned to New York, Dallaire left for Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where he was scheduled to meet with Tanzanian president Ali Hassan Mwinyi, who had served as the main facilitator of the Arusha peace process. Later, Dallaire would head to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for a meeting with OAU secretary-general Salim Ahmed Salim to discuss the role that the OAU was already playing in Rwanda and its future commitment to the peace process. Dallaire was surprised to be joined in Tanzania by Macaire Pédanou in his original position of head of the technical/reconnaissance mission. Dallaire did not disguise his frustration, as he probably believed that he would continue to act as the head of mission. According to Dallaire, Pédanou treated him “as his number two. I tried to shrug this off, reasoning that he already knew Mwinyi well from the Arusha process. It made sense for him to take the lead, but it

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<sup>29</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 68.

<sup>31</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 68.

<sup>32</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 71.

rankled.”<sup>33</sup> Dallaire’s patience, however, wore off when the two men met with Salim at the OAU. Dallaire wrote, “At our meeting with Salim, Péda-nou presented himself as the reconnaissance expert. In Dar es Salaam I had been patient, but the time had come to shut him down. I waited for him to take a breath, and in that brief pause I just started talking and didn’t stop until I had thoroughly briefed the OAU secretary-general on my proposed operational plan.”<sup>34</sup>

While Dallaire was finishing his round of meetings, Beardsley was already back in New York. There, everybody “on the reconnaissance team disappeared all back to their regular jobs. So the report was very much dumped in General Dallaire’s hands, and of course myself, to help him. A lot of people that had been on the mission disappeared on vacation, because it was the end of the summer. So we were stuck with putting this report together and doing the initial drafting; and again, our knowledge of the situation at this point was still pretty shallow.”<sup>35</sup>

The main item in the report was to determine the number of troops required for the mission. Dallaire and his team concluded that the “ideal” deployment would be between 5,500 and 8,000 troops, with 350 unarmed military observers, full logistical support, armored personnel carriers (APCs), helicopters, and several vehicles. Yet, they were aware that such a proposal would not be accepted, so they worked on another estimate for a “reasonable viable” option of 2,500 troops. The mission would “take more risks as a result, but it was more likely to be approved.”<sup>36</sup> Dallaire still believed that the “ideal” option (5,500 troops and personnel) was the most effective, “but there was no way to reopen that discussion. By the end of my first week back at UN Headquarters, I realized that we had to go with the ‘reasonable viable’ option.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 77–78.

<sup>34</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 78.

<sup>35</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>36</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 75–76.

<sup>37</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 82.

Beardsley explained that the team was fully aware that the UN was already overly committed in terms of troops. In just a short few years, the UN had gone from deploying a handful of missions with fewer than 10,000 troops to more than 10 missions with more than 80,000 troops. Beardsley remembered that they were told:

The chances of getting troops is extremely low. And General Dallaire was told, “Don’t bring in a request for anything more than 2,500.” . . . We call it in the military—they “situated the estimate.” They told us what the plan should be. If you’re going to recommend a peacekeeping force, then it mustn’t exceed 2,500. We estimated that we needed about 5,000 [or] 5,500. In fact, one of the earlier missions had gone and said 8,000 would have been the minimum number of soldiers. So we accepted. The way it had been portrayed to us on the technical mission was [that] this was an acceptable risk, because there was a lot of good intent, good cooperation on both sides. So General Dallaire accepted the 2,500-man limit on the mission. We put together a force structure. We put together the plan, the missions and tasks, and what we would need from contingents, and a draft budget. All that information was passed forward to the secretary.<sup>38</sup>

A few days before Dallaire left on the reconnaissance mission, he was called to a meeting in New York by another Canadian Army general, Maurice Baril, who since June 1992 had been serving as the military advisor to UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In the early 1990s, Baril played a key role at the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), then led by undersecretary-general for peacekeeping operations Kofi Annan. There, Baril explained to Dallaire that his request

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<sup>38</sup> Beardsley interview.

for troops and overall resources for the mission had to be “small and inexpensive,” or it would not be approved. Dallaire, who was taken aback, was asked “to design the mission to fit available resources rather than to respond to the actual demands of the situation we were being sent to address.”<sup>39</sup> Baril and Dallaire were colleagues who belonged to the same national institutions and had known each other in the past. They became “close,” Dallaire explained, in the late 1980s “during our battles with the Ottawa mandarins.”<sup>40</sup> Dallaire was surprised that, in his view, “New York” had changed Baril and made him “more cautious and more politically sensitive.”<sup>41</sup> It is very likely that Baril used his influence to make clear to Dallaire that his estimate for troop requirements, resources, and logistics had to conform to what the UN was ready and able to provide—not what the true needs of the mission were.

This was another major mistake. Dallaire left New York for Rwanda to conduct a fact-finding mission with a predetermined understanding of what he could ask for rather than what he would need to accomplish the mission. His proposal, once he returned from his trip, was designed to be “approved” by the UN leadership. As a result, UN key leaders had to take no responsibility and agonize in front of a more realistic request of 5,000 or 8,000 troops as well as an adequate number of vehicles, APCs, and helicopters, which is what Dallaire called the “ideal deployment.”

The relationship between Baril and Dallaire clearly undermined the sense of independence with which Dallaire, using his professional expertise and judgment, should have made and presented the UN with a mission plan. In addition, neither Boutros-Ghali, Annan, nor Iqbal Riza, an assistant secretary-general in the DPKO, had to face the fact that their key military leader was making a clear connection between mission success and a much greater troop requirement than they were willing or

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<sup>39</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 56.

<sup>40</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 51.

able to support. Dallaire later wrote, "From what I had determined, the Arusha accords would require a UN mission to meet their milestones. Yet if my technical mission report asked for more than what nations were willing to pay or contribute, there would be no mission. I had a major ethical dilemma on my hands before we had even left New York."<sup>42</sup>

In the end, the consideration that most determined the number of troops required for the mission in Rwanda was neither military nor operational but rather dictated by a bureaucratic vision of the deployment that included how many and which countries would be willing to deploy troops in Africa and what type of resources, APCs, and vehicles would be made available to the mission. Even Canada rejected Dallaire's modest request for a few staff officers and a 30-troop movement-control platoon.<sup>43</sup>

Determining the number of troops to be deployed with the mission was just one initial problem that Dallaire had to deal with. The next issue for the future commander of UNAMIR had to do with force composition. Once the number of troops had been decided, the main concern became the quality of troops to be deployed in Rwanda. The bulk of UNAMIR troops were provided by developing countries. The best trained and most prepared component was the small Belgian contingent, just a little more than 400 soldiers. No other Western country made a significant offer for either troops or logistics. A large number of countries were heavily committed to the UN mission in Somalia, and they had already invested much in that mission in both manpower and material resources.

On 22 October 1993, Dallaire returned to Kigali to establish a mission that would count on roughly 50 percent of the troops he believed were needed. He had neither a headquarters nor a chief of staff, and the political head of the mission still needed to be appointed. He would soon find out that these were just the first of many more problems.

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<sup>42</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 56.

<sup>43</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 85.

On his way to Kigali, Dallaire had a stopover in Kampala on 21 October. There, although he had a ticket for a flight to the Rwandan capital scheduled for the following day, to his disbelief, he was informed by the airline that the flight was full and that he was on a standby list. Dallaire did everything he could to be on that flight. When he arrived at the airport the following morning, still on the standby list, he was informed that the aircraft, which originally was supposed to fly to Kigali and then continue to Bujumbura, the then capital of Burundi, was mostly empty, as the Kigali-Bujumbura leg had been cancelled. During the night, the Hutu president of Burundi, Melchior Ndadaye, had been killed by a small group of military personnel belonging to the traditionally Tutsi-dominated army. A few months earlier in July, Ndadaye had become Burundi's first democratically elected president. He was committed to creating the conditions for the creation of a stable multiethnic government. One of his first steps was to appoint Sylvie Kinigi, a Tutsi, as prime minister.

The killing of Ndadaye had several major consequences. It triggered years of civil wars in Burundi that caused the slaughter of thousands, mainly Tutsi, and created a refugee wave in the country's north that affected the south of Rwanda. Two factors were critical to future events in Rwanda. First, following Ndadaye's death, crowds armed with machetes, in many areas with the support of local authorities, began killing Tutsi and moderate Hutus. According to Joseph Gahama, the events of October 1993 were a true genocide against the Tutsi, mainly in the north, center, and east of Burundi.<sup>44</sup> Eugène Nindorera noted that the ethnical "virus" "caused significant ravages."<sup>45</sup> Second, the outburst of violence and

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<sup>44</sup> Joseph Gahama, "Limites et contradictions du processus de démocratisation au Burundi" [Limits and Contradictions of the Democratization Process in Burundi], in *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993–1994): analyses, faits et documents* [The Political Crises in Burundi and Rwanda (1993–1994): Analyses, Facts and Documents], ed. André Guichaoua (Paris: Karthala, 1995), 85.

<sup>45</sup> Eugène Nindorera, "Lenjeu des droits de l'homme à la lumière des derniers événements burundais" [The Issue of Human Rights in Light of the Latest Events in Burundi], in Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda*, 98.

the fear that such violence spread among the population caused thousands of people to leave in search for safety. Large numbers among them crossed the border and entered the south of Rwanda. The ethnic tensions in Burundi and the events of October 1993 dramatically resembled what would happen, on a much larger scale, a few months later in Rwanda.

Dallaire should have understood the complexities he was about to deal with since the day he boarded an empty airplane on his way to Kigali. The killing of the democratically elected Hutu president of Burundi and its bloody consequences were indeed a powerful warning about how vicious the Hutu–Tutsi dynamic was in the entire region. Clearly, the issue was not confined by the borders of individual states. The events in Burundi in October 1993 and its consequences had an impact on the south of Rwanda, and it happened at a time when UNAMIR's main focus was concentrated on the north of Rwanda and on Kigali. It is possible that this commitment absorbed much of the UN military leaders' energy and left little space for them to consider what was happening in other parts of the country.

Moreover, only an experienced observer of Rwanda with an appreciation of the region's ethnic and regional dynamics would have been able to understand the powerful warning signs that from the end of October 1993 were abundant to UNAMIR. Dallaire admitted that he “was in uncharted waters—the geography, the culture, the politics, the brutality, the extremism, the depths of deception practiced almost as a Rwandan art form—all were new to me.”<sup>46</sup>

By the end of October, Dallaire was also overwhelmed by the UN's unreliable, rigid, and dull administrative and bureaucratic systems. Instead of investing precious time in furthering the objective of UNAMIR, he had to struggle to obtain the bare minimum essentials for the mission. It took Dallaire weeks before he could find a suitable place for the UNAMIR headquarters. Finally, Per Hallqvist, UNAMIR's chief ad-

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<sup>46</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 101.

ministrative officer, was able to secure the Amahoro Stadium and the athletes' hotel located in the proximity of the stadium. It was an excellent location, east of Kigali and on the way to the airport. The hotel was ideal for the UNAMIR headquarters, while the stadium had the capacity to host one battalion.<sup>47</sup>

However, Dallaire was extremely frustrated by Hallqvist's attitude. The UNAMIR administrator was very meticulous and, in Dallaire's view, at times pedantic in the application of UN procedure for any administrative request. Dallaire wrote, "Those early days introduced me to begging and borrowing to a degree I'd never dreamed of. I spent far too much time trapped in the details of running the force, drawn into lengthy arguments with Hallqvist about everything from toilet paper to the form of official communiqués."<sup>48</sup> In relation to the allocation of UN vehicles, Dallaire wrote that "Hallqvist distinctly left the impression that civilian needs came before military ones. UNMOs [UN military observers] lucky enough to have vehicles were accused of wasting gas on a short errands in Kigali, while some civilian staff were burning up fuel taking weekend jaunts to see the gorillas in Volcano National Park and other sights in Rwanda."<sup>49</sup>

Dallaire believed that it was extremely important not only to establish a UN presence in Rwanda but also to make such a presence visible to all political factions and to the local population. Just a few weeks into the mission, with only the Tunisian contingent and the military observers on the ground, he decided to hold a formal ceremony for the raising of the UN flag in the demilitarized zone (DMZ). The ceremony was scheduled for 1 November in Kinihira, a beautifully located town where many of the talks that preceded the Arusha Accords were hosted. Dallaire remembered the ceremony as

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<sup>47</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 109.

<sup>48</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 102.

<sup>49</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 107.



The place where I wanted to make the most impact, because of the few forces that I had, was in the demilitarized zone. So I made a ceremony, invited both parties . . . [to] a beautiful little village on the top of a hill, a magnificent view of the area, and where a number of other negotiated components of the peace agreement were signed. I wanted to do it right there, right in the heart of the DMZ. And so with less than 60 troops, mostly the Tunisians . . . we made a ceremony, and the significance of it in security and soon became more and more evident as the big wheels from the government side started to arrive and then the big wheels from the RPF started to arrive, with the arms they brought and us trying to keep a certain control. It became just a mob festival after the few moments of formal recognition and speeches. But it was a great moment.<sup>50</sup>

Captain Deme, who participated in the ceremony, remembers that the military observer team “was present, and the Tunisian platoon was in charge of honor duties. I remember some of the old pot-pot machines rapidly painted with a fresh UN logo, carburetors rapidly fixed by our local mechanics that showed those types of magical expertise only possible in our poor countries. They were supposed to attempt a very short parade, running around a small perimeter. After they started moving, two of them had to be pulled out rapidly.”<sup>51</sup>

Despite his personal commitment and the strong support of the then-small UN presence, Dallaire was disappointed by the absence of two key players in Rwandan politics: President Habyarimana and Major

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Gen Roméo Dallaire, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Dallaire interview.

<sup>51</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 27.

General Kagame. He was aware that their participation was very doubtful, yet even the Rwandan minister of defense, Augustin Bizimana, and many key leaders of the ruling party did not attend. Such an absence was problematic and troubling not only to Dallaire but also to the RPF representatives. The prime minister, Madame Agathe; the future designated prime minister, Faustin Twagiramungu; and the foreign minister, Anastase Gasana attended the ceremony. Their presence was important, but it was known that they were extremely committed to the peace process in Rwanda and to the role that the UN was about to play.<sup>52</sup>

On 25 October, a few days after Dallaire had taken command of UNAMIR, a reconnaissance mission of 25 Belgian Army officers, 20 of whom were paratroopers, arrived in Kigali.<sup>53</sup> Their objective was to assess the situation on the ground and determine the requirements for the Belgian contingent soon to deploy as part of UNAMIR. Colonel Jacques Flament, the chief of the mission, was well aware of the budget constraints that Brussels had imposed on the Belgian deployment. He was also aware that the UN leadership, and Dallaire in particular, would have liked to have a Belgian contribution of 800 soldiers, which would have been enough to provide a reliable level of security in Kigali. Flament made clear to Dallaire that Brussels had no intention of providing such a number. Dallaire also wanted the mission's quick-reaction force (QRF) to be provided by the Belgian contingent, but he soon realized that Brussels would not deploy such a contingent. Flament was indeed in a difficult position. He was aware of the budgetary limitations and the political importance that the number of troops deploying in Rwanda had for the Belgian government. Belgian Navy admiral Michel Verhulst, head of operations of the general staff, instructed him to stress that the Belgian contribution would be just 200 troops, while Dallaire had expected the Belgian con-

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<sup>52</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 103–4.

<sup>53</sup> *Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda* [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (6 December 1997), 180, hereafter *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*.

tingent to be one of the largest. Finally, and probably most important, Flament's concern was that the deployment of a small number of troops might compromise the overall security of the contingent. Consequently, he made clear to Verhulst that he was not ready to report that the contingent needed fewer than 300 troops. Yet, as he returned from Rwanda and prepared his report on 2 November, he wrote that 600 soldiers were necessary. While in Rwanda, he learned from Dallaire that the UN had explored the possibility that Bangladesh would offer a rather large contingent of troops and that they would provide the badly needed QRF.<sup>54</sup>

Before visiting Rwanda, Flament had already worked on a budget report in which he suggested that the Belgian contingent be supported by 22 combat vehicle reconnaissance, tracked (CVRT) armored fighting vehicles.<sup>55</sup> Yet, Dallaire made clear that he had no intention to deploy such vehicles. Although significantly smaller than medium tanks, Dallaire believed that CVRTs were too threatening and very likely unnecessary for the UNAMIR mission. It was only at the end of November that Dallaire agreed for six CVRTs to be deployed in Rwanda.<sup>56</sup> The six aging CVRTs—four FV103 Spartans and two FV107 Scimitars—were reconditioned in Somalia and airlifted to Rwanda. It is difficult to provide an assessment of their operational condition. Two or three were likely in reliable condition. According to Verhulst, it was mostly budget reasons that determined the Belgian general staff to redeploy the CVRTs from Somalia to Rwanda. Badly needed repairs were conducted by specialized personnel in Somalia, followed by more repairs in Rwanda in January and February 1994. After that, Verhulst stated, “the vehicles were mobile and ready to fire their guns.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Hearing of LtCol Briot and Col Flament before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (13 June 1997), hereafter Briot and Flament hearing.

<sup>55</sup> Briot and Flament hearing.

<sup>56</sup> Briot and Flament hearing.

<sup>57</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 292–93.

Following several weeks of negotiations, on 19 November, the Belgian government decided to provide UNAMIR with 450 troops. This number was significantly higher than the 200 initially informally suggested by politicians to military leaders, but it was dangerously lower than the 600 requested by Flament. On 13 June 1997, in a testimony for the Belgian Parliamentary Commission of inquiry about the events in Rwanda, Flament said, "I thought that 450 was an acceptable minimum number, even for the security of the troops. In previous humanitarian operations, sometimes very dangerous, we had sent just a paratrooper battalion. There [in Rwanda] we went for a peacekeeping operation. We needed 800 men to put together a battalion of three companies formed by three platoons each. It is clear that it would have been better if Belgium had been able to provide 800 men."<sup>58</sup>

Yet, Brussels' decision to deploy troops with UNAMIR was the outcome of carefully weighed domestic and foreign policy calculations. From early 1992, the Belgian government had deployed a contingent of 500 troops in the former Yugoslavia as part of UNPROFOR. The contingent soon grew to 668 troops. Brussels had also committed troops to the newly established mission in Somalia: Operation Restore Hope. From December 1992 to November 1993, a large contingent of Belgian soldiers was deployed in Mogadishu and later in Kismayo, a highly unstable city in southern Somalia. As a result, by the time Brussels decided to provide troops to UNAMIR in November 1993, it was already dealing with serious commitments in other major missions. The Belgian decision to join UNAMIR became a good avenue to disengage from the demanding deployment in Somalia, where five Belgian soldiers had already been killed. On 15 October 1993, Lieutenant General José Charlier, commander of the Belgian armed forces, wrote in a letter to the Belgian minister of defense that he welcomed the government's decision to participate in the UN mission in Rwanda. He also stressed that such a decision would

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<sup>58</sup> Briot and Flament hearing.

provide a strong argument to withdraw the deployment from Somalia.<sup>59</sup> Charlier noted that U.S. president William J. “Bill” Clinton had asked twice for Belgian prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene to continue the Belgian deployment in Somalia. However, the Belgian attaché in Washington, DC, had informed Charlier that the United States would probably support a Belgian decision to withdraw from Somalia, as long as a similar-size contingent would be deployed as part of the newly established mission in Rwanda.<sup>60</sup>

Politicians in Brussels were counting on other European and North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies to deploy troops in Rwanda as part of the mission. Yet, when Belgian foreign minister Willem “Willy” Claes explored where troops were to come from, a list of the following countries was provided by the UN: Belgium; Bangladesh; Ghana; Egypt; Tunisia; Togo; Uruguay; and Malawi. These were not exactly the countries Brussels had hoped to team up with in Rwanda. Belgian diplomats at the UN were immediately instructed to contact the Austrian and Canadian delegations to explore whether they would provide some troops. Ottawa made clear that it had no plan to commit troops to UNAMIR. As a result, contacts continued with Vienna, which seemed to be more interested in exploring a possible participation in the mission. Claes and Belgian defense minister Leo Delcroix tried to convince the Austrian government to join UNAMIR with a 200-troop contingent. However, it soon became clear that Austrian peacekeepers would not be able to join UNAMIR’s initial deployment; they could only deploy 9 or 12 months after the beginning of the mission. It was unclear and disputed what the role of such a contingent would be. The cabinet of the Belgian Ministry of Defense was keen on taking advantage of the Austrian deployment to withdraw some of the Belgian peacekeepers. However, Charlier thought

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<sup>59</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 179.

<sup>60</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 15.

that the Austrian deployment was to provide strength to what many in the Belgian armed forces considered an already insufficient deployment.<sup>61</sup>

On 18 February 1994, Delcroix met with his Austrian colleague, Werner Fasslabend, to solicit the deployment of Austrian troops, but did not achieve a positive outcome.<sup>62</sup> In the end, the possibility that Austrian troops might join the mission was superseded by the events of April 1994. The debate in Brussels about the possible role that Austrian troops would play in Rwanda, as well as the differences between political and military leaders, reveals how little understanding there was about the overall task and the safety of the Belgian deployment. Politicians never stopped considering Belgium's participation in UNAMIR as playing mostly, if not solely, a political role. The deployment should have benefited Brussels in the international arena. More realistically, several military leaders were concerned about the capability of such a small force to perform tactical tasks and provide security for their area of responsibility and for themselves. However, political leaders and their vision took priority and determined the Belgian approach in Rwanda until the very end of the deployment. The final decision to deploy 450 troops was an extremely flawed compromise between what political leaders wanted and what the military believed it needed.

Once the number of troops had been decided, the Belgian Army's 1st Paratroopers Battalion, based in Diest, was selected for the initial deployment. The battalion, then commanded by Lieutenant Colonel André Leroy, was—and is still today—one of the most distinguished units in the Belgian Army. The battalion has a strong tradition that dates back to World War II. The unit had deployed in the Congo, Zaire, Rwanda,

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<sup>61</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 213–16.

<sup>62</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 300.

Sahel, and Somalia, the last of these during Operation Restore Hope. Leroy had deployed in Mogadishu from December 1992 to April 1993.<sup>63</sup>

The first elements of the battalion arrived in Rwanda at the end of November 1993, and within a few days the deployment of the entire contingent was completed. Upon its arrival, the battalion was temporarily housed at the Amahoro Stadium and at the Don Bosco School. General Dallaire wanted the mission's best military contingents to be as visible as possible in Kigali, and so he encouraged a wide deployment of these troops throughout their area of responsibility.

Previously in October, Colonel Flament had made clear to Dallaire that the Belgian contingent had no tents and were under instructions not to be put in canvas. Flament was very concerned that the battalion would become extremely fragmented, as seemed to be Dallaire's intention. While Dallaire wanted to give his best troops highest visibility among the population in Kigali, Flament did not want to compromise their security and ability to react to a serious threat without being able to rely on a large enough number of troops. The understanding was that the lodging was to be arranged by units as large as company-size.

It was difficult to find a large enough structure to accommodate a few hundred troops. This was for at least two reasons: first, Kigali did not have many large buildings, and second, Rwandan government authorities were not very keen on helping the Belgians find good lodging. Flament stated that during the reconnaissance mission, when he was in a meeting with FAR colonel Léonidas Rusatira, he asked whether one of the Belgian companies could be hosted at the *Ecole Supérieure Militaire* (Military Higher School, or ESM). Rusatira rejected the request and did everything he could to stop the initiative. The ESM was located just a

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<sup>63</sup> Hearing of LtCol Leroy before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (24 March 1997), hereafter Leroy hearing.

few hundred meters from Camp Kigali, where 10 Belgian peacekeepers would be brutally killed on 7 April 1994.<sup>64</sup>

On 6 December 1993, when the first contingent of Bangladeshi soldiers arrived in Kigali, Dallaire ordered them to be stationed at the Amahoro Stadium, where they would be close to Rutongo, their area of responsibility. The Belgian soldiers had to relocate closer to their area of responsibility, a territory that covered the area from the airport to the Kigali city center. In addition to the logistical problems of relocating nearly the entire battalion, the Belgian contingent had to deal with administrative hurdles and budgetary constraints imposed on UNAMIR by both the UN and the Belgian government. As the UN began to deploy large numbers of civilians and military personnel to Rwanda, rent prices increased significantly. At this point, determining who was responsible to pay for rents became a major problem, as the UN was not supposed to and the Belgian government did not intend to. When senior Belgian military leaders in Kigali asked Brussels to authorize the payment for rents of places they desperately needed and have the government deal with who was supposed to pay for it, they were told that they had no authority to sign any contract.<sup>65</sup> As a result, the search intensified for “free” or cheap accommodations. The Salesian fathers and Bernardine sisters of the Lycée Notre-Dame de Citeaux school offered the Belgian paratroopers rent-free accommodation. This option immediately proved to be a poor one, as the students’ parents made clear that they did not like the fact that the soldiers would share the facility with their children. In a few weeks, the deployment at the school had to be relocated.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Briot and Flament hearing.

<sup>65</sup> Luc Marchal, *Rwanda: la descente aux enfers: témoignage d'un peacekeeper, Décembre 1993–Avril 1994* [Rwanda: The Descent into Hell: Testimony of a Peacekeeper, December 1993–April 1994] (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 2001), 51–52.

<sup>66</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 50–52.



Following the arrival of the Bangladeshi contingent, Leroy and his soldiers ended up on the street with nowhere to go.<sup>67</sup> It took several weeks before the Belgian troops could find “suitable” accommodations in as many as 14 locations. The Salesian fathers hosted the largest group, 90 soldiers, at the *École Technique Officielle* (ETO) school, Don Bosco, codenamed “Beverly Hills,” in the neighborhood of Kicukiro, and 50 more at the *Ate-liers techniques* school, codenamed “Franciscus,” in the neighborhood of Kimihurura. The logistical base “Cappuccino” was hosted in the neighborhood of Gikondo in a store of Rwandex, a company that produced and exported coffee. “Cappuccino” was manned by 41 paratroopers, some of whom were in charge of guarding the contingent’s heavier weapons and ammunition, including light antiarmor weapons. These three groups were located between the city center and the airport. The logistic base was situated rather close and within the same distance from both Kimihurura and Kicukiro.<sup>68</sup>

All other deployments of soldiers were small in number, less than 50 and as few as 5, as at “Vipere,” which was close to the airport’s new control tower, where the mission’s CVRTs were located. Not too far from there, close to the airport’s old control tower, were 40 soldiers of “Top Gun.” The company responsible for the city center was divided between three locations: the headquarters, “Chinatown,” had a total of 15 soldiers; one platoon with 36 soldiers was rather close in a building codenamed “Mirador”; and another platoon with 36 soldiers was close to the Islamic Cultural Center and therefore codenamed “Ramadan.” In addition to their limited ability to provide a mass response to an attack, Leroy also noted that his troops had to guard 14 sites, a task that could be handled only under peaceful conditions. Indeed, many Belgian peacekeepers who might

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<sup>67</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 47.

<sup>68</sup> *Kibat Chronique 6 Avr–19 Avr 1994* [Kibat Chronicle, 6–19 April 1994], International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 9–11.

have been tasked with patrolling, escorting, or conducting other mission-related duties were to provide security to their many accommodations.<sup>69</sup>

As Dallaire realized that he would not be able to rely on just one battalion to provide security in Kigali, he viewed the contribution of the Bangladeshi and the task they had to perform as one of vital importance. The Bangladeshi contingent, which was responsible for providing some key components to the mission—including an infantry battalion, an engineer company, a logistic company, and a medical platoon—took about three months to deploy. Dallaire was extremely keen to see the Bangladeshis provide, in the shortest possible time, a vital asset to UNAMIR: the QRF. Lieutenant Colonel De Loecker, a Belgian Army reserve officer, was ordered by the Belgian Joint Staff to take responsibility for the escorts and of the formation and direction of the QRF. De Loecker arrived in Kigali on 4 December and immediately began working on his tasks. He soon realized that the training program would be delayed since the vehicles to be used by the QRF had not arrived in Rwanda yet. At the beginning of February 1994, eight Eastern European-made BTR-80s, eight-by-eight wheeled APCs, arrived in Kigali.

These BTR 80s, which were redeployed from the mission in Mozambique, were old and of poor quality. A number of drivers appeared to be inadequately trained to drive in terrain such as that in Rwanda. Additionally, some of the APCs' equipment was inoperable because parts were stolen in transit.<sup>70</sup> With evident frustration, De Loecker stated that although the APC were easy to drive, the troops had to be trained for two weeks to learn what normally would require just one day: "Even the simple manning of a check point at a cross road in west Kigali seemed to be a too heavy mission for them. I had to intervene every day. At the end of March the Bangladeshi battalion commander, in a note addressed to the Kigali Sector [Headquarters] stated that the training was only reli-

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<sup>69</sup> Leroy hearing.

<sup>70</sup> Henry Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali* (Accra, Ghana: Woeli, 1999), 39.

able at the platoon level. These men, therefore, were not prepared for a QRF.”<sup>71</sup> The 80 peacekeepers from Bangladesh who were supposed to serve as the QRF were simply not up to the task. On more than one occasion, De Loecker made clear to UNAMIR senior military leaders how bad the condition of the Bangladeshi contingent was, how unreliable the old BTR 80s were, and therefore how dangerous the situation was in relation to the QRF. De Loecker did not hesitate to describe the troops from Bangladesh as “totally incompetent and unfit to carry out their mission.”<sup>72</sup>

In late February, the QRF was still training, and by the time it was desperately needed, it was, in Dallaire’s words, “still woefully inadequate.”<sup>73</sup> The reality is that UNAMIR never developed an effective rapid reaction ability.

Dallaire was aware that the Bangladeshi troops would arrive with little to no equipment. Bangladeshi political and military authorities had a strong expectation that the UN would provide the troops with any logistic or supply they needed. Yet, Dallaire “hoped that they would be well-led and well-trained.”<sup>74</sup> However, the performance of the Bangladeshi troops in Rwanda was significantly below his expectations. This was clearly a major problem because when UNAMIR reached its full strength, Bangladeshi peacekeepers made up for nearly 50 percent of the force and were supposed to be responsible for a number of critical roles. Dallaire’s judgment of the Bangladesh troops is tough but probably fair. According to Dallaire, during the difficult days at the beginning of the crisis in April, “[t]heir APCs were either mysteriously breaking down (we later found out that the crews were sabotaging the vehicles by placing rags in the exhaust pipes) or they couldn’t be reached (a confirmed tactic by

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<sup>71</sup> Hearing of Reserve LtCol De Loecker and Col Balis before the Commission d’enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (24 March 1997), hereafter De Loecker and Balis hearing.

<sup>72</sup> De Loecker and Balis hearing.

<sup>73</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 241.

<sup>74</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 123.

some of the crews was to move a short distance from the headquarters, shut down the radio and return later, claiming they had been held at a roadblock). Those who actually arrived at the place to which they had been sent exhibited a lack of zeal in pursuing their mission.”<sup>75</sup>

One of the things that puzzled Dallaire about the Bangladeshi contingent was its unusual composition. Once the battalion had deployed, he was surprised by the fact that, unlike other similar units normally commanded by a lieutenant colonel, the Bangladeshi chain of command included a full colonel, no less than six lieutenant colonels, dozens of majors, and a large number of captains and lieutenants.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Carol Off later explained that the Kigali Sector commander “discovered that the Bangladeshis were not a battalion at all but an assortment of soldiers pulled out of different units who had never been together before Rwanda. Their commander showed up weeks late and turned out to be a professor from the Bangladeshi military school who would act only on written orders submitted well in advance.”<sup>77</sup>

It should be noted that by the time Bangladesh began deploying troops in Rwanda, it had already placed significantly larger contingents in Mozambique (2,328) and Somalia (1,946). For a country with a small defense budget, the Bangladeshi military commitment was overstretched. According to Kabilan Krishnasamy, Bangladesh’s commitment to peacekeeping was determined by its attempt to achieve financial gains. In the early 1990s, “the UN allocates US\$988 per month per soldier to the national government, which then pays its military forces based on international scales and calculations. At an individual level, the salary is a major attraction for soldiers since it serves as a considerable supplement to their

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<sup>75</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 243–44.

<sup>76</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 124.

<sup>77</sup> Carol Off, *The Lion, the Fox, and the Eagle: A Story of Generals and Justice in Rwanda and Yugoslavia* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2000), 41.

meagre incomes at home. At the national level, the foreign exchange may bring additional revenues to the country's treasury."<sup>78</sup>

Ultimately, it was probably unwise for the UN to accept Bangladesh's contribution of troops when it was easy to understand that although the Bangladeshi government was keen on deploying more troops in peace support operations, it clearly did not have the ability to support them and to offer quality troops.

The Tunisian contingent was already deployed in Rwanda as part of the NMOG. The 60 well-led and well-trained Tunisians had no communication capability and no logistics, they were poorly equipped and supplied.<sup>79</sup> Despite many technical and logistical limitations, these peacekeepers were much respected by UNAMIR military leaders as they proved to be extremely effective.

As the force began forming, Dallaire had to develop the rules of engagement (ROE) to be adopted by UNAMIR. He studied very carefully what type of ROE would be best suited for the mission. He was in charge of a Chapter VI peacekeeping mission and was also aware that ethnic tension in Rwanda remained rather high. Dallaire wanted his peacekeepers to appear to the Rwandans as unthreatening as possible and use minimum force mainly in self-defense. However, he also wanted them to be able to deal effectively with ethnic killing and banditry. Dallaire prepared a document that reflected his hope that the two "former" enemies—the Rwandan government and the RPF—would comply with the Arusha treaty but that did not eliminate the possibility for him to use force to deal with certain type of crimes.

During the reconnaissance mission to Rwanda the previous August, Dallaire had prepared a draft document that drew much of its content from the ROE adopted by the United Nations Transitional Authority

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<sup>78</sup> Kabilan Krishnasamy, "Bangladesh and UN Peacekeeping: The Participation of a 'Small State,'" *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 41, no. 1 (2003): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/713999607>.

<sup>79</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 302.

in Cambodia, another Chapter VI mission but one with robust ROE. In October, Dallaire had submitted the ROE draft proposal for UNAMIR to the DPKO asking for approval. He never received a reply from the UN.<sup>80</sup> He also sent the same document to the governments participating in UNAMIR. The Belgian government expressed some reservations about the fact that its troops might be used in crowd control, while the Canadian government considered the use of deadly force to protect UN properties excessive. Amendments were made to incorporate these concerns.<sup>81</sup> The UN never even acknowledged Dallaire's ROE. The lack of a formal UN response to Dallaire's draft proposal was one element that added to the confusion when UNAMIR was presented with the need to use those rules. For the force commander, the silence from the UN secretariat could have been interpreted as the equivalent of a tacit approval. Yet, the issue was so important that for Dallaire to be in a stronger position, he would have needed at least an acknowledgment from the UN. The force commander and the UN needed to agree on how and under what circumstances the use of force was allowed.

Major Beardsley stressed how important it would have been for the UN to provide formal approval or ask for revisions of the ROE submitted by Dallaire. He noted that:

At this time in New York, again, we're a low priority mission, other missions are going through crises: Bosnia's in crisis, Croatia's in crisis, Somalia's in crisis. So they say, "You just write up the rules of engagement, you write them up, you draft them and give them to us." . . . So we're looking for robust rules of engagement. . . . Until such time as the UN approves it, it is an interim document. This is what we will be using. This goes to DPKO.

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<sup>80</sup> *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: United Nations Security Council, 1999).

<sup>81</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 99.

DPKO receives this. . . . Because we never hear a word. Now General Dallaire on basically a monthly basis is saying, “Oh by the way, have the rules of engagement been approved yet?” And nothing ever comes back, because nobody took the time to frickin’ read them. And no one wanted to put their signature on it accepting responsibility. So these remained interim right up to the 7th of April, the 8th of April, [the] 10th of April.<sup>82</sup>

According to the ROE, it was clear that UNAMIR peacekeepers might legally resort to the use of force to confront situations that went beyond self-defense. The force commander indicated that the conditions in Rwanda—a rapid process of demobilization, a high level of unemployment, and mass desertion from the army—could create a situation in which there might be a significant rise in banditry. The key concept of the ROE was that UNAMIR personnel could use weapons “to defend themselves, other UN lives, or persons under their protection against direct attack.”<sup>83</sup>

Despite the fact that crime control rested with the local police, the ROE stated that “UNAMIR military personnel may be required to assist UNCIVPOL and local authorities in maintaining law and order. In these circumstances, these ROE would be used in support of local authorities and UNCIVPOL.” Probably the most important paragraph of the ROE was that dealing with crimes against humanity: “There may be ethnically or politically motivated criminal acts committed during this mandate which will morally and legally require UNAMIR to use all available

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<sup>82</sup> “Voices on Rwanda: Major Brent Beardsley,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed 18 December 2024.

<sup>83</sup> Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

means to halt them. . . . UNAMIR will take the necessary action to prevent any crime against humanity.”<sup>84</sup>

Dallaire had therefore given the mission the legal framework that would have allowed him to deal with crimes against humanity and adopt any measure to prevent such crimes. Trevor Findlay noted that in the ROE Dallaire also “included a provision that the firing of weapons by individual troops required higher authorization, while the use of heavier weapons or light and medium machine guns to be authorized at the sector command and force commander levels, respectively.”<sup>85</sup> Indeed, point 8 of the ROE established that the use of any heavy support weapon—including artillery, rocket launchers, and heavy machine guns—was to be authorized by the force commander (Dallaire) or anyone acting as force commander. The sector commanders could authorize the use of medium machine guns and other automatic weapons, while the battalion commander was responsible for authorizing the use of all other weapons with single shots. The procedure to open fire was extremely strict but also somehow confused. In the attempt to consider every possible situation that peacekeepers might face, the procedure to use force became unclear. Dallaire was concerned with identifying the proper balance between using the right amount of force to protect defenseless people and avoiding a situation in which the overall mission objectives might be compromised by an unnecessary escalation of force. This approach became a source of confusion at the tactical level.<sup>86</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Dewez, the Belgian Army battalion commander who deployed with the Belgian contingent to UNAMIR, KIBAT II (abbreviated from *Kigali Battalion*), in March 1994, explained that he did his best to summarize and explain the ROE to his unit to make them

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<sup>84</sup> William A. Schabas, *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 476, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511575556>.

<sup>85</sup> Trevor Findlay, *The Use of Force in UN Peace Operations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 277–78.

<sup>86</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 383–88.



easier to understand.<sup>87</sup> Troops at all levels were confused by how to use force when necessary and in some cases even in self-defense. Dallaire, before the situation in Rwanda collapsed into a state of total chaos, recognized the confusion generated by the ROE and directed Colonel Walter Balis, a Belgian Army officer, to summarize and clarify them. Later, Dallaire also asked Balis to make a few changes to the ROE, particularly in relation to UN convoys and how they had to deal with roadblocks.<sup>88</sup>

In November 1993, the UN finally appointed the chief of the mission. UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali choose as the Secretary-General Special Representative for Rwanda a retired Cameroonian diplomat, Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, who had served as Cameroon's foreign minister in 1988–92. Boutros-Ghali and Booh-Booh knew each other well, as they had worked together when Booh-Booh was involved with the Egyptian-Cameroonian Commission and Boutros-Ghali was serving as Egypt's foreign minister. Boutros-Ghali appointed Booh-Booh because "as a West African [he] . . . would be objective about the situation in Rwanda. In addition I wanted to reinforce the African presence in the United Nations."<sup>89</sup>

As foreign minister, Booh-Booh had contacts with Rwanda and should have understood the complexity of the ongoing conflict. Yet, he did not possess the political knowledge necessary to navigate such a difficult situation and succeed in bringing the two factions to comply with the requirements set in the Arusha Accords. According to Gerard Prunier, Booh-Booh "seemed somewhat lost in the midst of all this confusion."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Hearing of Col Engelen and Col Dewez before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (16 April 1997).

<sup>88</sup> Hearing of Reserve LtCol De Loecker before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (29 May 1997).

<sup>89</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: A U.S.–U.N. Saga* (New York: Random House, 1999), 129–30.

<sup>90</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 2005), 204.

Carol Off noted that he “never seemed to grasp exactly what was going on in Rwanda.”<sup>91</sup> For the Belgian Senate Commission, Booh-Booh was not up to the task and position for the mission he was responsible for.<sup>92</sup>

The relationship between Booh-Booh and Dallaire was awkward from the very beginning. In his book, Dallaire described Booh-Booh as a “proper gentleman who kept diplomatic hours. . . . [He was] rarely in his office before ten, took a full two-hour lunch and left the office before five.” According to Dallaire, the special representative “seemed to bring nothing to the table in the way of expertise on Rwanda, knowledge of the conflict, familiarity with the Arusha accords, or skill at identifying and dealing with the political intrigues of the nation.”<sup>93</sup> A few years after Dallaire’s book was published, Booh-Booh provided his own view on this difficult relationship. According to Booh-Booh, during his briefing at the UN in New York on 16 November 1993, one week before he would leave for Rwanda, he was warned that Dallaire had insisted vigorously on functioning as both force commander and head of the mission.<sup>94</sup>

On 23 November, a few hours after his arrival in Kigali, Booh-Booh was at the Hotel des Mille Collines. He had given an impromptu press conference at the airport and was planning his days ahead when he was informed that President Habyarimana was ready to receive him the following day. It was just a few minutes before the meeting with Habyarimana that Booh-Booh and Dallaire met for the first time. They walked into the meeting with the Rwandan president as two near-complete strangers, engaging one of the key players in the country’s peace process without a concerted plan or any coordination.

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<sup>91</sup> Off, *The Lion, the Fox, and the Eagle*, 37.

<sup>92</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 716.

<sup>93</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 118.

<sup>94</sup> Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, *Le patron de Dallaire parle: Révélations sur les dérives d'un général de l'ONU au Rwanda* [Dallaire’s Boss Speaks: Revelations on the Excesses of a UN General in Rwanda] (Paris: Duboiris, 2005), 29.

The month of November saw a resurgence of violence, and Dallaire had to deal with “an increased number of reports of shooting and killings around the country.”<sup>95</sup> Rwanda’s prime minister, Madame Agathe, tried to make sure that those warning signs were not missed. She possessed a unique ability and the experience to read and interpret what was happening in the country and how the peace process was being taken hostage by the most extreme factions of the Habyarimana government. Madame Agathe, a 41-year-old moderate Hutu and a leader of the opposition party to Habyarimana, was very committed to the Arusha peace process and to the creation of a transitional government. She wanted to see an end, once and for all, to the civil war with the RPF. In April 1992, she had left her job as an educator to become Rwanda’s minister of primary and secondary education, a position that she held until July 1993, when she was appointed prime minister. During the last year, she had confronted the president both as minister of education and as prime minister. In a speech at the end of March 1994, she said: “nothing stands anymore to the creation of a new government . . . with the exception of President Habyarimana’s will.”<sup>96</sup>

On 3 November 1993, less than two weeks after Dallaire’s arrival in Rwanda, Madame Agathe delivered a message to the nation in which she publicly denounced the existence of a group of individuals firmly opposed to the application of the peace agreement: “This group . . . does whatever it can to prevent the deployment of the international Force. . . [T]he second objective pursued by this faction is to prevent the Prime Minister designated His Excellency Mister Twagiramungu Faustin to create the Broad-Based Transitional Government.”<sup>97</sup>

Interestingly, she also made a clear reference to what had happened a few weeks earlier in Burundi: “We are all sorry for the murder of his

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<sup>95</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 115.

<sup>96</sup> Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda*, 694.

<sup>97</sup> Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda*, 652.

Excellency Mister Melchior Ndadaye, president of the Republic of Burundi, of his close associates and for the massacre of the innocent people of Burundi. It is, however, unacceptable to see some political leaders to sympathize with the call to the massacre between Hutu and Tutsi at a time when our country is committed to national reconciliation, tolerance and welcome of the refugees.”<sup>98</sup> Madame Agathe displayed a consistent and strong commitment to the peace process and demonstrated great resilience, and she remained outspoken until the day she was brutally killed. She was constantly trying to catch the attention of those observers, including UN political and military leaders, who needed to understand the bloody consequences that laid ahead for the Rwandan people if the peace process failed.

Madame Agathe’s public denunciation was followed one month later by a letter addressed to Dallaire and signed by several senior Rwandan military officers. In the letter, dated 3 December 1993, the officers warned Dallaire about how dangerous the situation in Rwanda was becoming. They also addressed an issue that might not have been obvious to the UNAMIR commander: that several militaries “originally from the same region of the President of the Republic” would rather see a military solution to the conflict and therefore remained hostile to the peace process for “clear selfish and partisan interests.” Indeed, Dallaire was dealing not only with the most visible Hutu-Tutsi conflict but also with the less recognizable power struggle between north and south that characterized relations among the Hutu during several decades. They noted that the killing of civilians in Kirambo, Mutura, and Ngenda was part of a strategy to destabilize the country. They also indicated that these groups were organizing other massacres in regions of the country with “a high concentration of Tutsi,” such as Bugesera, Kibuye, Kibungo, and others. This “Machiavelian plan” was also being directed against political leaders such as Faustin Twagiramungu, Landoald “Lando” Ndasingwa, Felicien Gatabazi,

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<sup>98</sup> Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda*, 652–53.

Dismas Nsengiyaremye, and Boniface Ngulinzira.<sup>99</sup> These political leaders had committed the inexcusable sin of supporting the peace process, which ultimately would have significantly limited President Habyarimana's personal power and the power that the extremists currently enjoyed.

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<sup>99</sup> Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda*, 653–54.

# Chapter 4

## CLUB MÉDITERRANÉE

On 4 December 1993, Belgian Army colonel Luc Marchal boarded a military plane headed to Rwanda, where he would serve as the UNAMIR sector commander for Kigali. Marchal, a paratrooper who had served with the 1st Paratroopers Battalion, provided valuable African experience to UNAMIR, as he was stationed in Zaire for five years as part of the Belgian military cooperation there.<sup>1</sup> He had also served a three-year tour of duty in the cabinet of the Belgian minister of defense, where he worked on Belgian deployments in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. Marchal had accumulated a wealth of experience and appreciated the importance of providing continuity in the role he was to fulfill at UNAMIR. As a result, he asked Lieutenant General José Charlier, commander of the Belgian armed forces, to be allowed to hold the position for the entire duration of the mission and not just the normal rotation period of six months. Marchal was highly motivated. He wanted to apply his experience to help the population of Rwanda build peace and contribute to the creation of a better future in the country. “To me,” he later wrote, “it seemed an exciting task.”<sup>2</sup>

Three days before he boarded the Belgian Air Force aircraft that would take him to Rwanda, Marchal had a final meeting with Charlier.

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<sup>1</sup> Luc Marchal, *Rwanda: la descente aux enfers: témoignage d'un peacekeeper, Décembre 1993–Avril 1994* [Rwanda: The Descent into Hell: Testimony of a Peacekeeper, December 1993–April 1994] (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 2001), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 23.

He was instructed to stay focused on the security of the Belgian soldiers, occupy as much terrain as possible in Kigali, avoid contacts with the officers of the Belgian military cooperation, and maintain contact between the battalion deployed in Kigali and the Para-Commando Brigade back in Belgium. Following this last-minute meeting, Marchal was prepared to begin his mission with great enthusiasm but had few guidelines or directions from the officers in charge of “operations” in Rwanda. On his own initiative, he began collecting documents that might be of help to him, but he lamented that “on my departure day I was not sure I had with me the most updated version of the [mission] rules of engagement.”<sup>3</sup>

While still in Brussels, Marchal had one last chance to talk to Colonel Jacques Flament. Marchal was very interested in getting as much information as possible about the situation in Rwanda. He also wanted to raise a major concern about the configuration of the Belgian contingent that would be deployed as part of UNAMIR. When Marchal shared with Flament his apprehension about the small number of troops and the limited firepower in the contingent, Flament told him, “What do you complain about, you are going to a Club Med” (referring to the popular French travel company).<sup>4</sup> This shallow approach was shared by many of the Belgian paratroopers and their officers. This perception was probably due to several factors. Rwanda was a relatively familiar environment to Belgian troops. The small African country was a former Belgian colony, and just a few years earlier, in 1990, Belgian troops had deployed there, though admittedly for a short period of time. Overall, the environment in which the Belgian soldiers were about to operate was perceived as rather friendly. Moreover, Rwanda, a naturally beautiful country with excellent weather, was vastly different from Somalia, where the Belgian paratroopers had recently participated in peacekeeping operations. Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Dewez, who commanded KIBAT II, explained that if some

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<sup>3</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 27.

soldiers considered Kigali a Club Med, this was mainly because of the significantly different quality of life they experienced there when compared with the deployment in Somalia.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, it was clear to Marchal that his assignment, and the situation he would have to deal with, had very little in common with a Club Med. He became immediately aware of the many complex dimensions that had great potential to impact the mission in a negative way. A few hours after his arrival in Kigali, Marchal went to the UNAMIR headquarters for a meeting with General Dallaire. The new Kigali Sector commander wanted to introduce himself to the force commander and acquire a better understanding of the job he was to perform in the coming months. Dallaire gave Marchal a number of critical and urgent tasks. As a sector commander, he was to make all the necessary arrangements to protect the movement of and assure the position of a Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) battalion from Mulindi to Kigali as was agreed on in the Arusha Accords. The battalion's mission was to provide security to the RPF political leaders who were stationed in Kigali and working on the creation of a transitional government. To prepare for this task, Marchal was to create a weapons-safe zone in the capital, the Kigali Weapons Secure Area (KWSA). He was tasked to deploy all UNMOs to monitor the execution of the peace agreement. Marchal was also responsible for providing security to all the expatriates in Kigali, which was essential to make the case for an end to the French deployment in the capital.<sup>6</sup> Marchal felt as though he was facing an extremely steep wall that he had to climb without proper equipment.<sup>7</sup> To accomplish the tasks he had received from Dallaire, Marchal could count on a command team of one Ghanaian, four Belgian, and nine Bangladeshi military officers. Some of them were al-

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<sup>5</sup> Hearing of Col Engelen and Col Dewez before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (16 April 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 64–65.

<sup>7</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 66.



ready busy executing other collateral duties that took them away from the UNAMIR headquarters. Marchal was concerned not only about how small the team was but also about the difficulties of communication, as only the Belgian officers could speak French.<sup>8</sup>

In all likelihood, Marchal was not fully prepared to deal with the fact that some of the main problems in his sector would be created by his own troops. The first indication of trouble came just a few days after he had taken command in Kigali. Marchal had under his command a small but very important UNMO contingent, which was led by an experienced peacekeeper, Fijian Army colonel Ratu Isoa Tikoca, who had previously served in Kashmir, Syria, Lebanon, and Somalia.<sup>9</sup> Tikoca was likely among the very few who had some understanding of the conflict in Rwanda, for he had spent a month as an observer during the Arusha peace process. On 6 December, when Tikoca reported to Marchal for the first time, the Belgian colonel saw a man whose face shown clear signs of a fistfight. Tikoca had several bruises on his face and had some difficulty talking since his jaw would not function properly. Marchal learned that the day before he took command of the sector, an altercation had taken place at “Chez Lando,” a well-known restaurant in proximity to the UNAMIR headquarters. Tikoca had gotten into a strong verbal argument with two Belgian paratroopers, who decided to attack him outside of the restaurant. As a result, Marchal later noted, the two paratroopers “were the firsts of a long list of soldiers sent back to Belgium for disciplinary reasons.”<sup>10</sup> Lieutenant Colonel André Leroy, the battalion commander, said, “I sent back 18 soldiers for disciplinary reasons. At the slightest embarrassment, a return to Belgium was planned.”<sup>11</sup> During the period in

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<sup>8</sup> Jean-Claude Willame, *Les Belges au Rwanda: Le Parcours de la honte* [Belgians in Rwanda: The Journey of Shame] (Brussels: Editions GRIP, 1997), 64.

<sup>9</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), 63.

<sup>10</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 68.

<sup>11</sup> Hearing of LtCol Leroy before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (24 March 1997), hereafter Leroy hearing.

which Marchal acted as sector commander in Kigali, his relationship with the Belgian contingent was sometimes extremely tense.

After taking command, Marchal dove into his tasks. The most pressing and immediate assignment was the implementation of the arrangements that were instrumental in facilitating the execution of the Arusha treaty. To establish the Broad-Based Transitional Government (BBTG) in Rwanda, UNAMIR was to create the KWSA and arrange for a RPF battalion to be deployed in Kigali, where they would be responsible for the security of their political representatives in the transitional government. All of these tasks were complex and made more difficult because of UNAMIR's limited number of troops. By the end of December 1993, the mission was only at 50 percent of its total strength. In addition, the presence of the French troops deployed in Rwanda since October 1990 as part of Operation Noroit presented an obstacle to the implementation of the many tasks Marchal had been given. Besides providing vital support to the Rwandan government forces in their confrontation with the RPF, the French troops were the most reliable form of protection for the French community in Kigali. The French ambassador to Rwanda made clear to UNAMIR his worries about the safety of the expatriates after the departure of the French soldiers. Nevertheless, on 10 December, Operation Noroit ended and the French soldiers left the country.

Marchal understood the importance of increasing the local population's trust in UNAMIR. Therefore, while planning for the creation of the KWSA and the deployment of the RPF battalion in Kigali, he launched a short-lived operation, "Save City." For 10 days, a large number of UN patrols were conducted with the objective of helping Rwandans become familiar with the blue berets of the UN peacekeepers.

The perception among the population was rather positive. Carl Wilkens, the director of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International in Rwanda, remembered:

It was strange because, on the one hand, here's little groups of eight U.N. soldiers, fully decked out . . . with

all of their gear and their machine guns and everything, patrolling the city . . . and we used to joke, you can't . . . spit without hitting a U.N. car. And so you got all [these] white vehicles, black "U.N." all over them, and occasionally, you would see some white tanks or something. There was an incredible sense of security in that. And yet we also knew things were going to blow.<sup>12</sup>

Save City would also provide Marchal with an important test for how the units assigned to the Kigali Sector would perform with their peacekeeping duties. During the first weeks of December, Marchal did not yet know how ready the two battalions—the Belgian KIBAT and the Bangladeshi RUTBAT (abbreviated from *Rutongo Battalion*)—were to perform such tasks. While the Bangladeshi peacekeepers were busy trying to reach the operational level, the Belgians were anxious to begin some type of activity.

Marchal was not impressed by his initial interaction with the first Bangladeshi military contingent that arrived in Rwanda. When he met with the 250 soldiers who had just landed at the Kigali airport, he realized that the Bangladeshi troops had with them less than the bare minimum. Their equipment was extremely light, and they did not have food or water. A disappointed Marchal remembered, "The first question the detachment commander asked me was who should he ask to have something to drink and eat!"<sup>13</sup> Major Brent Beardsley, General Dallaire's assistant, noted, "The soldiers arrived in Rwanda, literally got off the plane without a bottle of water for supper or a meal and we had no logistics in place and we literally were on the market buying bags of rice to feed them a supper."<sup>14</sup> Marchal stressed that the UN instructions to the national

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Carl Wilkens, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS.

<sup>13</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 82.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Maj Brent Beardsley, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Beardsley interview.

contingents were that they were supposed to be self-sufficient for at least three months.<sup>15</sup>

The last Bangladeshi soldiers arrived in Rwanda at the end of January 1994. With them, arriving two months after the first troops, was the contingent commander, Bangladesh Army colonel Nazrul Islam. Marchal noted how his own priorities differed significantly from those of Nazrul Islam. While the initial interaction between the two officers was very polite, after Marchal shared with Nazrul Islam how he intended to employ the Bangladeshi battalion, Nazrul Islam told Marchal, "Sir, I would like to confirm again my sincere desire to work together with you, yet I would like to make clear that if you like that we carry out your orders, they have to be written."<sup>16</sup>

While Marchal was concerned about the Bangladeshi soldiers' performance, the Belgian peacekeepers patrolled the assigned city neighborhoods in ways that Marchal defined as "aggressive, belligerent or inappropriate."<sup>17</sup> Marchal was afraid that the Belgian soldiers had taken an approach that resembled too closely the one they adopted in Somalia, which was rather inadequate, at that point, for the streets of Kigali. He wanted the Belgian peacekeepers to take a more open approach that reflected the objective of UNAMIR. He discussed his concerns with the KIBAT commander, Lieutenant Colonel Leroy, who made clear to Marchal that his paratroopers were not "ordinary infantrymen."<sup>18</sup> While on patrol, Marchal wanted the Belgian peacekeepers to have their rifles on their shoulders so that they would not frighten the local population. But Leroy had no intention of changing the paratroopers' approach, and so they continued their patrols with rifles in hands.<sup>19</sup> Later, in his book,

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<sup>15</sup> *Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda* [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (6 December 1997), 215.

<sup>16</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 127.

<sup>17</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 73.

<sup>18</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 74.

<sup>19</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 74.

*Rwanda: la descente aux enfers: témoignage d'un peacekeeper*, Décembre 1993–Avril 1994, Marchal made clear the frustration caused by his colleague's inability to understand the fundamental requirements of a peace mission, as well as the fact that his fellow soldiers perceived such an assignment as less relevant and perhaps less honorable for a "true" paratrooper than warfighting. Leroy addressed the issue in his testimony before the Belgian Senate commission of enquiry, stating: "In my view, a military [soldier] must have a military [soldier] attitude. It might be disagreeable to have a weapon pointing at you, yet this is the way control must be carried out."<sup>20</sup> This approach clearly revealed a too-rigid mindset for a mission that required a high level of mental agility and flexibility. The practical consequences of such rigidity had a detrimental impact on the daily execution of peacekeeping tasks. In an end-of-mission report dated 30 March 1994, Leroy emphasized the limitations that the paratroopers had to deal with in Rwanda. He stressed that the main difficulties for his paratroopers were found in the execution of patrols, checkpoints, crowd control, and search of individuals. He concluded that the UN mandate was poorly assessed and that if the objective of pacifying Rwanda was a military task, then peacekeeping was a task for a police force.<sup>21</sup>

With these issues, limitations, and frictions that affected his two key contingents, Marchal began working on the KWSA. The implementation of the KWSA aimed at enforcing a significant reduction of movement of armed troops inside the Rwandan capital. *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) armored vehicles were not allowed to travel outside of their garrisons without authorization and an UN escort. Similarly, all troops had to remain inside their compounds, and only a limited number of locations would continue to have a military security system. A few key political leaders from both the government and the RPF would be able to

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<sup>20</sup> Leroy hearing.

<sup>21</sup> *Rwanda: Lettre ouverte aux parlementaires: Le texte du rapport du groupe "Rwanda" du Sénat: Les familles des paras* [Rwanda: Open Letter to Parliamentarians: The Text of the Report of the "Rwanda" Group of the Senate: The Families of the Paratroopers] (Brussels: Luc Pire, 1997), 96.

maintain a security detail that would be doubled by UN peacekeepers.<sup>22</sup> In General Dallaire's view,

The KWSA was an innovation I had come up with to deal with the unique problem of having an armed battalion of RPF soldiers located in the heart of the city, surrounded by thousands of their former enemies. Under the agreement, each party in the Kigali area would secure its weapons and only move them and armed troops with our permission and under our escort. When these conditions had been met, then and only then would the RPF send their political and bureaucratic appointments to the BBTG in Kigali, along with a security battalion.<sup>23</sup>

The creation of such a system required the full commitment of the KIBAT and RUTBAT battalions as well as the UNMOs assigned to the sector. There were several FAR and gendarmerie compounds that needed to be monitored regularly.<sup>24</sup>

Marchal launched the KWSA between 20 and 23 December. With all its limitations, shortcomings, and some resistance, the implementation of the KWSA was nevertheless instrumental for launching the next important step leading to the creation of the BBTG: the movement of a RPF battalion to Kigali. The main challenge for UNAMIR was to provide adequate housing and security to the battalion. In addition, UNAMIR was in charge of establishing security along the road from Mulindi, where the RPF had its headquarters, to Kigali. With limited troops and an inadequate number of vehicles available, both tasks were daunting. Marchal focused his attention on this effort. The initial issue to address was mostly political: where in Kigali should the battalion be

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<sup>22</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 77.

<sup>23</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 125.

<sup>24</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 78.

lodged? This presented an extremely difficult choice because of the political consequences that such a decision might have. According to the then-foreign minister, Anastase Gasana, President Juvénal Habyarimana wanted the RPF battalion to be lodged in the swamps between Kacyiru hill and Gacuriro in the northern area of Kigali. This would have placed the RPF battalion not only in a particularly inhospitable part of the capital but also in an area that was dominated by two FAR military camps in Kacyiru and Kami. The prime minister, Madame Agathe Uwilingiyimana, and Gasana opposed the idea, and in the end the battalion was deployed in the building of the *Conseil National de Développement* (National Council for Development, or CND). The CND had important symbolic value, as it was supposed to become the seat of the transitional national assembly.<sup>25</sup> However, it was situated in a tactically challenging position, as the main barracks of the Rwandan Presidential Guard, Habyarimana's elite units, were located very close by.

UNAMIR was also concerned about how the deployment of the RPF battalion was going to alter the political landscape. The RPF soldiers were subjected to strict rules, and they had to be confined to the CND compound. Yet, the fact that after three years of war more than 600 RPF soldiers were to be permanently stationed in Kigali created the potential for many incidents. The initial concern for UNAMIR leaders was that the RPF convoy might be attacked during the 80-kilometer journey from Mulindi to Kigali. Colonel Marchal, who was responsible for the operation, took an extremely careful approach. In preparation for the operation, which was named "Clean Corridor," UNAMIR required all FAR units and members to stay at least 400 meters away from the road on which the RPF battalion was to transit, while the Rwandan gendarmerie would play an active role in the operation. Marchal had to rely on the government to provide the vehicles to transport the battalion. At that time, he had 1,200 peacekeepers available to execute Clean Corridor

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<sup>25</sup> "Agathe Uwilingiyimana Biography," Forum for African Women Educationalists, 2000.

and a rather limited number of vehicles to patrol the road and provide an effective escort for the convoy. The stretch of road between Mulindi and Kigali was ideal for ambushes, which became immediately clear to Marchal as he drove to Mulindi.

In Mulindi, Marchal had several meetings in an old tea factory with Lieutenant Colonel Charles Kayonga, the RPF battalion commander responsible for making all arrangements to deploy his troops at the CND. Marchal described Kayonga as “slim as a knife blade” and speaking only English. Kayonga was very likely one of the thousands of Rwandan expatriates who grew up in one of the Anglophone countries bordering Rwanda and therefore spoke English rather than French. In Rwanda in the early 1990s, French was a popular language, so one could believe that most Rwandans spoke French. While this might have been true for those who grew up in the country, it was less so for those who grew up in a diaspora in Uganda or Tanzania. Kayonga very likely only spoke English not to make Marchal’s life more difficult but because he might not have known French. Regardless, this limitation in establishing easy communication became a cause of strain and, to a certain extent, misunderstanding between the two officers who, because of their key responsibilities for the overall mission, should have trusted one another far more than they did. Marchal wrote that Kayonga “is a difficult person to talk to and possess[es] a sharp sense of arguing.”<sup>26</sup> However, according to General Dallaire, “Commander Charles,” despite his young age, was an able and experienced leader.<sup>27</sup>

Marchal decided to deploy along the route to Kigali nearly all the personnel available to UNAMIR, which included 650 Bangladeshi, 420 Belgians, 100 UNMOs, 60 Tunisians, and 600 Rwandan gendarmes. Marchal’s concerns about a possible ambush grew stronger each time he traveled between Mulindi and Kigali. He was particularly worried by the complexities and rigidities of UNAMIR’s rules of engagement (ROE).

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<sup>26</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 86.

<sup>27</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 130.



His main apprehension was that, if the convoy was ambushed, he was responsible for authorizing the use of the 7.62-millimeter machine guns, while the use of any other weapon of a greater caliber had to be authorized by the force commander. Clearly, this process of authorization would have required much time during a situation in which it was extremely important to compress time for an effective military reaction to an attack. Marchal was well aware that although the ROE were inadequate, changing them at that point was not an option. He also knew that a strict application of the ROE would have increased the amount of risk for his troops. Marchal decided that, rather than exposing his peacekeepers to the risk, he would authorize the battalion commanders participating in Clean Corridor to open fire without restrictions if attacked. In his memoirs, Marchal wrote that he was aware that that decision was not in line with the rules of the mission, but “as the commander of the operation I assessed that it was a matter of my responsibility and of the security for those acting on my orders.”<sup>28</sup>

The date to move the 600 RPF troops was set for 28 December. The day before, Marchal was contacted by his national headquarters. From Brussels, a number of concerns were voiced about whether it was wise and safe to carry out the plan. But it was too late for Marchal to back down. That same evening, he left Kigali to be in Mulindi before dark and be ready for the convoy’s departure in the early hours of dawn. General Dallaire, meanwhile, was in Kigali waiting for the arrival of the RPA battalion in the early hours of the morning.

In Mulindi, early in the morning of 28 December, a frustrated Marchal had to accept the fact that the large contingent would not move according to the schedule. Several “minor” delays prevented the convoy from leaving Mulindi until 1230 that afternoon. A few hours later, the 25 vehicles with the RPF battalion finally arrived at the CND. Operation Clean Corridor had been completed successfully. Yet, Marchal was troubled by

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<sup>28</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 86.

the approach taken by the Belgian personnel involved in the operation. At 0500, he had decided to drive one more time along the route, and while he had seen that the Tunisians, the Bangladeshi, and the gendarmes were alert at their assigned positions, the sector manned by the Belgian troops was not ready. Several positions were not yet controlled, some of the automatic weapons were not crewed, and some of the soldiers were still in their sleeping bags. Marchal wrote, “The tourist approach of the personnel along the route gave me a feeling that they considered ‘Clean Corridor’ as an irrelevant exercise. I made clear to the battalion commander my disappointment.”<sup>29</sup>

With all its problems and tensions, the execution of Clean Corridor actually proved that the UN could provide the security that was necessary for the stability of Rwanda. It should have also provided a strong indication that the Belgian KIBAT—the key component of UNAMIR—had a less-than-encouraging approach to the mission in general and to tasks that were associated with peacekeeping in particular.

RPF captain Charles Karamba, who was serving as an intelligence officer with the RPF battalion, noted how joyful was the welcoming that they received from large crowds that had gathered along the sides of the road the convoy took to get to the CND.<sup>30</sup> Senegalese Army captain Amadou Deme, who had followed Clean Corridor to try to obtain valuable information to help his fellow UN soldiers accomplish their mission, wrote that “it was simply a great day for almost everybody who dreamed about peace. It seemed that the population was overjoyed; and with expressed dedication, true emotion, and innocence, they really welcomed and cheered the extra long RPF convoy coming into the city. . . . [T]he

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<sup>29</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 89.

<sup>30</sup> Edwin Musoni, “How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds,” *New Times*, 3 July 2014.

atmosphere of that day depicted the true expectations and hope in peace and expressed a deep confidence in the system.”<sup>31</sup>

The 600 soldiers of the RPF battalion travelled joyfully along the convoy route, singing a song composed for the occasion by one of their own, Maji Maji:

*We are coming, war heroes,  
Embodiment of bravery,  
Seeking peace and unity for the people of Rwanda.  
Come on, people of Rwanda, let's build our motherland.  
Our hands will build our nation.  
We are coming, war heroes,  
Embodiment of bravery,  
Those who seek the peace and unity of Rwandans.  
Let's avoid corruption and anything that might undermine  
Rwanda.  
The people of Rwanda should control our heritage.  
We are coming, war heroes,  
Embodiment of bravery,  
Those who seek the peace and unity of Rwandans.*<sup>32</sup>

Venantie Mukantaganzwa, a RPF medical officer assigned to battalion, said that “as we were riding, we reached Kabuye and found a long queue of Rwandan people who were happy clapping.”<sup>33</sup> Beatrice Uwera, who was among the many who cheered the arrival of the battalion, remembers, “We saw many buses with many young men with guns. We were so happy.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Amadou Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission: The Whole Truth* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2010), 47.

<sup>32</sup> *The 600: The Soldiers' Story*, directed by Laurent Basset and Richard Hall, written by Richard Hall (Piedmont, CA: Great Blue Production, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> *The 600*.

<sup>34</sup> *The 600*.

After the RPF battalion arrived at the CND, Lieutenant Colonel Kayonga met with several key political leaders to assess what the unit's main requirements were. Meanwhile, the soldiers began deploying outside, digging trenches and preparing a defensive perimeter. On the roof of the building, they positioned a 12.7-millimeter heavy machine gun, the highest caliber that the battalion was allowed to have according to the peace agreement. From the top of Kimihurura hill, the CND enjoyed a dominant position, which would prove to be a significant tactical advantage in the days that followed the beginning of the war in April.

Several senior RPF leaders were hosted at the CND, including Alexis Kanyarengwe, Tito Rutaremara, and Patrick Mazimpaka. The battalion's mission was to provide protection to these political leaders while the transitional government was being established. This protection was not limited to the CND; RPF soldiers were also tasked with escorting the leaders to any meeting they had to attend outside of the compound. Captain Karamba remembered that the FAR still had several checkpoints on the road to Mulindi, which the RPF used to support and supply the troops at the CND. The movement of the RPF soldiers, however, was a constant challenge. "One day we were ambushed in Gatsata and fired at and we even lost one of our comrades, but our force from CND came in to rescue the party that had been ambushed and recovered the body."<sup>35</sup>

Life at the CND was not easy. The RPF troops and their leaders had a clear perception that there was mounting obstruction to the formation of the transitional government and that the peace process was in serious danger of failing. Karamba stressed:

We knew that if the peace process collapsed, we are target number one—target number one to eliminate the RPF politicians and the 3rd Battalion [*sic*] that was charged with their security. That's why we kept analysing the situation and [were] ready for any eventualities, especially

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<sup>35</sup> Musoni, "How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds."

since we were a small force. By that time, I was a battalion Intelligence Officer (IO) and my job was to understand the enemy and analyse them correctly. We had a way of gathering our own intelligence; we knew the enemy and had to find a way of getting what were our enemy's intentions. We were just one battalion against something called OPs Kigali-Ville, garde présidentielle (an equivalent of Republican Guard), para battalion (of commandos), RECCE [reconnaissance] battalion and the Groupe Mobile d'Intervention (a mobile force)—so that was a huge force that surrounded us. But not only that, there were others like OPs Rulindo and OPs Byumba; basically we were in the middle of the enemy.<sup>36</sup>

The presence of the RPF battalion in Kigali changed the political landscape dramatically. Although the 600 soldiers were confined to the CND, they were now much closer to the Tutsi community in Kigali than they had been at the RPF headquarters in Mulindi. The first few weeks were extremely busy, as the CND building was in poor condition and needed much attention to accommodate such a large number of troops. Repair work was slow. Madame Agathe had decided that access to the building was to be given to the population. She believed that the presence of the RPF troops could provide a balance to the slow-moving peace process. She also wanted ordinary people in Kigali to learn more about the much-feared “rebels.”

From a security point of view, the presence of the RPF battalion in Kigali was a major burden to Colonel Marchal. The troops at the CND were given strict rules with which to comply, but there was skepticism about how to apply those rules. Marchal could not fully grasp whether the RPF wanted to use the battalion as a truly stabilizing tool or as a force to be used inside Kigali in a possible confrontation with Rwanda's govern-

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<sup>36</sup> Musoni, “How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds.”

ment forces. This second option was considered the most likely by FAR major general Déogratias Nsabimana, the chief of staff of the Rwanda Army, who viewed the RPF battalion in Kigali as a Trojan horse.<sup>37</sup> Responsibility for providing security to the CND compound and monitoring the RPF battalion was given to the Bangladeshi peacekeepers of RUTBAT. Their performance was so poor, however, that in less than two months they had to be replaced. In February 1994, immediately after the Ghanaian contingent deployed to the demilitarized zone (DMZ)—the buffer area that separated the RPF-occupied territory from the rest of the country in the north of Rwanda—the Tunisian soldiers were redeployed to Kigali and replaced the Bangladeshi at the CND compound.<sup>38</sup>

It was becoming increasingly evident that the Bangladeshi contingent was more of a liability than an asset to the mission. Marchal tried on several occasions to assign tasks to the Bangladeshi battalion, but over time the battalion commander became more and more defiant to the execution of duties that went beyond ordinary and safe routine. Even in the execution of the relatively simple but critical task of defending the CND, the unit's performance had been poor. Probably the most disappointing but also eye-opening event involving the Bangladeshi troops took place in late February. After Félicien Gatabazi, the secretary-general of Rwanda's Social Democratic Party, was killed on 21 February, UNAMIR was in charge of providing security to the funeral procession. A peacekeeping detail was to escort Gatabazi's coffin to Butare, where he was born. When Marchal briefed the battalion commanders, Colonel Nazrul Islam resisted the orders that identified his unit, which provided the QRF, as the one responsible for providing security to the funeral procession. He raised a number of issues that Marchal saw as an attempt to avoid the task. On 24 February, the day of the funeral procession, the Bangladeshi troops

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<sup>37</sup> Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London: Verso Books, 2004), 93.

<sup>38</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 130.

took a long time to travel from their garrison at the Amahoro Stadium to the Kadhafi roundabout where they were to provide protection with their BTR-80. In the end, the Bangladeshi troops conducted the assigned mission, but they did so reluctantly and with much resistance.<sup>39</sup>

On 15 January, Ghana Army brigadier general Henry Kwami Anyidoho, a distinguished military officer who had planned and participated in a number of peacekeeping missions, arrived in Kigali. General Dallaire decided to welcome Anyidoho in person at the airport, as Anyidoho would serve as the mission's second-in-command and Dallaire's chief of staff. Dallaire accurately described Anyidoho as "an imposing man, well over six feet tall and weighing over 120 kilos [264 pounds]. His impressive physical presence was matched by his voracious appetite for work. He was a born commander."<sup>40</sup> Like Dallaire, Anyidoho had graduated from the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College in Quantico, Virginia, Anyidoho in 1980 and Dallaire in 1981. The two officers immediately established a good relationship. In their books, both wrote with great respect about each other. According to Dallaire, Anyidoho was "confident, aggressive, capable and committed to the mission from the start."<sup>41</sup>

The 800-troop contingent from Ghana arrived in February and was immediately tasked with providing security to the DMZ in the north. As they were based in Byumba, they took the codename of BYUBAT. Dallaire was pleased with the contingent. In his view, the Ghanaian soldiers appeared to be well-led and very cohesive.<sup>42</sup> Together with the contingent also arrived the new DMZ sector commander, Colonel Clayton Yaache, who "would distinguish himself during the genocide with his leadership of the emergency of the humanitarian cell within UNAMIR."<sup>43</sup> Despite all these positive qualities, the Ghanaian troops deployed with limited

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<sup>39</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 131.

<sup>40</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 156.

<sup>42</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 177.

<sup>43</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 177.

logistics, supplies, and vehicles. All of their equipment was shipped by boat from Ghana to the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam, from where it had to proceed to Rwanda. UNAMIR provided the Ghanaians with 15 vehicles as well as one Toyota Landcruiser.<sup>44</sup> Anyidoho stressed that “We had to wait for vehicles, radios, tents, defence stores, night vision aids, compo rations, flak jackets, and a host of other things to come from either Cambodia or Somalia.”<sup>45</sup>

After the Ghanaian troops deployed to the DMZ, the small Tunisian contingent that for several months had been responsible for monitoring the area was redeployed to Kigali, where it served as an important asset to the entire mission. The Tunisian troops and their leadership were unanimously praised by all UNAMIR senior leaders. Dallaire held the small contingent in the highest respect:

They were the very definition of professional soldiers, led by an exemplary officer, Commandant Mohammed Belgacem. This small cohesive unit was (and remained) my fire brigade. Whenever I had a problem, whether in the demilitarized zone, at the CND in Kigali or later on during the war, I turned to the Tunisians, who have never once let me down. As I said good-bye to thirty of these men on the tarmac at the airport, I praised them for their service and sacrifices they had made during the very risky days of late 1993 in the demilitarized zone. With an entire force of such soldiers, we could have met any challenge in the Great Lakes Region. . . . The Tunisians remained my ace in the hole.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Henry Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali* (Accra, Ghana: Woeli, 1999), 40–41.

<sup>45</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 41.

<sup>46</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 152–53.



Dallaire emphasized that the Tunisian soldiers were all conscripts who had extended their military service to serve in Rwanda.<sup>47</sup>

The Tunisian contingent had to deal with poor supply and logistics, but they were able to compensate these deficiencies with excellent training, outstanding leadership, and what could be considered uncommon morale in Rwanda. Their inspiration and motivation were strong and rare. Anyidoho, in a few telling words, stated: “The men of the Tunisian company were fearless.”<sup>48</sup> More important, their courage and audacity were well-known among the warring factions. When violence broke in Kigali, the Tunisians commanded respect. Those who decided to confront them knew that they would have to deal with a tough military reaction.

At the beginning of 1994, UNAMIR leaders had great hope that the mission could continue to implement a few critical elements of the peace process.<sup>49</sup> The creation of the KWSA and the deployment of the RPF battalion in Kigali were two important steps that were intended to pave the way to the establishment of the BBTG. The process outlined in the Arusha peace treaty was scheduled to begin early in January with the appointment of all political positions within the government, including the president, the prime minister, and all executive cabinet members. Yet, it quickly became clear that the implementation of the BBTG would face major resistance. Major Beardsley remembered those days as very challenging: “We had incredible shortages within the mission; we were short of logistics, we were short of communications, we were short of vehicles. We didn’t have a budget, we didn’t have money.”<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, the security situation continued to deteriorate. UNAMIR began noticing the activity of the Interahamwe, the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (National Revolutionary Movement for Development, or MRND) youth organization turned militia. Beardsley observed

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<sup>47</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 152.

<sup>48</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 67.

<sup>49</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>50</sup> Beardsley interview.

that “they wore a clown suit with a clown beret in the national colors, and they had caught our attention. We knew that this third force, as we called them, was out there.”<sup>51</sup>

The activity of this extremist militia grew in intensity. Interahamwe teams traveled to a FAR camp in Gabiro, in the north of Rwanda, where they received some training. The extremist factions also began to receive more weapons. Beardsley noted such activities: “We’d intercepted a couple of arms ship[ments]. We’d intercepted one at the Kigali airport, and another one in a vehicle one day that happened to be in an accident.”<sup>52</sup>

Confronted with the challenge of establishing the transitional government by January, UNAMIR acknowledged that the situation in Rwanda was significantly more complex than initially believed. There were more than two factions fighting each other, and much of what was happening was not at all transparent. Beardsley stressed that inside the government camp there were two main sides: “[The] moderates . . . were extremely committed to Arusha, and then there was this group of extremists that appeared to be opposed to it, or had problems with it. So as we went in the new year, our eyes were starting to open more that there were going to be challenges, and that this was not going to be as simple as we thought it would [be]; we were certainly going to have a lot of challenges.”<sup>53</sup>

Despite a better understanding of the situation in Rwanda with all its complexities, Beardsley noted how the UNAMIR leadership felt: “We had a significant force on the ground, or enough to meet their requirements. We had achieved a lot going into the new year. So we had a lot of optimism that, if we can get this broad-based transitional government up and established, then there will be a focal point for the moderates to rally around and for the people of Rwanda to see that the peace agreement’s working.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>52</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>53</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>54</sup> Beardsley interview.

Such reasons for optimism proved to be mistaken. By the first week of January, Rwanda was supposed to have the BBTG in place. The BBTG was essential for transitioning the country to a more stable condition. Early in 1994, the peace process was extremely fragile, and there were worrying signs as the extremists, who had never truly supported the treaty, were becoming more open in their opposition to its implementation. The process of creating the BBTG stalled. On 5 January, the day when the president and transitional government were supposed to be put in place, only the president was installed. The BBTG fell into a state of limbo.

On 5 January, the Interahamwe made a strong showing. Immediately after the president arrived, the presidential guards blocked the entryway to the CND, where the ceremony was to be held. They began searching vehicles and did all they could to prevent other leaders, mainly moderates, from joining the meeting. RPF leaders were upset by this situation and decided to walk out. As a result, the ceremony collapsed just after the president was sworn in.

It all happened very quickly. Beardsley remembered, "This mob literally just came out of nowhere. . . . Presidential guards were there right away, and the whole thing was stalled."<sup>55</sup> Yet, after the ceremony was suspended, the disturbance caused by the Interahamwe stopped immediately, and the mob that had gathered also disappeared. Once they had achieved their intended objective—the formal appointment of Habyarimana as president of Rwanda—there was no longer a reason to continue the demonstration. It was a clear sign that what had just happened was an extremely well-staged action.<sup>56</sup>

Beardsley watched as the situation grew worse during the following weeks. He noted the occurrence of "just little things like grenades going off. When I arrived in Rwanda, there might be one a week. It then got down to several a week, and then it got down to one a night and then

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<sup>55</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>56</sup> Beardsley interview.

several a night. By March, we were counting grenades each night as we ate supper, going off within the city. There were assassinations, there were demonstrations, there were riots.”<sup>57</sup>

The Rwandan gendarmerie was supposed to deal with this escalation of violence and disturbance of public order. However, it was evident that the gendarmerie was utterly ineffective. The gendarmes, commanded by General Augustin Ndindiliyimana, were a composite force whose effectiveness was compromised in the early 1990s when they grew too quickly from 2,000 troops to 6,000. The thousands of gendarmes who had been hurriedly recruited after the beginning of the war in 1990 received inadequate training in crowd control, public order, and human rights. According to Jean-Claude Willame, early in 1994, “the Gendarmerie [would] not be of great support for the operations of control, detection and confiscation of illegal weapons.”<sup>58</sup> Belgian Army lieutenant Marc Nees, an intelligence officer with KIBAT I, noted that “at each checkpoint, Rwandan gendarmes were present. Often these gendarmes only spoke Kinyarwanda, which sometimes led to communication problems. I had the impression that their attitude during the execution of these checks left much to desire.”<sup>59</sup>

The mediocre performance of the gendarmerie made UNAMIR leaders aware that they could not count much on their support to maintain public order in Kigali. On 8 January, another attempt was made to install the BBTG. UNAMIR was fully committed to creating a security frame to make sure that the formation of the BBTG took place. The ceremony was scheduled to be held in the afternoon at the CND.<sup>60</sup> Yet, that morning a number of violent demonstrations and street riots took place

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<sup>57</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>58</sup> Willame, *Les Belges au Rwanda*, 96.

<sup>59</sup> Hearing of Lt Nees before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (7 March 1997).

<sup>60</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 141.

all over Kigali, and they were particularly intense in the proximity of the two crossroads leading to the CND. Hundreds of demonstrators armed with batons and machetes prevented several politicians from attending the ceremony, which eventually had to be called off. General Dallaire had instructed Colonel Marchal to deploy the peacekeeping troops in the Kigali Sector to deal with the rally and make sure that the politicians could arrive at the CND. Marchal, however, resisted the order and ultimately convinced Dallaire that the gendarmerie was better suited to deal with such an issue.

Willame stressed that Marchal's approach was the very first instance of a number of dysfunctions that affected the leadership and command of UNAMIR.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Marchal admitted that responsibility for the task Dallaire gave him belonged to the Kigali Sector.<sup>62</sup> Yet, he also noted that UNAMIR's soldiers had not received crowd control training, which should have been one of the gendarmerie's skills.<sup>63</sup> He was concerned that both battalions, KIBAT and RUTBAT, would not have been able to handle a crowd control operation, while UNAMIR should not have been directly involved in this kind of operation.<sup>64</sup> Marchal believed that his national chain of command in Belgium would have supported his approach. Yet, when he asked for guidelines on how to behave in these types of situations, he was instructed to follow the orders issued by the UNAMIR force commander. The guidance given to Marchal by senior leaders in Brussels surprised him, though they made complete sense from a military point of view. Marchal wanted to have discretionary power in "selecting" which orders to execute and which to decline on the base of his personal judgment and what would make sense for "Belgian" soldiers

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<sup>61</sup> Willame, *Les Belges au Rwanda*, 97.

<sup>62</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 138.

<sup>63</sup> Hearing of Capt De Cuyper and Col Marchal before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (14 March 1997).

<sup>64</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 137.

to do. He wrote, “Evere [the Belgian Defense Headquarters] confirms to me by fax that I must comply with the orders of the Force Commander in this matter. In practice, this meant that in the event of an order from the latter, I should engage, at their own risk and peril, Belgian blue helmets to break a demonstration in Kigali.”<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, while the political situation remained stagnant, a growing number of individuals were sharing with UNAMIR officers serious concerns about the activity of the extremist factions. According to Beardsly, “the situation was just falling apart there. It seemed that the world didn’t care. . . . The diplomatic community was involved, but not really committed, and we knew at this point—we could see it, we could feel it—we were sitting on a powder keg. There was a fuse burning, and if that fuse didn’t get stopped, that keg was going to blow. And it blew.”<sup>66</sup>

A few days after the incident that had imposed yet another shift in the schedule for the establishment of the BBTG, the designated prime minister Faustin Twagiramungu asked for a private meeting with General Dallaire. In the meeting, Twagiramungu told the UNAMIR commander that an Interahamwe insider wanted to share some important information with the UN mission. The informant, codenamed “Jean-Pierre,” met with Marchal and told him about the groundwork that the Interahamwe and other extremists were conducting in preparation for a major killing spree of Tutsi. Jean-Pierre spoke of specific training programs and the transfer of weapons from the Rwandan Army to the militia, and he also provided indications of the whereabouts of some of the weapons cache. Dallaire noted that Jean-Pierre also told Marchal of the plan to kill a number of Belgian soldiers: “[T]he trap was intended to kill some ten Belgians. The leadership of the Hutu Power movement had determined that Belgium

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<sup>65</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 138.

<sup>66</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 138.

had no stomach for taking casualties in their old colony, and if Belgian soldiers were killed, the nation would withdraw from UNAMIR.”<sup>67</sup>

Ultimately, the extremists’ objective was the total “destruction” of the Tutsi, using, according to Jean-Pierre, weapons of any sort, from AK-47 assault rifles to machetes that had been stored and hidden in several locations in Kigali. This was considered very important information. Acting on this acquired knowledge could have stopped or slowed down the extremist and militia activities aimed at the bloodbath that took place several months later. To provide more detailed information, Jean-Pierre asked UNAMIR that he and his family receive protection from the UN and that they be given diplomatic immunity and be relocated to another country.

Dallaire decided to act, and in the coming hours he planned to raid a few of the places that Jean-Pierre had identified where weapons were stored. The general informed the UN of his plan. The fax that Dallaire sent to General Maurice Baril at the UN on 11 January, containing this information and stating his intentions to take action to raid the arms depots in Kigali, has been analyzed in great detail. Clearly, both Iqbal Riza and Kofi Annan in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations did not understand how serious the situation was and that stopping the one action perhaps could have impacted the extremists’ genocidal plan. “We did not interpret the information in that cable to be the truth,” Riza conceded in an interview years later.<sup>68</sup> However, this event should be analyzed carefully considering its many dimensions. This investigation herein is not intended to place blame on any of the people or organizations involved in this process but rather to clarify what constitutes good and effective practice. While much visibility has been given to the overall content of Dallaire’s message to Baril, little has been said about the concluding paragraph in which the force commander casts serious doubts

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<sup>67</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 143–44.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Iqbal Riza, on *Frontline*, season 17, episode 2, “The Triumph of Evil,” directed and written by Steve Bradshaw and Ben Loeterman, aired 26 January 1999 on PBS.

about the reliability of the information and the informant. Dallaire wrote, "Force Commander does have certain reservations on the suddenness of the change of heart of the informant to come clean with this information. Recce of armed cache and detailed planning of raid to go on late tomorrow. Possibility of a trap not fully excluded, as this may be a set-up against this very very important political person."<sup>69</sup>

The course of action taken by Dallaire to inform Baril was also unorthodox. Dallaire explained his concern about sharing the information with the UN office where, he thought, such information might be leaked. Therefore, he decided to inform Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, the head of UNAMIR, the morning of the day the raid was supposed to take place. Next, Dallaire remembered:

[I put] together for General Baril a carefully worded code cable, which I would send as soon as possible. By sending the code cable directly to Baril, I was breaking the usual protocol. The standard operating procedure was to route all communications on matters of substance between a force commander and the DPKO through the civilian political hierarchy—in this case through Booh Booh and his office. The only time a force commander was to deal directly with the military adviser or any other concerned department at the UN was in order to discuss purely administrative matters or requirements. My decision to send this code cable under my signature directly to the military adviser—Maurice Baril—was unprecedented. I was opening an area of communication in an area where I had no authority to do so. But I believed that these rev-

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<sup>69</sup> "The 'Genocide Fax,'" United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed 18 December 2024.



elations from Jean-Pierre had to be acted upon immediately.<sup>70</sup>

By taking this approach, Dallaire was not only breaking a procedure that he was well informed about but also undermining the importance of his message, its contents, and ways to act upon them. Dallaire should also have known that Baril, although in an influential position at the UN, did not have the authority to approve a military operation in any given peace-keeping mission. Dallaire's message did not ask for authority, but by ending the message as he did, he sought some kind of approval from the chain of command in case UNAMIR peacekeepers were ambushed.

In response to Dallaire's message, after consulting with Annan, Riza wrote that Dallaire's initiative was to be immediately stopped and that the information provided by Jean-Pierre was to be shared with Rwanda's political authorities. The idea was that President Habyarimana and his government would take direct responsibility to intervene to investigate and stop the genocidal project. In retrospect, this was a naïve attempt to encourage the Rwandan government to take action to prevent a slaughter in the country. Probably the only effect it actually had was to speed up the distribution of weapons.

Contact with Jean-Pierre continued for a few more weeks. On 12 January, two UNAMIR intelligence officers met with the informant. Belgian Army captain Frank Claeys and Senegalese Army captain Amadou Deme discussed with Jeanne Pierre the activities of the extremists and the storage of the weapons cache. In a covert operation on the night of 13 January, Jean-Pierre took Deme to see the weapons. The two men had no problem entering the MRND headquarters, passing the guards at the gate and going to the basement. There, Deme remembered that he "saw a few wooden boxes on the floor. He [Jean-Pierre] opened them and I did see about three dozen weapons and do remember them being AK-47[s].

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<sup>70</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 145.

... There were clips in another box mixed with some grenades but no ammunitions for the rifles. And I remember later [Jean-Pierre] telling me that they have requested ammunitions from the presidential guard, but they could not so far obtain them. Well that was all regarding that famous reconnaissance of the MRND weapons cache.”<sup>71</sup> Deme was not impressed and frustrated. He wrote, “to tell the truth, on our way back, I was very disappointed with what I had seen and what would become so much a source of speculation.” Once back in the car with Claeys, they drove to a few more locations where there was supposed to be more weapons close to the airport in Kanombe. Jean-Pierre “was showing us a house from a distance and was giving us oral figures, but then he would say that we could not get into it because he did not know what to expect.”<sup>72</sup>

Deme had many doubts about the site visit: “It simply did not make a sense at all that those weapons should be there. If Mr. Mathieu Nguirumpatse [president of the MRND] had the motive of hiding illegal weapons in their compound, why did he leave them there openly in a room and actually without a professional security at the gate? Those we found there that night were from pure amateurs.” He continued: “There was something wrong.”<sup>73</sup> A few years later, Deme, by then an investigator with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), found “troubling details” about Jean-Pierre, “and the circumstances compounding him having to contact us for the known reasons. . . . According to me, those details were too much planned ahead, just to show the veracity of his involvement in high-level knowledge and enterprises within that political party.”<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, years later the ICTR found evidence that the FAR provided weapons and training to the Interahamwe. However, the judges did not believe what the informant maintained—that the training aimed at the

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<sup>71</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 55.

<sup>72</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 55.

<sup>73</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 56.

<sup>74</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 57.

extermination of the Tutsi. They instead thought that such preparation was to face new fighting with the RPF.<sup>75</sup> They also found that the lists compiled by the Interahamwe were of suspected opponents of the regime, yet such lists were focused more on the political and regional level rather than the ethnic. The evidence available to the tribunal indicated that the informant might have had ulterior reasons for seeking the protection of the UN. Apparently, his relations with the MRND was strained as he was suspected of selling weapons to the rebels in Burundi. Witnesses suggested that Jean-Pierre might have been a RPF agent who had a mission to infiltrate the Interahamwe. Although there was no evidence to support such a claim, clearly he had connections to the parties opposed to President Habyarimana and that were also close to the Tutsi-led rebels.

It is unclear what Jean-Pierre might have done after January 1994. Apparently in February, he told Dallaire's aides that he was planning to go to Zaire for "commando training." That was his final meeting with UNAMIR. His wife said that he joined the RPF and died in late 1994, although his death is still a mystery. Indeed, his wife maintained "I do not know how he died and where."<sup>76</sup> Moreover, she could not confirm that he was in fact dead.

Later, in testimony before the ICTR, Dallaire shared with the tribunal that his decision to send the "genocide fax" to Baril at the UN was mostly based on instinct. He believed that the peacekeeping force in Kigali needed to regain the initiative, but his chain of command in New York was doubtful about his proposed action.<sup>77</sup>

The genocide fax and the events that unfolded thereafter have provided unequivocal evidence of the damaged relationship between the civilian and military leadership of UNAMIR. This fracture was a major problem for the entire mission. It became clear that Dallaire was adamant

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Dobbs, "The Shroud over Rwanda's Nightmare," *New York Times*, 8 January 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Dobbs, "The Shroud over Rwanda's Nightmare."

<sup>77</sup> Dobbs, "The Shroud over Rwanda's Nightmare."

in his refusal to work with the UN special representative, and even if Booh-Booh was less than effective at his job, he was still the head of the mission. UNAMIR's chain of command was compromised. Brigadier General Anyidoho provided an interesting insight on this relationship and its consequences:

[F]rom the moment I arrived at the mission, I noticed that there was a gap between the office of the SRSG and that of the Force Commander. General Dallaire who headed the Technical mission leading to the establishment of UNAMIR recommended a unity of command; the Force Commander must also be the head of mission. Perhaps no clear decision was taken on that recommendation prior to General Dallaire's arrival in Rwanda as a Force Commander. This gap in relationship was to be exploited by the warring factions during the civil war leading eventually to Dr Booh Booh and General Dallaire being accused of bias by the opposing sides.<sup>78</sup>

It is also very likely that this dynamic might have been known at the UN in New York and that there was a perception that Dallaire was acting beyond his line of operation. In the documentary *The Last Just Man*, Dallaire made an argument for his intended action. He said, "I may not stop them, but at least I would create enough havoc with this operation that they would be off balance and then I would regain the initiative." Yet, as the UN stopped his operation, Dallaire said, "Incredible response." In a clear indication of the growing distrust between the UN and the UNAMIR commander, Dallaire added that "if you [are] given command of a mission and you have lives of people that could be at stake, or simply conducting the mission, if your senior Headquarters have given you that mission, but have a doubt, ergo they're going to keep an eye on this guy,

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<sup>78</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 11.

they are not too sure, you know, how will go, and so they are concerned about it, than that changes the all assessment in that higher Headquarters of what I am doing and what I am reporting.”<sup>79</sup> If UN leaders in New York had lost confidence in Dallaire’s ability to act as the force commander, and if they considered Dallaire’s behavior inadequate for the role he was playing with UNAMIR, they should have removed him from the position.

Indeed, the poor relationship between Booh-Booh and Dallaire was very detrimental to UNAMIR’s ability to make sound, timely, and effective decisions. Dallaire continued to communicate directly with leaders at the UN, leaving the head of the mission often unaware of important information and compromising the chain of command. In his book, Dallaire wrote that “for the duration of the mission I continued to communicate information and intentions directly to, and to seek directions and advice from, the DPKO without reference to the SRSG or the authority of his office. Having been head of mission as well as the conceiver of the mission, I simply continued to use the channels that had been open to me before the SRSG arrived in Kigali. At no time did the SRSG or the DPKO advise me to stop this practice, although on occasion a response to a code cable of mine would go directly to the SRSG for action.”<sup>80</sup>

Booh-Booh remembers the frustration of dealing with Dallaire. He later wrote, “In order to prevent UNAMIR from becoming a closed field of stubborn tensions and sterile agitations and destabilizing indiscipline, I had to firmly ask some of my colleagues to respect, without reservations, the authority of the head of mission and the terms of our mandate. . . . It seemed difficult, however, for General Dallaire to understand that he had to renounce the absurd claim of the authority of head of mission that he no longer had, the Security Council did not establish a diarchy at the head of UNAMIR. He was the commander of the peacekeepers

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<sup>79</sup> *The Last Just Man*, directed by Steven Silver (Toronto, Canada: Barna-Alper Productions, 2001).

<sup>80</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 145.

and placed under my direct authority.”<sup>81</sup> In relation to the event of early January 1994, Booh-Booh wrote: “Jean-Pierre’s case illustrates how superficial Dallaire’s work was. Faced with the seriousness of the situation in Rwanda, he privileged the low blows, used the parallel networks and the small rivalry to the detriment of a real cooperation with his superior hierarchic.”<sup>82</sup>

In early February 1994, Booh-Booh, reported to Annan that President Habyarimana, despite having been informed by UNAMIR senior leaders of the Rwandan extremists’ activity and their intention to destabilize the peace process through the use of violence, had not made any serious attempt to address the issue.<sup>83</sup>

The situation in Kigali was rapidly worsening. From early January, the number of incidents for which the greatest responsibility rested with the extremist militias increased significantly. So too did the number of cases of acts of indiscipline by the Belgian troops. In mid-January, a group of Belgian soldiers got into an altercation with some Bangladeshi soldiers that escalated into a fist fight at Chez Lando.<sup>84</sup> On 31 January, an even more serious incident took place when a group of Belgian soldiers attacked Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, who was an extremist political leader, the director of foreign policy at the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the chairman of the executive committee for *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTL), the radio station responsible for the strong anti-Tutsi campaign in Rwanda and which also took a strong stance against the Belgian deployment. The consequences of such behavior were serious. Colonel Marchal was summoned to an immediate meeting with the Belgian ambassador in Kigali, who feared that the behavior of the troops

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<sup>81</sup> Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, *Le patron de Dallaire parle: Révélation sur les dérives d'un général de l'ONU au Rwanda* [Dallaire's Boss Speaks: Revelations on the Excesses of a UN General in Rwanda] (Paris: Dubois, 2005), 58–59.

<sup>82</sup> Booh-Booh, *Le patron de Dallaire parle*, 93.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Useem, *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss So You Both Win* (New York: Crown Business, 2001), 85.

<sup>84</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 141.

could put Belgian expatriates in danger.<sup>85</sup> On 2 February, Marchal suspended liberty for the Belgian troops.<sup>86</sup> The professional relationship between Marchal and Lieutenant Colonel Leroy, already tense and marred by differences in opinion on how Belgian paratroopers should behave, became significantly worse. Marchal wondered whether he should have demanded that Leroy be removed from command of the battalion.<sup>87</sup> Marchal did not miss an opportunity to let his chain of command know that the Belgian soldiers deployed in Rwanda needed to have different and more suitable training for the mission. At the end of February, the 1st Paratroopers Battalion was getting ready to rotate out of Rwanda and be replaced in March by a new unit, the 2d Commando Battalion. As sector commander, Marchal “needed to have a Belgian battalion committed to accomplish its mission rather than act as tourists who wanted to make the most out of their deployment in the country of the Mille Collines, doing rafting in the Nyabarongo, trekking on the slopes of Karisimbi, photo safari in the Akagera or the Virunga park, and parachute jumping or fishing along the shores of lake Kivu.”<sup>88</sup> On 9 March, the new battalion began its deployment to Kigali. On 20 March, just a few weeks before the genocide began, in a small ceremony at the airport in Kanombe, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Dewez took command of KIBAT II from the departing Lieutenant Colonel Leroy. On 4 April, several days before President Habyaramana was killed, Théoneste Bagosora made a remarkable statement. During a party held at the Hotel Meridien to celebrate Senegal Independence Day, in conversation with Dallaire, Booh-Booh and Marchal, he said that “the only plausible solution for Rwanda would be the elimination of the Tutsi.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 143.

<sup>86</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 146.

<sup>87</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 159.

<sup>88</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 156.

<sup>89</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 50.

# Chapter 5

## THE LONGEST DAY

On the morning of 6 April 1994, the UNAMIR headquarters was informed about a new UN Security Council resolution (SCR 909) that extended the mission mandate for an additional six weeks. However, the resolution also stated that if by the time the new mandate expired the transitional government had not been installed, the mission was to come to an end. It was a myopic approach. On the one hand, the new mandate gave more time to the Rwandan moderate faction to establish the Broad-Based Transitional Government (BBTG); on the other hand, it encouraged the extremists to slow down the peace process and simply make sure that by the time of the new deadline there would be no visible achievements and UNAMIR would come to an end.

UNAMIR leaders were concerned about the overall state of the mission and the little progress that they had been able to achieve. By 6 April, the demobilization of *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) and Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) troops should have already started, yet the process was at least a few months behind schedule and the BBTG was not in place yet. UN leaders were working hard to identify possible avenues to put the peace process back on track, while overall security in Rwanda, and in particular in Kigali, was deteriorating quickly. As a result, UNAMIR had to reinforce the Kigali Sector by redeploying to the capital a company from BYUBAT originally stationed in the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Major Brent Beardsley emphasized that at this point UNAMIR had too many small detachments and several potential targets to protect, ranging



from moderate ministers, who were increasingly threatened by the emboldened extremists, to the UN installations and camps all over the city. A large number of UN troops were committed to the static protection of these numerous and vulnerable targets. The task was overwhelming. On 6 April, Beardsley remembered, "We were still fighting all those logistics battles. It was just another one of those frustrating days where you're trying to sort this stuff out that seems to go in circles."<sup>1</sup>

The day was typical for the leaders of UNAMIR. That evening, General Dallaire and Major Beardsley were at their residence, preparing their supper while waiting to get some news from CNN.<sup>2</sup> Brigadier General Henry Kwami Anyidoho, like many others in Rwanda passionate about football, had just finished watching one of the Africa Cup of Nations matches and was ready for a good night's rest at the end of another busy day. The evening could not have been more "normal." Then, suddenly, the loud detonation of the explosions that brought down President Juvénal Habyarimana's plane over Kigali shook the night.

Dallaire was informed that the explosion had been at the airport. In a short time, many more calls arrived at Dallaire's residence from the UNAMIR headquarters, from political leaders and other military commanders. Beardsley noted, "It went from 'There's been an explosion at the airport,' to 'We think it's the ammunition dump at Kigali that's blown up,' to 'It's a plane that's crashed,' to 'It's the presidential plane that's crashed.'"<sup>3</sup> It became clear that the presidential plane had been shot down while preparing to land at the airport.

Habyarimana was killed while traveling back to Rwanda from a meeting in Tanzania that had been organized with the objective to inject some renewed energy into the languishing peace process. He was on the Dassault Falcon 50 jet aircraft that the French government had provided

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Maj Brent Beardsley, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Beardsley interview.

<sup>2</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>3</sup> Beardsley interview.

him to be used as his presidential plane. Also aboard the aircraft were the president of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira, and several senior Rwandan military leaders, including Major General Déogratias Nsabimana, chief of staff of the FAR; Major Thaddée Bagaragaza, an officer with the Presidential Guard; and Colonel Elie Sagatwa, member of the special secretariat of the Rwandan president and chief of the military cabinet of the Rwandan president. Habyarimana's death—and the deaths of everyone else on the plane, to include the French crew—became the defining moment in the tragic history of the Rwandan genocide. It was clear that such an event would generate the kind of destructive violence that causes thousands of innocent people to be killed. However, with the exception of the Hutu extremists and the infamous Hutu militias, few could have predicted the magnitude of the violence that was about to be unleashed.

While he was waiting for more information to be able to understand the seriousness of the situation, Dallaire declared a red alert for all UNAMIR troops. Colonel Luc Marchal, the sector commander for Kigali, was tasked with securing the crash site for an accident investigation.<sup>4</sup> Anyidoho was directed to go immediately to the UNAMIR headquarters and take responsibility for operations there, while Dallaire tried to get a better sense of what was happening and, more important, learn from political leaders what to do next.<sup>5</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Ephrem Rwabalinda, the FAR liaison officer to UNAMIR, informed Dallaire that a crisis committee meeting was about to take place at the FAR headquarters and invited Dallaire to join the meeting.<sup>6</sup> Of the Rwandan gendarmerie and army senior leaders were at the gathering, notably absent was the army chief of staff, Major General Nsabimana, who had died with the president.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali* (Accra, Ghana: Woeli, 1999), 20.

<sup>6</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>7</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), 222–24.

Between 2100 and 2130, General Dallaire, Major Beardsley, and Dallaire's aide-de-camp, Royal Netherlands Army captain Robert van Putten, traveled to the meeting. The three officers drove through Kigali's very dark and unusually quiet streets. Beardsley remembered that there was no one outside: "the streets were just empty. It was like a ghost town. We saw some vehicles flipped over, turned over, their doors open. But we saw no presidential guards, we saw no patrols out, we saw nothing. Everybody had just disappeared. We drove very carefully and slowly, because we'd heard that there had been firing, there had been roadblocks set up in various areas of the city; but there were not. It was very empty."<sup>8</sup>

The officers were joined by Colonel Marchal at the FAR headquarters. The UN officers immediately noted the rather unusual high number of troops and military vehicles that were gathered at the military installation and that the guard at the gates had been strengthened. Dallaire and Marchal sat together with a dozen FAR officers and key leaders to examine the situation and explore what the best course of action might be under the circumstances. General Augustin Ndindiliyimana, the gendarmerie chief of staff, was the most senior officer present. Among the other participants were several key personalities including retired Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, the chief of staff of the Rwandan Ministry of Defence and a key figure in the events leading to the genocide; Colonel Felicien Muberuka, who was in charge of all FAR forces in the Kigali Sector; Colonel Joseph Murasampongo; Colonel Balthazar Ndengeyinka; Lieutenant Colonel Rwabalinda; Colonel Paul Rwarakabije; and several other officers from the army staff and gendarmerie. Bagosora was running the meeting. He made it clear that following the death of the president, the officers at the crisis committee would take control of Rwanda until a reliable, political framework could be put in place.

This put Dallaire in a difficult position. He was adamantly opposed to such a course of action and during the meeting often emphasized that,

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<sup>8</sup> Beardsley interview.

despite Habyarimana's death, the country continued to have a legitimate government and that Prime Minister Madame Agathe Uwilingiyimana was still in charge. This argument was vehemently opposed by Bagosora. Dallaire wanted to keep the situation as calm as possible, and several times he asked the Rwandan military leaders to get their troops back to their barracks and keep them there. He stressed the importance of complying with the Kigali Weapons-Secure Area agreement and suggested increasing the number of gendarmerie patrols to whom he would add UN troops. Bagosora remained opposed to all suggestions.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of the meeting, General Ndindiliyimana made a statement that emphasized his commitment to support the peace process and to comply with the provision of the Arusha treaty; transitional institutions would be established in the shortest time possible, and they would continue to work together with the peacekeeping force in Rwanda.<sup>10</sup>

While these crucial events were taking place, Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, a critical personality in the unfolding crisis as head of UNAMIR, was in a situation of isolation. Like the large majority of people in Kigali, he heard the explosion over the capital that evening, but only after he received a call from Enoch Ruhigira, Habyarimana's chief of staff, did he learn that the president's aircraft had been shot down. Booh-Booh unsuccessfully tried to contact Dallaire to obtain more information and to report to the UN secretary-general in New York about the possible consequences that such an event might have on the feeble peace process in Rwanda. His attempts to contact Dallaire were frustrated by an unreliable system of communication and by the fact that the general had left his residence to join the emergency meeting at the Rwandan Army headquarters. When Dallaire called Booh-Booh, it was 2300. At the emergency meeting, the FAR officers had raised a number of issues that Dallaire

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<sup>9</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>10</sup> Luc Marchal, *Rwanda: la descente aux enfers: témoignage d'un peacekeeper, Décembre 1993–Avril 1994* [Rwanda: The Descent into Hell: Testimony of a Peacekeeper, December 1993–April 1994] (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 2001), 219.

was not in a position to address. Booh-Booh, as the highest UN authority in Kigali, would have been in a much better position to deal with them, and a meeting with the secretary-general's special representative would have been beneficial. Booh-Booh's initial reaction was one of concern, as he had little background information about what was happening in Kigali and did not want to come across as unable to provide appropriate answers to the issues that would be presented to him. Nevertheless, he agreed to a meeting, and soon Dallaire, Bagosora, Lieutenant Colonel Rwabalinda, Mactar Gueye, and Gilbert Ngijol were at the residence of the UN mission head. It was during this meeting that Bagosora explained to Booh-Booh and Dallaire that Rwanda would be temporarily led by a military committee. Booh-Booh asked whether this was a military coup, a statement that Bagosora strongly rejected. Yet, Bagosora made clear that the armed forces with their strong deployment would be better suited than any small political party to provide the country with the necessary stability. Clearly neither Booh-Booh nor Dallaire wanted to give Bagosora the slightest impression that his course of action might be accepted by the UN's highest political and military representatives. Consequently, the two men tried to convince the Rwandan extremist that it was of the greatest importance that the process of stabilization and transition would continue with the participation of civilian and political leaders. This was something Bagosora tried to resist, and only under significant pressure did he agree to a meeting with leaders of the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (National Revolutionary Movement for Development, or MRND) and representatives of the country's observers of the Arusha Accords. Yet, he was firm in his decision to prevent Prime Minister Madame Agathe from issuing orders to the government's armed forces.

Booh-Booh did not waste any time, quickly getting in touch with the U.S. ambassador to Rwanda, David P. Rawson, and scheduling a meeting with Rwandan political leaders, the observers of the Arusha agreement, and the Vatican ambassador. The meeting was to be held at Rawson's resi-

dence at 0900 the following morning, Bagosora agreed to the meeting and promised that both the gendarmerie chief of staff and the newly appointed army chief of staff would attend. It was the last time Booh-Booh saw Bagosora. Clearly, Bagosora understood the importance of gaining time and avoiding raising skepticism among the UN leadership and foreign diplomats about his real intentions. He wanted to maintain control of the armed forces and extend that control to the political sphere. Bagosora was probably also uncertain about how the UN troops in Rwanda might react to his plans and very likely wanted to test them before confronting their leaders with an obstinate denial of their requests.

Well into the night, Booh-Booh informed Madame Agathe of the meeting with Bagosora. She was extremely concerned and shared with the UN diplomat her desire to address the Rwandan people to calm the situation. She suggested that she address the nation from Radio Rwanda. The hour was late, and both agreed that she would go to the radio station the following day at 0500, when more Rwandans would be listening to the radio.<sup>11</sup>

While Dallaire was busy with the delegation of Rwandan officers at Booh-Booh's residence, Marchal returned to the Kigali Sector headquarters and briefed the staff officers there about the ongoing events. Several Belgian soldiers stationed at the airport, probably around 20, had been taken "hostage" by Rwandan government troops. Although the situation was tense in the early hours of the night, it did not look as bad as it would turn out to be late in the morning of 7 April. Indeed, there was still hope that the commitment to maintain peace, as stated by General Ndindiliyimana, was going to prevail. Yet, this would be a short-lived hope. Marchal's main task was to make the necessary arrangements to provide Madame Agathe with a security detail to reach the Radio

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<sup>11</sup> Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, *Le patron de Dallaire parle: Révélations sur les dérives d'un général de l'ONU au Rwanda* [Dallaire's Boss Speaks: Revelations on the Excesses of a UN General in Rwanda] (Paris: Duboiris, 2005), 148–50.

Rwanda station, from where she was to address the nation, and to secure the site with Belgian peacekeepers. Clearly this was a task of great importance. Madame Agathe had already informed several Western embassies about the possibility of a bloodbath in Rwanda. She probably knew that a genocide might happen in her country. Just a few days earlier, she had been accused by people close to the president of plotting a coup together with key members of the defense staff.<sup>12</sup> This was a blatant lie intended to discredit her. She was also aware that the peace process was very shaky and understood how seriously such a process might be affected as a result of Habyarimana's death. The death of such a key Rwandan political actor was to finally set free the extremists who had never accepted Habyarimana's commitment, although unenthusiastic, to the peace process. It is likely that Habyarimana never would have agreed to the Arusha Accords had he not been under great international pressure and very concerned about the poor performance of the FAR in the war against the RPF. Moreover, Madame Agathe was aware, even more so than the UN military leaders in Kigali, that she was one of the main targets of the extremists, as were a large number of moderate Hutu leaders. Indeed, the Rwandan leaders who had participated in the meeting at Booh-Booh's residence made clear that they had no intention of talking to the prime minister. Dallaire noted that "Bagosora was firmly opposed to the idea that the Prime Minister might speak on the radio." In Bagosora's view, Madame Agathe "had no credibility before the nation, and her government had no support to deal and take care of the situation."<sup>13</sup>

When Dallaire spoke to Madame Agathe, she informed him that she was trying to bring the government together, but the extremist ministers

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<sup>12</sup> André Guichaoua, ed., *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993–1994): analyses, faits et documents* [The Political Crises in Burundi and Rwanda (1993–1994): Analyses, Facts and Documents] (Paris: Karthala, 1995), 695.

<sup>13</sup> *Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda* [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (6 December 1997), 420.

were nowhere to be found and several of the moderate members of her cabinet were fleeing their homes in search of safe places to hide.<sup>14</sup> Dallaire contacted Radio Rwanda and *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTL) “but was unsuccessful in arranging for the [prime minister] to go to those radio stations. The personnel at the radio stations were either vehemently against her speaking (RTL) or fearful of providing help.”<sup>15</sup>

The situation at Madame Agathe’s house was very tense. The prime minister, the five Ghanaian peacekeepers, and the Rwandan gendarmes who were in charge of her security knew that the next hours would be decisive for the future of both Rwanda and themselves.

To ensure that Madame Agathe could address the nation, Marchal issued detailed instructions to UNAMIR’s Belgian Army contingent, KIBAT II. The Belgian troops were to provide two patrols: one to secure the Radio Rwanda site and the other to escort the prime minister from her residence to the radio station. Marchal directed Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Dewez, the battalion commander, to organize the patrols. Dewez and Marchal entered in an argument about whether such a mission would actually be possible, as well as how risky it would be for the Belgian soldiers. Dewez was concerned that in some neighborhoods in downtown Kigali the situation had become rather volatile; already there were a few firefights. He was very worried that the two patrols would end up in the middle of these firefights and would be extremely vulnerable, an opinion shared by Major Maurice Timsonet, the battalion second-in-command.<sup>16</sup> Yet, these concerns did not change Marchal’s orders. He had clear directives from Dallaire, and although he was aware that the mission was risky, he knew that it was of great importance. Dewez decided to reinforce the

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<sup>14</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 221.

<sup>15</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 421.

<sup>16</sup> Rwanda: *Lettre ouverte aux parlementaires: Le texte du rapport du groupe “Rwanda” du Sénat: Les familles des paras* [Rwanda: Open Letter to Parliamentarians: The Text of the Report of the “Rwanda” Group of the Senate: The Families of the Paratroopers] (Brussels: Luc Pire, 1997), 100.



patrol protecting the prime minister; instead of sending 5 soldiers on 2 Volkswagen Iltis light utility vehicles, he sent 10 soldiers on four Iltises.

Lieutenant Thierry Lotin, the commander of the battalion's mortar platoon, was placed in charge of the patrol that was tasked with escorting Madame Agathe to the radio station. In the early hours of the morning of 7 April, at about 0200, Lotin was at the airport refueling his vehicles. The previous day had been a pleasant one for the 29-year-old officer. He had traveled to the Akagera National Park on escort duties for a RPF delegation. Such a task was more of a tourist opportunity than a military operation. Very likely, considering the nature of the task, he and his troops had decided not to take a heavy machine gun with them. After a few weeks in Rwanda, the visit to Akagera was a chance to see an interesting part of the country and some of Rwanda's wildlife. Now, Lotin was to take the lead on a vital mission—one that he did not know would be his last.

When the vehicles were ready, Lotin and Corporal Stéphane Lohr left the airport. They drove to "Viking," the base of the 16th Company, to meet with First Sergeant Yannick Leroy and Corporal Alain Debatty's two other sections. The 10 soldiers then began the journey to reach the prime minister's residence a short distance away. Several times they had to divert their journey and take alternative routes to avoid some of the streets that were becoming too dangerous. It was already dawn by the time they reached their destination. The situation they found there was a difficult one. Lotin was informed that the other Belgian patrol that was supposed to secure the area around Radio Rwanda had not been able to arrive at the location due to intense firefights in the area and that their mission had been aborted. Lotin's mission therefore was to provide protection to the prime minister.

While Lotin and his patrol were trying to reach Madame Agathe's house, the Rwandan Presidential Guard and the militias had begun the arrest and summary execution of dozens of key moderate leaders. A few hours after the shooting down of President Habyarimana's plane, FAR units were busy in their violent tasks.

The Presidential Guard was the unit that took a leading role in the genocide. Its commander, Major Protais Mpiranya, a native of Gitarama Province, was an extremist officer who had a close connection with Colonel Bagosora. Following a period during which he served as the Presidential Guard's second-in-command, he took command of the unit in 1993. Since then, and until July 1994, the Presidential Guard was instrumental in the training of and distribution of arms to militias.<sup>17</sup>

The Presidential Guard was supported by other FAR units, including the Para-Commando Battalion, commanded by Major Aloys Ntabakuze, and the Reconnaissance Battalion, commanded by Major François-Xavier Nzuwonemeye. These two officers, as well as Captain Innocent Sagahutu, second-in-command of the Reconnaissance Battalion, were in communication with Bagosora.

After Habyarimana's plane was shot down, Nzuwonemeye directed his unit to support the Presidential Guard in the assassination of Madame Agathe. In the early hours of 7 April, Sagahutu, in the presence of Nzuwonemeye, ordered the soldiers stationed at the Radio Rwanda station to prevent the prime minister from addressing the nation. As a result, the Belgian patrol that was tasked with securing the area before Madame Agathe arrived was confronted and threatened by the FAR soldiers. While the Belgian patrol was dealing with the FAR soldiers at the radio station, Sagahutu directed the unit commanded by Adjutant Boniface Bizimungu, stationed in Kiyovu at the presidential residence, to stop the prime minister from leaving her residence. Since the early hours of the morning, Madame Agathe's house had already been surrounded and attacked by FAR soldiers.

When Lotin and his troops arrived at the prime minister's house at around 0500, they drove into an ambush. The Belgian paratroopers

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<sup>17</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Case no. ICTR-2000-56-I, The Prosecutor against Augustin Bizimungu, Augustin Ndindiliyimana, Protais Mpiranya, François-Xavier Nzuwonemeye, [and] Innocent Sagahutu, amended in conformity with Trial Chamber II Decision, 25 September 2002, hereafter ICTR Indictment.

were attacked and immediately lost two of their four vehicles, which were burned by the Presidential Guards. When the Belgian troops entered the residence, they found that the 5 Ghanaian peacekeepers and 10 Rwandan gendarmes were frightened. The Rwandan gendarmes had probably no intention in engaging in an armed confrontation with the Presidential Guards. The Ghanaians, who were suffering from a shortage of ammunition, might have also been reluctant to engage in an armed confrontation, but they believed that they would not be attacked and that they would be able to come out of the prime minister's house without having to fire their weapons. The situation was extremely confused. There were now 25 armed troops inside the prime minister's residence, 15 of whom were peacekeepers, and 5 of whom had a limited amount of ammunition to sustain a protracted firefight. However, despite all of these problems, the real and determining issue was that the peacekeepers did not fully grasp the fact that not resisting a Presidential Guard attack was not an option. They believed, or were led to believe, that they could negotiate a way out.

Among those in charge of making critical decisions at the prime minister's residence, Lotin, the senior officer in command, had just a few weeks in country. He had served in several other missions, but his limited time in Rwanda and lack of familiarity with the politics of the country probably did not allow him to fully appreciate the situation. His immediate chain of command, Lieutenant Colonel Dewez, and the senior UN officer, General Anyidoho, grossly underestimated the danger faced by the patrol. Anyidoho explained that during these crucial hours in the morning of 7 April, he had been constantly in contact with the peacekeepers at the prime minister's house. As he did not fully appreciate what was going on, he therefore told them that opposing the presidential guards was not a rational course of action: "The best they [the peacekeepers] could do was to talk to them [the presidential guards], to negotiate, to tell them, 'Look,

what you are about to do is wrong. You cannot do it.”<sup>18</sup> Lotin continued to receive instructions from his battalion commander. A few minutes before 0700, he informed Dewez that the house was surrounded by Rwandan soldiers armed with rifles and grenades. He had been asked by the Presidential Guards to lay down his weapons and those of his troops. Dewez told him not to comply with the request but to maintain an open line of communication with the guards.

Madame Agathe, who had the best understanding of the situation, realized that the most effective chance at saving her life and the lives of her family was to escape from her house and avoid being apprehended by the Presidential Guard. She explored the limited options for escape that were available. Her initial attempt was unsuccessful. She contacted one of her neighbors, Joyce E. Leader, the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Kigali, to ask if she could hide at the U.S. diplomat's house. Although Leader initially agreed, when one of the prime minister's guards climbed what seemed to be a ladder and raised his head above the fences, shots were immediately fired. The U.S. diplomat asked to abort the attempt, and the prime minister had to abandon this option. Indeed, after a few minutes, Rwandan soldiers entered Leader's residence and searched for Madame Agathe. The situation was so tense that when a distressed Leader answered a phone call, she was told to hang up immediately and a firearm was shot.<sup>19</sup>

Madame Agathe's alternative option for escape was through another neighbor, a UN volunteer. She successfully accessed the neighbor's house, but she was nonetheless captured by the Presidential Guard and brutally killed alongside her husband. Of all the people at the prime minister's residence, Madame Agathe understood best how dangerous the situation was. She had made the decision not to go to the radio station once she had

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Gen Henry Anyidoho, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Anyidoho interview.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Joyce Leader, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS.

been informed that the Belgian patrol could not reach the location, and she was aware of how unsafe the entire neighborhood of Kiyovu, where the station was located, had become. She had also received some worrying news about the fates of moderate members of the government. That morning, she had contacted Booh-Booh to inform him that the Rwandan military had taken two ministers to ask for a stronger protection to escort her out of her residence to a safer place such as the UNAMIR headquarters.<sup>20</sup>

Madame Agathe was not the only one who understood how dangerous the situation was for her personally and for those in charge of her protection. Since the early hours of the morning, while Lotin's patrol was on its way to the prime minister's house, Belgian Army lieutenant Yves Theunissen, the second-in-command of "City Group," had listened to the radio communication between the patrol commander and the battalion headquarters. Minute after minute, he became aware of how dangerous the situation was for the patrol at the prime minister's house. Theunissen was deployed with about 25 very experienced and well-armed paratroopers who were capable of dealing with the FAR soldiers and their French *Auto Mitrailleuse Légère* (AML, or light armored vehicle). He said, "I had about twenty men to go and help Lieutenant Lotin as well as the necessary armament."<sup>21</sup>

Theunissen was about two kilometers away from the prime minister's house. He was confident that, by cutting through the residential neighborhood on foot, he could have easily reached his fellow paratroopers under siege by the FAR and the Presidential Guard and bring them the support that might have been decisive to deal with the very difficult situation. The Belgian officer's assessment of the enemy forces at the prime minister's house was careful. He was aware of the rather good training of the Presidential Guard, though he knew that it was still not compa-

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<sup>20</sup> Booh-Booh, *Le patron de Dallaire parle*, 150.

<sup>21</sup> Hearing of Capt Theunissen before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (6 June 1997), hereafter Theunissen hearing.

rable to that of the Belgian paracommandos. He did not think that the presence of a few Rwandan armored vehicles in a static position would present a serious obstacle for his troops. Theunissen was convinced that the operators of the AMLs had little experience and probably not even ammunition.<sup>22</sup>

There were a number of BTR-80 armored vehicles of RUTBAT that could have been employed to help extract the surrounded peacekeeper patrol. Three of them were moving around the area, but Theunissen said that “they came up against a roadblock and they turned around because they were cowards. If resolute it was possible to pass. So I remained convinced that the intervention was possible.”<sup>23</sup> The Belgian lieutenant offered his support to the struggling patrol. He provided additional details about the condition of his small unit at the time:

We had more ammunition than we needed. These had been distributed in the morning. We did not have any LAWs [light armored weapons], however, they were at Rwandex. Commander Choffray claims that nobody thought of it and that it was impossible to move around town. I noted, however, that General Dallaire went without problems to his meeting at 10 o'clock, that Choffray did not go out and therefore did not know if it was possible to drive around and that, at 11 am and 2 pm, I asked if it was possible to move [and] I was answered in the negative. I then learned that Colonel Marchal had asked for ammunition and that they had been brought from Rwan-

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<sup>22</sup> Hearing of Col Dewez and Capt Theunissen before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (30 June 1997), hereafter Dewez and Theunissen hearing.

<sup>23</sup> Dewez and Theunissen hearing.

dex to the stadium with a BTR. I no longer followed the orders and sent for ammunition.<sup>24</sup>

At 0700, Theunissen's request to intervene in support of Lotin's patrol was the best chance to rescue the peacekeepers. In his testimony before the Belgian Senate, Theunissen made clear that the battalion's headquarters and operation cell were "nearly nonexistent."<sup>25</sup> After Lotin was captured, no more orders were issued by the operations cell. Lieutenant Colonel Dewez was isolated, Captain Choffray was overwhelmed by the events, and Captain Roman was wounded.<sup>26</sup> Theunissen's request to intervene was rejected by battalion headquarters.<sup>27</sup> This decision was probably one of the most important of the entire day, as it had practical and psychological consequences at both the tactical and operational levels. The lack of reaction made clear to the Rwandan extremists that UNAMIR was reluctant or afraid to use force, and that it probably felt that its troops deployed in Kigali were extremely vulnerable and would not have been in a position to properly engage the Presidential Guard or even defend themselves. Dewez explained that his decision was influenced by a serious concern about the possible retaliation that some of the most isolated and small Belgian outposts might have faced, had Theunissen intervened.<sup>28</sup> The Presidential Guard probably realized that UNAMIR had many tactical deficiencies; the psychological consequences were enormous. The Presidential Guards and extremists were not to be stopped by the peacekeepers. In many ways, the lack of action in support of Lotin and the Belgian paratroopers placed the Presidential Guard in a strong psychological position, while the peacekeepers lost the reactive edge that would have made clear their commitment to stop the Presidential Guard in any pos-

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<sup>24</sup> Theunissen hearing.

<sup>25</sup> Theunissen hearing.

<sup>26</sup> Theunissen hearing.

<sup>27</sup> Dewez and Theunissen hearing.

<sup>28</sup> Dewez and Theunissen hearing.

sible way. Dewez was well aware that both Dallaire and Marchal intended to follow the strict UN instructions on the use of force. Very likely, a forceful action would not have been approved by UNAMIR leaders. In addition, the use of the heavy machine guns, essential to give Theunissen the advantage he needed to be effective against the Presidential Guard, had to be authorized by Dallaire, who was going from meeting to meeting. Indeed, in his testimony before the Belgian Senate Commission on Rwanda, Dallaire stated that “had either Colonel Marchal or [Lieutenant Colonel] Dewez requested authority from me to conduct an assault on Camp Kigali [where the Belgian paratroopers were taken late that morning] to rescue the detained group under the conditions of that time, my response would have been an outright refusal for such an armed intervention. The only solution reasonably available to us at that time was to continue to negotiate as a neutral force.”<sup>29</sup>

In the next hour, as soon as Dewez was informed by Lotin that Madame Agathe had fled her house, the battalion commander told the lieutenant that his mission was over and that he was to return to base as soon as possible. Yet, at this point such a course of action was no longer an option. Lotin’s situation became even more difficult as three of his soldiers were seized by the Presidential Guard. From his position, he could see the three soldiers on the ground surrounded by FAR soldiers who were pointing their rifles at them. Lotin sent a distress message asking Dewez for instruction, and once more the battalion commander ordered the lieutenant not to give up his weapons. Yet, Marchal intervened in the battalion network and said that Lotin, as he was on the ground, was in the best position to assess the situation and do what he believed was best.<sup>30</sup>

The experienced colonel failed to realize that the events had overwhelmed Lotin and that the lieutenant’s ability to make the best decision

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<sup>29</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 424–25.

<sup>30</sup> *Kibat Chronique 6 Avr–19 Avr 1994* [Kibat Chronicle, 6–19 April 1994], International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 27, hereafter KIBAT Chronicle.



was compromised by what had become an extremely threatening and stressful situation. Even more problematic was Lotin's inability to understand how little he could trust the FAR officer who asked him to give up his weapons. Neither Dewez nor Marchal had a sense of how quickly the situation was falling apart. Marchal, however, should have known that the Belgian peacekeepers would be extremely unsafe in the hands of the Presidential Guard. At this point, Dewez told Lotin, "Since three men are on the floor disarmed, I think that the best thing will be to do what they ask."<sup>31</sup>

Lotin's situation could not have been worse. Besides being surrounded by a hostile force, his chain of command was far removed from the events, unable to fully grasp what was happening and provide the lieutenant with viable courses of action. Lotin, under extreme pressure and distress, gave in to the request of FAR major Bernard Ntuyahaga to lay down his weapons. Although they had negotiated their surrender under the promise that they would be taken to a UNAMIR base, the 10 Belgian and the 5 Ghanaian peacekeepers were driven to Camp Kigali, a FAR military installation, just a few minutes away from the prime minister's residence. By now, the 15 peacekeepers, disarmed and detained by the Rwandan military, represented just one of the many challenges, probably the most difficult, that UNAMIR and its leadership faced in the early hours of 7 April.

Many incidents that required as many quick decisions took place that day. In Dallaire's words, "this was a day not of one or two isolated incidents and a few decisions. It was a day that felt like a year, where there were hundreds of incidents and decisions that had to be made in seconds."<sup>32</sup>

The 0900 meeting scheduled at the house of the U.S. ambassador that was supposed to be attended by Madame Agathe, several key political leaders, and the highest-level representatives of the international

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<sup>31</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 239.

community was cancelled. Marchal was informed that Rwandan soldiers at the airport had broken into the compound where the artillery and flak pieces were stocked and deployed them along the runaway. For Marchal, the most frustrating thing was the fragmentation of the chain of command inside the Rwandan military: "It was like a part of the military deliberately did not care about what the other was doing."<sup>33</sup> Under these conditions, it was difficult to trust that the officer he was dealing with when trying to ease several points of friction had the authority to issue orders that would actually be executed by any given Rwandan Army unit. This was indeed a clear indication of how poorly the Rwandan military was organized, as unity of command was nonexistent and the chain of command was broken down and ineffective.

Meanwhile, the situation was becoming increasingly more chaotic at the UNAMIR Kigali Sector headquarters. In Marchal's words, "The operations room of the Sector HQs has become a soundboard. Through the loudspeaker branches on the various radio networks, the messages overlap one another in an overbidding of decibels. The phenomenon, much similar to a Tower of Babel, is well underway. Some interventions seem to come from another planet. In the midst of this ambient cacophony, the rattling of the telephone has almost something challenging."<sup>34</sup>

Captain Amadou Deme confirmed the chaos that affected the UNAMIR command and noted how ineffective the organization had become. He wrote, "That very same day, there was obviously a kind of vacuum in the functioning of our headquarters. The Force Commander was still very busy and was between meetings and other interventions, especially with the RGF [FAR] side."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 226.

<sup>34</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 229.

<sup>35</sup> Amadou Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission: The Whole Truth* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2010), 75.

UNAMIR was dealing with a poor communication system in which several officers used different languages.<sup>36</sup> Among the many messages that crowded the air waves, Major Mohammed Belgacem, the commander of the Tunisian contingent in charge of security around the *Conseil National de Développement* (National Council for Development, or CND), informed Marchal that the RPF was removing the fences around the perimeter and some units were leaving the compound.<sup>37</sup> The troops of 3d Battalion were getting ready to engage the FAR and the Presidential Guard.

At Camp Kigali, the situation was getting extremely dangerous for Lotin and the other peacekeepers apprehended by the RGF. Despite being surrounded by a hostile crowd, Lotin was able to make contact with the UNMO stationed to the FAR compound, Togolese captain Apedo Kodjo, who had already informed Lieutenant Colonel Willie Purtscher, the chief of the UNMOs in Kigali, about the situation. Using Kodjo's phone, Lotin contacted Dewez and told him that he and his soldiers were about to be lynched. Dewez did not believe the junior officer and, disconnected from the reality faced by his troops, replied that Lotin was "probably exaggerating and that perhaps he [was] only going to be beaten up."<sup>38</sup> This was the last time that the two officers spoke. Nevertheless, Dewez informed Marchal about his communication with Lotin and asked for the intervention of the armored personnel carriers (APC) of the quick-reaction force (QRF) to liberate his troops. But the unruly mob of Rwandan soldiers in the compound did not waste any time, and they quickly attacked the group of peacekeepers.

Years later, Dewez said that "if I had realized that Lotin might have been massacred by a crowd, I would have intervened without considering how my action might have affected the security of the expatriates or

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<sup>36</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 229–30.

<sup>37</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 229.

<sup>38</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 27.

the position of UNAMIR. Nevertheless . . . we did not understand the situation. If even one of my company commanders had understood the situation, he would have informed me immediately and would have asked me to act.”<sup>39</sup>

Sergeant George Aboagye, the senior enlisted soldier of the five Ghanaian peacekeepers on guard duty at the prime minister’s residence, wrote that as soon as they arrived at the camp they were ordered to line up and to sit down. Then, “the soldiers at the camp rushed on us and started beating us from all angles, some with rifles, sticks, iron bars and stones.”<sup>40</sup> It was a spontaneous burst of violence.

A few Belgian soldiers, probably four, were killed immediately; a few ran toward the noncommissioned officers’ (NCO) dining hall; and at least three, probably wounded, entered the office of the UNMO at the compound’s main gate and put up a tough resistance against the overwhelming number of Rwandan soldiers. Someone among the crowd was adamant that the “black” peacekeepers should be spared, and therefore the Ghanaian peacekeepers were separated from their Belgian colleagues. These were moments of unusual violence. Among the Belgian soldiers, First Sergeant Leroy had been able to hide a pistol and, although wounded, opened fire against the assailants. A Rwandan corporal armed with an AK rifle tried to enter the UN office, but he was confronted by Lotin, who successfully took the rifle. Several Rwandans were killed, while the remaining Belgian paratroopers, abandoned to their fate by UNAMIR, put up a fight that lasted at least until 1200. It was probably 1300, or maybe even later, when the last peacekeeper was finally killed.

That morning, Dallaire left UNAMIR headquarters in a vehicle accompanied by Major Petrus Maggen, one of the Belgian officers assigned to the force commander’s staff. They went to an emergency meeting

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<sup>39</sup> Dewez and Theunissen hearing.

<sup>40</sup> Filip Reyntjens, “Rwanda: Trois jours qui ont fait basculer l’histoire” [Rwanda: Three Days that Changed History] (Brussels: Center for African Studies and Documentation, 1995), 78.

chaired by Bagosora at the *Ecole Supérieure Militaire* (ESM) next door to Camp Kigali. On their way to the meeting, they ran into a roadblock and had to abandon their vehicle. They were offered to get in a car driven by a Rwandan gendarmerie major. While the Belgian soldiers were fighting for their lives, Dallaire, Maggen, and the Rwandan officer passed by the entrance of Camp Kigali. Dallaire noticed the presence of a few soldiers dressed in Belgian uniforms lying on the ground.

Dallaire was aware that peacekeepers had already been targeted, as before leaving UNAMIR headquarters Maggen heard Dallaire discussing with his deputy the death of two or three UNMOs at Camp Kigali.<sup>41</sup> At the meeting, Lieutenant Colonel Laurent Nubaha, the camp commander, informed General Ndindiliyimana that a few Belgian soldiers were at risk of being killed at Camp Kigali. Several more FAR officers, including Major François-Xavier Nzuwonemeye, attended the meeting after leaving Camp Kigali while the Belgian soldiers were being attacked and some among them had already been killed. Neither Ndindiliyimana nor Nzuwonemeye did anything to stop the slaughter of the Belgian soldiers, and they carried on with the meeting until around 1200.<sup>42</sup>

Dallaire remembered that the view of a few Belgian soldiers lying on the ground “was a brutal shock. How had they been captured?”<sup>43</sup> He had no knowledge of what had taken place at the prime minister’s house. Although he should have known about the capture of the 10 Belgian peacekeepers, he was acting without a full understanding of the events that were unfolding. He explained, “The Kibat personnel operated on a different radio system and were not on the UNAMIR Force level radio net. The interface in the communications systems was at Kigali Sector HQ. I do not recall any specific radio transmission or reports regarding Lt Lotin and his Section at that time.”<sup>44</sup> Yet, as he entered the ESM, Captain Apedo,

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<sup>41</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 407.

<sup>42</sup> ICTR Indictment.

<sup>43</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 236.

<sup>44</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 421.

who had been able to leave Camp Kigali with the Ghanaian peacekeepers, approached Dallaire to inform him about what was happening just a few yards from where they were. Dallaire noticed the distress in the Togolese captain's eyes.<sup>45</sup> Dallaire remembered that "to the best of my recollection he spoke of a number of Belgian peacekeepers being held at Camp Kigali and that they were being abused or beaten up. I told the Togolese and Ghanaian soldiers to wait for me there as they seemed relatively safe with our escort officer."<sup>46</sup> Dallaire looked at the Ghanaian soldiers and was surprised to see that they did not have their individual weapons.<sup>47</sup>

At the end of the meeting with the military extremists, Dallaire returned to the parking lot where the Rwandan major who drove him to the ESM was waiting for him. Apedo and the five Ghanaian peacekeepers were also there, guarded by FAR soldiers. Dallaire told them to return to their units, which they could do with a FAR vehicle and escort. Dallaire, his aide, and the Rwandan major headed to the ministry of defense, yet this time the Rwandan major did not pass in front of Camp Kigali.<sup>48</sup>

The Belgian Senate committee that conducted a thorough investigation on the events in Rwanda found Dallaire's decision in relation to the Belgian paratroopers rather problematic. In the committee's view:

General Dallaire's attitude raises a series of questions. Why did General Dallaire not immediately inform Colonel Marchal about what he had found out himself and about what the Togolese UN observer told him? Did General Dallaire want to avoid Belgian soldiers intervening at all costs? Why did General Dallaire not insist more to stop when he passed by camp Kigali? Why did he not talk about the peacekeepers during the meeting [the crisis committee] at the Ecole Supérieure Militaire? Why,

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<sup>45</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 237.

<sup>46</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 423.

<sup>47</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 237.

<sup>48</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 242.

after the meeting at the same school, has he not informed of the situation at Camp Kigali? Why did he not send scouts?<sup>49</sup>

In the years following that tragic day, Dallaire, on several occasions has offered explanations about his decision not to take any initiative to intervene to rescue the Belgian peacekeepers. In a long interview for *The Last Just Man* documentary, Dallaire remembered:

[A]s we are going towards the Ecole Supérieure, I looked to the right and as we were passing the second gate to the camp I see two individuals in Belgian camouflage laying in the compound, and so I just catch it as we driving by. I told the driver, hey those are my guys, stop! He says no no, the situation is too chaotic in the camp. [I'll] bring you where the meeting is to where all the commanders are. . . . I had realized that I am now taking casualties. [I've] got troops all over the country, a bunch of them unarmed, [I've] got civilians all over the country, I have no defensive stores, I'm low in ammunition, I mean all those things that I have been repeating him [probably General Baril or Iqbal Riza] daily and daily in sitreps, so I mean they were instinctive. And I have got them deployed all over the place in a chapter six peacekeeping scenario and so my assessment at that time was that I cannot conduct offensive operations.<sup>50</sup>

A few years later, Dallaire said, "Part of the argument that some people find difficult is why didn't I go rescue those ten Belgians and screw the

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<sup>49</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 424.

<sup>50</sup> *The Last Just Man*, directed by Steven Silver (Toronto, Canada: Barna-Alper Productions, 2001).

rest of the mission. So do I send another bunch in and end up with twenty, thirty casualties and on top of that they could just blast a shitter on my headquarters and my mission would have been over.”<sup>51</sup>

In *Shake Hands with the Devil*, Dallaire explained why he did not raise the issue of the Belgian peacekeepers with Bagosora and either ask for their liberation or use force to rescue them:

I needed to assess its impact on the entire mission, and I wanted to talk to the senior army leadership, who I hoped might be able to save the situation. It was that decision, in part, that contributed to the deaths of ten soldiers under my command. I wanted to proceed by negotiation, as I realized I could not use force without the certainty of more casualties. I did not have the offensive force to take on a dug-in garrison of more than a thousand troops. I considered a rescue operation irresponsible. If we used force against the RGF [FAR] compound, we were then a legitimate target and we would become a third belligerent. My aim that morning was to do everything in my power to avoid a confrontation, regain control of the rogue units in Kigali and keep the dialogue and the prospect of the peace accord alive.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, Dallaire’s tactical concern was significant. Yet, here was a force commander who had for too long played a political and diplomatic role. He seemed to be more concerned about the fact that a tactical initiative might have had a negative impact on the overall mission, which he still believed had the objective to sustain the peace process. On 7 April, it was clear that UNAMIR should have adopted an approach that would

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<sup>51</sup> *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*, directed by Peter Raymont (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004).

<sup>52</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 239.



have allowed it to escalate force, if necessary, instead of the mindset that had been developed to only focus on deescalation and negotiation. In an interview for the *Ghosts of Rwanda* documentary, Dallaire stated that he [N]ever doubted that that morning [we] took the right decision. . . . There was no way to get those guys out of there without risking the mission, the people and an enormous number of other casualties and potentially falling right into the trap that those bastards wanted me to, [to] become a belligerent and have to be totally pulled out. Because the nations would not want to sustain those casualties and become the third belligerent and then the whole lot of us would have been out. No way. I would not be able to live with the moral[ly] corrupt decision of packing up and leaving.<sup>53</sup>

Dallaire stressed that on 7 April, “We had troops in dangerous situations and, although limited by the ROE [rules of engagement] change, I could have overridden the prohibition on intervention and used force where crimes against humanity were being committed. I did not exercise that option for I could not have sustained combat operations nor guaranteed the safety of civilians or my troops if UNAMIR were to have become the third belligerent.”<sup>54</sup>

In his book, Dallaire described what went through his mind while he was going from meeting to meeting with senior Rwandan military officers. At the tactical level, his main concern was that key FAR units had taken defensive positions and had control of the city center and communication to the airport. The Presidential Guard was reinforced by elements of other experienced units such as the Reconnaissance Battalion

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Gen Roméo Dallaire, on *Frontline*, season 17, episode 2, “The Triumph of Evil,” directed and written by Steve Bradshaw and Ben Loeterman, aired 26 January 1999 on PBS, hereafter Dallaire interview.

<sup>54</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 246.

and the Para-Commando Battalion. Camp Kigali, where the Belgian peacekeepers were in the process of being slaughtered, very likely represented a tough target.

Dallaire estimated that to be successful, he needed several hundred troops and a reliable QRF, which at that time was, in his own words, “woefully inadequate.”<sup>55</sup> The deployment of the QRF was made even more difficult since Lieutenant Colonel De Loecker, who was in charge of forming and training the QRF, was sent to the airport in the early hours of the morning to conduct a flyover of Kigali with a UNAMIR helicopter to get a better sense of what was going on in the city. The Belgian officer was accompanied by the helicopter pilots and a section of Belgian paratroopers when, on their way to the airport, they faced some fire that prevented them from continuing to their destination. They decided to head to the Belgian Army post at the *École Technique Officielle* (ETO). De Loecker was ordered to remain there and help with the coordination of refugees. Yet, he was probably the officer who knew the QRF best and whose presence was extremely important to the Bangladeshi company that made up the unit. Indeed, De Loecker confirmed that, although the decision to deploy the QRF belonged to Dallaire and Marchal, the “QRF would not have been committed/deployed in any way if I had not been present.”<sup>56</sup>

Dallaire was extremely concerned by the possibility of embarking on an operation similar to the one that the U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force launched in Mogadishu, Somalia, just a few months before. There, the Americans “had botched the abduction attempt of a couple of aides to a Somali warlord and had suffered eighteen dead and more than seven-

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<sup>55</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 241.

<sup>56</sup> Hearing of Reserve LtCol De Loecker and Col Balis before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (29 May 1997), hereafter De Loecker and Balis hearing.

ty injured.”<sup>57</sup> For Dallaire, “precipitous action in the context of the tense and uncertain security environment in Kigali that morning could have been the spark which would have ignited a wider conflict. This would have placed UNAMIR in an adversarial role. This situation could have provided a possible excuse for the RPF to both punch out of its CND compound, and to move through the DMZ to ostensibly come to the rescue of UNAMIR (that sort of offer was in fact made to me by General [Paul] Kagame that afternoon).”<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, in the afternoon of 7 April, Kagame made clear to Dallaire that the killing had to be stopped. He was ready to take the initiative, and that same afternoon he had a few companies from the RPF’s 3d Battalion at the CND ready to leave the compound and engage the FAR, as they indeed did later that night. Kagame asked Dallaire to give the RPF “weapons and vehicles that the UN was holding, and we would use them for the protection of people. [Dallaire] laughed it off and said that it was not possible. Later on [Kagame] even contemplated capturing them by force.” Kagame stressed how his troops had limited arms and ammunition. He continued, “but on second thought, in my mind, that would create even more problems, not on the ground but diplomatically.”<sup>59</sup> Clearly, Dallaire, as a UN force commander, was prevented from even considering such an extreme option, yet Kagame’s proposal clearly indicated that the RPF would not have been hostile to the UN troops had UNAMIR decided to take a more assertive role in protecting defenseless civilians. Indeed, RPF engagement of extremist forces would have benefited the action of the UN troops, albeit indirectly. Yet, Dallaire was unable to see how the RPF action would have greatly benefitted a more assertive UN initiative at the tactical level.

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<sup>57</sup> De Loecker and Balis hearing.

<sup>58</sup> *Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda*, 424.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda’s Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 143.

At the Belgian Senate inquiry, Lieutenant Jean-Noel Lecomte, second-in-command of the Belgian Army's 14th Company, provided an eye-opening tactical assessment of the events of 7 April. When he was asked whether and how between 60 to 70 soldiers (peacekeepers mainly from the Belgian contingent) might have been able to deal and succeed against a force that probably at that moment in Camp Kigali numbered in the thousands, Lecomte wondered how well-armed or well-organized those soldiers were. He stressed that in the past, he had noted that FAR soldiers did not even obey the orders issued by their leaders. According to Lecomte, "The operational capabilities of hastily inflated African troops and European troops cannot be compared, with the exception of the RPF, who were very disciplined and who did real military work."<sup>60</sup> He continued, "We could force the roadblocks without problems with the weapons we had, but we had to get permission. The Rwandans felt in a position of strength because of the attitude of the Belgian peacekeepers who constantly . . . had to adopt a rather passive attitude, negotiate instead of imposing themselves. . . . If there had been more firmness, things would have been different."<sup>61</sup> When Lecomte was asked to provide an example of such a firmness, he referenced the course of action taken by Lieutenant Jean-Marc Vermeulen who, "as he faced a hostile crowd, finally opened fire, which rescued the situation. He simply applied purely military reflexes." Lecomte strongly noted, "It was not necessary to negotiate to pass a barrage."<sup>62</sup> In his view, "there was too much collusion between the broader policy and the reactions on the ground." Regarding Dallaire, Lecomte noted that the Canadian general "had other priorities and concerns from ours. For him, the success of the mission counted above all. If he reacted

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<sup>60</sup> Hearing of Reserve Lt Lecomte and Capt Lamaire before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (7 May 1997), hereafter Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

<sup>61</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

<sup>62</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

that way, it was to maintain calm in the city. In my view, men were sacrificed so as not to make the situation more explosive than it was.”<sup>63</sup>

In Lecomte’s view, UNAMIR and Dallaire lacked the initiative to rescue the 10 Belgian peacekeepers. What the Belgian troops needed that morning was simply “permission to go ahead.” However, Lecomte stressed that such a decision required accepting a significant amount of responsibility for “engaging UN troops . . . opposing the Rwandan authorities by forcing the roadblocks, and taking the risk of losing men, not to mention the diplomatic responsibility of adopting an aggressive attitude.” Yet, “an operation was possible to save Lieutenant Lotin and his men [as had happened to] Captain Vermeulen when he found himself in trouble at the stadium. The main problem was that of making such a decision [to open fire].”<sup>64</sup>

Lecomte acknowledged the shortage of ammunition:

[W]e had only 120 bullets for our rifles [and] we were forbidden to use our automatic weapons, which prevented us to respond effectively in case of an engagement. The guidelines were so restrictive that it was difficult to be credible . . . the Rwandan gendarmerie was reluctant to cooperate. I am convinced that a joint mission with the mortar platoon was possible because we had a Battalion of Bangladeshi and armored vehicles. The exact location of the mortar platoon was known to us, and we could have quickly brought together two large platoons thanks to the presence of the 14th company. As for the issue of replenishment of ammunition, it would not have been an obstacle because it could be done quickly.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

<sup>64</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

<sup>65</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

In 1999, the *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* noted:

The tragic killing of the Belgian peacekeepers also shows a number of problems in capacity to deal with a crisis situation. When there were reports that the peacekeepers guarding the Prime Minister were in trouble, sufficiently decisive action was not taken by UNAMIR to determine what had happened and to prevent the killings. The Force Commander stated that, passing by Camp Kigali and seeing Belgian peacekeepers on the ground, he was unable to get the RGF [FAR] driver of his car to stop. The Sector Commander for Kigali said that he did not know about the death of the Belgian paratroopers until 22:00. Although the Force Commander was prevented from reaching the Belgian group at that point, it is a matter of concern that the communications between the different elements of UNAMIR did not seem to ensure a correct flow of information about the threat to the Belgians, and that no-one was able to investigate the fate of the paratroopers until after they were dead. The failure in these instances seems to be attributable in some instances to a lack of direction from UNAMIR Headquarters, but also to the peacekeepers themselves, who by not resisting the threat to the persons they were protecting in some of the cases outlined above, as would have been covered by their Rules of Engagement, showed a lack of resolve to fulfill their mission.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: United Nations Security Council, 1999), 45.

On 7 April, several other small Belgian units faced the hostility of the FAR, the Presidential Guard, the infamous Interahamwe, and Rwandan mobs. Yet, in those cases the small unit leaders took a significantly different approach than Lotin—and, more important, they did not rely on instructions, or lack thereof, from their chain of command. They trusted their understanding of what was happening around them and what the best—and in some cases the only—course of action might be. Lotin put his faith entirely in his chain of command, with the result that he and his soldiers were brutally slaughtered. Vermeulen, on the other hand, followed the instructions from a confused chain of command only until he realized that to comply with the poor guidance he received was no longer a sound or even viable option.

Soon after President Habyarimana's airplane was shot down on the night of 6–7 April, Vermeulen's section was instructed to join the Belgian outpost "Top Gun" at the airport. The lieutenant was ordered to execute a reconnaissance mission to Kanombe, where the presidential aircraft had crashed. Yet, the small patrol, which was made up of a Volkswagen Iltis and a Unimog, was not allowed by the Rwandan Army to access the crash site. The patrol positioned itself at a distance, hoping that a FAR officer would let them inside the camp.<sup>67</sup> Marchal asked Lieutenant Colonel Rwabalinda, the FAR liaison officer with UNAMIR's Kigali Sector, to help the patrol access the crash site, but Marchal's many attempts were frustrated.<sup>68</sup> Although they were determined to wait as long as possible, after less than an hour the Belgian patrol tried to return to the airport. By this time there were sporadic but at times intense firefights in some neighborhoods in Kigali, and the Belgian patrol had to navigate its way back. Vermeulen's small group was unable to reach the airport, and they had to stop at a crossroad on the way there.

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<sup>67</sup> Alexandre Goffin, *Rwanda, 7 Avril 1994: 10 Commandos Vont Mourir!* [Rwanda, 7 April 1994: 10 Commandos Will Die!] (Brussels: ASBL, 1995), 90–91.

<sup>68</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 223.

The situation at the airport was confused and tense. Together with the FAR soldiers and Belgian peacekeepers were a number of expatriates. Just moments after Habyarimana was killed, a Belgian Air Force Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft and a scheduled Sabena flight from Brussels were expected to land. Outside the locked waiting room, Father Leopold Griendl, the director of the Conference of Bishops of Rwanda, waited for the C-130. With him were the director of Caritas, an embassy official, and two UN military medical officers who were disarmed and guarded by Presidential Guards. They knew that something had happened when they heard the explosions that brought the presidential airplane down and the runaway lighting system was turned off. The Rwandan soldiers, with no officers and NCOs present, simply refused to talk to them.

The C-130 aborted its attempt to land, left Rwanda's airspace, and headed to Nairobi, Kenya. So too did the Sabena airplane a few hours later. The small group decided to leave the airport in search of a safer place. For a few hours, they were held hostage by the FAR soldiers, but after some negotiation they were allowed to leave. At a crossroad on the way to Rwagimana, the small convoy met Vermeulen's unit.<sup>69</sup>

The situation around them was becoming increasingly violent: "[W]ith binoculars we could see the presidential guard throw grenades at [people] houses, we could hear the fire of machine guns. The operation seemed to be systematic, house by house and seemed to be organized."<sup>70</sup> By then, the group of Belgian soldiers, the catholic father, and the few civilians had no doubts of what they had to do if confronted with violence. It was then that two members of the Presidential Guard arrived at the crossroad where the Belgians were stopped. One of them recognized Father Griendl and helped the entire group to reach the Amahoro Stadium. In close proximity to the UN site, the convoy stopped as

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<sup>69</sup> Hearing of Mr. Leopold Greindl before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (28 May 1997), hereafter Greindl hearing.

<sup>70</sup> Greindl hearing.



they came within sight of a hostile crowd. A request for help sent to the UNAMIR Kigali Sector headquarters was eluded, and Vermeulen was directed to deal with the threat while UNAMIR headquarters waited for instructions from New York. In Father Greindl's view, "Waiting for orders from New York, 200 meters away from people threatening us, [was] ludicrous!"<sup>71</sup> Standing in front of the Amahoro Stadium, the Belgian patrol realized that they were facing hundreds of hostile militias, civilian mobs, and members of the Rwandan military. Nonetheless, the view of the stadium and the UNAMIR headquarters just a short distance away gave them a feeling of safety. It was a belief that did not last long. As the group arrived at the gate of the stadium, they realized that the Bangladeshi peacekeepers there, frightened by what was happening outside, had locked themselves inside. While Father Greindl tried to convince a Bangladeshi officer to open the gate, Vermeulen soon realized that waiting was becoming extremely dangerous, and so he ordered his small group to move toward the UNAMIR headquarters at the Amahoro Hotel, just a few yards away. While trying to cover the short distance to the UNAMIR headquarters, the crowd grew more aggressive. Captain Richard Schepkens, the KIBAT II liaison officer at the Kigali Sector headquarters, informed Marchal of the difficult situation that Vermeulen and his troops faced. Although Marchal ordered the commander of the Bangladeshi contingent to open the gates and let the Belgians inside, the gates remained closed. Later, the Bangladeshi opened the gates only for a few seconds when Vermeulen and his unit were too far away to reach them, and the gates were then closed again. It was in this chaotic circumstance that a military truck full of FAR soldiers arrived on the scene. The situation became explosive. Schepkens continued to pressure the Bangladeshis to open the gates, with no results. The lead vehicle of the Belgian convoy tried to break through the crowd and head to the UNAMIR headquarters. As the crowd became violent and threatening

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<sup>71</sup> Greindl hearing.

around his car, Adjutant Cantineaux opened fire with his gun through the car's front window.<sup>72</sup> The detonation quickly put in motion a series of events, probably the most important of which was that Vermeulen and his soldiers immediately got out of their vehicles and engaged the FAR.

The small unit engaged in a firefight while moving toward the stadium, which they managed to enter from the side. They suffered no losses, while it is likely that more than 15 FAR soldiers and militia laid on the ground dead or seriously wounded. The Bangladeshi did nothing to help their fellow Belgian peacekeepers. Clearly, in such a confusing and threatening situation, Vermeulen's decision to engage the crowd and to open fire was the last resort. UNAMIR's ROE would have allowed him to engage the FAR much earlier, yet the poor clarity about how to apply such rules delayed a response that was well inside the parameters of self-defense. The important point, however, is that although they faced an overwhelmingly hostile force of several hundred, they were able to engage them, create a corridor among the crowd, and move back toward the stadium while sustaining no casualties. Father Greindl stressed that for Vermeulen, there were no other options. He stated that the FAR elements were indeed motivated by a strong anti-Belgian sentiment. In addition, "they [were] fully aware of the total indifference of the UN. . . . However when the commandos finally opened fire, [they ran] away and we were saved. . ." He then added that "it was the indifference of the UN that gave courage to the Rwandan Army and the Gendarmerie."<sup>73</sup>

It took a significant amount of time for Vermeulen to finally order his group to engage the hostile crowd. The initial shot, however, was fired by Adjutant Cantineaux, who had a few civilians in his vehicle, to include Father Greindl. The ordeal for Vermeulen's unit began late on the night of 6 April and ended at about 1500 on 7 April, probably 30 minutes after

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<sup>72</sup> In the Belgian Army, the rank of adjutant is the equivalent of a warrant officer.

<sup>73</sup> Greindl hearing.

they had engaged the FAR soldiers in the area between the stadium and the hotel where the UNAMIR headquarters was located.

In other cases, however, the use of firearms by small units of the Belgian contingent was not as delayed. At 0630, Sergeant Bullinkx and his section, a cohesive unit of experienced soldiers who had deployed already in Rwanda in 1990 and Somalia in 1993, were traveling in a Unimog on the Boulevard de l'Umuganda on their way to the Belgian outpost "Franciscus."<sup>74</sup> They suddenly realized that they were about to fall into an ambush. When the driver stopped the vehicle, a crowd of Rwandan soldiers, militia, and civilians moved toward the Belgian section. As soon as Bullinkx got out of the Unimog, he was targeted by small arms fire. The reaction of the Belgian soldiers was immediate. They engaged the crowd and opened fire with all their individual weapons and the FN MAG machine gun that they had installed on the vehicle that morning. In a matter of minutes, the crowd disappeared, and the soldiers were able to continue to Franciscus without any additional problems.<sup>75</sup>

While peacekeeper patrols and small squads were dealing with the violence and adopting significantly different courses of action, several peacekeepers immediately and bravely began to protect and save defenseless people. As many among them were UNMOs, not only did they act in isolation, but they were also unarmed. Among the many UNMOs who on the morning of 7 April began saving lives, Captain Mbaye Diagne of Senegal distinguished himself as he took bold actions to protect people. Captain Mbaye was in his early 30s, a married man with two children when he arrived in Rwanda in 1993 as part of the Organisation of African Unity observer team. A few weeks after UNAMIR was created, he became a liaison officer to the FAR. In this position, he was able to establish many contacts that would prove to be extremely valuable during

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<sup>74</sup> *Unimog* refers to an all-terrain vehicle and implement carrier known for its off-road capabilities and ability to handle heavy loads and hazardous goods.

<sup>75</sup> Goffin, *Rwanda*, 60–61.

the difficult days of the genocide. The months he had spent in Rwanda had given Captain Mbaye a good understanding of the difficult relationship between the Rwandan government and the RPF. As a UNAMIR liaison officer, he had been able to establish good contacts with several FAR officers. He was an extremely likable individual who knew that his main weapon was his personality and his ability to generate support from people who very likely may have been hostile to him. In an extremely delicate approach, Captain Mbaye relied on the power of his smile and sharp sense of humor to navigate through roadblocks and frenzied violence. He, together with a few more unarmed military observers, was lodged at the Hotel des Mille Collines. The hotel, destined to become a sanctuary, was located in a very convenient position in the Kigali city center. It was just minutes away from key government buildings, army barracks, embassies, and the residence of Madame Agathe.

On 7 April, Captain Mbaye was among the first to arrive at the United Nations Development Programme compound, where the prime minister and her husband had been slaughtered. At about 1300, Dallaire arrived at the compound, not yet aware that Madame Agathe had been killed. Dallaire remembered that “the gate opened and to my surprise there was a man standing there with a U.N. vehicle right behind him. And I said, ‘What are you doing here?’ And he said, ‘I received information and I came here in regards to the compound, the VVIP, and also simply coming in to assist or look at the situation.’”<sup>76</sup>

Dallaire viewed the scene where the murder of the prime minister had just happened; there was “blood on the wall and sign of grenade explosion[s].”<sup>77</sup> Dallaire was surprised to see Captain Mbaye:

I don’t know how those instructions and stuff got to him, but he ended up there. He was a Senegalese officer, Captain Mbaye Diagne that was used a lot in passing infor-

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<sup>76</sup> Dallaire interview.

<sup>77</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 245.

mation from one side to another. He had been behind the government lines for his work with a team of observers inside the city, and had been noticed by his courage already. I mean this guy would do things that other guys wouldn't do, and so he would take on missions that other guys would not necessarily look at. They showed me where the killings had happened. . . . [The prime minister] and her husband were killed, but the children had been hidden and the extremists hadn't been able to find them.<sup>78</sup>

In a final desperate attempt to save her children, Madame Agathe had hidden them in a room inside the compound. The Presidential Guards had not looked for them, and now they were there, still alive but presenting an extremely dangerous target. Before leaving, Dallaire told Captain Mbaye that he would send a few APCs to escort the children to a safe place. After waiting for some time, the Senegalese officer realized that no APC or reinforcement was going to show up. Therefore, he hid the children in the back of the UN vehicle and took them to his room at the Hotel des Mille Collines.<sup>79</sup> He was aware of how delicate the situation was at the hotel, where the only protection from the Interahamwe was a small number of UNMOs and the fence around the hotel, part of which was made of bamboo canes. He was able to find a way out of the hotel and took the children to a safer place.

Gregory "Gromo" Alex shared a vivid memory of how Captain Mbaye, using his network and contacts, had been able to move freely around Kigali. From the very beginning of the violence, Alex noticed large numbers of people moving in and out from several UN locations to safer places. "We began to put together that Mbaye was bringing people from

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<sup>78</sup> Dallaire interview.

<sup>79</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 268.

all over to the headquarters, and then evacuating them or having them picked up and taken to safety elsewhere," he said. "I don't even know the numbers of the people that he saved . . . lot of people were saved by him, and not just Rwandans. . . . [I] think they were put in positions where their lives were pretty close to an end, and he stepped in and saved them."<sup>80</sup>

At the UNAMIR Kigali Sector headquarters at the Hotel Meridien, Colonel Marchal was overwhelmed by the fast sequence of violent events that mainly targeted the moderate Rwandan politicians who supported the Arusha treaty and had challenged President Habyarimana and the extremists. He met shortly with Lieutenant Colonel Dewez. The two Belgian officers were in desperate need of information, which was provided mainly by the many UNMOs spread all over the city. The officer in charge of the UNMOs for the Kigali Sector, Uruguayan Army lieutenant colonel Willie Purtscher was very concerned about the fate of the officers. Marchal understood that in all places where UNMOs were deployed, they were dealing with extremely difficult situations.<sup>81</sup>

Marchal received desperate telephone calls from several moderate politicians who were targeted by the extremist military. The killing of moderate political leaders seemed to be systematic and planned well ahead of 7 April. Key personalities of the opposition parties were in danger, the large majority of whom were protected by a combination of Rwandan gendarmes and UN troops. Marchal and his headquarters were overwhelmed and unprepared for such an emergency.<sup>82</sup> No real plan had been made to deal with a situation like the one the Kigali Sector was now facing. In many cases, there was no real plan to reinforce the UN peacekeepers tasked with protecting the politicians, high-level bureaucrats, and administrators who were supportive of the Arusha peace process. As a

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Gregory "Gromo" Alex, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS.

<sup>81</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 224–44.

<sup>82</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 235–39.

result, much of the reaction from the UN peacekeepers was improvised, uncoordinated, and once more isolated.

At UNAMIR headquarters, meanwhile, Major Beardsley was dealing with a major telephone traffic. The number of incoming calls—as many as 100 an hour—was significantly higher than the headquarters could handle. Beardsley remembered, “As soon as I put down the phone, it rang again, and it just never stopped for the next 12 hours.”<sup>83</sup> The calls were mostly from moderate political leaders who were desperately asking for help. Suddenly, Beardsley noted that the volume of calls from them dropped off, and “they weren’t calling any more, and others were calling.” He continued, “Very early that morning, starting around dawn and proceeding to about mid-morning, one by one they were knocked off, and we never heard from them again. Then later it was confirmed over the radio that they had been killed.”<sup>84</sup>

Then, ordinary citizens began calling to report the ongoing killing in different sectors of the capital and to ask for help. Such requests were passed by radio to the Kigali Sector, which was already overwhelmed by similar requests. Communications soon broke down.

Some of the patrols dispatched to respond to the desperate requests for help were stopped at the improvised roadblocks erected by the FAR and the militia. As a result, UN patrols had to find alternative routes, which in some cases were not available, and many could not get to the places where they had been sent.<sup>85</sup> Outside the UN military compounds, mobs began gathering and making it difficult for the peacekeepers to go out and back into their bases. Beardsley stressed that “as the day progressed, it just got worse and worse and worse.”<sup>86</sup>

In a matter of hours, the Presidential Guard deployed a significant number of troops to the Kimihirura neighborhood, where many senior

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<sup>83</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>84</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>85</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>86</sup> Beardsley interview.

political and government leaders, both moderate and extremist, resided. The Presidential Guards gathered all the extremist ministers and prominent members of President Habyarimana's circle and took them to military camps. They were subsequently moved to the Hôtel Diplomate, the temporary location for the Rwandan government, where they were protected by members of the Reconnaissance Battalion. That same morning, after the extremist politicians were moved to safe locations, the Presidential Guard, with the support of the Para-Commando and Reconnaissance Battalion, began the systematic kidnapping and killing of moderate political opponents, both Hutu and Tutsi.

RPF leaders were extremely concerned by this evolution of the events. In the early hours of the morning, a RPF representative approached General Ndindiliyimana and Colonel Bagosora as well as the general staff of the FAR to ask them to take control of the military, in particular the Presidential Guard, and stop the killing. Bagosora ignored these requests and ordered all Rwandan Army elite units and their commanders to continue the killing.<sup>87</sup>

The FAR, together with the Presidential Guard and Para-Commando Battalion units, conducted the targeted murdering of individuals. The Rwandan Army general staff instructed troops to actively seek the help and support of the extremist militias and other sympathizers to identify Tutsi people and to help massacre them.<sup>88</sup>

In Kimihurura, a unit of about 40 Presidential Guards surrounded the residence of Joseph Kavaruganda, the president of the Constitutional Court. Kavaruganda had opposed the Hutu and was at odds with the party of the president, the MRND. Following the death of Habyarimana, he would have been responsible for swearing in a new president. That night, Kavaruganda was at home with his family, "protected" by a detachment of Ghanaian peacekeepers.

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<sup>87</sup> ICTR Indictment.

<sup>88</sup> ICTR Indictment.



Kavaruganda's son Julien remembered, "My mother, my sister and I were at home around 8pm when we heard that the plane that was carrying president Habyarimana had been shot down. Presidential guards immediately began patrolling our Kimihurura neighborhood and stormed our home the next morning."<sup>89</sup>

At the judge's house, the Presidential Guard initially requested to take the entire family to a different location, and then only asked for Kavaruganda to go with them. When the UN peacekeepers asked Kavaruganda to come out, "he refused . . . warning them that the men were not there for a good cause." While the peacekeepers, the judge, and his family were discussing what to do next, Presidential Guards stormed the house and took Kavaruganda.

Kavaruganda's son stressed how his father was captured without the UN security detachment providing any opposition or even arguing with the Presidential Guards. Kavaruganda's family wanted to follow him, but the Rwandan soldiers had different ideas. As some soldiers were taking the judge away, others stayed behind and continued to threaten the family while they looted the house. In the afternoon, a few UNAMIR vehicles drove by the house to pick up the Ghanaian peacekeepers: "The family begged them to come with them, but in vain."<sup>90</sup>

While soldiers were looting the house, the family was able to flee in the overall confusion and reached the Canadian embassy. From there, they were taken to the airport and left Rwanda, first for Kenya and then for Belgium.<sup>91</sup>

Frederic Nzamurambaho, chairman of the *Parti Social Démocrate* (Social Democratic Party, or PSD) and minister of agriculture, was killed with his entire family; only his son Fernand, 19 years old, survived the brutal attack. Nzamurambaho had been at his residence since the night

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<sup>89</sup> Jean de la Croix Tabaro, "Tribute to Kavaruganda, the Valiant Constitution Defender," *New Times*, 22 April 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Tabaro, "Tribute to Kavaruganda, the Valiant Constitution Defender."

<sup>91</sup> Tabaro, "Tribute to Kavaruganda, the Valiant Constitution Defender."

of 6 April, protected by a gendarmerie detachment. Fernand remembered that the gendarmes alerted the family that the situation in the neighborhood was becoming violent and that his father was initially taken by his police escort to an unknown location.<sup>92</sup> The Presidential Guards were moving up and down Kimihurura to locate where all potential targets were. Fernand said that his father was brought home the following day, this time escorted by Presidential Guards. He remembered, "We were terrorized, huddled together in a space far from the windows." A group of soldiers meticulously searched the house and then gathered the domestic workers and all family members to identify them all. They left immediately after. Fernand believed that the worse was over: "We were relieved, we thought it was over." Yet, a small group of soldiers came back and brought everyone back into the living room. "They killed one after another, my father, my mother and my two brothers, aged 22 and 15. . . . Each time, one bullet was enough."<sup>93</sup> Fernand miraculously survived because the Presidential Guards looted the house and lost track of him.<sup>94</sup>

Landoald Ndasingwa, known as "Lando," and his family were killed a few yards away from Kavaruganda's residence. Ndasingwa was in his late 40s, had been born into a very progressive family, and had been politically active and committed to the peace process and, more important, to the process of unification that would reconcile Rwanda's ethnic divide. He was a prominent political figure in the *Parti Libéral* (Liberal Party) and had taken responsibility in the Rwandan government as minister of labor. A Tutsi, Ndasingwa was well aware that he was detested by the extremists, and that he was a target for those who opposed the peace process. Yet, he did not think that his family shared the same risk.

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<sup>92</sup> Jean de la Croix Tabaro, "Nzamurambaho Dared Genocidal Government on Sectarianism, Paid with His Life," *New Times*, 17 April 2014.

<sup>93</sup> "Rwanda, 6 avril 1994: les premières violences" [Rwanda, April 6, 1994: The First Violence], Radio France Internationale, 6 April 2014.

<sup>94</sup> Tabaro, "Nzamurambaho Dared Genocidal Government on Sectarianism, Paid with His Life."

As a young man, Ndasingwa had studied in Canada at the Université Laval at Quebec City, at McGill University in Montreal, and at the Université de Montréal. It was at the latter university where he met his future wife, Helene. They had moved to Rwanda with a strong desire to be instrumental in the development of a fully integrated country that was able to overcome its historical divisions. When they arrived in Rwanda, Helene immersed herself in the upbringing of their two children, Malai-ka and Patrick, and in the creation of a restaurant hotel, Chez Lando, that was, and still is today, located near the Amahoro Stadium. With Chez Lando, Helene had created an impressive and successful business, and it became a point of reunion for Rwandans, expatriates, and peacekeepers. Ndasingwa, meanwhile, had taken on a stronger and more visible political role. He wanted to see a democratic system in Rwanda and an end to the conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi. He considered all, Hutu and Tutsi, Rwandans first and foremost. With such a view, he had many enemies, not only among the hardcore Hutu close to President Habyarimana but also among some of his colleagues and fellow party members, a few of whom decided to distance themselves from him. Ndasingwa's life had been threatened in the past. On 7 October 1990, a few days after the RPF had launched the attack against Habyarimana regime, Ndasingwa had been arrested and detained for a short period of time. As Ndasingwa became a prominent actor in Rwanda's political life, Habyarimana appointed him minister of labor and social welfare. This was Habyarimana's attempt to comply with the adoption of a more democratic system in Rwanda—an attempt that was only a façade, behind which the real intention was to delay as long as possible the grip on power.

On the morning of 7 April, Ndasingwa's family was at their house in Kimihurura. When Lando and Helene learned of the death of the president, they knew immediately that such an event would be very destabilizing to the feeble peace process and to Rwanda overall. Their concern grew when they saw the Presidential Guard moving in large numbers in Kimihurura. Inside their compound there were two tents that hosted eight

Ghanaian UN peacekeepers and five Rwandan gendarmes that were supposed to provide protection to Ndasingwa and his family. Ndasingwa's sister, Louise Mushikiwabo, wrote that the two units were "equipped with automatic rifles and radios. They can't do much against a determined attack by a determined and organized unit, but in the midst of chaos, these two official and organized units can easily discourage bloody play of the sort that defines chaos, especially given the inclination of thugs to beat up on the helpless."<sup>95</sup>

She was probably right. The murderers of Ndasingwa and his family were already outside the compound by sometime around 0700 that morning. They began to test what kind of opposition they were going to face to accomplish their bloody deed.

General Anyidoho wrote that the Presidential Guards fired a few warning shots, and after that they talked to the Ghanaian soldiers at Ndasingwa's residence: "The soldiers, sensing danger, tried to cover up by framing a story."<sup>96</sup> Clearly, the peacekeepers had no interest in or intention of resisting the presidential guards and providing the protection that they had promised Ndasingwa for months.

As soon as it became clear what kind of threat the Ndasingwa family faced, a desperate Helene called General Dallaire to ask for help. Hours passed until the crowd outside the compound understood that they were not going to face any resistance.

Anyidoho explained that the failure of Ghanaian peacekeepers to provide protection to the Ndasingwa family was due to the fact that "UNAMIR troops operated under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, which did not allow the use of force unless in self defence of UN troops or installations. Indeed the only prudent action for

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<sup>95</sup> Louise Mushikiwabo and Jack Kramer, *Rwanda Means the Universe: A Native's Memoir of Blood and Bloodlines* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 51.

<sup>96</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 27.

the troops under those prevailing circumstances was to negotiate and not to use force.”<sup>97</sup>

At about 1100, the Presidential Guards and the Interahamwe entered Ndasingwa’s home. In a final desperate attempt to secure help from the UN, Ndasingwa called Colonel Marchal, crying for help. While he was still on the telephone with the Belgian officer, he faced his own death. “If you do not intervene immediately I will be killed with all my family,” he told Marchal. Then, a few seconds later, he said, “it is already too late.” Marchal, on the other end of the telephone, became the witness of the massacre of a man and his family.<sup>98</sup>

Pierantonio Costa, the Italian honorary consul in Rwanda, could see Ndasingwa’s residence from his house, and he witnessed the brutality with which he and his family were killed. According to Costa, members of the Interahamwe massacred the Ndasingwas family. He described the events he witnessed in his memoir:

As the hours passed, the full light of day had come. It was a gray morning, typical of the rainy season. Very few news came. But one thing was certain: the clashes continued and intensified. The shots of light weapons now mixed the deaf tune of the cannons and the mortars. Later we learned that during the night some of the RPA [RPF] troops had left the parliament [CND] to deploy to a more convenient and higher position. They had moved six or seven miles across the hill in front. From there they could have some control over the city. Small patrols were also pushed into some Kigali districts to save people who were particularly at risk. They had taken them with quick commando actions before the government came to kill them. For its part the army had placed cannons around

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<sup>97</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 28.

<sup>98</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 235.

the airport and fired on the parliament building. Nearby were also the barracks of the Presidential Guard, the chosen body of the president faithful. Throughout that area, the battle was particularly intense.<sup>99</sup>

While Costa was on the phone with another Italian expatriate, his wife called out suddenly. He ran to see:

Groups of soldiers and Interahamwe—civilians armed with rifles and machetes—were raiding two houses that were on Kimihurura Hill, just overlooking ours. They were those of the Lando and Sebulichoco families. . . . They fired in the direction of the enclosure wall and the houses. They were trying to get in. The attack lasted for a few minutes. . . . I understood two things. First, the swarms of assassins ranged with precise lists of men and families to be eliminated. Second, we should not have hoped for the help of the 2500 blue helmets present in the country as a force of peace.<sup>100</sup>

Lando; Helene; their two children, Patrick and Malaika; and Lando's mother, Bibiane Nyiratulira, were all brutally killed by the extremists. Years later, Anyidoho was asked whether the Ghanaian soldiers stationed at Ndasingwa's house were supposed to protect the Rwandan politician and his family. He answered, "Yes." Then he was asked, "Do you think you let him down?" The general replied, "In a sense, Mr. Lando, if he were to be alive, or any of his relations, will feel that the U.N. let him down. But I think the force that we put there did what was expected of them."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Pierantonio Costa, *La lista del console. Ruanda: cento giorni, un milione di morti* [The Consul's List, Rwanda: One Hundred Days, One Million Deaths] (Milan, Italy: Edizioni Paoline, 2004), 76–78.

<sup>100</sup> Costa, *La lista del console. Ruanda*, 76–78.

<sup>101</sup> Anyidoho interview.

In Kimihurura, another target of the violence was Felicien Ngango, the vice president of the PSD, an opposition party that represented mostly Hutu from the south of Rwanda. Ngango was originally from Butare. Based on the Arusha Accords, he would have been the speaker of the parliament. Ngango and his family were protected by three Belgian UN peacekeepers who were part of the larger unit located at the outpost “Viking,” just a few yards away from them.<sup>102</sup>

The situation at Ngango’s house had been tense since the late hours in the evening of 6 April. In the morning, several Rwandan soldiers, approximately 20, surrounded Ngango’s residence. Belgian Army first sergeant Didier Hutsebaut and a few more Belgian soldiers left Viking and headed to Nango’s house to get a better understanding of what was happening. Hutsebaut already knew that something was wrong and positioned a soldier armed with an FN MAG machine gun in a position from where he would be able to cover them, should they need it. On the way to Ngango’s house, the group halted at an improvised FAR roadblock. Hutsebaut told the FAR leader that he was going to get Ngango’s family and the three peacekeepers on guard duties. The FAR made clear that the Belgians could get their comrades, but not the family. The discussion at the roadblock soon became tense. The Belgian soldiers were allowed to go through the roadblock to Ngango’s residence, but they were stopped again when they tried to leave the residence with the family.<sup>103</sup> The Belgian soldiers felt threatened by the aggressive behavior of the soldiers outside the compound. They contacted their chain of command.

A few minutes after 0630, Hutsebaut informed Lieutenant Luc Lemaire of the stressful situation and that he and his soldiers had been asked by some aggressive and threatening Rwandan soldiers to leave the house. Lemaire was directed by his chain of command to instruct the Belgian soldiers at the residence that they could leave with the family. Yet, later,

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<sup>102</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 30.

<sup>103</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 30–31.

on his own initiative, Lemaire told them to abandon Ngango's family, as it would have been impossible to defend them.<sup>104</sup>

A few years later, Lemaire confirmed, "The battalion asked me to provide protection, but I heard from the sound of my corporal's voice that the situation was critical. So I gave the authorization for him to leave and abandon the woman to the Rwandans who raped her, and of course killed her."<sup>105</sup> The reader might wonder whether such a course of action would have been acceptable if the woman had been a Belgian expatriate.

Hutsebaut said that the Rwandan soldiers "told us that only Belgians could leave the compound but Rwandans should remain. They warned us that if we tried to take any Rwandan, we would all be eliminated. Those in the house at that time were two women and one small girl."<sup>106</sup> The Belgian paratrooper explained that they were forced to leave Ngango's residence and abandon the women, who immediately locked themselves inside. "A few moments later, we could hear sounds of breaking glass as the soldiers started breaking into the house. . . . There were screams of terror coming from the house, later followed by gunshots."<sup>107</sup> Hutsebaut explained that the Belgian soldiers decided not to intervene because they were outnumbered.<sup>108</sup> Once the Rwandan soldiers had access to Ngango's residence, they no longer cared about the Belgian paratroopers. The UN peacekeepers could leave unharmed while Ngango's family was brutally killed. A few hours later, Ngango, who was not with his family at that time, was also killed.

As it became clear that many of the moderate leaders of Rwanda in the Kimihurura neighborhood were being targeted by the extremists, Colonel Marchal instructed Lieutenant Colonel Dewez to organize a large patrol of Belgian peacekeepers to help with the protection of the Rwan-

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<sup>104</sup> Goffin, *Rwanda*, 62.

<sup>105</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

<sup>106</sup> "Former Belgian Blue Helmet Testifies," JusticeInfo, 2 December 2003.

<sup>107</sup> "Former Belgian Blue Helmet Testifies."

<sup>108</sup> "Former Belgian Blue Helmet Testifies."



dan dignitaries. KIBAT's military logbook documented how quickly security was degrading: "In effect this is the neighborhood of ministers and dignitaries and is systematically cleansed by the Presidential Guard and the Gendarmerie."<sup>109</sup> Marchal asked for this patrol to be deployed as soon as possible. Dewez asked the peacekeepers at two Belgian outposts, Franciscus and Viking, to explore whether they could organize a patrol under the command of an officer "to intervene in the neighborhood." Dewez was told that no officers were available and that the two sections at Franciscus and the few soldiers at Viking were prevented by roadblocks from joining each other to create a patrol of sufficient strength. Dewez called back Marchal and suggested that the task be given to RUBAT, as it had APCs available and the strength of a battalion at the Amahoro Stadium.<sup>110</sup> That patrol was never formed.

During a well-planned and well-executed action taking place in a few hours, the extremists had eliminated key moderate leaders, mainly Hutu, often with their immediate families. Major Beardsley rightly noted that the killing of moderate leaders "was not something that was just spontaneous. You don't make all of these actions just off the cuff when you're going to several key locations around the city to people's homes. You know exactly where they are. You know who's there. You come up in overwhelming force, you overwhelm the guards, you're into the compound, you grab the whole family and you kill them."<sup>111</sup>

The *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* placed a significant amount of responsibility on the peacekeepers' failure to protect many political moderate leaders who were killed on 7 April. The report noted:

There is a pattern to these events which shows a failure by UNAMIR troops to guarantee the protection to these

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<sup>109</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 30.

<sup>110</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 30.

<sup>111</sup> Beardsley interview.

political personalities that they had been assured and expected. It is regrettable that not more could be done to resist the attacks by the Presidential Guards and other extremist elements against these politicians. . . . [T]he Rules of Engagement which governed the mission permitted the use of force in self-defence, as well as action to prevent crimes against humanity. On the other hand, it must be recognized that the extremist forces had had time to observe the strength of the UNAMIR guard posts and overwhelm them with larger force.<sup>112</sup>

While the massacre of moderate Hutus and the initial killing of Tutsi was taking place, Marchal was warned several times by Major Belgacem, the commander of the Tunisian company in charge of defending the perimeter at the CND, that the RPF battalion was growing increasingly restless. Belgacem reported that the RPF soldiers were ready to leave the compound. From a tactical point of view, it was indeed an extremely difficult situation for RPF lieutenant colonel Charles Kayonga's troops, as they were targeted immediately after the shooting down of the presidential aircraft.

Philippe Gaillard, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) chief of delegation in Rwanda, and other two colleagues were at the CND on the night of 6–7 April for a meeting with RPF leaders. They were discussing the humanitarian situation in the northern part of the country. Gaillard remembered the reaction of the RPF delegates when they heard that the presidential plane had been shot down: "They were not expecting that. We really had the same reaction. They could not believe it."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda*, 44–45.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Philippe Gaillard, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Gaillard interview.

Gaillard stressed that they had to shelter inside the compound as the FAR began shooting bullets and mortars rounds at the building. With his two colleagues and several RPF representatives, they spent the night in the basement of the CND. Gaillard remembered, "Nobody slept. During the night, nobody was able to see anything, but the following day when we came out of the basement and started to watch through the windows of the parliament, three or four hundred meters away you could see how some people were running after other people and killing them." He provided a good description of the situation in the morning, writing that they had been aware since the morning of 7 April of the initial massacres of the civilian population: "Inside the Parliament members of the RPF were boiling with rage and impatience, like us they were witnessing powerless the initial evidence of the massacre. Gaillard stood by as some tense conversations took place between the RPF leaders and the UN peacekeepers. The RPF military told the peacekeepers at the CND, "If you don't do anything, we will do it." The UN staff told them, "Please don't move." The peacekeepers did not know what was happening."<sup>114</sup>

Gaillard and his small team had to make a critical decision, whether to stay at the CND or leave and try to reach the ICRC delegation. Had they decided to stay at the CND, they would become a potential target. Gaillard believed that "you cannot do anything if you are in a building on fire."<sup>115</sup> They decided to leave. Taking Gaillard's car, they drove to the house of his secretary. She packed all she could in five minutes, and then they all went to another colleague's house.

The roads were deserted. A strange atmosphere pervaded the city, as the streets were empty. Then, while on the way to their colleague's house, the group was stopped at a military checkpoint. Gaillard remembered, "I opened the window and the guy told me in French with this incredible strong Rwandan accent, 'Give me the keys of your car.' I told him, 'Listen,

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<sup>114</sup> Gaillard interview.

<sup>115</sup> Gaillard interview.

sir, I'm really sorry but I cannot give you the keys of my car because this is not your car, this is a car of the International Committee of the Red Cross.”<sup>116</sup>

In a brave move, Gaillard got out of the car, and immediately the soldier put the barrel of his machine gun to Gaillard's stomach.

I introduced myself—I could not shake his hand—and asked his name. He refused to give me his name. I had this machine gun on the belly, and at that moment you have to be a good actor, so I told him, “Listen, I'm a very close neighbor of your boss, the minister of defense, Augustin Bizimana, and I also know very well the Chef de Cabinet of the Ministry of Defense, Colonel Bagosora. If you insist with your machine gun in order to get my car, I will complain to the minister of defense and to Bagosora.” I don't know [how], but it worked. The guy put down the machine gun and told me, “It's OK, go on.” Why did he decide not to shoot? Why? It's so evident that if I'm killed I cannot complain, so he will get the car, which was his intention.<sup>117</sup>

The group finally reached Gaillard colleague's house, where they spent the next one or two nights.<sup>118</sup>

RPF captain Charles Karamba explained how the 600 RPF troops at the CND reacted to the events, and what the RPF leadership did to support them. When the fighting began, the RPF had two main objectives: to rescue and protect potential victims of the genocide and to defeat the forces that conducted the genocide. He acknowledged that “that was not easy. As 3rd Battalion, we had to carry out possible operations within

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<sup>116</sup> Gaillard interview.

<sup>117</sup> Gaillard interview.

<sup>118</sup> Gaillard interview.

the perimeter that we had created and of course carry out raids to save civilians whenever we got information of their location.”<sup>119</sup> They also had to protect the RPF politicians and those who survived the genocide. “So there are people that we knew, who used to come visit us when we had just arrived in Kigali, there were incidents in Nyanza-Kicukiro when our soldiers arrived there and saw faces of people we knew lying down, they had been killed. You can imagine how that can be.”<sup>120</sup>

During the afternoon of 7 April, a few patrols had taken defensive positions around the perimeter of the CND, while the politicians were taken to the safest place inside the building. A few other patrols were directed by Lieutenant Colonel Kayonga to leave the CND, position themselves in a tactically advantageous location, and wait for the enemy to take the initiative. Initially, such movements were intended to be defensive, a tactical initiative to gain space and time while other RPF units were in the process of moving to concert a broader action with the 3d Battalion. The RPF units that left the CND late on 7 April and during the following days rescued people from the Amahoro Stadium; some went as far as Kacyiru, and others moved into the area where the current Ministry of Justice is located, “giving us a bigger perimeter to protect our base.”<sup>121</sup>

The operation to reinforce the 600 troops at the compound provided evidence that the RPF leadership had planned for any possible contingency—even the most difficult, that the battalion would be attacked. Karamba stressed that the battalion was not an isolated force. When the violence began, the RPF priority “was to quickly link up with the 3rd Battalion, rescue the targets of genocide and subsequently defeat the genocidal forces.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Edwin Musoni, “How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds,” *New Times*, 3 July 2014.

<sup>120</sup> Musoni, “How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds.”

<sup>121</sup> Musoni, “How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds.”

<sup>122</sup> Musoni, “How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds.”

The RPF soldiers were aware that at the CND they could have been easily surrounded by the Presidential Guards and other FAR units, and as a result they would have faced a tough situation. They also began to receive news of the murdering of several moderate political leaders who had been supportive of the peace process.

The Presidential Guards continued to fire unrelentingly on the CND and the soldiers who had left the compound. The FAR also employed heavy artillery that was deployed at the end of the airport runway, a position strategically effective to hit the RPF troops at Mount Rebero. In simple words, Karamba stressed that “we were receiving both direct and indirect fire from the enemy positions all around Kigali.”<sup>123</sup> RPF sergeant David Rwabinumi, who manned the only heavy machinegun on the rooftop of the CND, said that he was assisted by three or four other soldiers. The first few days of the violence, from 7 to 9 April, were the worst. Rwabinumi explained:

I would shoot at them and they'd flee. So when they got angry and realized they could not get in here, they decided to shoot the building down. They started shelling and the bombs started falling here on top . . . there was smoke everywhere, but I could still see them . . . nothing happened to me. They came in a big number from all the directions. Whenever I shot at them, the infantry would fall back.<sup>124</sup>

The 3d Battalion was supported by a 12.7-millimeter antiaircraft gun positioned in Kimihurura. Yet, the guns available to and used by the FAR were of a greater caliber and possessed longer range. Karamba explained that the weapons available to the RPF were rather light, as their task was

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<sup>123</sup> Musoni, “How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds.”

<sup>124</sup> *The 600: The Soldiers' Story*, directed by Laurent Basset and Richard Hall, written by Richard Hall (Piedmont, CA: Great Blue Production, 2019).

to serve as a protection force. The battalion's leaders were closely following the movement of troops that Paul Kagame had sent to Kigali to help the 600 soldiers. The movement of troops was extremely well-planned and involved several units. Karamba explained that they were "aware that Alpha, Bravo and 59 Combined Mobile Forces were on their way."<sup>125</sup>

Sam Kaka, the commander of Alpha Mobile Unit, was tasked with providing immediate support to 3d Battalion. Alpha Mobile, stationed in Byumba, some 95 kilometers from Kigali, was the closest unit to the CND. The unit left on foot on 8 April, and within three days it was in Kigali. The sight of the incoming unit was a moment of great relief and joy for the RPF soldiers at the CND.<sup>126</sup>

Since 7 April, Kagame had given the RPF sector commanders detailed tasks. James Kabarebe explained that in addition to Alpha Mobile,

[T]he 59 battalion which was under late Ngonga also moved to Kigali, the 21 battalion which was under (now) Gen. Martin Nzaramba also moved to Kigali, 101 battalion under (Charles) Muhire moved through Muhura and eventually to Kigali, 157 battalion under (Lt. Gen.) Fred Ibingira had to move through Umutara, Kayonza, Kibungo, Bugesera, Gitarama and then Butare. Bravo, under Dodo (Twahirwa), also moved towards Kigali, specifically to Jali and Gatsata areas; Charlie, under late Kareba, was to take charge of the Ruhengeri-Kigali areas; the 7 mobile force moved along with the 157 battalion but they separated at Kayonza, with the 7 battalion, under late Bagire, taking the Rwamagana-Kigali direction. The military police and other the general headquarters kept the rear. The High Command was mobile, President Kagame and his protection unit were mobile across al-

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<sup>125</sup> Musoni, "How RPA Deployed 600 Soldiers in the Heart of Kigali against All Odds."

<sup>126</sup> *The 600*.

most all sectors, we had abandoned the base because the mission now was to stop the Genocide, sometimes they would be around Kigali, sometimes towards Bugesera, and so on.<sup>127</sup>

Daylight began to fade on the most difficult day in Rwanda since UNAMIR had deployed in 1993, but the day was not over yet. For the senior UNAMIR leaders, there was one final, extremely painful and sad task to take care of—recovering the bodies of the 10 Belgian peacekeepers who had been slaughtered by mobs of FAR soldiers.

In the early afternoon, Marchal had received a call from Beardsley, who informed him that a number of Belgian paratroopers, maybe as many as 11, had been killed. According to Marchal, this was the first time that he was given official information about the Belgian blue berets.<sup>128</sup>

Beardsley remembered the confusion about the fate of the Belgian patrol. The information received by UNAMIR and Kigali Sector was often conflicting. That morning, UNAMIR was mistakenly informed that the Belgians had been released. During a period of several hours, the Canadian major did not even think about them. The information about the group of Belgians who had been released was probably about the one that had gone to investigate and secure the crash site close to the airport. Beardsley said, “They had actually been surrounded by presidential guards. They refused to give up their weapons. They went back to back, refused to give up their weapons. They’d been taken to the airport, and then had been released in the morning. That was that first report that Belgian troops were missing, and then they’d been released. So we thought it was that group.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> “Kabarebe on Why RPA Prevailed Despite Early Setbacks,” *New Times*, 3 July 2014.

<sup>128</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 236.

<sup>129</sup> Beardsley interview.



However, in the afternoon, UNAMIR headquarters received a call from the Kigali Sector asking whether General Dallaire had provided any information about the Belgian patrol. According to Beardsley, the caller said, “‘We’re dealing with it at the unit level. But have you heard anything from General Dallaire about our troops?’ . . . We’re saying, ‘What guys? They were released.’ And he said, ‘No, there’s another group that was with the prime minister’.”<sup>130</sup> There was a lot of confusion at headquarters about the fate of the Belgian peacekeepers, in part caused by the situation but also aggravated by the fact that UNAMIR was “working through three or four different radio nets; the communications were incompatible.”<sup>131</sup>

Both General Dallaire and Colonel Marchal were aware that something bad had happened to the Belgian peacekeepers taken hostage at the prime minister’s residence. Finally, the two officers were told that the Belgian paratroopers were at the Kigali hospital. Dallaire’s hope that they might still be alive—possibly beaten or wounded, but alive—vanished when he heard an officer telling the chief of the Rwandan gendarmerie where the “bodies” of the Belgian soldiers were.<sup>132</sup> At the hospital, in the dim light of a small-watt bulb, Dallaire saw what at first he thought were sacks of potatoes: “It slowly resolved in my vision into a heap of mangled and bloodied white flesh in tattered Belgian para-commando uniforms. The men were piled on top of each other, and we couldn’t tell how many were in the pile. The light was faint and it was hard to identify any of the faces or find specific markings. We counted them twice: eleven soldiers. In the end it turned out to be ten.”<sup>133</sup> The emotion of the moment over-

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<sup>130</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>131</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>132</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 255.

<sup>133</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 255.

whelmed Marchal; for the Belgian officer, time stopped while he faced such a “horrible tragedy.”<sup>134</sup> He wrote, “I am well aware that I am going through what every military leader hopes he will never experience.”<sup>135</sup>

UNAMIR’s longest day was over.

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<sup>134</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 236.

<sup>135</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 236.



# Chapter 6

## MOUNTING VIOLENCE AS THE MISSION COLLAPSES

On 8 April 1994, Kigali and several more cities and provinces in Rwanda woke up to a significant disruption of essential services and mounting brutal violence. After the near totality of moderate, pro-Arusha political leaders had been murdered, the perpetrators of the genocide could focus on their next target: the defenseless Tutsi population.

Kigali was quickly falling into a state of chaos. The airport, the main lifeline for the UNAMIR, had been shut down since the night of 6 April, while the volume of fire increased heavily. Many neighborhoods in Kigali lost electricity, the water system went down, and an increasing number of mobs, high on alcohol, began roaming the streets of the city, putting up improvised roadblocks often made by a few stones, long tree stumps, and some old car tires.

Despite the chaos, General Roméo Dallaire noted that on 8 April, “I could drive around the city with no escort.”<sup>1</sup> That night, Dallaire decided to see how the Ghanaians, who had taken over the security of the UNAMIR headquarters, had arranged the defensive perimeter. On the roof of the causeway to the rotunda, he met two Ghanaian soldiers who had set up a machine gun post with a view over the parking lot. In addition to the machine gun, they had been given an M72 light antiarmor weapon

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<sup>1</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), 264.

(LAW), but they did not know how to use it. Dallaire gave the two soldiers a short lecture on how to use the weapon and then went to another observation post on the roof of the hotel. He remembered that he “startled the lone Ghanaian observer so badly he soiled his pants. I sat down beside him to try to ease his embarrassment and reassure him he was all right and then sent him to change his pants while I replaced him at his post.”<sup>2</sup> Dallaire felt, for the first time that day, “truly hopeless and trapped, a feeling I determinedly shunted to one side when the young Ghanaian came back to relieve [me].”<sup>3</sup> Although Dallaire must have found it difficult to push aside his feelings of hopelessness, it was even more difficult to realize that the force he commanded had serious problems at all levels and in all contingents. The episodes involving the few Ghanaian soldiers on guard at the UNAMIR headquarters provided additional and direct evidence to Dallaire that the mission had failed to prepare its troops to face a military crisis.

Late during the night of 8–9 April, Dallaire finally gave in to the fatigue that had accumulated during the last 48 hours and fell into a restless sleep. He was awakened by a call from General Maurice Baril, the military advisor to UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who informed him that French forces, followed by Belgian troops, were about to land at the airport in Kigali to conduct a noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) of their expatriates still in Rwanda. Dallaire had no control of the airport—the French took care of that—but he was frustrated that he had not been informed about the operation in a timely manner. Baril directed Dallaire to assist with the evacuation, even though, as an advisor to the UN secretary-general, he had no authority to order Dallaire to do so.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 274.

<sup>3</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 274.

<sup>4</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 275.

The first elements of the French mission were already at the airport a few minutes before 0130 on 9 April. A deployment of 150 French soldiers ensured that the runway was clear and protected before the arrival of the remaining units of the contingent. By the early hours of the morning, Operation Amaryllis, the codename for the French NEO, was on the ground.<sup>5</sup> The deployment of the French troops encountered no resistance because of the good relations that the French military historically had with the Rwandan government and the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR). France had maintained a number of military officers in Rwanda in a liaison role with the Rwandan armed forces. Beginning on the night of 8 April, the four French military advisors attached to the FAR Paracommando Battalion, one of the units responsible for killing many politicians on 7 April, were able to get the FAR to remove all obstacles from the airport runaway. By the afternoon of 9 April, Operation Amaryllis had deployed a force of 359 soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

Like Dallaire, late that night Colonel Luc Marchal, the UNAMIR sector commander for Kigali, was informed by General José Charlier, commander of the Belgian armed forces, that a joint French-Belgian rescue mission was imminent. During the hours and days that followed, hundreds of French and Belgian troops, assisted by an Italian Army company, established a short-lived presence in Kigali.

In less than 24 hours, the Belgian armed forces launched Operation Silver Back to evacuate their expatriates. Brussels deployed more than 1,000 troops, of which 500 landed in Kigali and actively participated in the mission, while the remaining 500 were stationed as a reserve in Nairobi, Kenya. In preparation for the mission, Marchal was directed by his national chain of command to place UNAMIR's Belgian company stationed at the airport under the command of French Army colonel Jean-Jacques

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<sup>5</sup> Bernard Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l'armée française et le Rwanda* [François Mitterrand, the French Army, and Rwanda] (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2005), 176–77.

<sup>6</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l'armée française*, 178.

Maurin of the French Technical Military Cooperation in Rwanda. The order stunned Marchal. UN vehicles were used by French troops to move around Kigali with a clear compromise of the perception of UNAMIR to different actors in the country. Dallarie was equally upset. One of the senior Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) leaders “angrily told me that the French had been using UNAMIR vehicles to move Rwandans of known extremist background to the airport, where they were flown out of the country.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, one of the first French Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft to leave Kigali on the afternoon of 9 April carried 12 members of President Juvénal Habyarimana’s family, to include his wife.<sup>8</sup> In a few days, the French, Belgian, and Italian contingents gathered hundreds of expatriates at the airport, where they then left the country.<sup>9</sup> Traffic was heavy at the airport. Several French, Belgian, Dutch, and Italian C-130s and a few heavier U.S. Air Force Lockheed C-5 Galaxy aircraft landed and took off from the airport, while Sabena continued to operate a Boeing 747 and a McDonnell Douglas DC-10. The French contingent left Rwanda on 14 April, and the other two contingents soon followed. The Belgian government also informed Dallaire of its intention to pull all troops, to include the Belgian UNAMIR contingent, out of Rwanda in the coming days.<sup>10</sup>

While the international military contingents were conducting their NEOs, the RPF became more assertive in its engagements with the FAR. The RPF’s military operations were met with unorganized and ineffective resistance even from the most distinguished FAR units. Despite the heavy use of artillery fire against the *Conseil National de Développement*

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<sup>7</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 285.

<sup>8</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l’armée française*, 178.

<sup>9</sup> The small Italian contingent, fewer than 200 troops, operated as part of the Belgian-led Operation Silver Back. The Italian troops arrived in Kigali on three aircraft on 10 April and left about 10 days later, after all Italian expatriates were evacuated. The Italian operation was named *Ippocampo* (Seahorse).

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Lefèvre and Jean-Noël Lefèvre, *Les militaires belges et le Rwanda, 1916–2006* [Belgian Soldiers and Rwanda, 1916–2006] (Brussels: Racine, 2006), 195.

(National Council for Development, or CND), FAR was unable to stop the RPF's 3d Battalion. The initial RPF objective was to position several units on a few elevations so that they could better protect themselves and gain control of the communication routes north of Kigali. They were able to control the road leading to the airport, and already on the morning of 8 April they had control of the area where the Hotel Meridien, UNAMIR's Kigali Sector headquarters, was located. The battalion also organized small patrols that penetrated the lines controlled by the FAR, with the objective of locating and quickly moving key politicians and other personalities who would have been a target of the extremists.

On 9 April, the 3d Battalion was heavily engaged in combat in Remera, Kimihurura, Kacyiru, and Kicukiro. By dawn that day, RPF troops controlled the Amahoro Stadium and the adjacent hotel where the UNAMIR force headquarters was located. The presence of the RPF had an immediate impact on the area. According to Dallaire, "there were no crowds, no mobs, no militia, only disciplined and co-operative RPF soldiers who had secured our area."<sup>11</sup>

It should be noted that the RPF's initial engagement was conducted by a component of the 3d Battalion deployed at the CND, probably a few hundred troops. These soldiers were later reinforced by other battalions and mobile units sent to Kigali by the RPF command. The RPF withdrew from the engagement in Ruhengeri and concentrated its efforts on taking Byumba to open a path on which it could move its troops to Kigali. The first reinforcement of RPF troops who had left Mulindi on 8 April arrived at the CND two days later.

Dallaire noted, "Two days of walking over sixty kilometers through enemy territory, carrying heavy packs and weapons, and they got to Kigali still singing. They were kids—young, tough and dedicated."<sup>12</sup> Two weeks since the beginning of the genocide, the RPF had made some major prog-

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<sup>11</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 276.

<sup>12</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 288.



ress in the battle against the FAR. The Rwandan Army, and mainly its “elite” units, showed significant weaknesses any time they were confronted in frontal engagements with the RPF. General Paul Kagame’s forces gained significant ground, forcing the FAR to flee as they captured large amounts of weapons and military equipment.

In the north of Rwanda, UNAMIR’s Byumba-based BYUBAT contingent—a Ghana Army battalion and a Bangladesh Army engineer company—was in a dangerous position, as it was no longer in a respected demilitarized zone (DMZ). The UN soldiers were in the middle of serious crossfire between the FAR and the RPF. Given the new situation, the RPF gave BYUBAT the ultimatum to withdraw from the DMZ. A decision was made to leave the position and to redeploy the Ghanaians and Bangladeshi to Kigali. Yet, neither the company nor the battalion had enough vehicles to move inside or away from the DMZ. The Ghanaian battalion had arrived in Rwanda and deployed in the DMZ without vehicles, while the Bangladeshi company had a small number, fewer than a dozen, of troop-carrying vehicles. With the existing vehicles and a few more provided by the Bangladeshi contingent in Kigali, the Ghanaian unit followed orders, redeployed to Kinihira and Nkumba. The Bangladeshi unit, however, ignored the guidance issued by the DMZ sector commander, instead heading back to Kigali and regrouping with the rest of its national contingent.<sup>13</sup>

UNAMIR’s military leaders were extremely concerned about the safety of the many soldiers, patrols, contingents, and UN civilians spread all over Kigali and the rest of the country. They organized patrols to pick up UNMOs, UN staff, diplomats, and other people at various locations who could have been targeted by the extremists. Several rescue missions

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<sup>13</sup> Henry Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali* (Accra, Ghana: Woeli, 1999), 40–42.

were conducted. As Major Brent Beardsley remembered, “We had a lot of people to locate, and we basically did that until the end of the mission.”<sup>14</sup>

On the night of 11 April, Dallaire, confronted with the challenge of protecting and evacuating UN personnel, changed the rules of engagement (ROE): “I signed a new ROE that permitted my troops to disarm belligerents and to intervene with force after warning shots. The new rules also permitted local commanders to decide on the level of force they needed to use.” Dallaire reflected on taking such a step: “The question remains as to whether I had the authority to change my own ROE for the duration of the evacuation mission. I was on the ground, I was in command, I had been given the mission and I took the decision.”<sup>15</sup> Over time, and on a number of different occasions, UNAMIR leaders were ready and willing to change or ignore the ROE. The previous December, when UNAMIR troops were preparing to conduct Operation Clean Corridor, Marchal told the officers that, if they were ambushed, to ignore the ROE and, if necessary, employ weapon systems that needed to be authorized at a higher level. During testimony given after the killing of the 10 Belgian soldiers on 7 April, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Dewez stated that if he had known that the Belgian soldiers were being brutally slaughtered, he would have intervened “without taking into account aspects such as the security of expatriates or the position of UNAMIR.”<sup>16</sup> Dallaire changed the ROE to ensure that UNAMIR personnel participating in the evacuation mission could be effective defending themselves and the evacuees.

Therefore, the justification for UNAMIR’s decision not to intervene to stop or slow the genocide in Rwanda due to restrictive ROE, which has been provided over the years, is bothersome. In many instances, it

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Maj Brent Beardsley, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Beardsley interview.

<sup>15</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 290.

<sup>16</sup> Hearing of Col Dewez and Capt Theunissen before the Commission d’enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (30 June 1997).

seems to be a convenient way to justify inaction to avoid taking any risk to defend and protect those Rwandans who were targeted by violence. During situations in which UN soldiers might have been targeted, bending or disregarding the ROE were acceptable courses of action.

For the Tutsi population, the hours that followed the beginning of the genocide was a time of critical decisions. To many elderly Tutsi, it was something that reminded them of the past—a sporadic and limited burst of violence, as they had experienced many times already in 1959, 1973, and 1990. Yet, in the coming days, it became clear that such a wave of violence was significantly greater and more powerful than anything else the Tutsi community had experienced in the past. For many defenseless people, the courses of action available to them were limited, and they would determine in the most unpredictable way the difference between life and death. Those people could remain where they were, acknowledging the dangerous violence that was around them but also hoping that they would be spared. Unlike any time in the past, a UN mission was in Rwanda, and its presence should have been a major deterrent against the perpetrators of violence. Another option was to go into hiding, often in their own house or that of a family member or a friend of Hutu ethnicity, and hope that the perpetrators would not find them. They could also come together to share a shelter where they hoped that the presence of a large number of people would give them strength and discourage the perpetrators from killing them. Churches offered such a place—in addition to surrounding themselves with a large number of people, many believed that they might also be protected by the priests. Often, they were proven wrong. They could also join together and offer up a resistance. This option was considered in only a few cases, the most notable being in Bisesero.<sup>17</sup> They could head to one of the many UN posts that were well-defended by peacekeepers. Finally, a lucky few who had worked for

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<sup>17</sup> *Resisting Genocide: Bisesero, April–June 1994* (London: African Rights, 1998).

or had some connection to a foreign embassy or organization could hope to find shelter and protection at that institution.

Although none of these options provided any certainty of safety, to many the UN option must have appeared to be among the most reliable. Little did they know that, in many instances, gathering at a UN post would help the Interahamwe easily find large numbers of defenseless civilians to slaughter after the UN soldiers abandoned them.

Some choices, however, were far more extreme. James Orbinski remembered how people often begged or paid their tormentors to have their children shot rather than facing a slow terrible death. Orbinski shared the story and dilemma of the Hutu mayor of Butare who, in order to save his Tutsi wife and children from the Interahamwe, was asked to “give up his wife’s family—both her parents and her sister—to be killed. He made the deal.”<sup>18</sup>

During the next few days, the number of people killed increased dramatically. The situation of the wounded was terrible. Large numbers of badly injured people flooded all available hospitals and the few health centers in Kigali. Philippe Gaillard, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) chief of the delegation in Rwanda, was shocked by the devastating lacerations inflicted on individuals by the militia. He remembered, “The wounded whom we picked up were actually survivors whom the killers, in particular the Interahamwe militiamen, had not had time to finish.”<sup>19</sup> These were some of the very first people taken to the ICRC’s improvised field hospital. Faced with a mounting number of casualties, Gaillard asked Geneva for support. In a matter of days, surgeons, nurses, and other specialized staff arrived in Rwanda. The role played by these

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<sup>18</sup> James Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarian Action for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Walker, 2008), 170–71.

<sup>19</sup> Philippe Gaillard, “Rwanda 1994: un témoignage: ‘On peut tuer autant de gens qu’on veut, on ne peut pas tuer leur mémoire’ [Rwanda 1994: A Testimony: “We Can Kill as Many People as We Want, We Cannot Kill Their Memory”], *International Review of the Red Cross* 86, no. 855 (September 2004): 615, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1560775500181064>.

shelters would be vital to saving the lives of several thousand individuals. Gaillard would spend the coming months fully committed to the mission of helping and saving the injured.

The situation in Rwanda was made worse by the fact that in one week most aid agencies, UN agencies, and nearly all the development and co-operation missions left the country. There were only a few isolated cases of brave individuals such as Carl Wilkens, the head of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Rwanda, who decided to stay and continue to do all they could to help. Orbinski explained that several aid organizations left behind “their Rwandan staff and abandoned the Rwandan people to their fate. After April 6, 1994, only the Red Cross, MSF [*Médecins Sans Frontières*, or Doctors Without Borders], two members of the UN Advanced Humanitarian Team, and the UNAMIR peacekeeping force remained in Kigali.”<sup>20</sup>

Orbinski had arrived in Rwanda when the genocide was at its peak as the MSF head of mission. He described the challenge faced by all those who decided to confront evil and bring help to those who were suffering. Orbinski remembered how afraid he was when he left the UNAMIR headquarters or the Faisal Hospital. “But I had to try,” he wrote. “Others were trying. I had doubts, confusions, uncertainties about what we were doing, about the risks we were taking. Sometimes I was so afraid that I hoped that it would be impossible to leave the compound or the hospital. I hoped that others would stop trying, so that I could. Every time we went out it made it more difficult to go out again, but even more difficult not to at least try.”<sup>21</sup>

Gaillard at the ICRC had to make many critical choices, “I took the decision to gather my people—we were more than 30 expatriates in Rwanda at that time, with around 120 local staff—into the delegation and to leave the houses. The local staff started to come in with wives, with

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<sup>20</sup> Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering*, 171.

<sup>21</sup> Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering*, 203.

children, with mothers, with grandfathers, with family.”<sup>22</sup> Then, he determined that a good course of action was to keep only essential personnel in Rwanda to help with the health emergency. All other personnel were evacuated. As the number of people in need of medical assistance grew, he activated a field hospital in a nearby school for young girls that provided a greater capacity. Gaillard also decided that, no matter how dangerous, the Red Cross ambulances would continue to drive through Kigali to help the wounded even if they had to go through roadblocks manned by the Interahamwe.<sup>23</sup>

Red Cross ambulances could move around Kigali, but in some instances they were stopped and attacked violently. On several occasions, the wounded people the ambulances carried were taken out of the ambulance and slaughtered on the spot. On 14 April, a few Rwandan Red Cross volunteers were stopped by the Interahamwe. The six already severely injured Tutsi were taken out of the ambulance by the militia and executed. It was a shock for the Red Cross volunteers; it was also enough for Gaillard. He carefully pondered how to deal with such a situation. Finally, he discussed it with the ICRC headquarters in Geneva. He was asked whether it would be a good course of action to make public the attack against the ambulance and the killings. Despite the risk associated with such an option, they decided to release the information. The news was made public with a short and to-the-point press release. The following day, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Reuters, and Radio France Internationale gave the news ample visibility.<sup>24</sup> No ambulance was attacked again. Gaillard stressed that in some circumstances, “if you don’t at least speak out clearly . . . you are participating to the genocide.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Philippe Gaillard, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Gaillard interview.

<sup>23</sup> Gaillard interview.

<sup>24</sup> Gaillard interview.

I mean, if you just shut up when you see what you see, morally, ethically, you cannot shut up! It's a responsibility to talk, to speak out."<sup>25</sup>

For ICRC personnel, working in Rwanda was a very demanding and highly stressful task. Yet, they did enter the country in the middle of extreme violence, knowing that they would experience the pain and suffering caused by evil and probably risk their own lives in the process. Gaillard noted how often people had to be replaced. Many "got crazy." Indeed, they were ready to take the risk "to do the very little things you can do, which are always miracles."<sup>26</sup>

Gaillard and the Red Cross staff were instrumental in saving thousands of individuals as they provided as much support as they could to the protection of the defenseless. Gaillard developed a close professional relationship with Dallaire. The UNAMIR force commander deeply valued what Gaillard was doing, but he also knew that, while they were providing help to thousands, the Red Cross volunteers were extremely vulnerable.

In Dallaire's view, Gaillard was "an absolute guardian angel of the world community . . . courageous, determined, gutsy, brash, an intimate leader, very close to his troops, to his people, will not back down, argumentative, pig-headed, but the heart of an angel. Humanity for him is all humans."<sup>27</sup> Gaillard soon became a point of reference. During the 100 days of genocide, the Red Cross lost more than 56 nationals. Although they took many casualties, "they never wavered."<sup>28</sup> Dallaire was very concerned about the ICRC's situation. Consequently, he asked Gaillard and his team to join UNAMIR's communication network "and to listen in all the time, so he can keep abreast of what's going on, and to intervene whenever he felt he had to or he needed stuff." Nearly every night, Dallaire

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<sup>25</sup> Gaillard interview.

<sup>26</sup> Gaillard interview.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Gen Roméo Dallaire, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS.

<sup>28</sup> Gaillard interview.

and Gaillard would conduct a radio check to ensure that in the middle of so much violence and death the brave Red Cross team was still safe.<sup>29</sup>

In the days that followed the beginning of the genocide, many places in Kigali had become vital sanctuaries for the Tutsi population. The largest one was the Amahoro Stadium, located near the UNAMIR headquarters and the site of the Bangladeshi battalion. Although it was shelled a few times, which killed several people, the stadium provided a shelter to many thousands of people. Dallaire provided a graphic description of the conditions at the Amahoro:

[T]he Place filled up and at one point we were up to 12,000 in here. . . . 12,000 people trying to live in here, so you get this latent smoke that hangs in here and then all you see is people and clothes . . . rags and stuff and so the place looks absolutely, totally out of control. It became, probably in the most pejorative way, sort of like a concentration camp. We were out there protecting them, but as we were protecting them out there, they are inside dying because of lack of water, because of lack of food . . . and the stench was so powerful you had to actually force yourself not to puke.<sup>30</sup>

In downtown Kigali, a large number of moderate Hutus and Tutsi headed to the Hôtel des Mille Collines. Traditionally, the hotel was the main choice for international travelers and delegations visiting Rwanda. A small contingent of UNMOs was stationed at the hotel under the leadership of Congolese Army major Victor Moigny.<sup>31</sup>

More than a week after the beginning of the genocide, Dallaire received a letter from Paul Rusesabagina, the hotel's new manager, in which

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<sup>29</sup> Gaillard interview.

<sup>30</sup> *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*, directed by Peter Raymont (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 268–69.



he expressed some serious concerns about the safety of the hotel compound. From the night of 6 April, a few hundred people had made their way to the Mille Collines. Protection of the hotel consisted of a few brave and determined Tunisian soldiers and a handful of UNMOs. Rusesabagina was very worried that as soon as the militia found out about the hotel's weak defenses, they might break in, overwhelm the protection, and conduct a mass killing. Dallaire was aware of the difficult situation and ordered the Bangladeshi contingent to reinforce the few peacekeepers who provided security at the hotel. In response to the order, he received from the Bangladeshi commander a letter of protest "stating that the mission was too dangerous."<sup>32</sup> The Bangladeshi officer told Dallaire that he had informed Dhaka of the UNAMIR force commander's request.

Dallaire withdrew the order. He later reflected, "What was the use? If they'd obeyed the order there was a good chance they would have fallen apart in any confrontation."<sup>33</sup> He continued, "The situation with the Bangladeshi battalion was worsening. Luc [Marchal] felt that this unit was almost useless. The Bangladeshi had either ignored his orders to conduct missions or told him they had complied when they hadn't. The commanding officer offered nothing but excuses, and most of the contingent had gone to ground inside their compounds in a state of fear."<sup>34</sup> Bangladesh Army colonel Moeen U Ahmed, UNAMIR's chief operations officer, told Dallaire "that the Bangladeshi commander had no problem risking the lives of his men to save foreign nationals but did not want to put them on the line to save Rwandan civilians. . . . [H]is superiors had ordered him not to endanger the troops by protecting Rwandans or to risk carrying any Rwandans in their vehicles."<sup>35</sup> Ghanaian Army general Henry Kwami Anyidoho also noted that the Bangladeshi commander "was not prepared to take any risks with his troops. It was obvious that the contingent would

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<sup>32</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 302.

<sup>33</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 302.

<sup>34</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 272.

<sup>35</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 273.

not continue with the mission except for a handful of staff officers and military observers.” Anyidoho explained that even the small Bangladeshi military police detachment of 11 soldiers had simply vanished since the night of 6 April: “They took refuge with their compatriots at the Amahoro stadium.”<sup>36</sup>

Senegalese Army captain Amadou Deme provided an insightful reflection about the sanctuaries in Kigali. He explained, “The most renowned were, of course, the Hotel des Mille Collines and the stadium Amahoro that was adjacent to our HQ. Comparing those two, it was like between a five star hotel in Mille Collines and a zero-star hotel (talking about Amahoro Stadium).”<sup>37</sup> As a result, Deme continued, “It is, of course, obvious that it was not simply anyone who could have benefited of the shelter at Mille Collines; it was for the well-endowed, prominent people, with an exception made for the luckiest that made their ways and forced or bargained their entry.”<sup>38</sup>

Edouard Kayihura, a survivor who found refuge at the Mille Collines, was an employee of the prosecutor’s office in Kigali and a Tutsi.<sup>39</sup> He worked side by side with individuals who had subscribed to a radical hardline ethnic agenda. Early in the morning of 7 April, Kayihura knew that he was in danger and decided to leave his house and neighborhood of Gitega, where a large number of militiamen resided. After miraculously escaping death a number of times while hiding at the house of one of his Hutu friends, he decided to leave and find another shelter to avoid compromising the safety of his friend’s family. Kayihura shared the feeling of leaving the safety of his friend’s house: “I felt like a man committing suicide or facing the gallows. The moment I exited, the militias could be

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<sup>36</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 48–49.

<sup>37</sup> Amadou Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission: The Whole Truth* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2010), 116.

<sup>38</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 119.

<sup>39</sup> Edouard Kayihura and Kerry Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story . . . and Why It Matters Today* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2014), 6–7.

waiting for me, machetes drawn.”<sup>40</sup> While carefully moving through Kigali’s streets, he experienced firsthand the sinking of the city into a state of anarchy and violence. He described how he “saw a truck parked in front of a restaurant, with people standing around it. Nearby, there was a roadblock manned by children who had become killers as young as age ten or less. They were drunk, having robbed beer from the neighboring stores.”<sup>41</sup> Edouard also noted that such murderers were “[u]nlike real armies . . . they are far less disciplined and dedicated to their cause. Most are nothing more than common criminals.”<sup>42</sup> After passing through several roadblocks by showing an official paper that stated that he had lost his identification card, he arrived at the Mille Collines. “The first thing I saw were the UN peacekeeping armored cars in front of the main door to the hotel” and then the UN blue flag.<sup>43</sup> “I could not feel true elation because I knew not what the future, even the next few minutes of my life, had in store for me. But somehow I convinced myself that something good had just happened to me. A voice inside of me said, *Thank God I will die with other people.*”<sup>44</sup>

Alison des Forges provided an explanation about why the Mille Collines became a reliable haven. In her view, since the hotel was owned by Sabena, a European airline, its destruction would greatly “annoy Sabena and its Belgian owners.” Therefore, “it was a place where foreigners were already staying.” For Rwandans, “the idea was that the closer you came to foreigners, the safer you were likely to be, if you were a targeted person.” She stated that “several hundred Rwandans did flee there and, in fact, were safe, although there were a couple of times when the militia actually came into the hotel, made incursions into the hotel, but were

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<sup>40</sup> Kayihura and Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*, 23.

<sup>41</sup> Kayihura and Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*, 26.

<sup>42</sup> Kayihura and Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*, 19–20.

<sup>43</sup> Kayihura and Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*, 33.

<sup>44</sup> Kayihura and Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*, 34.

finally driven out, either by forces, or through the skill and negotiation techniques of the manager.”<sup>45</sup>

Since 9 April, while French, Belgian, and Italian troops were conducting the evacuation of their expatriates, any possible doubt about the target and the magnitude of violence was confirmed when the news of the first large-scale massacre hit UNAMIR headquarters. Several Tutsi, more than 100, were targeted and horribly killed by a combination of Rwandan soldiers and militiamen at the Polish Pallottine missionary Catholic church at Gikondo.

From 7 April on, a growing number of people had gone to Gikondo. There, they were hosted by a community of Pallottine priests and nuns. Two Polish Army UNMOs, Majors Jerzy Mączka and Ryszard Chudy, had been stationed at the church for some time. On the morning of 9 April, a few Rwandan soldiers showed up at the church and, as soon as they realized that many Tutsi were there, they directed a few dozen Interahamwe to go to the church. After having identified and separated all the Hutu in the group, the militiamen began the massacre. The UNMOs sent several distress calls to the UNAMIR headquarters, just a few kilometers away. They asked for immediate help, but their requests were not answered. The UNMOs and the Pallottine community witnessed the mass slaughter; they could rescue only two badly wounded people. Later that day, a small patrol of UN peacekeepers arrived at the church to discover what had taken place. The patrol was organized and led by Major Beardsley and Major Stefan Steć, another Polish Army UNMO. The scene they faced was one of horror, and they were all impacted by the carnage. Steć documented what had happened, filming the scene and the bodies, and found a significant number of charred identity cards, all belonging to the Tutsi who had been killed. He did not hesitate to label what he saw as genocide.

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Alison des Forges, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS.

In testimony given before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Beardsley remembered counting the pummeled bodies of 165 people, mostly in civilian clothes. He had no doubts that the civilians slaughtered were ethnically targeted.<sup>46</sup> Dallaire offered a much more graphic description of the massacre. Once the gendarmerie had gathered all the Tutsi in the church,

Methodically and with much bravado and laughter, the militia moved from bench to bench, hacking with machetes. Some people died immediately, while others with terrible wounds begged for their lives or the lives of their children. No one was spared. . . . Women suffered horrible mutilation. Men were struck on the head and died immediately or lingered in agony. Children begged for their lives and received the same treatment as their parents. Genitalia were a favorite target, the victims left to bleed to death. There was no mercy, no hesitation, and no compassion.<sup>47</sup>

Massacres like this left no doubt among peacekeepers that the protection they provided to thousands of civilians was vital to keep them from being slaughtered. Samantha Power maintained, "The Rwandan genocide would prove to be the fastest, most efficient killing spree of the twentieth century. In 100 days, some 800,000 Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu were murdered."<sup>48</sup>

With the help of the other Polish UNMOs, Steć created a humanitarian assistance cell (HAC) within UNAMIR, which was aimed at or-

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<sup>46</sup> "Bagosora's Subordinates Carried out Massacres, Says Beardsley," Hirondelle News Agency, 3 February 2003.

<sup>47</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 280.

<sup>48</sup> Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 334.

ganizing rescue teams. Although they developed a plan of action for the creation of secure zones, they were able to achieve very little.<sup>49</sup>

Steć received full support from Major Marek Pazik, another Polish UNMO. The two officers believed that the Arusha Accords were dead, and that it made sense that the focus of the UN mission should be humanitarian assistance. Steć stressed that “General Dallaire agreed with that idea. By the 15th April we had a plan of humanitarian assistance for Rwanda. It called for creation of secure zones, co-ordination of relief agencies and protection of the population.”<sup>50</sup> Yet, none of those points was ever realized. The UN Security Council opposed the initiative. Steć stressed, “Instead of saving people, we were engaged into talks on impossible ceasefire. Basically it sounded to us like: ‘do not save people, play for time and see how it develops.’”<sup>51</sup> As a result, Steć explained:

[W]e did not save anybody except for the people from the Hotel des Mille Collines. As a humanitarian assistance officer, I had a “Schindler’s List” of the people we were allowed to save. The conditions were: they did need a visa guarantee and a financial guarantee that they would be received outside Rwanda. Those guarantees were faxed to me and I had a tremendous file for every person which we saved. A few blocks away from the Mille Collines, a church, St. Famille, hosted more than 5,000 refugees. Every night militia [were] killing people there. We did nothing for them and I guess it was because they didn’t have visas. In May I tried to revive the humanitarian assistance plan. General Dallaire discussed that with me and we concluded that it was the right thing to do

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<sup>49</sup> Linda Melvern, “Major Stefan Steć: UN Peacekeeper on ‘Mission Impossible’ in Rwanda,” *Independent*, 7 October 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Stefan Steć, talk, The Rwanda Forum, Imperial War Museum, London, UK, 27 March 2004, hereafter Steć talk.

<sup>51</sup> Steć talk.

but we could not save people because of political liaisons. At that time, the sense of rebellion was very strong in UNAMIR. The words “nonsense operation” were commonly used by military observers to describe the refugee transfers we did. The Ghanaian troops even refused to drive the trucks on certain occasions. At certain moments I was considering leaving UNAMIR and joining the RPF in protest. I was going to go to the liaison officer saying “give me a Kalashnikov, I’m joining RPF.” But I had still my “Schindler’s List” of people we were supposed to save and actually we did, so that balanced the situation that I did not join RPF then.<sup>52</sup>

Some of the UNMOs, who had to deal with the danger of moving and protecting Tutsi through Kigali from places where they were vulnerable to sanctuaries, began arming themselves. Captain Deme remembered that “we were busy in organizing the columns heading towards the airport, and I was back and forth in front of the convoy to recon the road, talking to militia and coordinating with Major Marek Pazik, a Polish officer who, by the way, was carrying an old AK-47; God knows where he found it.”<sup>53</sup> Pazik was one of the UNMOs who had arrived at the scene of the Gikondo massacre, where he met two fellow traumatized Polish officers and saw dozens of slaughtered bodies of those brutally killed by the Interahamwe.

By then, the small and frustrated HAC was manned by a handful of UNMOs and headed by Ghanaian Army colonel Clayton Yaache. After the departure of the Belgian contingent, the Ghanaian officer replaced Marchal as the Kigali Sector commander. Despite all the limitations, Dallaire assigned to the HAC some of his best and most committed per-

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<sup>52</sup> Steć talk.

<sup>53</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 96–97.

sonnel. Indeed, those dedicate individuals did their best to protect and help people. On 20 April, Canadian Army major Donald MacNeil, an armored officer with 20 years of service and participation in UN peace-keeping missions in Cyprus, arrived in Rwanda and was assigned to the struggling HAC. MacNeil took the position of operations officer. Three more UNMOs, two from Poland and one from Ghana, were part of the HAC.

The HAC's main task was to go around Kigali's neighborhoods and search for people who had taken refuge in UN compounds, to assess their situation, and to report it to the UN as best they could. MacNeil explained:

As well, it was our job to ensure the security was put in place for any relief that came into the airport for these people within Kigali. As the conflict continued, we became involved in moving people within Kigali from one side of the conflict to the other side of the conflict, depending on where they felt more secure. And that was the major thing we did, in addition to bringing aid workers as they came back in. But a big operation we had was transferring people between front lines.<sup>54</sup>

Among the many places where desperate and frightened Rwandans looked for shelter and protection, one that appeared to be among the safest was the *École Technique Officielle* (ETO), Don Bosco, in Kicukiro. Since the morning of 7 April, residents from Kicukiro, Kimihurura, and other parts of south Kigali fled their homes. People in these neighborhoods were particularly in danger because of their proximity to many FAR installations. The situation for them was made worse as the battle

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<sup>54</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Case no. ICTR-98-41-T, Chamber I: The Prosecutor of the Tribunal v. Theoneste Bagosora, Gratien Kabiligi, Aloys Ntabakuze, and Anatole Nsengiyumva, 23 November 2005 (testimony of Donald James MacNeil).



intensified between the FAR soldiers and the RPF troops deployed at the CND. For the residents in the area, the choice to find a shelter came down to two places: the UN post at the ETO and the RPF battalion at the CND. Most believed that the ETO offered the best protection, as the CND was in a difficult location and was already targeted by artillery and small arms fire.

Since November 1993, the ETO had been used by UNAMIR as the South Group headquarters and a base for the Belgian paratroopers' 14th Company, commanded by Lieutenant Luc Lemaire. From there, Belgian peacekeepers conducted a range of missions, from patrolling to resupplying the many posts located in their area of responsibility.

Tutsi and moderate Hutu civilians crowded into the ETO compound. Siméon Hitiyise, a 29-year-old man from Niboye, decided to go to the ETO as soon as the violence began, as he believed that the peacekeepers would protect him. The school was just 100 meters from his house. "I got in through the gate by the cemetery," he remembered. "I think there were already about 500 refugees by then and more kept coming all the time. About 80 people got in with me."<sup>55</sup> For Chantal Mukampama and her family, the ETO represented a sanctuary, not only because of the peacekeepers there but also because the school was run by the Catholic Church. Late in the morning of 7 April, she saw the Interahamwe erecting roadblocks while gunfire could be heard all over Kigali. "That was when I thought of going to ETO, because it was guarded by UNAMIR so nothing could happen to us there," she recalled. "Besides, for a long time, whenever we felt threatened, we had gone to hide in premises that belonged to the Church. Not only did ETO belong to the Church, but there were those UNAMIR troops there with heavy armaments and those troops were Westerners, with all their resources."<sup>56</sup> Léonile Mu-

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<sup>55</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, Witness to Genocide no. 13 (Kigali: African Rights, 2001), 15–16.

<sup>56</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 16–17.

kakimenyi, a 37-year-old farmer at the end of her pregnancy, arrived at ETO on the afternoon of 8 April. She remembered:

[I] was completely exhausted, so I went into one of the larger buildings used by the school children and fell asleep on my wrap, with my jumper as a blanket. I slept very well because I thought we were safe with UNAMIR. The Rwandese say that confidence makes you drunk and that is what happened to me. We told ourselves that we were not going to die now because we were in the hands of UNAMIR. When we saw how well they were armed, we said that if the interahamwe ever came and attacked them, they would only have themselves to blame for what happened.<sup>57</sup>

The local priests encouraged their parishioners to go to the ETO, where they believed they would be protected. Padre Louis Peeters, who had lived in Rwanda since 1948 and worked at the ETO until 1967, was the priest at the parish of Kicukiro. He encouraged his parishioners to head to the ETO.

[T]hey were in danger and I had no means of defending them. . . . We hoped UNAMIR soldiers would protect us because, not only were they armed, they commanded respect as well. The fact that the Interahamwe waited until their withdrawal to massacre the people UNAMIR had been protecting proves this. There was nowhere else to go except to ETO. The only other place where the refugees could have felt safe was Amahoro Stadium, but none of them would have risked the long walk there without an armed escort.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 18.

<sup>58</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 24.

For Padre Jean-Paul Lebel, a Salesian father, the ETO was a safe place for those who were the potential target of the extremists. He also encouraged his parishioners to go to the ETO, as he was convinced that they would be safer there than in the Kicukiro Parish. He stressed:

We decided to do this mainly because we could hear gunfire nearby, and the interahamwe were prowling around outside. But we also thought they would be more secure at ETO because of the presence of the other refugees and, especially, because of the Belgium UNAMIR troops. I didn't want to see the refugees killed. As well as my everyday duties as a priest, I was also the provincial delegate of my order in the Rwanda-Burundi region. I had two colleagues with me at the parish: Father Peeters and Father Fonke who have not returned to Rwanda.<sup>59</sup>

Beginning on 8 April, Padre Lebel had been at the ETO, and he left with the Belgian contingent.

According to African Rights, "People went to ETO because they shared faith in the UNAMIR forces. They knew the soldiers were well armed and trained and—because they had come to Rwanda as 'peacekeepers'—that they had both the responsibility and the capacity to protect them. Their confidence in UNAMIR was reinforced by the knowledge that, in the past, these troops had provided security for some opposition politicians and responded to a number of calls from individual seeking help."<sup>60</sup> The peacekeepers had successfully conveyed an image of a reliable force that, despite its many limitations, was in a position to offer what the refugees needed most: protection.

As the number of people at the ETO grew from a few hundred to more than a couple thousand, the situation became very stressful. The

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<sup>59</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 24–25.

<sup>60</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 3–4.

refugees were conscious of the threat against them. Many people arrived at the school already severely traumatized. Some were sick, while others were injured. Many refugees had already witnessed the slaughter of family members. The level of brutality was horrific. The Belgian paratroopers were placed in a difficult situation. Food, water, and medicine became scarce very soon. The presence of so many refugees made even the large compound overcrowded. The initial reaction of the Belgian troops was to close the gates and leave hundreds of Rwandans outside the school, where they could easily be attacked by the militia.

Indeed, Florence Mukakabanda, a 24-year-old woman, spent hours outside the ETO gate, hoping to get inside while fearing being horribly killed. She had been with her family in Kagarama when the genocide started. As soon as her family became aware that soldiers were shooting at the home of their neighbors, they headed to the ETO. It was not an easy journey. They spent hours trying to reach the compound, and when they did arrive, their troubles were not over. Mukakabanda remembered the tribulation of going through the neighborhood where the Interahamwe had been able to block many streets and had begun to capture many Tutsi. Yet, she was able to get to the school. There, she faced initial rejection from the Belgian soldiers at the gate, but after some negotiation she was able to get inside. The peacekeepers gave in when the youngest men in Mukakabanda's group jumped over the fence.

The UN soldiers understood then that they didn't have any choice. With every minute that passed, more and more refugees were arriving. We went to ETO because the UNAMIR soldiers were there. Because they were there, people said we wouldn't be in any danger. No Rwandese soldiers or interahamwe would dare break in when it was guarded by UNAMIR. If only that had been the case.

Everyone near ETO thought it was the one place where their safety would be assured.<sup>61</sup>

Lieutenant Lemaire's decision to stop the refugees from entering the school was in part due to the confusion that followed the violence in Kigali. On the evening of 7 April, Colonel Marchal informed Lemaire about UNAMIR's new policy: that all Rwandan refugees had to leave all UN posts by the next day at 0600. With several hundred refugees and 150 European expatriates, the ETO had already become one of the largest sanctuaries in Kigali. The order generated a legitimate question as to whether the Belgian troops or the Salesian fathers, who actually owned the school, should decide who would be allowed to stay on their property. It was clear that obeying such an order would expose hundreds to violence and could have resulted in many being massacred. The refugees, therefore, were allowed to stay.

When Lemaire contacted the sector headquarters to receive additional instructions on who the Belgian troops were supposed to protect—Rwandese clergy or all Rwandese—the operations officer, Captain Choffray, told him to “protect all.”<sup>62</sup>

While this rapid sequence of events occurred, the news that the 10 Belgian paratroopers had been brutally killed was delivered at the ETO. Sadness, anger, and fear quickly spread among the Belgian troops. They had lost several beloved comrades and, if they still had any doubts, it had become clear that Belgians too were the target of the extremists. No other UN “blue helmet” had been seriously harmed; even the five Ghanaian peacekeepers who had been captured by the Presidential Guard with the 10 Belgian paratroopers at the prime minister's house had been freed.

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<sup>61</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 18.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Astri Suhrke, “Facing Genocide: The Record of the Belgian Battalion in Rwanda,” *Security Dialogue* 29, no. 1 (March 1998): 44.

Lemaire felt the burden and uncertainty of a growing isolation. In his words, “the morning of the 7th things deteriorated rapidly. We realized we were not any longer referees among two football teams, they put away the ball and brought out their machetes. We heard gunfire, the refugees started descending on the school.” Lemaire also acknowledged, “Luckily we were a large group. It was a secure environment for people in such a danger.” The overall situation was difficult and volatile. Lemaire stressed that “the line of fire was aimed in our direction, when they [Hutu militia] returned from a massacre, they would pass close to the school and fire . . . at us. The pressure was enormous everyone felt he was in serious danger.”<sup>63</sup>

From 9 April, the soldiers at the ETO were fully aware that French and Belgian contingents had deployed in Kigali and that a reserve of Belgian troops was on standby in Nairobi. Indeed, this was a different situation than the one they had to deal with on 7 April. Moreover, on 9 April, Lieutenant Colonel Dewez, after a meeting with Colonel Marchal, sent the following message to all the Belgian posts in Kigali:

Following an attack by the RPF in Northern Rwanda UNAMIR may evacuate the country. You must pack your bags in each camp. For each camp give a list of the staff and equipment to be evacuated and the number of vehicles available. State whether you have sufficient means and if you don't, report your needs. You must take turns to do all these preparations so that the camps can be defended. This is an order only to start preparation for evacuation and not an evacuation order. In any case the soldiers will not leave the country before the evacuation of all the UNAMIR civilians.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold, Part 2: We Were Cowards*, directed by Danièle Lacourse and Yvan Patry (Montreal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1996).

<sup>64</sup> *Kibat Chronique 6 Avr–19 Avr 1994* [Kibat Chronicle, 6–19 April 1994], International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 51, hereafter KIBAT Chronicle.

Early in the evening that same day, Dewez reminded his troops that “negotiation together with firmness are the only means of achieving our aim which is to save as many lives as possible, especially those of our compatriots. This tactic [has] so far worked for us quite well, except in one case where the circumstances were equally exceptional.”<sup>65</sup>

On 11 April, French soldiers of Operation Amaryllis arranged for all Europeans and Rwandan clergies to be evacuated from the ETO. The last convoy escorted by French troops left the compound late that morning. Lemaire, his 90 men, and the Rwandan refugees stayed behind. Lieutenant Jean-Noel Lecomte, the company’s second in command, provided a description of the situation:

Among the people we protected, we must distinguish between Rwandan refugees and European expatriates. There were 140 of them. We were never ordered to evacuate them to the airport. We did, however, benefit from an intervention of French troops to do so. The first part of these expatriates was taken to the French school, the second to the airport. These people were escorted by thirty French soldiers who initially came only looking for French and Italian nationals. Yet, we forced them to take also the 140 refugees [non-Rwandans]. The Rwandan refugees were about 2,000 and placed under the protection of the UN troops. With the agreement of the Salesian fathers, we tried to give them maximum comfort, but we did not have enough to feed so many people for ten days. Nor did we have the means to evacuate them to the airport. Captain Lemaire advised them to leave in small groups at night. Not everyone was in danger. Some were talking calmly with gendarmes outside Don Bosco. We had contacts with a Rwandan general to place them

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<sup>65</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 56.

under the protection of a regular force. We abandoned them there. The order of departure was transmitted by the company commander, Lieutenant Lemaire. We had already felt for some time that we had to prepare for the evacuation of UNAMIR.<sup>66</sup>

Immediately after the French left the ETO for the airport, Lemaire asked his chain of command for permission to leave the school. He stressed the growing pressure coming from the armed groups outside of the compound and the fact that the French had opened a path to the airport. This was a time-sensitive decision, mainly dictated by the amount of time the path opened by the French soldiers would remain a viable and relatively safe way out of the ETO. Dewez passed Lemaire's request to Marchal, who approved the company commander's request, though he directed the Belgian contingent to head not to the airport but to the Hotel Meridien instead. Marchal, however, did authorize the company to pass by the airport so that they could leave the trucks carrying luggage and other unnecessary equipment.<sup>67</sup>

In 10 minutes, Dewez informed Lemaire of Marchal's decision. The 90 Belgian soldiers stationed at the ETO could leave as soon as they were ready to do so. It took them just a little more than an hour to depart. Lemaire meticulously communicated to his superiors that, in the process of leaving the ETO, he had to abandon "TWO broken-down vehicles and ONE generator."<sup>68</sup> No mention was made of the more than 2,000 people who were being abandoned to a certain horrible death.

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<sup>66</sup> Hearing of Reserve Lt Lecomte and Capt Lemaire before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (7 May 1997), hereafter Lecomte and Lemaire hearing.

<sup>67</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 80–81.

<sup>68</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 81.



At 1345, the small Belgian contingent, the last hope of survival for the refugees, left the ETO. Angélique Numukobwa, another survivor of the massacre who followed the departure of the Belgian blue helmets, remembers that “that day we were told to go to the chapel and the classrooms to receive food. We had spent three days without eating, we all rushed in. UNAMIR trucks began leaving.”<sup>69</sup> When the refugees realized what was happening, they rushed in front of the white-painted vehicles and tried to stop them. Belgian soldiers fired in the air and forced their way out of the ETO. When Lecomte was asked whether women and children were clinging to the vehicles, he answered that “everyone did it. I had to shoot in the air to free ourselves.”<sup>70</sup> In an interview for a Public Broadcasting Service documentary, the Belgian officer explained, “I had to fire in the air to open the path to the last vehicles because there were all these people around there, all over the vehicle.”<sup>71</sup> It was the first time Lecomte used his side arm since his deployment to Rwanda.<sup>72</sup>

As the Belgian UN vehicles left the ETO, the militia entered the school and killed several people. Then, a large number of refugees were rounded up and taken to the Sonatubes factory, not far from the ETO. There, they met soldiers and Interahamwe militia who immediately began brutalizing them.

For the refugees, there was one more false moment of hope while they were awaiting their horrible fate at the Sonatubes.<sup>73</sup> Despite the fact that they had been abandoned by the Belgian troops, they still felt some hope when a UNAMIR contingent of Ghanaian soldiers approached the road close to the factory. The refugees were seated on the ground and surrounded by soldiers and the Interahamwe; it was clear what was about

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<sup>69</sup> *Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold*.

<sup>70</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

<sup>71</sup> *Frontline*, season 17, episode 2, “The Triumph of Evil,” directed and written by Steve Bradshaw and Ben Loeterman, aired 26 January 1999 on PBS.

<sup>72</sup> “The Triumph of Evil.”

<sup>73</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 70.

to happen to them, and such a sight should have alerted the peacekeepers. The refugees screamed to the Ghanaians for help. The peacekeepers drove on.

Jean-Paul Biramvu, then the secretary-general of the Collective of Human Rights Leagues and Associations (CLADHO), remembered, "After we had been sitting on the road for about an hour, a group of Ghanaian UNAMIR soldiers drove by in three vehicles. Although we were surrounded, we cried out to them, saying: 'Save us!' But they just passed on."<sup>74</sup> Biramvu was not the only one to see the peacekeepers' patrol. According to Vénuste Karasira, "Even outside Sonatubes, UNAMIR did nothing."<sup>75</sup> Yves Habumuremyi recalled, "While we were sitting there, some UNAMIR armoured cars drove by, flying the UN flag. They were driven by Ghanaian soldiers. We cried out for help. But got no response. Instead of helping they glared at us. There was a lot of traffic driving by."<sup>76</sup>

Eric Ruzindana noted how the UN vehicles passed by:

[T]he occupants showed no concern for our fate. Imagine; people driving by as though nothing was happening, when it was obvious we were about to be murdered. There was a jeep carrying Ghanaian UNAMIR soldiers, and another jeep with a machine gun mounted on it. I recognized the Ghanaians because their uniforms are different from the Belgians', and they look different as well. They couldn't even be bothered to stop and ask what was going on. I even think some women begged them to help, but in vain.<sup>77</sup>

Survivors of the massacre expressed a strong belief that the Ghanaian soldiers had heard them and had a clear understanding of the situation

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<sup>74</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 71.

<sup>75</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 71.

<sup>76</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 71.

<sup>77</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 71.

the refugees faced. They could not understand why the peacekeepers did nothing to help them, neither responding directly nor returning to the Sonatubes with reinforcements to help them.<sup>78</sup>

It soon became evident to the perpetrators that, since the Sonatubes factory was close to a major road artery connecting downtown Kigali, the Amahoro Stadium, and the airport, it was too exposed to traffic and therefore not a good place to conduct a large massacre. The thousands of refugees were taken to Nyanza, just a few kilometers from the ETO, far from the main roads. There, they were slaughtered. The few who survived only did so because they were left for dead, having not been finished off by the militia, and were rescued by the arrival of the advancing RPF troops of Alpha Mobile Unit.<sup>79</sup> The first few RPF soldiers to arrive in Nyanza were met with a horrible scene. To many of them, the sight was devastating as they realized that members of their families had been slaughtered there. Jean Bapiste Karega, a RPF soldier originally from Kicukiro, remembered in tears his arrival at the massacre scene:

The most difficult thing on my side, was that all my family was in Nyanza. As we were going up in Nyanza among the dead bodies, I met a relative. We were getting closer to where they were being killed, he told me all my family was there. So I went. When we go there, we managed to rescue some of them who had been wounded and chopped. Others were already dead. I found my mother dead on top of the dead bodies. I was very shocked by that.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 70–71.

<sup>79</sup> Jean-Pierre Bucyensenge, “Karasira: UN Peacekeepers’ Forsaking Condemned Us to Die,” *New Times*, 10 April 2014.

<sup>80</sup> *The 600: The Soldiers’ Story*, directed by Laurent Basset and Richard Hall, written by Richard Hall (Piedmont, CA: Great Blue Production, 2019).

Sam Kaka, the unit's commander, said, "It was very difficult to see the scene."<sup>81</sup>

At the ETO, although it was certain that the refugees were going to be killed, no one showed a serious commitment to protect them. The priority of the Belgian soldiers stationed there should have been to protect all those people—as Choffray directed Lemaire to do—who had trusted them and placed their lives in the peacekeepers' hands. Yet, day after day, the conditions at the school developed in such a way that the military leadership lost confidence that they could successfully protect the refugees without having to take some risks. Lemaire explained how his soldiers felt about the situation they were in: "My men were horrified because they thought it should have been an easy mission and they suddenly discovered it was a nightmare."<sup>82</sup>

In a few days, the priority quickly shifted from protect all, to protect and rescue the expatriates, to save ourselves. Nevertheless, the main mission—and what the blue helmets represented—should not have changed. Lemaire was not ordered to leave ETO; rather, he was authorized to leave from his battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Dewez, and the sector commander, Colonel Marchal. When Lemaire was informed by his commander that Belgian troops were regrouping at the Meridienne Hotel, Brussels had not yet announced that it would withdraw its troops from Rwanda. He independently decided to leave the compound when he believed that the road to the airport was relatively safe, a few hours after the last contingent of expatriates escorted by French troops left the ETO.

At the ETO, a number of options were available to the Belgian paratroopers. They could have resisted, but in reality they were never attacked, and it is very likely that they would not have been attacked. It is true that they might have believed initially that they were in a weak position, but

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<sup>81</sup> *The 600*.

<sup>82</sup> "The 'Triumph of Evil.'"

if this was the case, it was more a perception than reality. Lecomte stated, "At Don Bosco, our ammunition allowed us to resist one or two classic attacks. The FAR would never have engaged in conventional attacks. It was more like skirmishes, sporadic shooting."<sup>83</sup> He explained that ammunition supply would not have been a problem. "It was not the logistics base that delivered our ammunition to us, we were the ones who were going to get them. We always had to follow the rules of engagement. The only way to stop light armored vehicles was heavy weapons, but we could not put them in place because of the rules of engagement. Finally, given the deterioration of the situation, we put them in position."<sup>84</sup> He continued:

At one point we had the technical capability to evacuate these refugees. But we did not get the order. Then the situation got worse. It was then too late. Evacuation became impossible because of the number of refugees, our numbers, the state of the roads, and the rules of engagement. For example, we could have taken advantage of the presence of the French, who passed without problems through the FAR roadblocks. I was stunned by the order of departure and abandonment of the refugees. We left our consciences there.<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, another option was to escort all refugees to the Amohoro Stadium, about three kilometers from the school. This was probably the most difficult course of action because of the complexities involved in moving so many people through uncertain terrain. However, large numbers of people, often under the "protection" of unarmed peacekeepers, were moved through Kigali. Finally, the Belgian troops could have waited a little longer before abandoning the compound. Even a few hours would

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<sup>83</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

<sup>84</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

<sup>85</sup> Lecomte and Lamaire hearing.

have probably saved a large number of people. The darkness of the night slowed and ultimately stopped the killing in Nyanza. The perpetrators simply had to stop and come back to the killing ground the following day to complete their terrible action. In the dark, some victims could have saved their own lives, and probably many more would be alive if they could have run away in the night from the ETO compound. This final option was not even considered because the same darkness that might have helped the refugees would have played against the Belgians, as the small contingent would have had to travel to the airport with reduced visibility.

While critical decisions with deadly consequences were being made at the compound, a number of RPF units were already fighting the FAR soldiers and militia in the area close to the ETO. Indeed, the largest number among those who survived the massacre at ETO were rescued by the advancing RPF soldiers. Africa Rights stressed, "It is appalling to realise that had the UNAMIR troops left but a day later, many more people would have been saved by the RPF."<sup>86</sup>

Alison Des Forges rightly noted that if only a limited number of lives were saved, it was mainly because several UNAMIR soldiers refused to take risks.<sup>87</sup> According to Astri Suhrke, "the story of the ETO is partly an account of the limits to personal heroism."<sup>88</sup> More than a lack of personal heroism, the events at the ETO indicate a moral failure. The decisions made there show evidence that the unit leaders, and probably the soldiers as well, were willing or felt compelled to take risks to protect expatriates but were not ready to take an even minimal amount of risk to protect Africans.

For Lemaire, a significant problem was the high level of confusion in which he had to make important decisions. He stressed, "The issue of protecting Rwandans has never been clear, either from the battalion

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<sup>86</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 6.

<sup>87</sup> Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 611.

<sup>88</sup> Suhrke, "Facing Genocide," 45.

or from the sector. The orders were contradictory. On the 7th, we were asked to get the refugees out of our cantonments, but on the 8th, we were ordered to protect everyone. And on the 9th, we were informed that the UNAMIR evacuation was near and that we had to prepare. I knew that I was an important pawn in the battalion and that the battalion was dispersed and needed reinforcement.”<sup>89</sup> Lemaire informed the refugees of the situation and advised them to leave the compound at night in small groups. While a few did leave, many more stayed behind even as more continued to arrive.

Lemaire explained that on 10 April, he understood that Belgium would not send additional aid to Rwanda and that the evacuation plans were rejected. Former Rwandan Army colonel Léonidas Rusatira had gone to the school many times. Lemaire said that Rusatira “was a troubled figure who easily crossed the roadblocks of the extremists. I asked him if a group of reliable Rwandan soldiers could protect the refugees. I did not get an answer, any more than from the Red Cross or MSF. On the 11th, we were ordered to evacuate the expatriates. The French arrived using the free passage to the south.”<sup>90</sup> He acknowledged:

We had the opportunity to save people and we had to leave. As early as the 9th, I warned people that UNAMIR was going to leave and some asked us to kill them rather than leaving them there. I had no other option but to abandon them. I would have needed reinforcements to protect them. . . . I didn’t want to have to shoot Rwandans. When we left, a French jeep arrived and the Rwandans applauded because they thought it was our replacement. But it was not. I knew I was leaving these people in danger. Minister Ngulinzira asked me to be able to join our convoy. But I refused. I told him that his pres-

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<sup>89</sup> Lecomte and Lemaire hearing.

<sup>90</sup> Lecomte and Lemaire hearing.

ence would have endangered the convoy, but in fact it was impossible for us to tell the minister about when we were leaving. If I had warned him of this moment, we should have to [shoot] the Rwandans and I did not want to. I told him that if he followed us, he would be protected.<sup>91</sup>

According to African Rights, “any initiative to save lives would have relied largely upon Lemaire’s personal courage and ingenuity. While there is evidence of his concern about their situation, he could have no confidence that he would have the backing of his superiors or the UNAMIR command for an attempt to evacuate the Rwandese refugees.”<sup>92</sup>

In the confusion that overwhelmed UNAMIR chain of command for several critical days in April, the events at the ETO, the decisions made by the Belgian leaders, and the massacre of a few thousand Rwandans who had found shelter at the school remained unknown to General Dallaire and his staff. Years later, Major Beardsley spoke about the horrific scenes at the ETO:

I couldn’t believe it at the time. I can remember I’m on tape somewhere, speaking to reporters, telling them, “No way that happened. I can’t believe that that would happen. There’s no way the Belgian troops would just abandon Rwandans like that without telling us, without making some arrangement to get them to the stadium.” . . . It wasn’t until months later that finally it was confirmed to me. I eventually saw the video of it, and it made me sick to my stomach. I never believed that professional Western soldiers, Christians, Belgians, could do such a thing. It absolutely disgusted me. . . . I still I find it incomprehensible that they knew that, when they left, that

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<sup>91</sup> Lecomte and Lemaire hearing.

<sup>92</sup> *Left to Die at ETO and Nyanza*, 47.



they were abandoning those people to their deaths, and to make absolutely no effort.<sup>93</sup>

Similarly, Dallaire was surprised and outraged to learn about the massacre that began at the ETO and culminated in Nyanza. In 2004, when he returned to Rwanda, he met with Fidele Bideri, who lost nearly his entire family, more than 10 members, in the massacre at Nyanza. An extremely upset Dallaire said, "If I had known that there were civilians here [the ETO], then I would have taken troops from another contingent that was staying, and put them in here and so keep the UN presence. That never happened. Because I never knew about it, and then it was too late. . . . It is an outrage how the soldiers left here and abandoned people because those weren't their orders."<sup>94</sup>

The outrage of those who survived the massacre remains strong. Their disappointment at being abandoned by the peacekeepers remains an open wound. Nausicaa Habimana, a survivor of the ETO, expressed her rage at the peacekeepers: "I heard on the radio that UNAMIR had left Rwanda, and for me they were utter swines because they began by giving us shelter, and then they left us in the hands of killers who did us much harm and who killed our families."<sup>95</sup>

Lemaire, clearly fearing for the safety of his soldiers, decided to take no risk to protect the Rwandan refugees. Indeed, during the first week of violence in Kigali, the peacekeepers, and all other international organizations that maintained a presence in the country, faced many risks. Yet, when violence was confronted with competence and professional determination, the peacekeepers successfully prevailed and suffered little to no casualties. There were several instances in which Belgian troops responded to the violence using a proper military approach. On the morn-

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<sup>93</sup> Beardsley interview.

<sup>94</sup> *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Nausicaa Habimana, on *Frontline*, season 17, episode 2, "The Triumph of Evil," directed and written by Steve Bradshaw and Ben Loeterman, aired 26 January 1999 on PBS.

ing of 10 April, Captain Pierre Marchal, the commander of the Belgian City Group detachment, reported that the patrols he had sent out to the downtown neighborhood to search for Belgian expatriates did not encounter any difficulties.<sup>96</sup> Early in the evening, KIBAT was ordered to provide supplies to the Tunisian company, which had not received food provisions for two days. The task was accomplished without any problem.<sup>97</sup> That same day, French troops of Operation Amaryllis had no issues going through roadblocks. Against regulations, in several cases, they used Belgian white-painted UN vehicles.<sup>98</sup>

That morning, Captain Vandriessche, the commander of the Belgian Army deployment at the airport, informed Lieutenant Colonel Dewez that the French had agreed to help the Belgians pass through roadblocks. However, as they had no vehicles, they asked for three Unimogs. Dewez approved the request and directed Vandriessche to work closely with the French.<sup>99</sup> Such a request was against UN procedures. Indeed, as soon as the RPF realized that French troops were using UN vehicles, they contacted the UNAMIR headquarters to stress the prohibition for French troops to ride on UN trucks. UNAMIR's reaction was immediate, and a directive was sent to all UN troops clearly stating that no non-UNAMIR soldier could ride on a UN vehicle.<sup>100</sup>

On the morning of 10 April, at about 0900, a small Belgian Army convoy, including a Volkswagen Iltis and a Unimog, left the Rwandex complex on a mission to rescue a few families. As the Belgian soldiers stopped at a crossroad, an unmarked pickup truck carrying a few FAR soldiers suddenly emerged and opened fire on the convoy. The Belgian response was swift, as the soldiers returned fire. A team engaged the FAR soldiers, who fled quickly; one was apprehended, disarmed, and then let

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<sup>96</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 62.

<sup>97</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 63.

<sup>98</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 64.

<sup>99</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 64.

<sup>100</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 64.

go. The KIBAT log recorded, “Nobody, neither the escort nor the civilians evacuated, [was] wounded during the operation.”<sup>101</sup>

On April 11, Captain Choffray was tasked with heading to the *coopération technique militaire* (CTM) village, near the CND building, to evacuate a few Belgian personnel. On his way to the CTM, he passed by the CND. The convoy drove through the crossfire between the RPF and FAR and yet experienced no problems. Choffray and his soldiers left the CTM village with the Belgian personnel and escorted them to the airport. Later, the captain reported that he had no problems on the road to the airport, except at a crossroad where he ignored a stop command given by some FAR soldiers. The Rwandans did not react to Choffray’s action.<sup>102</sup>

A few days later, on 13 April, Captain Marchal received orders to organize and lead a patrol consisting of two Unimogs armed with machine guns and two small reconnaissance teams on two Iltises and two tracked reconnaissance combat vehicles (CVRT). His mission was to head to Gikondo to gather a dozen Polish citizens; to the French school to collect some foreign journalists; to the Hotel des Mille Collines to pick up Zairians, Senegalese, and Americans; to Nyarugenge to gather 10 Burundian priests; to the Lycée Notre Dame de Citeaux for one young girl; to the Groupe Scolaire St André for two priests; to the Eglise de la Sainte Famille for two nuns; and to Nyamirambo for the children of a Russian citizen. The Belgian patrol gathered the Polish citizens at Gikondo, the refugees at the Hotel des Mille Collines, and the girl from Notre Dame de Citeaux, and after bringing them all to the French school, they left for Nyamirambo. On the way to Nyamirambo, the patrol ran into two roadblocks defended by an anti-Belgian crowd. The patrol was able to pass through the roadblocks by pretending that they were French, which they accomplished by removing the uniforms with Belgian badges. It

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<sup>101</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 67.

<sup>102</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 76.

was only after the patrol had passed that the Rwandans realized they had been deceived. As they arrived at the Group Scolaire St. Andre, the Belgian soldiers picked up two priests and a Rwandan family. While at the college, a grenade was thrown inside the building. The situation was quickly becoming tense. Marchal knew that he would not be able to go back through the same roadblock and deceive the hostile crowd again. He decided to take an alternative path. However, the patrol was attacked by several gunmen. The Belgian soldiers' response was immediate and tough, with them opening fire on the attackers with all their weapons. One of the CVRTs was used to take down an improvised wall erected as a roadblock. The CVRT was unsuccessfully attacked by propelled grenades, and once more the convoy counterattacked with determination. The patrol completed its mission at the French school, and no one was harmed.<sup>103</sup>

The Belgian contingent was aware that they were about to be ordered to leave Rwanda, and indeed, on 14 April, Brussels confirmed the decision to withdraw its forces from the country. Colonel Marchal was very troubled. He felt that he was deserting the mission, his fellow peacekeepers, and the UNAMIR leadership. Marchal sat down in his office and wrote a note to inform General Dallaire about the Belgian government's decision. Two words were on Marchal's mind: "deserter" and "dishonor." He wrote, "Regretfully the moment has arrived for me to leave my job. For a soldier is very difficult to abandon the battlefield, when circumstances require his presence near his brothers in arms. Never I could have imagined to leave under these circumstances. My country has asked everything from me. I must obey, of course, but I will, no doubt, have a sour taste for a long time."<sup>104</sup> Marchal was fully aware that the departure of the Belgian contingent, the best trained of all the UN troops in Rwanda, would contribute to the speed of the genocide.

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<sup>103</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 98.

<sup>104</sup> Luc Marchal, *Rwanda: la descente aux enfers: témoignage d'un peacekeeper, Décembre 1993–Avril 1994* [Rwanda: The Descent into Hell: Testimony of a Peacekeeper, December 1993–April 1994] (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 2001), 245.

In a long and tense telephone conversation, Marchal explained to General Charlier that the situation was such that withdrawing from Rwanda would cause severe harm to the Rwandan population. "If we leave now," he said, "we will never be able to come back. If we leave there will be thousands of deaths. General if we leave there will be a blood-bath all over the country."<sup>105</sup>

Informed by Marchal of Brussels' decision, Dallaire was shocked and could not believe that his most important and efficient contingent was going to leave Kigali in a matter of hours. It was another devastating blow to the UN mission in Rwanda.

The departure of the Belgian contingent offered another disgrace for UNAMIR and for the Belgian government. Belgian soldiers were, in several instances, less than disciplined. They are seen in some videos tearing apart the UN symbols they had been wearing as part of UNAMIR. At the airport, Belgian soldiers engaged in looting. Captain Douglas Tefnin, the commander of the logistics base, asked Lieutenant Colonel Dewez "to intervene at the airport because information had been received that some KIBAT elements were helping themselves to stocks of cigarettes and T-shirts kept at the airport."<sup>106</sup> Indeed, Dewez and Major Maurice Timsonnet had already made sure that discipline was restored and directed the judicial detachment to initiate an investigation.<sup>107</sup>

The behavior of the Belgian soldiers provided evidence of a total collapse of leadership. Captain Deme described the scene:

After having demonstrated against the United Nations by tearing the blue flags and their blue berets with their knives and bayonets, they proceeded to a complete ravaging of the airport—broke the window glasses and chairs—broke into the shops, took whatever they could,

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<sup>105</sup> Marchal, *Rwanda*, 253.

<sup>106</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 104.

<sup>107</sup> KIBAT Chronicle, 104.

and threw away stuff they did not need. It was like a hurricane that went through the hall of the airport. And that was in front of us, in front of the [Rwandan Forces] Para commandos, and in front of local Rwandan workers who were just shaking their heads in indignation. And at no time did we see an officer intervening to order the halting of this behavior. Not at all. Insults in both French and Flemish were in the air, and they were spitting against whatever they could. It was simply immoral and indecent. That was the consecration of a highly demoralized troop that showed highly undisciplined behavior.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 101.



# Chapter 7

## A FEW HUNDRED PEACEKEEPERS AND A FADING HOPE FOR RWANDANS

On 16 April 1994, General Roméo Dallaire, in his daily report to the United Nations (UN), stressed that UNAMIR could not [C]ontinue to sit on the fence in the face of all these morally legitimate demands for assistance/protection, nor can it simply launch into Chapter 7 type of operations without the proper authority, personnel and equipment. It is thus anticipated that over the next 24 hours or so, the Force Commander will either recommend a thinning out of the force down to a responsible level needed for security of airport, political process, humanitarian support tasks . . . a force of 1,300 personnel, or the FC will recommend . . . the 250 men force.<sup>1</sup>

Dallaire was surprised by Iqbal Riza's response the following day. The senior UN diplomat indicated that "your plans to start sharp reduction of UNAMIR personnel is approved. This also will demonstrate imminence of withdrawal of UNAMIR if cease-fire is not achieved."<sup>2</sup> Dallaire was

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<sup>1</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), 307.

<sup>2</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 308.



frustrated by the UN response: “I had given them an argument for pulling out, and they jumped on it, though that hadn’t been my intention.”<sup>3</sup>

General Henry Kwami Anyidoho was the first one to receive the news that the UN intended to shut down the mission completely. The Ghanaian officer was stunned and immediately informed Dallaire, who was going from meeting to meeting to arrange an impossible ceasefire.<sup>4</sup> It was a difficult moment for UNAMIR’s leaders, who could now see clearly that withdrawing the mission entirely would imply a complete desertion of those defenseless civilians who were being killed daily by the thousands. There were several thousand civilians under their protection in a few UN sanctuaries. This situation gave the UNAMIR leaders great resolve, and they finally showed a strong determination to push back on the UN decision.

When Dallaire had time to think over the directions he had received from New York, he met with Anyidoho to decide how to respond. Dallaire said, “Henry, they want us out. We’ve failed in the mission, we’ve failed in attempting to convince, we’ve failed the Rwandans. We are going to run and cut the losses, that’s what they want us to do. What do you think about this?” Anyidoho responded, “We’ve not failed and we’re not going to leave. We should stay.” According to Dallaire:

[T]hat was all I needed because by Henry saying that, that meant that I would still have troops on the ground—which were good troops, not well equipped but good troops. . . . His support was exactly the depth that I needed to give me just that much more oomph to decide. So I stood up and I said, “Henry, we’re staying, we’re not going to run, we’re not going to abandon the mission, and we will not be held in history as being accountable for the abandonment of the Rwandan people.” It was just mor-

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<sup>3</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 308.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali* (Accra, Ghana: Woeli, 1999), 49.

ally corrupt to do that. And that's when I went back and told them to go to hell, or words to that effect.<sup>5</sup>

Dallaire, Anyidoho, Colonel Clayton Yaache, Colonel Ratu Isoa Tikoca, and Colonel Moeen U Ahmed assessed how many troops were necessary to continue their mission, with the main focus to provide humanitarian assistance. Initially, they wanted to maintain 1,200 troops in Rwanda, yet they became aware that such a number would not be accepted. They decided that the minimum number was 456.

Dallaire did not believe that the UN force would be able to protect a significant number of refugees, yet UNAMIR shelter sites were already hosting more than 20,000 people. The force commander stressed that "there was no way that I could abandon them. I needed some protection for those sites, or to consolidate those sites in one way or another. I also needed the transport capability, for if we were able to keep a life line going I could bring food and fuel and medicine, not only for my troops but for those people."<sup>6</sup>

The *Special Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda* on 20 April 1994 suggested that a small group of peacekeepers and the UNAMIR force commander, with essential personnel, would remain in Kigali. Its mission would be to work with the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) to try to bring both sides to an agreement on a ceasefire. The mission would pursue this objective for a limited period of two weeks or longer, depending on the decision of the UN Security Council (UNSC). The small deployment would also assist with humanitarian operations. The mission would be composed of an infantry company in charge of security and some military observers and, besides civilian staff, would total approximately 270

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Gen Roméo Dallaire, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Dallaire interview.

<sup>6</sup> Dallaire interview.

people. The UN would withdraw the remaining UNAMIR troops and personnel. The role of the special representative, supported by a reduced staff, would be to act as an intermediary in the political negotiations attempting to bring the Rwandan government and the RPF back to the Arusha peace process.<sup>7</sup> Such recommendations were formally adopted by UNSC Resolution 912 of 21 April 1994.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the UN decision that determined a reduction of UNAMIR troops to 270, Dallaire and Anyidoho decided to keep in Rwanda the 456 troops they had initially agreed on. The bulk of the contingent, 356 in all, were Ghanaians. The Tunisian contingent, UNAMIR's most distinguished and effective, remained in place and continued to provide great help to the mission. Anyidoho wrote, "The figure of 456 that we kept in Rwanda throughout the war was illegal." He also stressed, "We simply held on to it stubbornly since we could not do otherwise. It was a command decision."<sup>9</sup>

The resolve showed by UNAMIR leaders in response to the UNSC resolution proves their determination and commitment. Yet, the overall mission would have benefitted greatly if such a resolve had been adopted on 7 April. That day, the UNAMIR leaders would have been in a much better position to affect the entire evolution of the genocide, probably stopping it and surely slowing it down to a degree that many thousands of lives might have been saved. On 21 April, such resolve was very important and beneficial to the lives of the lucky thousands that had found shelter in the few UN sanctuaries, yet its impact was limited. The risk that the UNAMIR leaders took with the deployment of 456 troops in the middle of an ongoing war was much higher than they would have taken on 7 April, at the beginning of violence, when they had more than 2,000 troops at their disposal, some of whom were extremely well trained. What was

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<sup>7</sup> *Special Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda* (New York: United Nations, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 912 (21 April 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 51.

different was the focus and perception that these military leaders had on 7 April, when Dallaire began his “shuttle diplomacy” and hoped that he could save the mission and place no risk, or minimal risk, on his troops. On 21 April, it was clear that diplomacy and political negotiations were failing miserably, that many people were being killed, and that, to make a difference, peacekeepers had to accept a significant amount of risk. In many ways, on 21 April, there were no options available to a commander, either to stay in place or to leave. However, on 7 April, there were no options either. All indications were that the UN peacekeepers presented the only real obstacle to the violence unleashed by the genocidaires. The systematic killing of moderate politicians, the assault on the prime minister, and the brutalization of the Belgian soldiers were clear signs that Rwanda was quickly heading toward violence. Yet, despite the evidence that the Arusha peace process was broken and that the mission’s objective was unachievable, in Dallaire’s mind and wish, pursuing the mission remained the main objective, to the point that he became blind to the reality that it was simply no longer an option.

In mid-April, UNAMIR provided protection to several key places in Kigali. Tutsi and moderate Hutus found shelter at the Hotel Meridien, the Hotel des Mille Collines, the new King Faisal Hospital, and the Amahoro Stadium. Shortly after the beginning of the violence, the Amahoro Stadium and the King Faisal Hospital fell under RPF control. The King Faisal Hospital, with the Red Cross field hospital, played an important role in saving lives. The hospital, with a 150-bed capacity, was brand new, as it was scheduled to be inaugurated in June. It was well-designed, well-equipped, and able to support surgeries. Eleven Tunisian peacekeepers provided protection to the medical facility.<sup>10</sup>

The place that was the most at risk during the genocide was the Hotel des Mille Collines. The challenges faced by the hotel were numerous.

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<sup>10</sup> James Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarian Action for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Walker, 2008), 188.

First, the area around the hotel was controlled by the Hutu extremists; it was a part of Kigali where the Interahamwe enjoyed great freedom of movement and carried out several massacres. Many such massacres were conducted just a short distance from the hotel. Second, the hotel quickly became a shelter for many who found protection under the UN flag. However, the number of peacekeepers, of which a large component were UNMOs, was extremely small. While the walls at the main entrance of the hotel were made of concrete, the remaining parts of the fences around the compound were made of canes and were therefore extremely vulnerable. The bravery of those peacekeepers, and their commitment to saving lives, cannot be praised enough. Third, some of those who found shelter at the hotel were extremely valuable targets for the extremists. For example, during the initial days of violence, Prime Minister Madame Agathe Uwilingiyimana's children, who had survived the vicious attack by the Presidential Guard, were hidden at the hotel until they could be taken to a safer place. Fourth, as soon as the extremists realized that such important people were inside the hotel, they limited all movements in and out of the sanctuary. In order for people to be taken to safer places, a deal had to be made among the warring factions and UNAMIR. Such deals did not materialize until May, and even then, the first evacuation of people out of the hotel on 3 May nearly ended in a bloodbath when the convoy was stopped and harassed by the Interahamwe. Fifth, the UNMOs at the hotel, and in particular officers such as Captain Mbaye Diagne, who would be killed by a grenade fragment on 30 May, were extremely active in conducting stealth rescue operations. Mbaye is credited with saving the lives of hundreds of defenseless civilians. Finally, a few weeks after the violence began, the hotel lost electricity, water, and all its communication but a fax line. Daily life at the hotel was grim. More important, in the words of Edouard Kayihura, "the fear level rose precipitously."<sup>11</sup> To those

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<sup>11</sup> Edouard Kayihura and Kerry Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story . . . and Why It Matters Today* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2014), 73.

frightened people, the presence of the UN peacekeepers and Dallaire's occasional visits became a very reassuring factor. Edouard Kayihura remembered those terrible days and the essential role played by the UN troops: "Short-staffed as they were . . . General Dallaire's peacekeepers were far from impotent. The Hotel des Mille Collines was like some isolated outpost of peace surrounded by gruesome violence . . . those who spoke with Dallaire always came away remarking on his very obvious compassion for us Rwandans. . . . Dallaire cared. The moment you looked him in the eyes, you simply knew."<sup>12</sup>

A few weeks after President Juvénal Habyarimana's death, when the violence became widespread, the departure of the Belgian contingent from Rwanda was immediately followed by that of the Bangladeshi. Anyidoho stressed that some of the Bangladeshi soldiers "were gripped with fear and there was a scramble to board the Canadian C 130 transport plane that came to pick up troops."<sup>13</sup>

On the afternoon of 21 April, Dallaire was informed that *The Washington Post* had published on its front page the undignified photo of a group of UN soldiers rushing like a "scared herd of cattle" to get aboard the aircraft. Riza told Dallaire that some of those peacekeepers "were actually kissing the aircraft while others were dropping their belongings on the tarmac as they raced to the plane."<sup>14</sup> The opening of the article read: "Terrified U.N. soldiers scrambled aboard planes evacuating Kigali today as the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Rwanda neared collapse amid the country's bloody chaos. Shouting and murmuring prayers, 252 Bangladeshi peacekeepers squashed into planes with dozens of U.N. military observers and refugees. Many had to stand."<sup>15</sup>

For Dallaire, the behavior of the Bangladeshi troops was humiliating. He later wrote, "We were portrayed as scared rats abandoning a sink-

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<sup>12</sup> Kayihura and Zukus, *Inside the Hotel Rwanda*, 59–60.

<sup>13</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 49.

<sup>14</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 323.

<sup>15</sup> "U.N. Force Nears Collapse in Chaotic Rwanda," *Washington Post*, 21 April 1994.

ing ship. Even in their departure, the Bangladeshi contingent was able to bring my mission even further down in the eyes of those who saw us as a joke in the first place.”<sup>16</sup>

At the end of April, UNAMIR was left with a few hundred troops, some of them deployed illegally, and limited capabilities, few logistics, and poor supply. UNAMIR was about to enter another extremely difficult phase in the worst possible shape. With the few troops available and such limited resources, UNAMIR could barely provide protection to a number of sanctuaries, move displaced people to protected areas, and launch often unauthorized rescue missions to save people who were hiding in areas where they were extremely vulnerable to the extremists’ violence.

Captain Amadou Deme continued to move around Kigali to collect vital information and provide help that was essential to save many lives. Such commitment would exact a toll from those who stayed in Rwanda and did all they could to save lives. Deme wrote, “horror was at its peak. Killings were occurring everywhere.”<sup>17</sup> He remembers the growing number of corpses that piled up along the streets, the terrible smell of death, and the sight of dogs eating human flesh.<sup>18</sup> It was a scenery worth of the inferno, the coming through of a horrible nightmare. Indeed, such nightmares haunted those brave individuals. Deme wrote, “It was hard to find sleep upon return to the headquarters.”<sup>19</sup>

In this situation, the RPF was instrumental in saving the lives of thousands of Tutsi and moderate Hutu while it was fully engaged in the war against the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR). For the RPF, Kigali was a critical front to which it committed a sizeable number of troops, but it was also fighting simultaneously in a number of other locations that absorbed hundreds more troops. RPF soldiers were engaged in the

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<sup>16</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 323–24.

<sup>17</sup> Amadou Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission: The Whole Truth* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2010), 91.

<sup>18</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 93.

<sup>19</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 93.

battle for Byumba, the city strategically located on the main communication line between Mulindi and Kigali; they were committed to preventing FAR troops from disengaging from the north of Rwanda and redeploying to Kigali to provide vital reinforcements to the units fighting there. RPF units dug themselves in to prevent the FAR from regaining full control of the road that linked Kigali, Ruhengeri, and Gisenyi. They had to retain control and defend positions such as Gaseke, in the proximity of the Mount Zoko, a key location for the control of the communication between Kigali and Byumba. All those military engagements took a significant toll on the RPF that, although successful in its operations, had to be careful not to spread its forces too thin. Following the fall of Byumba, RPF troops could be committed to other operational areas, while units that were already committed to a given area of operation could be bolder and set for themselves more ambitious objectives. On 27 April, the RPF took Rwamagana, an important city strategically located in the eastern part of the country. The RPF was pressing the FAR and the genocidaire government toward the southwest. A few days later, on 30 April, Rusumo, a key border location in the eastern region, fell to the RPF.<sup>20</sup>

Often the RPF had to conduct fast and stealth rescue operations to avoid exposing civilians to a firefight. One such operation was launched on 26 April, when the RPF, after warning UNAMIR of the mission, escorted thousands displaced people who had found shelter at the Amahoro Stadium and the Meridien Hotel behind their lines, where they would be safe and looked after. It was known that security in the UN sanctuaries was flimsy, while food, water, and other supplies were extremely limited. The night the RPF carried out its rescue operation, Dallaire stood with Major Brent Beardsley on his office balcony:

[W]e heard the sound of a small cowbell on the street in front of the HQ. Straining our eyes in the direction from

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<sup>20</sup> Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza, *Rwanda: l'histoire secrète* [Rwanda: The Secret History] (Paris: Editions du Panama, 2005), 286–90.



where the bell had jangled, we saw the most surreal scene. . . . What Brent and I were witnessing was the movement of over twelve thousand people of all ages in the dark in order not to draw FAR fire. We barely heard a shuffling as they went by. The RPF guards gestured their directions and people obeyed without a word.<sup>21</sup>

The end of April saw another blow delivered to Dallaire, as Beardsley finally gave in to the overwhelming pressure of serving as a key player of a desperate mission. After tirelessly working and witnessing the scenes of many massacres, Brent's system collapsed. Initially, it was thought that Beardsley was suffering from malaria, since after he had been forced to abandon his home on 6 April, he had lost his malaria medications. Dallaire ordered Beardsley to be sent to Nairobi for a proper medical check-up. He did not have malaria, yet his condition deteriorated, and he had to remain under observation. Beardsley never returned, as Dallaire hoped, to UNAMIR; he was instead sent back to Canada to start a recovery process that would last more than a year.<sup>22</sup> "I felt like I had lost my right arm," Dallaire wrote. "After all that we had been through together, we were now split without even a proper goodbye."<sup>23</sup>

Beardsley was replaced by another Canadian Army officer, Major Philip Lancaster. Dallaire and Lancaster had known each other a long time. Lancaster did not truly know what to expect from the deployment:

I landed in Kigali airport on a beautiful sunny day with the sound of gunfire off the distance. Sporadic gunfire. Landed in an airport that was in utter chaos, wasn't a pane of glass left that was not shattered, glass and debris of one kind or another everywhere. . . . Our time on it was

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<sup>21</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 335.

<sup>22</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 341.

<sup>23</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 341.

very short, we were essentially ejected off the Hercules very quickly, and it left before we had time to have a second thought about where we were, and what we were doing there. I guess the predominant emotion with me was one of curiosity. I could hear the gunfire, I could smell the death, a very strong smell of rotting meat . . . but it was until sundown that it really hit home where I was. As soon as the sun went down, the gunfire increased and as the night went on we had heavier and heavier calibers of weaponry used, and then throughout the night there were packs of dogs that started a fight over the corpses, I guess of previous day's killings, but you could hear this dogs moving about in packs and yelling, snarling at each other through the night, and that's when it hit home where I was.<sup>24</sup>

The humanitarian situation was worsening with each passing day. For UNAMIR, it was vital to consolidate and reduce the number of sanctuaries so that they could protect a few large ones rather than many small ones. Early in May, the humanitarian assistance cell (HAC) decided to move refugees from sanctuaries that might be vulnerable to the attack of the extremists to better protected and safer places. Yet, past experiences had been disappointing. Deme remembered how improvised the process was of evacuating UNAMIR civilian personnel based mainly at the Meridien Hotel. According to Deme, UNAMIR had not planned for a rescue or evacuation mission. Much of what happened was mainly the personal initiative of those individuals who had to deal with the emergency. The effort was complicated by the fear and "total hysteria" of some civilians who, in Deme's words, were "even reluctant to cross the few meters between the hotel hallway and the APC parked in the front gate despite the

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<sup>24</sup> *Witness the Evil* (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 1998).

flak jacket[s] we handed over to them.” He added, “In addition there was a total confusion as the Bangladeshi crew would spend time talking and talking on the radio instead of just moving and getting the job done.”<sup>25</sup> Deme also noted that during this improvised process, the UNMOs and other peacekeepers went against the instructions they had received and rescued many defenseless civilians who they knew they were in trouble and might have been killed. The Senegalese captain remembered, “I was convinced that the Force Commander knew about it all but was turning a blind eye since we were saving lives.”<sup>26</sup>

Many of the UNMOs were able to evacuate boarded aircraft leaving Kigali and were mainly directed to Kenya. They arrived in Nairobi without any identification or other paperwork. A few days into this improvised process, Kenyan authorities complained and required that all those arriving to Nairobi had ID cards before boarding the planes. The UNMOs learned that UNAMIR security officers had left behind an ID card machine. Deme wrote, “we made ID cards for them. . . . I was ashamed inside but did not really feel I was being a culprit of any crime . . . the left behind ID card machine had been printing a lot . . . [and] that is how Rwandese civilians have been able to get fake ID cards and smuggled in the UN planes to Nairobi, where they were taken care of by UNHCR and other charitable organizations.”<sup>27</sup>

The first significant movement of civilians organized by the HAC took place on 3 May. The only reason that it did not end in complete disaster was due to a combination of luck and bravery of those who defended the convoy. On that day, the officers of the HAC obtained verbal permission from FAR leaders to move a sizeable number of civilians. They organized a convoy to travel from the Hotel des Mille Collines to the airport. However, they had nothing to show that provided evidence

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<sup>25</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 83.

<sup>27</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 84.

that permission to move the refugees had indeed been granted to them by FAR authorities. To be allowed to join the convoy was not easy. The evacuees needed to comply with several requirements: they needed to have a passport, the commitment of a country to host them, and someone who would be ready to take them in and take responsibility for them. In a situation of violence and disarray, these were significant and often unobtainable requirements. Nevertheless, the convoy was full of civilians. Major Donald MacNeil emphasized that the HAC's first attempt to move people did not include a plan and they ran into trouble. "[F]rom then on," he remembered, "whenever we did one [convoy], we ensured that we had a plan in place. . . . After the first attempt, we then sat down and made a plan as to how we would be able to transport people from one side to the other, according to their wishes, in the safest way we could with the limited UN troops we had on the ground."<sup>28</sup>

The convoy left the hotel and headed toward the airport but was stopped just a few kilometers into the journey by a crowd of Interahamwe who attacked the refugees. The UN officers did all they could to convince the militiamen that they had been authorized by senior Rwandan government military leaders to proceed. MacNeil said that he was unable to provide any authorization, but he told the Interahamwe at the roadblock that he had been given permission by senior military staff to drive the convoy with refugees from the hotel to the airport. Nevertheless, the militia "were not going to let those people that were with us go through to the airport."<sup>29</sup> MacNeil explained that he was led to believe that either Rwandan government's senior military leaders or civilian leaders would be speaking with the leaders of the Interahamwe and other militias and "that UNAMIR should not have anything to worry about because they

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<sup>28</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Case no. ICTR-98-41-T, Chamber I: The Prosecutor of the Tribunal v. Theoneste Bagosora, Gratien Kabiligi, Aloys Ntabakuze, and Anatole Nsengiyumva (23 November 2005) (testimony of Donald James MacNeil), hereafter MacNeil testimony.

<sup>29</sup> MacNeil testimony.

would speak with them.” However, “on the 3rd of May and, again, on a couple of occasions after that, it would appear that either they did not pass the word on to the selfdefence force leaders or Interahamwe, or if they did, it was not being followed, whatever direction they were being given. If they were, in fact, telling us the truth in the first place.” MacNeil stressed, “Having been at the roadblock myself on this particular incident and having personally mentioned the fact to, in my case, a uniformed officer that was there, it did not matter to him that we had the authorisation of, as I understood it, General [Augustin] Bizimungu. And, as I understand it, Colonel [Clayton] Yaache, who was at a militia check point, it had no effect there as well. They had made a decision that these evacuees were not going to be taken to Kigali airport.”<sup>30</sup>

Deme heard on the radio what was happening to the convoy. He drove to where the UN trucks were stuck by rising tensions between the peacekeepers and militia, many of whom were armed with rifles, machetes, and rocket-propelled grenades. The arrival of Colonel Tharcisse Renzaho, a FAR senior leader, was no help, as the militia simply did not care what he said or asked them to do. Deme wrote, “they wanted to kill. A few times they started to pull people out [the trucks], but I still do not know how we managed to get them back inside the trucks.”<sup>31</sup>

The situation seemed to be unrecoverable. Dallaire went on the radio and told MacNeil that he could use force.<sup>32</sup> Captain Mbaye arrived at the scene to provide more help with his unique negotiating skills. In the end, Deme managed to get Georges Rutaganda, the vice president of the Interahamwe, to help. He thought that the presence of Rutaganda alone would provide a resolution to the incident. It soon became clear, however, that not even such a senior member of the Interahamwe had any real power over the crowd. Finally, the militia was convinced to loosen the grip

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<sup>30</sup> MacNeil testimony.

<sup>31</sup> Deme, *Rwanda 1994 and the Failure of the United Nations Mission*, 143.

<sup>32</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 350.

on the convoy when they realized that the refugees in the convoy could be used as hostages to be exchanged with Hutu refugees that needed to move from RPF controlled areas to Hutu-safe parts of Rwanda. According to MacNeil, "So we were successful in negotiating with them to get them back to the Mille Collines."<sup>33</sup>

Dallaire wrote that the attempted transfer "nearly cost the lives of the seventy Tutsi leaders in our trucks."<sup>34</sup> The events of 3 May provided strong evidence that the overall situation in Kigali was not only violent but also highly unpredictable. Increasingly, the bloodthirsty militia were not responding to the directives coming from senior leaders that they did not like.

Despite this initial setback, the HAC was able to transfer more than 2,000 displaced people. However, it was only after a few more weeks that UNAMIR could conduct its first successful transfer.<sup>35</sup>

Dallaire joined the "hostage exchange missions" on one of the convoys and directed Anyidoho to join the other convoy. They were often targeted; in one case, on 3 June, the convoy joined by Dallaire received mortar fire by a RPF position. Dallaire strongly complained with RPF general Paul Kagame about the behavior of the RPF battalion commander who, apparently on his own initiative and against the orders not to fire on the convoy, opened up on the UN vehicles.<sup>36</sup> Even more problematic for the UNAMIR commander was the reaction from his own troops to the risk they faced when conducting such missions. That same evening, Dallaire received a letter from Yaache in which the head of the HAC informed him that the Ghanaian soldiers and the military observers "considered these high-risk missions unessential and thought they were being exposed to danger unnecessarily."<sup>37</sup> In addition to the limited resources that

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<sup>33</sup> MacNeil testimony.

<sup>34</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 350.

<sup>35</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 396.

<sup>36</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 407.

<sup>37</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 406.

put a heavy restriction on the activity of HAC, in a transfer case in June, Dallaire had to ask the Red Cross for fuel to make sure that the convoys would not run out of gas during the journey. The UNAMIR force commander was very concerned about his troops: "I was constantly worried about how far I could push them and how I could keep them motivated to the point where they would risk their lives, especially in the transfers."<sup>38</sup>

In a number of cases, the HAC was able to conduct rescue operations that saved many lives. However, they were often unable to act quickly enough to help people, and many were murdered. Regretfully, that was the case of Florence Ndirumpatse, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) director of personnel, a much-loved personality among the UN staff, a Tutsi, and a distant relative of Paul Kagame. In 1990, Ndirumpatse was jailed by the Hutu government as a suspected dissident and was much despised by Hutu extremists.

Since the beginning of the genocide, Ndirumpatse was trapped in her house, which was located very close to the UNDP compound. She hosted more than a dozen schoolgirls, the children of friends and colleagues, as she believed that her status would help protect them. Ndirumpatse's house was a single-story building surrounded by trees, halfway down a dead-end dirt lane that did not provide for an easy way to escape. Gregory "Gromo" Alex remembered the terrible scenes at the roadblock erected by the militia at the entrance to Ndirumpatse's street. He said, "They would sit there during the day, drink their beers and kill people. And come here and terrorize Florence and the kids."<sup>39</sup>

Day after day, Ndirumpatse's situation worsened, and by the middle of May it was dire. By a miracle, her phone line was still working, and she used it to make calls to the UN asking for help, knowing that she was running out of time. She was also able to call and talk to Kagame, who

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<sup>38</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 408.

<sup>39</sup> *The Few Who Stayed: Defying Genocide in Rwanda*, produced by Michael Montgomery and Stephen Smith (Saint Paul, MN: American Radio Works, 2004).

later said that she had told him that “all the women in the house had been raped by the militias, who would just come in, sleep with them, then leave, then come the next day and so on. She said living like that is like being dead.”<sup>40</sup> Alex noted that the UN headquarters had banned evacuation attempts of Rwandan staff to maintain the UN’s neutrality. Still, Alex and other UN workers pressed the UN to rescind the ban. “Florence represented more than just her[self],” said Alex. “For all of her goodness and all of the things we saw in her, she represented the first official attempt by the U.N. to actually do something.”<sup>41</sup> Ngirumpatsé’s evacuation was finally authorized in mid-May, but it was too late. Just before UN peacekeepers were sent to rescue her and those who had found protection at her house, militia hacked to death everyone at her residence.<sup>42</sup>

While the HAC was able to do what it could with the restrictions imposed on it by UNAMIR and its leaders, the group of UNMOs stationed at the Hotel des Mille Collines increased their activity to protect and save people. The UNMOs were few, but they were very determined and ready to face whatever risk the situation required them to take. At the Hotel des Mille Collines, they had a 24/7 office and residence. Paul Rusesabagina, the manager of the hotel, wrote: “The men [the UN Military Observers] in my hotel displayed courage in going out onto the streets of Kigali to fetch the condemned. They were chauffeurs through hell. One in particular, a captain from Senegal named Mbaye Diagne, became legendary for his ability to dodge the *Interahamwe*. His companion, Captain Senyo of Ghana, displayed equal bravery at plucking refugees from their houses. It was a task that probably violated the ridiculous mission parameters handed down from New York, but these rules deserved to be broken.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *The Few Who Stayed*.

<sup>41</sup> *The Few Who Stayed*.

<sup>42</sup> *The Few Who Stayed*. See also, Charles Petrie, “Why Is the 1994 Murder of a Much-Loved UN Official Still Unsolved?,” *Huffpost*, 15 May 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Rusesabagina and Tom Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man: An Autobiography* (New York: Viking, 2006), 124.



Indeed, Captain Mbaye distinguished himself from the very beginning of the genocide. He successfully took Madame Agathe's children to the safety, although precarious, of the Mille Collines. Mbaye was tireless, extremely brave, and also uniquely gifted in the way he was able to interact with the warring factions that could have easily turned against him. He was constantly out in Kigali searching for people who might have been a target of the militia. The initial experience on 7 April, when he saved Madame Agathe's children, gave him confidence that they, the UNMOs, could actually make a difference. They might not have been able to save thousands of people, but they could save many. For Mbaye, it was not a question of number or risk, but rather it was about helping and operating as a true rescuer rather than a passive bystander.<sup>44</sup>

Alex had become a close friend to Captain Mbaye. They had worked together and developed a strong bond based on mutual respect and affection. For Alex, Mbaye was like Cool Hand Luke, a tall, smiley guy: "You could challenge him with anything or put him in a situation where things were difficult. He never really stayed in one place either; sometimes he would escort us and he'd go off somewhere and he'd come back. He was always on the move."<sup>45</sup> Mbaye was able to put whomever he was with in a good mood. "However long of an encounter you have with him, you come away with a smile."<sup>46</sup> His commitment to save defenseless people defied UNAMIR's orders. Alex remembered that Mbaye simply decided to ignore the orders, while Dallaire, who knew what the Senegalese captain was doing, never really interfered with his activity: "I would think that the general saw him as some expression of what we were supposed to be doing. . . . But here's someone who stepped out of line, and [the general is] not going to discipline him, because he's doing the right thing."<sup>47</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Gregory "Gromo" Alex, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Alex interview.

<sup>45</sup> Alex interview.

<sup>46</sup> Alex interview.

<sup>47</sup> Alex interview.

Mbaye showed little concern about the rules and the procedure that the UN was supposed to follow. He had a clear sense of what was right, and he did it, giving little to no attention to any other consideration.

Captain Mbaye saved probably several hundred people. He did so by rescuing just a few, maybe three or four, at a time. According to Alex, "So you imagine when we talk about the 23 checkpoints, and you take even 200 people, you divide it by the maximum five—that would mean he [would] have five people in a vehicle, which is too conspicuous, too. So he would do it in smaller numbers, so that he wouldn't draw so much attention to people. But he'd go through all these checkpoints, and at every checkpoint you have to explain yourself."<sup>48</sup> Mbaye's ability to go through the checkpoints was unique. "That's just the way he was. People laughed. Even they have or had some attachment to a real world where there's real laughter, even in all this gore, hatred; as long as you can have that brief glimpse of [his] smile, or laugh about something that's good, you'll grab onto it. With Mbaye, I think that's what everybody did."<sup>49</sup> At the checkpoints, he was well known by all.

On their own initiative, Captain Mbaye and the other UNMOs went to locations where they had been told people were hiding, and facing some serious risk to their own lives, did all they could to take them to a UN-protected site. Mbaye would also frequently visit neighborhoods where large numbers of refugees were gathered that could not have been easily moved. These were places where people were systematically killed. Often, Mbaye's determined presence would result in lives being saved. Concilie Mukamwezi, who had gone with her family to the Sainte Famille Church, remembers how Mbaye saved her life: "I had just bought some laundry soap from a stall when a priest in military uniform came up to me. . . . He had four militiamen with him and he was armed with a Kalashnikov rifle, a pistol and grenades." This priest accused her of being

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<sup>48</sup> Alex interview.

<sup>49</sup> Alex interview.

a RPF collaborator and was ready to kill her. When he pointed his rifle at her, Mbaye, who had seen the scene from a distance, “ran over and stood right between the priest and I,” said Concilie. “He shouted, ‘Why are you killing this woman? You must not do this because if you do the whole world will know.’” The priest backed down.<sup>50</sup>

Regretfully, during the following days, many of those who had gone to the church were slaughtered by the militia. The killings at Sainte Famille were conducted with the intent of causing a high level of psychological harm to the refugees. The militia, mostly at night, would visit the church, gather a number of people—20 or 30, sometimes less, other times more—and execute them. The intent was to generate a high level of fear among the survivors who did not know if they would be killed the next time the militia showed up. James Orbinski, who often visited the church to treat wounded people, said that anytime the church door opened the refugees held their breath, knowing that they might be killed.<sup>51</sup>

Mark Doyle, the BBC correspondent in Rwanda, had met Captain Mbaye in his search for news and information and developed a friendly relationship with him: “I got to know [him] a little bit,” Doyle remembered. “I wouldn’t be presumptuous to say he was my friend.” Yet, clearly Mbaye and Doyle had some level of connection. The journalist explained that he did not know what Mbaye was doing: “I had an inkling from one or two people that he was saving people’s lives, and I learned about it several weeks later, after he’d been killed.” Mbaye was constantly on the move, rushing from one place to the other “to allow an aid convoy through, or allow the Red Cross to go and pick up some people. . . . [W]hen the genocide started, I saw him still rushing around, but I didn’t know what he was doing. I subsequently learned that he’d rescued the family of the prime minister, the children, and he’d hidden them in his house. I under-

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<sup>50</sup> Mark Doyle, “A Good Man in Rwanda,” BBC News, 3 April 2014.

<sup>51</sup> *Evil Revisited*, produced by Saša Petricic (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004).

stand that he saved quite a lot of other people as well by driving through the front line, hiding people in his car, driving back through the front line and so on.” Doyle stressed that Mbaye was never just hanging around the parking lot like some of the other UN officers. “He was always going out and doing things.”<sup>52</sup>

Doyle noted that, in many difficult situations, the presence of few isolated peacekeepers made a big difference. He remembered:

[T]here were occasions when they were doing transfers. Tutsis would go from one side of the town and Hutus would go from the other side, and the U.N. was transporting them to areas where they felt relatively safe. The militia attacked the convoys, and I saw individual soldiers, including Captain Mbaye, actually kicking people off, because they didn’t have guns. The U.N. soldiers didn’t have gun[s]; they were actually kicking people off, and saying, “You can’t come up here. These people, we’re saving these people. You can’t get on here. You’re a militia man—your bosses have said that we can do this. There’s an agreement that we can do this.”<sup>53</sup>

Doyle was convinced that “several thousand well-armed soldiers could have saved hundreds of thousands of people.”<sup>54</sup>

Sadly, the day arrived when Captain Mbaye’s audacity, bravery, and commitment to save human lives tragically ended. Alex, with tears in his eyes, remembered when, just 12 days before the end of his tour in Kigali, Mbaye was killed. They had been on one of their many humanitarian missions and were planning to all leave at the same time. Mbaye decided

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Mark Doyle, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Doyle interview.

<sup>53</sup> Doyle interview.

<sup>54</sup> Doyle interview; and Doyle, “A Good Man in Rwanda.” See also “Odette’s Story: ‘Mbaye Diagne Is a Hero,’” BBC News, 25 March 2014.

to stay behind for a little longer. Unknown to the others, he was working hard to get several more people out of danger. He planned to go to headquarters first. Yet, while he was waiting at a checkpoint, a mortar shell exploded close to Mbaye's vehicle. Shrapnel broke through the car rear window and hit him in his head, killing him instantly.<sup>55</sup>

Captain Mbaye's death had a strong emotional impact on the entire community of military and civilian humanitarian staff. Alex remembered that they were stunned and tried to understand what they could do to treat Mbaye's body with the greatest respect. They wanted to get his dress uniform, while others tried to get a body bag. A frustrated Alex remembered that there were no body bags, not at the UN or at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In the end, Alex said:

We had some UNICEF plastic sheeting, and we had some tape. Mbaye's body comes, and he's a big man, tall, big feet. He's on a stretcher now. Nobody knows exactly what to do, but we're going to make a body bag. . . . You want to do it right. You want to . . . zip it, [but] you got this U.N. light blue body bag, and we're going to make and fold the edges over. We're folding them up, and the creases aren't right, because his feet are so damn big. . . . You don't want that for him. You want it to be, like, just laid out perfectly, so that when people look at him, they know that he was something great. He was a hero. He was the guy that, in every movie that's ever made you have the guy that [is] the tragic hero. . . . [But] this one's real. This man was a hero to people he didn't know and people he did know, to people who didn't have a clue and didn't understand why he was doing it.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Alex interview.

<sup>56</sup> Alex interview.

The day Captain Mbaye was killed, Dallaire was in Nairobi to meet with a delegation from the U.S. Congress, as he was trying to convince them of how desperate the situation was in Rwanda. The force commander returned to Rwanda to make sure that he paid his respects to the fallen peacekeeper. Dallaire spoke of the ceremony that UNAMIR held inside the airport terminal before Mbaye's final trip back to Senegal. The conditions under which the ceremony was held were sad and frustrating. There was not a coffin for the deceased Senegalese officer. His body, still wrapped in a UN-colored sheet used for refugee camps, was carried into a Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport aircraft. Dallaire said: "It was a very, very low point. [He was] an incredibly courageous individual amongst others who were strong and courageous, but he seemed to be untouchable."<sup>57</sup>

Dallaire praised Captain Mbaye as an exceptional leader: "He was courageous and risk-taking."<sup>58</sup> According to Dallaire, all of the UNMOs "didn't move. This heart of observers, the gang that stayed at the Mille Collines . . . they stayed and they operated. Others did some. Others were observers in specific points. But apart from that the bulk of the force had been rendered inept in what it could do."<sup>59</sup>

While Dallaire greatly valued the commitment and initiative taken by the unarmed military observers, he expressed a strong dislike for the large number of expatriates who began fleeing Rwanda after 7 April. He said, "these white people, businessmen, abandoning the nannies who had raised their kids for years, with bags full of (certainly not) clothes, even bringing their dogs on the aircraft, [which is] against the rules. Running to the goddamn aircraft; running to the trucks to save their bums, and abandoning the ones who had been loyal to them for so many years . . . and a lot of them were Tutsis too."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Dallaire interview.

<sup>58</sup> Dallaire interview.

<sup>59</sup> Dallaire interview.

<sup>60</sup> Dallaire interview.

Dallaire emphasized the increasing pressure he received from the UN to deploy his troops to rescue and save many individuals in danger. Beardsley was dealing with a list of several hundred people who had requested help. Finally, Dallaire told the UN in New York, "That's it. My people are being burned out and risking their lives, and sometimes nobody's there."<sup>61</sup> For Dallaire, it was a major ethical problem:

Why am I saving them more than anybody else, and why am I risking the lives of my observers and my staff to get them out more than anybody else? And so I entered into a debate about whether or not it was right. We also had another dimension that all of a sudden came into this: the extremists had caught on to this, that we were at least going around and looking for people. And so what they would do was they'd go to places where they suspected had Tutsis or people hiding, and they would come in and tell people there, "This is the U.N., we're here to save you," and all this kind of stuff. And people would climb out of the sewers or out of the ceilings and they'd slaughter them.<sup>62</sup>

While the massacres increased in and outside of Kigali, Dallaire was fully engaged to achieve a number of objectives that were of great importance for Rwanda. He spent countless hours trying to work out a ceasefire between the FAR and RPF. Such a ceasefire would have been extremely beneficial to transfer the refugees and resupply UNAMIR. Yet, at best, he was able to get the enemies to stop fighting for short periods of time. Dallaire was also busy working on the "new" UNAMIR deployment authorized with UNSC Resolution 918 of 17 May 1994. The resolution expanded UNAMIR's mandate and added some responsibilities to the

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<sup>61</sup> Dallaire interview.

<sup>62</sup> Dallaire interview.

mission. UNAMIR was to play a more assertive role in the security and protection of displaced people, refugees, and civilians at risk in Rwanda. Where possible, and based on the resources available, UNAMIR was to establish and maintain secure humanitarian areas and provide security and support for the distribution of relief supplies and humanitarian relief operations. The UN also acknowledged that UNAMIR may have to act in self-defense to protect sites and population, UN and other humanitarian personnel, or the means of delivery and distribution of humanitarian relief. As a result, the UN authorized an expansion of the force level to 5,500 troops.<sup>63</sup> Despite this encouraging initiative from the UN, Dallaire would not see more troops arrive in Rwanda for some time.

On 17 June, Dallaire received a visit from Bernard Kouchner, one of the founders of *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF, or Doctors Without Borders), who was now working for the French government led by President François Mitterrand. Kouchner was accompanied by a French colleague, who he introduced to Dallaire as a representative for Mitterrand's crisis committee on Rwanda.<sup>64</sup> The objective of the meeting was to inform Dallaire of France's decision to launch a humanitarian intervention in Rwanda and deploy a military force in the country. Kouchner intended to explore whether the UNAMIR commander would support such an initiative. Dallaire's response to the French proposition was an angry "no."

While the two French representatives and Dallaire argued about France's decision to deploy a force in Rwanda, Major Lancaster interrupted the meeting to inform Dallaire that a UNMO patrol was in trouble. At the time, it was speculated that the patrol had probably run over a mine or had been hit by a rocket. It was later found that it had been attacked by the RPF and hit by a rocket. The two military observers, Major Ahsan of Bangladesh and Major Juan Saúl Sosa of Uruguay, were hit just outside Kigali while crossing the front line on their monitoring assignment. Both

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<sup>63</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 918 (17 May 1994).

<sup>64</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 422.



officers were seriously injured. The operation to rescue them was significantly delayed by the poor condition of the UNAMIR vehicles available to bring help to the UNMOs, as the vehicles kept breaking on the way to the shooting site. UNAMIR was also slowed down by the RPF, which hesitated to give UNAMIR permission to cross the front line to bring help to the two officers. Sosa was still alive when medical aid was finally provided to him, but it was too late, and he died shortly after. It was another senseless and unnecessary loss. Dallaire took responsibility for the casualties and provided an explanation that helps one better understand some of the judgment calls he made as force commander. He wrote:

As far as I was concerned, the ambush had also been a result of my judgment. Until yesterday, [the day before the attack on the two UNMOs] every time one of our patrols was sent through the lines, we had warned the belligerents in advance through our liaison officers. But the night I'd go back to Kigali, neither [Kamanzi, the RPF liaison officer with UNAMIR] nor his assistant was anywhere to be found and we needed to send out patrols for airfield reconnaissance and contact with the interim government. Though I ordered that the UNMOs were to stop and turn back at any point where they judged there was too much risk, I had agreed that the patrol needed to go. The UNMOs suffered the consequences of my poor operational decision.<sup>65</sup>

Indeed, the decision to send out a patrol without informing the RPF and the FAR was a major risk. Just a few months earlier, French troops with Operation Amaryllis had taken and used white UN vehicles to conduct a rescue mission, but also, at least in the RPF perception, to help the FAR. Orbinski explained how, for different reasons, both the FAR and RPF

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<sup>65</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 429.

had grown hostile to the UN mission. The FAR fired on UNAMIR vehicles and blocked any effort to exchange Tutsis and Hutus. While “in the face of the UN’s decision to not stop the genocide, the RPF had decided to stop it themselves and worked to keep UNAMIR out of the way. It restricted UNAMIR’s movements around the country, and insisted on controlling aid in the regions the RPF held.”<sup>66</sup> In June, the RPF was likely aware that France was planning to launch a military intervention, an initiative that would have been beneficial to the FAR. For UNAMIR, the death of Sosa and the evacuation of the critically injured Ahsan came as another considerable blow.

After the incident, Dallaire held a number of meetings with his senior officers to examine what had happened and make sure that in the future the UNMOs would not be exposed to such risks. When he held a meeting with the small Uruguayan contingent, mainly UNMOs, he offered them to be repatriated, should they decide to do so. Three of them left.

Following his unsuccessful meeting with Dallaire, Kouchner went to the MSF office at the UNAMIR headquarters to briefly meet with Orbinski. Kouchner informed Orbinski that he was heading to the King Faisal Hospital with members of the media and asked Orbinski to facilitate the visit. In Orbinski’s view, “Kouchner being photographed at an MSF hospital filled with wounded Rwandans before the French forces arrived would not help us or the hundreds of thousands needing assistance—though it would go a long way towards moulding French public opinion in support of intervention.”<sup>67</sup> Orbinski told Kouchner that not only would he not support or facilitate the visit, but that he would not allow it. Kouchner was livid. Orbinski remembered, “His veins bulged in his neck. He pointed one finger into my face and his other arm gesticulated wildly as he moved from foot to foot. I stepped back from him.

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<sup>66</sup> Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering*, 197.

<sup>67</sup> Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering*, 219–20.

‘You fucking know nothing . . . nothing!’ he screamed.”<sup>68</sup> Kouchner then stormed away. That same evening, Paris announced the launch of Operation Turquoise.

The UN mandate that established the French-led mission, UNSC Resolution 929, was adopted on 22 June 1994. The following day, French troops began the deployment of a mission that was supposed to last no longer than two months. The mandate was more robust than that of UNAMIR. French troops were supposed to operate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and were authorized to use force with more latitude than just self-defense. To minimize the possibility that the French troops would enter into a firefight with the RPF, Operation Turquoise put its forces on the ground using the airport in Goma, Zaire.

Despite Dallaire’s strong opposition to any sort of French military involvement in Rwanda, the UN approved Operation Turquoise a few weeks before Kigali was liberated by the RPF on 4 July 1994. Orbinski, from his gloomy vantage point, saw how the initiative emboldened the FAR and the militia to conduct more killings. In addition, the RPF took a strong stance against the French deployment and the UN overall. Finally, the deployment, which was not under UNAMIR’s command, greatly weakened the mission. Shortly after the French government announced that it would conduct a humanitarian intervention with the participation of Franco-African countries, Orbinski remembered, “fresh French flags flew at every checkpoint. Their morale boosted by the French announcement, the RGF [FAR] and Interahamwe went on an invigorated killing spree.”<sup>69</sup>

As expected, RPF opposition against the French deployment was strong. Operation Turquoise launched in the southwest region of Rwanda, a territory still under control of the retreating FAR. Indeed, such a retreat created thousands of refugees, innocent people caught in the middle of

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<sup>68</sup> Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering*, 220.

<sup>69</sup> Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering*, 221.

a bloody civil war. Yet, hidden among the crowd were thousands of the perpetrators of the genocide.

Orbinski noted, "In the wake of the French announcement, with its peacekeepers openly targeted by both the RGF [FAR] and the RPF, UNAMIR's military observers were unable to move in the city. All transfers were called off. With no reinforcements, nearly out of supplies and attacks coming from all sides, it looked like UNAMIR would have to fight its way out of Kigali."<sup>70</sup>

According to Anyidoho, "UNAMIR was again caught in the middle of a new crisis following the Security Council's approval of the French initiative in Rwanda."<sup>71</sup> As predicted, once French troops began their deployment in Rwanda, the RPF attitude toward UNAMIR and its peacekeepers changed to outright hostility. Dallaire noted that "Kagame's position was that we should immediately withdraw."<sup>72</sup>

The RPF targeted all French-speaking African peacekeepers, while the Canadians were targeted by the FAR. Dallaire was left with few options other than to repatriate the French-speaking African peacekeepers from Togo, Mali, Congo, and Senegal. This was another humiliating departure. While on their way to Uganda, a dozen kilometers out of Kigali, the small convoy of 42 UN officers was stopped by the RPF and sent to the airport. On the runway, the RPF conducted a careful inspection of the officers and their personal belongings. Much of their electronic equipment was confiscated. General Anyidoho and Colonel Tiko watched with great frustration as this event took place.<sup>73</sup>

As a result of the departure of nearly all of his French-speaking officers, Dallaire lost the ability to effectively communicate with the FAR.

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<sup>70</sup> Orbinski, *An Imperfect Offering*, 222.

<sup>71</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 101.

<sup>72</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 438.

<sup>73</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 435.

The Canadians stepped in to translate, yet they were disliked in FAR and extremist circles, as Dallaire was considered to be acting to help the RPF.<sup>74</sup>

The RPF's military engagements in several neighborhoods around Kigali finally began to crack the resistance of the government forces, and on 4 July, they took the capital. It was a critical moment in the history of Rwanda and the perpetration of the genocide. The killing stopped, and it became clear that the RPF, which had already showed its military strength, was now unstoppable. The government forces could slow down Kagame's advancing units, but they could not stop the RPF, even with the deployment of the French troops of Operation Turquoise.

MacNeil remembered the great sense of relief he experienced as soon as Kigali was liberated by the RPF. It took Kagame's troops less than three days to establish some sort of normalcy in the city.<sup>75</sup> Yet, for Dallaire, coping with a significantly fast evolution of events strained his physical and mental health. In a few weeks, Shaharyar Khan, a Pakistani diplomat, replaced Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh as secretary-general special representative for Rwanda; the RPF liberated Kigali; and the troops of UNAMIR II deployed. Dallaire was elated at the sight of the fresh troops arriving. He wrote, "We were no longer alone—which was both exhilarating and impossibly draining, since we had become used to being the embattled few."<sup>76</sup> The nature of the deployment, the responsibilities of a challenging command, the amount of violence being confronted daily, and a myriad more aspects of UNAMIR mission had become overwhelming to Dallaire. The joy that had lifted his spirit in the middle 1993 when he was informed that he would be a UN force commander had long gone, and his life and professional dream had turned into a terrible nightmare. Dallaire's tour as force commander was scheduled to end in October 1994. Yet, he saw those few months ahead of him as a long stretch of time. In

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<sup>74</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 435.

<sup>75</sup> MacNeil testimony.

<sup>76</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 443.

early July, Dallaire wrote that “the pressure of my absence and the nature of my mission were weighing far too heavily on my family and they hoped to see me before the end of summer, at least on leave.”<sup>77</sup> Yet, the situation on the ground in Rwanda was putting more pressure on an exhausted Dallaire. After dealing with a bloody genocide, he now had to make arrangements with the French of Operation Turquoise, the arrival of many nongovernmental organizations, and the beginning of UNAMIR II, all with the support of an overwhelmed and extremely worn-out team. Dallaire’s staff, fewer than 30 officers, “still living in terrible conditions, were visibly tiring, now partly from the stress of dealing with all the parties who wanted to come in and help us.”<sup>78</sup> Dallaire acknowledged, “I had to recognize that I was exhibiting the signs and symptoms that caused me to send other to Nairobi for a rest. I could rarely sleep, and could not bear to eat anything other than peanut butter from Beth’s last care package. I was moody and overtaken at the most inopportune times by spontaneous daydreaming.”<sup>79</sup>

At the end of July, Dallaire’s aide, Lancaster, who had monitored the general with the attention and affection typical of a military assistant, confronted him. Lancaster shared with Dallaire his concern about the general’s emotional state, his state of health, and the state of the mission.<sup>80</sup> Dallaire’s nights had become increasingly sleepless, and his temper often got out of control.<sup>81</sup> As a diversion to the daily horror and overwhelming commitment he had to deal with, Dallaire had acquired a few goats “to bring some life into my days.”<sup>82</sup> Early in August, Dallaire was at work when a peacekeeper ran to his office to let him know that several dogs were attacking his goats. The general’s reaction was immediate and

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<sup>77</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 471.

<sup>78</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 484.

<sup>79</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 488.

<sup>80</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 494.

<sup>81</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 499.

<sup>82</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 500.

thoughtless: “I grabbed my pistol, raced outside and started shooting at the dogs as I ran across the parking lot. I fired my entire clip at them.” He did not kill any of the dogs, but they ran away without killing any of the goats. Yet, “[w]hen I turned to go back to my office, I saw at least fifty pairs of surprised and concerned eyes staring at me intently: Khan, the civilian staff, my staff officers and my soldiers. They said nothing but the message was clear: ‘The General is losing it.’”<sup>83</sup>

It was an unsustainable situation. On 3 August, Dallaire asked to be relieved from his command. It was an extremely difficult and painful choice, but by then a necessary decision. Another Canadian Army general was appointed to replace Dallaire. Major General Guy C. Tousignant arrived in Kigali on 12 August to spend a week with Dallaire before taking command of the mission on 19 August.

Tousignant faced a significantly different situation than the one Dallaire had to deal with. The RPF not only had taken Kigali and liberated a large part of the country, but it had also consolidated its position. New government institutions were put in place; the French troops of Operation Turquoise were in the process of leaving Rwanda’s southwest region; troops of UNAMIR II were pouring in; the ICRC and MSF were no longer the only organizations responsible for providing help and care to the displaced people; and fewer people were under the care and protection of the UN soldiers in Kigali, as the RPF had made sure that they would take care of them. With fresh troops and greater resources, the newly appointed UNAMIR force commander was in a better position to provide security. Yet, the grim reality of the genocide emerged: more than 800,000—likely closer to 1,000,000—Rwandans had been tragically slaughtered.

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<sup>83</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 501.

# Conclusion

The research conducted on the testimonies of those who experienced the most critical phases of the genocide in Rwanda provides evidence that, at the tactical level, the peacekeeper's level, UNAMIR was positioned to do much more than it did, and it probably had the potential to stop the genocide. A more assertive approach would have brought great trouble to those who planned the genocide. Yet, the peacekeepers' actions were uncertain, hesitant, and extremely confused. UNAMIR leaders, who were supposed to act in a proactive way and retain the initiative, were mostly ineffective. Very likely they lacked the experience, competence, and skill to understand and possess a professional appreciation of what was happening and, more important, what needed to be done.

Therefore, several of the elements explored and considered in this conclusion have a tactical and operational dimension. They involve the essential factors that determine the success or failure of a mission, and in Rwanda, they ultimately made a major difference between life and death for hundreds of thousands of defenseless civilians. Indeed, the UN and the international community have major degrees of responsibility in the failure in Rwanda. Several years after the end of the mission, Major Brent Beardsley wrote:

While the mission failed to prevent or suppress the genocide in Rwanda, that failure was overwhelmingly due to the lack of will and means provided to the mission from the international community. *It was not due to a failure in command in the mission.* In fact, the mission was blessed with a group of outstanding senior international officers, who with their individual and collective values, skills,



knowledge and attitudes, as well as their sense of duty and *their phenomenal moral and physical courage*, directly contributed to saving the lives of over 40,000 Rwandans.<sup>1</sup>

Although there is no doubt that the international community should and must have done much more for the people of Rwanda, the critical issue for the mission on the ground was the failure of command at all levels. Competence, or lack thereof, has little to do with an individual's character and moral fiber. UNAMIR leaders were incapable of providing a proper operational and tactical response to the events of 7 April 1994. Although they had few resources, logistics, and troops, they did not make any preparation or plan to react to a situation like the one they faced in the hours and days that followed the death of President Juvénal Habyarimana. The most crucial time for the future of the mission was on 7 April. It is questionable whether they would have made different arrangements to react to those events had they had more troops, better equipment, and more resources.

Indeed, this research shows that at the outbreak of violence in Rwanda, despite all the limitations, UNAMIR did have the capacity to slow down and very likely stop the genocide. The *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* rightly noted, "When the genocide began, the weaknesses of UNAMIR's mandate became devastatingly clear. The natural question is why a force numbering 2,500 could not stop the actions of the militia and RGF [*Forces Armées Rwandaises*, or FAR] soldiers who began setting up roadblocks and killing politicians [*sic*] and Tutsi in the early hours after the [presidential airplane] crash. Could UNAMIR not have deterred, by

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<sup>1</sup> Maj Brent Beardsley, "A Profile of Effective Officership in Multi-National Command," in *Serving the Greater Good: Perspectives of Operational Duty*, ed. Col Bernd Horn (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2006), 37, emphasis added.

its presence and a show of determination, the terrible sequence of violence that followed?”<sup>2</sup>

Very likely, UNAMIR's leaders were individuals possessing a great sense of duty and, as stated by Beardsley, “phenomenal moral and physical courage.” However, they were apparently not prepared to deal with a crisis that escalated dramatically in a matter of hours. The many mistakes that were made, the lack of confidence that they had in their organization and in themselves, show clear evidence of significant inexperience and incompetence. On 7 April, UNAMIR did not have a plan, did not know how to react, and despite clear and strong warnings, did not think or plan for how to respond to the possibility that large-scale violence might break out. UNAMIR leaders had the best intentions, and maybe they hoped for the “best,” but sound operational and tactical commanders always prepare for the most challenging and threatening scenarios, no matter how limited their resources might be. More important, they ensure that their personnel prepare for the possibility that, indeed, the worst might happen.

On 7 April, UNAMIR's Belgian contingent was spread thin. This was an obvious shortcoming, yet in looking at the event in retrospect, it was not the main problem. The Belgian soldiers of the 2d Commando Battalion who had just replaced those of the 1st Parachute Battalion possessed a less-than-alert mindset. They wrongly believed that an armed confrontation with a hostile force would be unlikely. In addition, there is no evidence that they had been briefed on the information given to UNAMIR by “Jean-Pierre” in which the informant suggested that, should violence begin in Rwanda, the Belgian contingent would be the target of choice for the Hutu extremists. It seems also that General Henry Kwami Anyidoho, who joined UNAMIR on 21 January 1994, 10 days after Jean-Pierre's revelations, was extremely naive as well, or that he did not fully appreciate the fact that the Belgians represented a key target for the extremists.

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<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: United Nations Security Council, 1999), 35.

If he knew about the informant's warning, then suggesting Lieutenant Thierry Lotin, the Belgian patrol commander who was brutally massacred alongside other nine Belgian paratroopers on 7 April, to negotiate with the Rwandan Presidential Guard was an inexcusable mistake. In the case of Colonel Luc Marchal, he did know about the threat and should have urged the patrol not to surrender their weapons. Unlike Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Dewez, who had been in Rwanda for a few weeks, Marchal had been part of UNAMIR since December 1993 and was the most experienced to give Lotin guidance on the best course of action under the circumstances. Indeed, Dewez should have informed and ensured that his troops were alerted about a possible tactical reaction to a situation in which they might have been surrounded and threatened by a hostile force.

The Belgian Senate Parliamentary Inquiry Committee Concerning the Events in Rwanda held Marchal responsible for failing to properly appreciate the situation. The committee stressed that Marchal "continued to believe in the willingness to collaborate and in the good faith of the Rwandan armed forces and gendarmerie thinking that they would resolve the incident concerning Lieutenant Lotin's Mortars platoon, even though, early in the morning of April 7 1994, it turned out that this trust was unfounded and that those men were in grave danger."<sup>3</sup> The committee also held Dewez responsible for misjudging the situation. In the committee's view, Dewez failed to recognize that collaborating with the Rwandan armed forces and gendarmerie was no longer possible: "Moreover, according to his own letter of July 4, 1997 to the commission, Colonel Dewez did not have 'a normal reaction for a soldier' at the time. He made the mistake of not giving the necessary clear directions to Lieutenant Lotin." In addition, during the night of 6–7 April, Dewez and Major Choffray, the battalion's operations officer, did not take "the necessary measures to

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<sup>3</sup> *Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda* [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (6 December 1997), 717.

distribute to the KIBAT companies the ammunition and heavier weapons stored at Rwandex.”<sup>4</sup>

Years later, General Roméo Dallaire stated that Lotin’s unit should not have given up their weapons. However, he also added:

[FAR soldiers] would simply approach my soldiers, and although they were on alert they approached the soldiers and simply beat them up and took their weapons away, before they could even react. . . . The procedures that were being used by the extremists were the normal routine procedures, except they brought in more people; and for the guards having more people come would have made sense because they were just increasing the number of security. They were all caught off guard and they simply either were beaten up and taken away or their weapons taken away and they were told to get lost.<sup>5</sup>

However, the mindset of the soldiers on guard duty should have been significantly different than what Dallaire described. Soldiers on guard should be instructed to, and prepared to, not be approached easily or at all. There should be clear physical lines that are not to be crossed, and if they are, such behavior should be met with an immediate armed reaction from the soldier. They either did not take these duties seriously, or they were overwhelmed with fear when the FAR soldiers showed up. It is also very likely that there might have been a significant amount of confusion in areas where courses of action and reactions to potential threats should have been well defined and clear.

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<sup>4</sup> Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda, 716–17.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Gen Roméo Dallaire, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Dallaire interview.

Anyidoho naively, but also honestly, explained UNAMIR's poor mindset and mistaken approach in relation to the soldiers' guard duties. He wrote that:

A weakness that is obviously revealed in UNAMIR troops that were deployed in the houses of both the Prime Minister and Mr Lando, was that of being overpowered by the presidential guards. One would ask: "Why were the UN troops overpowered in each case while they were also carrying weapons?" The answer is very simple. UNAMIR troops operated under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, which did not allow the use of force unless in self defence or in defence of UN troops or installations. Indeed the only prudent action for the troops under those prevailing circumstances was to negotiate and not to use force. This is an issue the Rwandese had never understood and they continued to accuse UNAMIR of looking helplessly when the massacre were being carried out.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, Anyidoho failed to understand that once UNAMIR provided individuals with the protection of a guard detail, they extended the "self defence" to those who were being protected. Why would they have done so otherwise? Anyidoho's suggestion that the prudent action for the troops facing such circumstances would have been to negotiate reveals the absence of an understanding of a proper application of a military approach to guard duty.

Many of the moderate, pro-Arusha Rwandan political leaders killed on 7 April resided in the Kimihurura neighborhood. UNAMIR should have had a plan to consolidate all these defensive positions in case of an emergency. The protection provided to the moderate political leaders was

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<sup>6</sup> Henry Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali* (Accra, Ghana: Woeli, 1999), 28.

a weak facade that collapsed immediately as the extremists—the “elite” units—attacked them. A last attempt by Marchal to establish a large patrol of Belgian soldiers to provide protection to the moderate leaders guarded by UNAMIR failed miserably. The level of improvisation for a military organization was simply appalling and reflected how inexperienced and naive those UNAMIR leaders were.

Indeed, the widespread confusion about the rules of engagement (ROE) and their application might have amplified this poor understanding, but in essence what seem to have happened is that soldiers, in many cases, failed to behave as such. Philipp Drew and Brent Beardsley maintained that “the confusion caused by the dichotomy inherent in the various interpretations, and the inability of UN Headquarters to expound a clear policy on the scope of self-defence for the mission, was to prove deadly, both for those UNAMIR personnel who were unsure of their rights to defend themselves and others, as well as for those who they were tasked to protect.”<sup>7</sup>

The Belgian contingent was confused about the ROE to an astonishing degree. This lack of clarity was such that in several instances the soldiers hesitated to use force even when self-defense was unquestionable. Because of the level of authorization required to use more powerful weapons, a few small unit leaders had likely developed the habit of not taking those weapons with them on patrol. In the case of the 10 Belgian soldiers’ firefight with the Presidential Guard at Prime Minister Madame Agathe Uwilingiyimana’s residence, apparently the patrol was not carrying a squad automatic weapon, which might have been a major asset to them. Having to request a higher level of authorization to use a weapon does not imply that the weapon should not be taken on patrol. The battalion commander should have directed all company commanders to make

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<sup>7</sup> Phillip Drew and Brent Beardsley, “Do Not Intervene: UNAMIR’s Rules of Engagement from the Inside,” *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 22, no. 1-4 (2020): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18754112-0220104008>.

sure that each patrol leaving the compound was armed with those more powerful weapons, such as a heavy machine gun and at least a couple of short-range light antitank weapons (LAW). If those units did not have enough LAWs—and they did—they should have made sure that all outgoing patrols were armed with them and that they would be returned to the armory at the end of the patrol to then be available to subsequent outgoing patrols. A few Belgian units did have heavier weapons and used them with positive results, putting the attackers on the run. It was the initiative and experience of small unit leaders that, in many instances, determined the equipment that they had available during the crisis and what course of action they took when confronted with a threat. The equipment of each patrol should have been determined at the battalion level and enforced at the company level.

On the morning of 7 April, the Belgian contingent could have easily resupplied all its small detachments with additional ammunition and the more powerful weapons stored at the armory at the Rwandex complex. With such weapons and ammunition, they would have been prepared to deal with the elite FAR units. The FAR had a few armored vehicles, and it is unclear if they were working, if they had functioning weapons, or if the personnel crewing them were even able to operate them. In addition to a large number of LAWs, the Belgian contingent had also deployed with a midrange antitank missile system, the Franco-West German *missile d'infanterie léger antichar* (MILAN), though they did not have the required missiles for the weapon. The troops mainly used the MILAN for its night-vision capability. In the months leading to the genocide, the Belgian contingent had requested that Brussels send them the MILAN missiles, and they were supposed to be delivered late in April. Nevertheless, even if the MILAN had been fully functional, it is very questionable whether it would have been effective in an environment such as Kigali. Use of the MILAN would have been difficult at best very likely impossible. The LAW, although rudimentary, was a more reliable weapon, and the Belgian contingent had plenty. Lieutenant General José Charlier, commander of

the Belgian armed forces, stated that “the MILANs were not usable in Kigali. . . . If Colonel Marchal had requested MILANs, it was only in case the airport itself was threatened.” He then emphasized that the Belgian troops “had adequate and sufficient weapons to destroy much more than all the tanks in Kigali.”<sup>8</sup> What is troubling, however, is that the contingent had not put in place a plan to distribute the weapons in an emergency situation. There should have been a procedure determining which units would have reacted on a prearranged course of action to receive the heavier weapons or to head to and secure the weapons at Rwandex. Much of what happened in relation to the distribution of weapons and ammunition on 7 April was unplanned and improvised.

On the morning of 7 April, UNAMIR had several hundred soldiers who were better equipped, and a few hundred who were better trained, than the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) troops who left the *Conseil National de Développement* (National Council for Development, or CND) that afternoon and, despite great limitations, successfully confronted the elite FAR units in several firefights. Those RPF troops and their leaders were fully aware that they would not receive reinforcement for at least several days. Although they were lightly armed, they made a major impact on the urban environment in which the battle for Kigali was about to take place. The RPF took nearly a week before it was able to reinforce the 3d Battalion in Kigali.

For UNAMIR, a critical component of its ability to respond quickly and effectively to the crisis was the deployment of the quick-reaction force (QRF), able to operate as a reserve and provide strength in an emergency. Lieutenant Colonel De Loecker, the Belgian Army officer responsible for preparing and training the QRF, had major doubts about the Bangladeshi contingent’s ability to provide such a critical asset. He stressed that it was

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<sup>8</sup> Hearing of Gen Charlier before the Commission d’enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (21 April 1997).



UNAMIR senior military leaders who had to choose between the Bangladeshi and Belgian troops to form the QRF. He remembered, “I do not know why the Bangladeshi were chosen, and I do not know who should have decided on this. . . . I was not associated with the search for solutions. It was within the responsibility of Colonel Marchal in collaboration with General Dallaire. . . . In addition, the HQs chief of staff was a Bangladeshi who did not like at all that I dealt with the Bangladeshi soldiers. He preferred that I set everything from my desk.”<sup>9</sup>

Establishing the QRF was clearly a challenge. The Bangladeshi soldiers did not have enough basic training on which they could have added more specialized training to run an effective specialized unit. De Loecker was frustrated with the small Bangladeshi contingent that was supposed to provide the QRF and made clear to both Marchal and Dallaire that progress was dangerously slow.

In a military setting, and especially in an uncertain situation, a QRF is extremely important. Such a unit requires the ability to respond promptly and efficiently to a crisis. A commander establishes a QRF and hopes to never have to use it because there will never be a crisis so significant to require its intervention. Yet, commanders rely on the QRF to be at its best when necessary. It is like an insurance policy one hopes never to use, but should they need it, it must be reliable. Dallaire might have ignored the importance of such “insurance”—this was a critical mistake. On 7 April, when the Belgian soldiers were viciously attacked and eventually lynched by a mob of rogue FAR soldiers, the QRF should have intervened to stop and repel the assault. The QRF simply did not have the ability to conduct such an operation. The situation would have ended differently if Dallaire and Marchal, after realizing that the Bangladeshi soldiers needed significantly more time to become an effective QRF, gave that responsibility,

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<sup>9</sup> Hearing of Reserve LtCol De Loecker and Col Balis before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (29 May 1997), hereafter De Loecker and Balis hearing.

even temporarily, to the Belgian contingent. A Belgian QRF probably would have required fewer troops; would have been significantly better trained, equipped, and led than the Bangladeshi; and would have therefore been more effective. The activation and intervention of the QRF on 7 April should have been automatic; once the commander acknowledged the crisis, he would then deployed the QRF to face and deal with the crisis. It is possible, but not entirely sure, that the QRF might have taken some casualties, but its intervention would have saved some of the Belgian peacekeepers and would have sent a strong message to the perpetrators of the genocide. UNAMIR leaders did not appreciate how critical it was to have even a small functioning QRF, probably because they believed that they would not need to use one.

Lieutenant Colonel André Leroy, the first Belgian Army battalion commander to deploy to Rwanda with UNAMIR, described how, despite the many challenges and limitations, he established a reserve unit that also functioned as a QRF. He explained that the battalion reserve unit had several tasks to perform, to include providing protection to explosive ordnance disposal personnel as they conducted demining and investigations. He also noted that a two-helicopter detachment was available to his unit, and that one of the helicopters “had been requisitioned by General Dallaire for the evacuation of the seriously wounded. As of December 19, a helicopter had been armed.”<sup>10</sup>

Initially, the reserve unit was formed by two platoons provided by the battalion’s 13th Company. Later, this unit was formed by the battalion’s reconnaissance platoon and the 11th Company. Yet, after 11 January, the reserve was formed by the reconnaissance platoon, the helicopter, and armored fighting vehicles.

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<sup>10</sup> Hearing of LtCol Leroy before the Commission d’enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (24 March 1997), hereafter Leroy hearing.

Leroy stated that, over time, the Belgian contingent received an increasing number of requests for escorts as well as vigilance and detail escort for VIPs. As a result, he had to deploy more of the reserve unit. He planned for two measures to strengthen his reserve unit in a crisis situation. In the event of a crowd control emergency, some of the personnel assigned to logistic tasks were to perform installations guard duties.<sup>11</sup> Should the battalion have faced serious turmoil in its area of responsibility, the role of the 75 logistic personnel would have been critical, as they would have been responsible for providing support to the reserve unit.<sup>12</sup>

The availability of a limited number of troops to support the QRF represents a challenge at several different levels. The first problem involves the unit's ability to perform its tasks. The smaller the number of troops, the more difficult it is for the unit to respond to several crises happening simultaneously. The second challenge involves the amount of risk that a small QRF faces. The smaller the QRF, the higher the risk is when dealing with a crisis. A higher risk for the QRF implies a higher probability of suffering casualties.

It is not surprising that commanders might be more inclined to commit their troops to deal with a dangerous crisis if they believe that their troops will face minimum losses. Yet, commanders should be ready to commit their soldiers when necessary, accepting the risk that comes with it. In Rwanda, the small number of UN troops available probably gave senior leaders the perception that they would be facing an unreasonable amount of risk and therefore a high level of casualties. In reality, they probably had extremely high chances to succeed against an adversary that was far from being as well-trained as some of the UN troops. In many cases, UN peacekeepers would have faced poorly motivated, poorly organized mobs. Yet, during the initial days of the genocide, UNAMIR senior leaders were inclined to take only minimum risk or no risk at all.

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<sup>11</sup> Leroy hearing.

<sup>12</sup> Leroy hearing.

There were many soldiers and tactical leaders who fully appreciated the nature of the threat they faced, and they were often adamant in responding to the violence with force. In several cases, they did so successfully. Captain Theunissen explained that in several instances, when Belgian Army vehicles approached a roadblock defended by a hostile mob, Belgian soldiers were immediately aimed at. However, he noted that “as soon as we had the 10 LAWs, we pointed our guns at the vehicles and people disappeared into the turrets.” Theunissen stressed that if the Belgian contingent had stayed in Rwanda, the genocide could have been prevented. He continued:

[I]ndeed much of it could have been avoided. I would have liked to stay and the men too . . . we were never able to intervene. Master Corporal Pierard informed me, during the day of the 7th, that Rwandan gendarmes were engaged in looting and massacres in the street. We could respond, it was a case of self-defense. I requested it [permission] from the battalion. I was told not to intervene in these ethnic conflicts. From then on, I no longer asked for anything.<sup>13</sup>

After 7 April, dozens of peacekeepers risked their lives to protect the defenseless. Captain Mbaye Diagne, the Senegalese military officer who paid with his own life for such a commitment, became the most famous, but he was not an isolated case. At the unit level, one notable standout was the Tunisian contingent. These approximately 60 soldiers were not deterred by the shortage of ammunition; were not slowed down by the constraints set by the UN mandate; and were not discouraged by a confused application of the ROE, which actually required that the peace-

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<sup>13</sup> Hearing of Capt Theunissen before the Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda], Belgian Senate Sess. 1997–98 (6 June 1997).

keepers take action to defend the victims of the genocide. They were not frightened by engaging in firefights with the elite FAR units or with the RPF. They accepted the risk that comes with the honorable mission to serve the defenseless, sacrificing their own lives if necessary. This small unit made a unique contribution to the mission and was a major asset to UNAMIR. The contingent's commander, Major Mohammed Belgacem, who in Dallaire's words was "an exemplary officer," made decisions that were consistent with a clear understanding of the threat he was facing and the awareness of the potential and power that his 60 soldiers exercised in such a confusing scenario.<sup>14</sup> The Tunisian contingent was respected and prized by many. Despite the high level of risk, they suffered no casualties.

### **Leadership, Character, and Competence: Dallaire as Force Commander**

General Dallaire will remain the tragic and sympathetic character of the genocide in Rwanda. The challenges he faced—a fast and violent slaughter—were overwhelming. Since he relinquished command of UNAMIR, much attention has been paid to his leadership and the decisions he made during his tenure before and after 7 April 1994. Lewis MacKenzie, a distinguished retired Canadian Army major general with significant peace-keeping experience, noted that although "the public has heaped much sympathetic praise on General Dallaire for his efforts as the force commander in Rwanda . . . there has been much criticism of his leadership by members of the Profession of Arms, particularly in Canada."<sup>15</sup>

Sarah Devonshire analyzed Dallaire's leadership and found that, despite the many challenges, "Dallaire's tenure prior to the [presidential airplane] crash was a tentative success." According to Devonshire, after the plane crashed, Dallaire did not have the capability to deal with and

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<sup>14</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), 152.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good: A Life in the Shadow of War* (Vancouver, BC: Douglas and McIntyre, 2008), 227.

stop the genocide, and therefore a true measure of his “success or failure” should only be judged by considering the period before 6 April. She also stressed, “While some have stated that UNAMIR’s ‘greatest challenge’ was to stop the killings, in reality this was neither its purpose nor within its ability. Dallaire had not been sent to Rwanda to fight for peace, only to facilitate it.” Devonshire concluded, “While morality obligated action, it was not a practical or political possibility in Rwanda in 1994. The flood gates had been opened and no one man, whether willing or recalcitrant, masterful or inept, could close them.”<sup>16</sup>

Dallaire’s leadership has also been looked at in relation to character, ethics, and moral responsibility. Michael Geheran and David Frey analyzed Dallaire’s decisions and his character. They maintained that Dallaire’s “actions and motivations appear to demonstrate a clear correlation between character, moral responsibility, and effective leadership in highly ambiguous, uncertain situations.”<sup>17</sup>

According to Geheran and Frey, “Discussions of character can become circular or axiomatic: Good character produces good leadership; bad character, bad leadership.”<sup>18</sup> They also noted how military organizations emphasize how important character is for the development of leaders. Indeed, character is foundational for good leadership. However, while good character is a foundational and essential element for good leadership, not all individuals of good or even great character will be good and effective leaders. To be good leaders, individuals of character must have several more skills and attributes, in particular competence and professional expertise.

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<sup>16</sup> Sarah Devonshire, “The True Measure of Success: The Leadership of Roméo Dallaire in the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 7, no. 2 (2012): 191, <https://doi.org/10.3138/gsp.7.2/3.184>.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Geheran and David Frey, “Leadership in War and Genocide: Roméo Dallaire in Rwanda,” in *Historians on Leadership and Strategy: Case Studies from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Martin Gutmann (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020), 17, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26090-3>.

<sup>18</sup> Geheran and Frey, “Leadership in War and Genocide,” 18.

Dallaire's character is indeed a difficult subject to explore. What can be examined, however, is his ability to make sound and effective professional choices. Leadership has much to do with the propensity to understand the complexities of making timely decisions. This includes employing the resources available, no matter how small, in the most effective way. With a small number of troops available, leaders must accept the fact that the risk they take will be higher than they would like. Considerations about orders, the chain of command above and below them, the lives of soldiers, and more will make an impact on a commander's decision-making process. The more experienced and competent the commander, the better prepared they will be to deal with this pressure. In a self-examination of his readiness to deal with the crisis in Rwanda, Dallaire said, "Having been in the army at peace for so many years . . . you rarely get really tested. You're sort of like a fireman who hasn't really gone to a fire but has spent his life in prevention. And so you don't really know even with the strong training you get that when you're actually in that operation to what extent all that training will come to the fore so that you take the right operational, tactical decisions at the time."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, many of Dallaire's decisions had much to do with his experience and competence rather than character.

One of the main criticisms of Dallaire involved his strong inclination to strictly follow orders at the very beginning of the crisis, when he was directed not to use force to stop the violence but only to protect UN personnel. One of Dallaire's most vocal critics has been Alain Destexhe, a former Belgian senator and a member of the Belgian Senate Investigation Committee on Rwanda.

In 2004, during his first visit to Rwanda since the end of the genocide, Dallaire was confronted by Destexhe. The Belgian senator strongly questioned the UNAMIR force commander's decision to abandon the 10 Belgian paratroopers on 7 April. Indeed, Dallaire's decision to take a passive approach and to do nothing to rescue his peacekeepers while they

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<sup>19</sup> Dallaire interview.

were brutalized by a mob of unruly Rwandan soldiers has been strongly debated. In a public exchange, Destexhe maintained that whatever “Dallaire says is debatable. Do you obey orders? Are the orders legal?” The Belgian senator maintained, “You do not obey orders if they go against your conscience.” Dallaire adamantly responded that to “disobey the orders would have been showmanship, would have been Hollywood, would have been totally irresponsible.” Dallaire continued, “In the field a general must not question the legal orders he receives. Not illegal. Legal.” Yet, Destexhe stressed that Dallaire “obeyed orders that were criminal instead of saving the lives of Tutsi. He drove past Camp Kigali where two Belgian soldiers lay murdered and six others were still alive.”<sup>20</sup> The Belgian senator implied that Dallaire was responsible for abandoning his peacekeepers at Camp Kigali where they were all killed.

While conducting the Belgian Senate investigation on Rwanda, Destexhe and Colonel Walter Balis explored the consequences of Dallaire’s order not to intervene in the massacre in Rwanda. Balis told Destexhe that Dallaire’s “rather formal order was not to evacuate Rwandans. The militaries [peacekeepers] could judge for themselves whether to intervene in a case of massacre. Personally, I believe that the instructions related to self-defense established an obligation for the militaries [peacekeepers] to intervene.” When Guy Verhofstadt, another member of the Belgian Senate commission, asked Balis whether the commanders should have intervened as established in article 17 of the ROE, the colonel answered, “I believe, yes!”<sup>21</sup>

General MacKenzie, a critic of both Dallaire and the UN, provided an interesting reflection on orders. In his view, while orders received by a commander in a situation of war that deal with immediate actions are not to be debated, those received by UN force commanders in charge of

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<sup>20</sup> *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire*, directed by Peter Raymont (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Loecker and Balis hearing.



multinational peacekeeping operations “present a much more complex set of circumstances.”<sup>22</sup> According to MacKenzie, “Field commanders familiar with the UN’s flawed decision-making process learn to deal with the ambiguities and to rely on their own common sense. The unattractive and unworkable alternative is to regularly ask UN headquarters for advice or direction. Better to take the appropriate action, and ask for permission—or absolution—later.”<sup>23</sup> MacKenzie explained that as a result of Dallaire’s inexperience in working with the UN, he was poorly prepared to act on the fact that the UN mandate for UNAMIR had collapsed by early in the day on 7 April, several hours after the Habyarimana was killed and the genocide began. MacKenzie strongly criticized Dallaire:

[He mused] on the possibility of such a development a number of times that morning, but he took no action to shift his priorities, to concentrate his forces, particularly his Belgian paracommandos, and to place his soldiers’ security first in the order of priorities. He opted for a futile attempt to perpetuate a mandate that had been overtaken by events and that was made even more implausible by the ridiculous direction from UNHQ not to use deadly force unless fired upon, no matter what the circumstances. If a Rwandan child is dragged off to be slaughtered under your very nose, so be it, the order implied.<sup>24</sup>

BBC reporter Mark Doyle provided a more direct and sympathetic opinion of Dallaire’s leadership. Doyle was one of the few journalists who remained in Rwanda to cover the genocide during its most critical and violent phases. He developed a professional connection with Dallaire, as the Canadian officer decided to give the media a prominent role in the

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<sup>22</sup> MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good*, 227.

<sup>23</sup> MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good*, 228.

<sup>24</sup> MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good*, 228.

crisis. Dallaire wanted the journalists in Rwanda to provide the world a true sense and understanding of what was happening there. According to Beardsley, "It was a very calculated decision by General Dallaire to use the media to get the word out to the world of what was happening in Rwanda."<sup>25</sup>

In Doyle's view, Dallaire "was being incredibly loyal to the people that he saw as his bosses in New York. He wasn't a soldier anymore; he was a U.N. general. The chain of command, as he saw, it started in New York, and he did what they told him to do. The doubts and the knowledge that he had, he certainly wouldn't have shared with a journalist, because he would have seen that as being disloyal."<sup>26</sup>

Several decisions made by Dallaire, and some of his responses, both at the beginning of the genocide and during the weeks and months that followed, indicate that he was only partially aware of what was happening in Rwanda at the tactical level. It is likely that at the very beginning of the crisis, he failed to understand how vital his presence was at the UNAMIR headquarters. Although General Anyidoho, his second-in-command, was at the headquarters while Dallaire was in search of emergency meetings to attend, the force commander was the only one with the authority to allow the use force to respond to the violence. Dallaire's presence was also vital for the coordination of all the national contingents at a critical moment.

Those initial moments were extremely important. It was at that time that contact between the force commander and the rest of the force was missing. MacKenzie wrote:

Dallaire left his HQ with two of his staff, looking for an alleged meeting taking place between Bagosora and the gendarmerie. He had a handheld Motorola radio, another

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<sup>25</sup> *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Mark Doyle, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, "Ghosts of Rwanda," directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS.

er radio mounted in the vehicle and one pistol among the three of them. Soon their vehicle was refused passage at a roadblock, and Dallaire and one of his staff proceeded on foot. Their communication with Dallaire's HQ was now reduced to the handheld radio. After walking for a few kilometers they were picked up by a Rwandan major, who after some consultation at Rwandan army HQ determined the meeting they were looking for was being held at the École Supérieure Militaire.<sup>27</sup>

Dallaire's decision to leave his headquarters to join a crisis meeting, and in the process leave behind the most reliable system of communication, was a poor one. At a time when his presence was needed where decisions had to be made, he could not be reached.

The *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* rightly noted, "The correspondence between UNAMIR and the Headquarters during the hours and days after the plane crash shows a force in disarray, with little intelligence about the true nature of what is happening and what political and military forces are at play, with no clear direction and with problems even communicating among its own contingents."<sup>28</sup>

Dallaire has been criticized for not intervening to rescue the Belgian soldiers who were being murdered by a few hundred rogue FAR troops. He has often justified the decision not to intervene because he believed that such a course of action might have compromised his main priority: the mission.

MacKenzie noted: "If Dallaire is permanently wedded to the view that the mission must always come first, then his Belgian soldiers' sacri-

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<sup>27</sup> MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good*, 223.

<sup>28</sup> *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda*, 35–36.

fice and the fact that he ordered no action be taken to assist them while they were being slaughtered could be both explained and justified.”<sup>29</sup> Yet, the most important asset for commanders to accomplish their mission are their soldiers. The moment Dallaire decided to abandon the Belgian peacekeepers likely delivered the greatest blow to the mission. The debate over whether the priority of a commander should be mission first, soldier second, or the other way around might be valuable for the educational development of leaders, though it is worth remembering that without soldiers there is no mission that can be accomplished. Dallaire’s decision to abandon the soldiers not only sent a powerful message to the extremist militias but also made clear to the UNAMIR peacekeepers that they were an expandable resource. There are circumstances in which soldiers will have to make sacrifices to accomplish the broader mission, but being abandoned in the hands of a rogue crowd of thugs in uniform is a highly questionable decision. Moreover, an additional issue in the case of the 10 Belgian soldiers is that UNAMIR had not even thought of or planned for the possibility that such an event might occur and, despite all the limitations, adopted a contingency plan to react to such an emergency. With more troops available, the risks of launching a rescue operation would have been smaller for the reaction force; with fewer troops on the ground, the risks would have been higher. Regardless, the trouble is that nothing had been planned or prepared.

Again, MacKenzie noted that although after his arrival at the *Ecole Supérieure Militaire* (ESM) Dallaire was informed by one of his UN military observers about the Belgian soldiers being held and assaulted in the nearby Camp Kigali, he proceeded to the meeting. For MacKenzie, it was surprising “that he did so without advising his HQ of the fact that a number of his soldiers were detained and were being abused or worse. With over four hundred tough Belgian paracommandos dispersed around the city, the potential existed for a UN show of force that would

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<sup>29</sup> MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good*, 229.

have been more than a little intimidating to the unruly mobs doing the killing.”<sup>30</sup>

In an interview for the Public Broadcasting Service, Dallaire said that as a commander,

You have to take instinctive decisions in nano-seconds that will influence thousands or hundreds of thousands and you hope that what you’ve been building up over the years through ethical and moral references and command experiences and leadership that when you have to take that one instantaneous decision, you’re taking the right one. And I’ve never doubted that that morning I took the right decision. . . . There was no way to get those guys out of there without risking the mission, the people and an enormous number of other casualties and potentially falling right into the trap that those bastards wanted me to . . . [to] become a belligerent and have to be totally pulled out. Because the nations would not want to sustain those casualties and become the third belligerent and then the whole lot of us would have been out. No way. I would not be able to live with the morally corrupt decision of packing up and leaving.<sup>31</sup>

However, the Belgian Senate inquiry into the events in Rwanda strongly emphasized the fact that they did not understand

why General Dallaire, who had seen the corpses of peacekeepers in Camp Kigali, did not immediately speak to the senior FAR officers at the meeting of the Ecole Supérieure and did not demand the urgent intervention of the Rwandan officers present. This seems to reflect a

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<sup>30</sup> MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good*, 223–24.

<sup>31</sup> Dallaire interview.

great indifference on his part. Moreover, General Dallaire also neglected to inform his sector commander of what he observed and to give him the necessary instructions.<sup>32</sup>

MacKenzie noted, "There are those who argue, as Dallaire has, that a rescue attempt would have been suicidal."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Geheran and Frey stated that "a case can be made that, had Dallaire made UNAMIR a belligerent, the only difference in outcome would have been greater numbers of dead UN peacekeepers."<sup>34</sup> Drew and Beardsley support such a view. They wrote:

We witnessed the various parties engaged in their crazed killing frenzies, and there is little doubt in our minds that, if they had been provoked, the RGF [FAR], the RPA and the various militia would have turned their rage on UNAMIR. Completely isolated, under-equipped and lacking ammunition, the small peacekeeping force would have been overwhelmed and destroyed before any reinforcements could possibly have arrived, with the members likely facing the same fate as the Belgian paratroopers who were murdered and mutilated on April 7, 1994.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, according to MacKenzie, those who support the idea that UNAMIR would have suffered a high number of casualties

should realize that macho bullies who beat, torture and murder defenceless women and children become cowards when they are faced with well-trained, professional combat soldiers. If they had been ordered to intervene,

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<sup>32</sup> Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Concerning the Events in Rwanda, 716–17.

<sup>33</sup> MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good*, 229.

<sup>34</sup> Geheran and Frey, "Leadership in War and Genocide," 35.

<sup>35</sup> Drew and Beardsley, "Do Not Intervene," 133.

there was certainly a chance that the Belgian paratroopers standing by would have got the job done; by their own accounts, they certainly wanted to try.<sup>36</sup>

On several occasions, a few weeks into the genocide, Dallaire experienced how easily a show of force and determination would have achieved positive results with the rogue individuals guarding the roadblocks and fueling the genocide. On 7 May, Dallaire visited the airport to check on the Ghanaian soldiers stationed there and bring them the much-valued encouragement of the commander. On his way back to the Amahoro hotel, Dallaire and his security detail ran into a roadblock. The general was frustrated and very upset. He slowed down to look at the people at the roadblock and saw that it was several youths. "I pressed on the gas and smashed my way through," Dallaire remembered. "The crates flew into the air, and the militiamen jumped back in complete surprised." No one was hurt. After Dallaire arrived at headquarters, he decided to send Colonel Tiko with his escort back to the roadblock and take care of the problem. "The outraged militiamen became very subdued when Tiko approached. . . . [T]he militiamen were no older than sixteen. . . . [T]he youths [some armed with AK-47s] decided to withdraw, after shaking hands and promising not to come back to the area. They never did." Dallaire "[e]njoyed the story, but it reinforced for me what we could have possibly done with even 5,000 troops and officers of this caliber."<sup>37</sup>

A few weeks later, on the afternoon of 21 May, Dallaire headed to the Hotel des Diplomates for a meeting with a senior government leader. Because of recent death threats he had received, the Canadian general was now moving using the old, armored personnel carriers that had been fixed by the Tunisians. He wrote, "They assured me that the main weapon, a heavy machine gun, worked and that they knew how to use it.

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<sup>36</sup> MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good*, 229.

<sup>37</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 356.

They never hesitated to point the weapon at the person that controlled a barrier, aiming at his upper thorax and keeping the gun on him no matter where he moved. It was enough to intimidate many of those gangsters of the so-called self-defence forces.”<sup>38</sup> That same morning, in a meeting with General Augustin Ndindiliyimana, chief of the gendarmerie, Dallaire was told that “the roadblocks would disappear if I used the threat of force: the local bullies would abandon the barriers when they realized that the risks of being attacked by a reinforced and bolder UNAMIR 2 were high.”<sup>39</sup>

Dallaire’s experience provides evidence that MacKenzie’s assessment was correct. Alison de Forges provided an enlightening explanation about the UNAMIR response at the beginning of the violence, rightly noting that “what they were dealing with was a few hundred, a few hundred extremists at the top, who had control of the levers of power and if they had dealt with those few hundred, there would have been no genocide.”<sup>40</sup>

Actually, in all instances in which violence was met with force and determination, the peacekeepers prevailed; the unruly mobs and FAR troops fled, often taking casualties. The reaction and determination of many Belgian patrols on and after 7 April offers a clear indication that they faced a weak and often unmotivated threat. The Tunisian contingent, lightly armed and poorly resourced but possessing outstanding leadership and great motivation, provides the strongest evidence of what UNAMIR could have achieved.

As for the RPF, it is unlikely that Paul Kagame would have ordered his troops to act against UNAMIR. Indeed, the opposite might be true. Kagame often reached out to Dallaire to ask him to be more assertive in his protection of defenseless civilians. It might be argued that, had Dallaire taken this course of action, the RPF may have benefited at the tactical level but it also would have slowed or stopped the genocide. Even Drew

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<sup>38</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 383.

<sup>39</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 382.

<sup>40</sup> *Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold, Part 2: We Were Cowards*, directed by Danièle Lacourse and Yvan Patry (Montreal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1996).



and Beardsley acknowledged that “during this period several UNAMIR soldiers demonstrated incredible bravery, particularly Tunisian Major Belgacem and Republic of Congo Capitán Mabiya, each of whom placed themselves in personal danger to prevent civilians from being killed.”<sup>41</sup>

Another major issue was that on many occasions Dallaire appeared to be disconnected or at least not fully aware of what was happening at the tactical level. It is interesting to note that, on 12 May, more than a month into the genocide, José Ayala-Lasso, the recently appointed UN high commissioner for human rights, visited Rwanda. The UN diplomat wanted to acquire a direct understanding of what was taking place in the African country. In a meeting with several key leaders in Kigali, Ayala-Lasso asked Philippe Gaillard, the International Committee of the Red Cross chief of delegation in Rwanda, for an estimate of how many people had been killed to that point. Gaillard told him that the number was at least 250,000. Dallaire appeared surprised, even shocked, and he said, “Come on, Philippe, you are exaggerating.” But Gaillard was not, and he explained, “I think it was more than that, because most of the people were killed I think during the very first weeks. I think that 80 percent of the people were killed during the first month, between the 6th of April and mid-May.”<sup>42</sup>

Gaillard explained that Dallaire was probably not fully aware of the extent of the slaughter in Rwanda because of a “lack of information. I mean, where were the U.N. in Rwanda in 1994 when the genocide started? They were in Kigali, and that’s all. They had no information on what was happening in other places. The genocide happened everywhere.”<sup>43</sup>

Years later, Dallaire acknowledged that while the killing in Rwanda was massive, “there was no easy instrument of computing that. And although there [were] massive killings, the scale was difficult to compre-

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<sup>41</sup> Drew and Beardsley, “Do Not Intervene,” 134.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Philippe Gaillard, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Gaillard interview.

<sup>43</sup> Gaillard interview.

hend. But my assessment was dead wrong. Gaillard had better data on what was going on.”<sup>44</sup>

Kagame argued that Dallaire did not comprehend the magnitude of the problem, particularly at the onset of the violence. He and other senior RPF leaders stressed and voiced their strong concern that the UN presence was giving people a misleading sense of security when in reality they were not protected. Kagame and his team raised this concern at every meeting they attended with UN military leaders.<sup>45</sup> The RPF leader told Dallaire, “It is your job, it is the U.N.’s job. Since you have forces there on the ground, and you have always reassured us that the forces who are there [are] to give Rwandans security, then your job has started. You have to give Rwandans security.”<sup>46</sup> Yet, day after day, the slaughter intensified. Kagame, who had held regular phone calls with Dallaire, told him “If you don’t take action, somebody is going to take action.” He remembered, “In this case, we are directly concerned, and we have to take action. Within the means we had, within whatever capacity we had, we could not sit there and watch the situation unfold the way it was unfolding without anybody doing anything about it.”<sup>47</sup> Paul Rusesabagina argued that “Dallaire could have and should have done more to put his men in between the killers and their victims.”<sup>48</sup>

Years after the end of the genocide, Kagame said the following about Dallaire:

[H]e maybe as a person was a good man. But he was serving a very hopeless organization, an organization maybe that has no principles, that follows no principles, that is just, in my view, useless, though it serves all of us and

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<sup>44</sup> Dallaire interview.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Paul Kagame, on *Frontline*, season 22, episode 6, “Ghosts of Rwanda,” directed and written by Greg Barker, aired 1 April 2004 on PBS, hereafter Kagame interview.

<sup>46</sup> Kagame interview.

<sup>47</sup> Kagame interview.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Rusesabagina and Tom Zoellner, *An Ordinary Man: An Autobiography* (New York: Viking, 2006), 104–5.

serves the international community. I was talking about the U.N. . . . I thought personally that was wrong for him as a general with an army, armed, to see people being killed, and you don't save them because there is something called a mandate? So if a mandate does not address saving people, what is it for?

Later, during a meeting with the then-retired Dallaire, Kagame told him that "if I was ever to serve the U.N., and that situation developed, I would cease to be a member of the U.N. and just say I'm leaving, or I will disobey the orders of the U.N. and try to save the people until they sacked me . . . I told him I cannot serve as a general who will sit there and see people being killed and do nothing about it."<sup>49</sup>

Drew and Beardsley offered a strong and critical statement about the UN and the international community for the role they played in the genocide in Rwanda. They wrote:

Those who believe that UNAMIR failed to protect civilians because of its ROE are wrong. . . . UNAMIR was not destined to fail because of its ROE, but because of the willful neglect of the organization that created it [the UN]. Without a doubt, it was the senior members of the Secretariat, the Security Council, and the international community as a whole, who failed the people of Rwanda. In the words of General Dallaire, "the international community has blood on its hands."<sup>50</sup>

It is unquestionable that the UN, the international community, and several world powers bear a major responsibility for failing to stop the genocide in Rwanda. Yet, Dallaire and his force also bear a significant amount

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<sup>49</sup> Kagame interview.

<sup>50</sup> Drew and Beardsley, "Do Not Intervene," 135.

of responsibility for how they reacted and performed at a critical moment at the beginning of the genocide and during the weeks that followed. Dallaire and his troops were positioned to do more and should have done more to stop the genocide. They were often able to do so without disobeying the directives given by the UN. Once Dallaire was aware that a few of his troops were in danger of being murdered, he should have launched a rescue operation to extract them. Such an operation was well within his authority and responsibility; he did not need higher authorization. Indeed, an assertive rescue of the Belgian soldiers might have been perceived as a risky operation, but the reality is that a small unit of well-trained and well-equipped soldiers such as the Belgian troops under Captain Theunissen's command would have easily dispersed an unruly mob like the one that ultimately massacred the 10 peacekeepers. The troubling issue is that Dallaire did not even consider such an option, as he believed that using force to rescue his peacekeepers might have compromised the mission. The more realistic issue is that UNAMIR had adopted a mindset unfit to deal with any sort of contingency like the kidnapping of the Belgian soldiers. Indeed, as soon as Dallaire and Marchal realized earlier in the mission that the 80 Bangladeshi soldiers were unable to perform the task of a QRF, they should have explored alternatives and maybe establish a smaller but still effective QRF. Lieutenant Colonel Leroy, who understood the importance and value of such a force, did organize a small unit that would have been able to intervene in a crisis or an emergency. From a military point of view, this force would have to take on a high risk, but they would have been able to provide a reaction capability. In the case of the rescue of the Belgian soldiers, it has been speculated that the intervention to extract them would have been deadly, but the reality is that a determined use of force would have spread havoc among the unruly mob. When Lieutenant Jean-Marc Vermullen's patrol confronted a mob in front of the Amahoro Stadium, among whom were some FAR soldiers, they were indeed unmatched. As soon as they opened fire and killed a few of the attackers, however, the mob disappeared. Such a situation repeated

anytime FAR soldiers and rogue militia were confronted with determination and, when necessary, with fire.

The confusion that affected UNAMIR caused a poor response to Lieutenant Lotin's request for guidance when he was confronted by the presidential guards at Madame Agathe's residence. Dewez did not fully appreciate what was happening; Marchal failed to understand that Lotin needed guidance by a more experienced leader; and Anyidoho was probably naive in believing that the peacekeepers might have negotiated their way out of the situation. They should have instructed Lotin to resist, and they should have dispatched Theunissen with reinforcements to help them. By simply following radio traffic, Theunissen had been able to understand the gravity of the situation and that Lotin was in danger. On his own initiative, Theunissen made himself and his unit available to conduct such a rescue operation. They were told not to intervene, but their request and its importance was perhaps lost in the confusion.

In essence, what affected UNAMIR's response in Rwanda on 7 April 1994 and afterward was not the limitations of troops and resources but instead the lack of experienced and competent military leadership. UNAMIR leaders might have been individuals of great character who possessed strong moral fiber, but when they were confronted with a quickly developing crisis, they were simply unprepared to respond.

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