

"The World's Fastest Genocide"

Reflecting on Rwanda, Ten Years Too Late

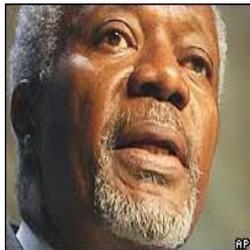
James S. Henry

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This week marks the tenth anniversary of the start of what has since become known as the **"world's fastest genocide"** -- the 100 days from April 6, 1994, to July 1994, when the world stood by and watched the slaughter of at least **800,000 to 1 million ethnic Tutsis and many moderate Hutus**, more than 10



percent of **Rwanda's** entire population. The **UN's Kofi Annan** has designated today, April 7, as an **"international day of reflection on the genocide in Rwanda."** So let us by all means reflect on what it means.

In retrospect, it has almost become fashionable for present and past world leaders like **Kofi Annan, former US President Bill Clinton,** and the **UK's John Majors** to issue heart-felt public admissions that perhaps it really was a mistake to stand by and watch (literally, by way of our sophisticated military satellites) the butchering of hundreds of thousands of defenseless men, women, and children without lifting a finger to stop it.



Carlyle Group's John Major

At the time, there were warnings as early as January 1994 from key UN staff on the ground that a small group of senior Hutu politicians was laying plans for both a Presidential coup and a social butcher shop.



Yet UN Sec Gen.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali and then-Undersecretary General Kofi Annan reportedly resisted taking any action whatsoever until it was too late. They were encouraged in this passivity by key members of the UN Security Council, especially the US, France, and the UK. Indeed, President Clinton, Majors, and **France's Francois Mitterand**, whose military had very close ties with the Hutu-dominated Rwandan Army and its Presidential Guard, actually encouraged the UN

to sharply reduce the number of peacekeeping troops in Rwanda, from 2500 to 450, just as the genocide was getting started. They also then adopted the rather strange policy of denouncing the horror from the sidelines, while expressing hopes that *someone else* in the international community would somehow achieve a ceasefire.

Lt. Gen. Dallaire

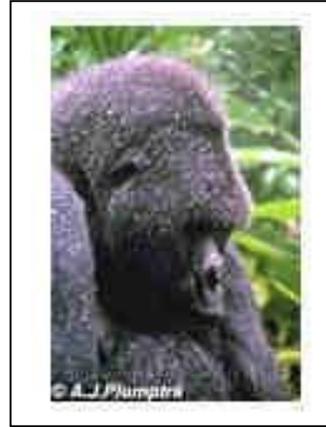
As **Lt. General Romeo Dallaire**, the former head of the UN peacekeepers in Rwanda who had warned Ghali and Annan in January 1994, said recently, the real problem -- long before then, then and right now, in the form of the current HIV/AIDS crisis -- is that the world is *basically indifferent* to the fate of poor blacks in far-away African countries:



I still believe that if an organization decided to wipe out the **320 mountain gorillas**, there would be still more of a reaction by the international community to curtail or to stop that than there would be

still today in attempting to protect thousands of human beings being slaughtered in the same country.

Subsequent research, notably by UK investigative journalist **Linda Melvern**, has disclosed that this genocide had been carefully organized for more than three years by its ringleaders -- with the probable knowledge of **their French military advisors and Chinese and Egyptian suppliers**. . According to Melvern, this clique imported half a million machetes from China -- one for every three Hutus -- as well as 85,000 tons of AK47s and grenades from Boutros-Ghali's own Egypt.



The signal for the start of the genocide was the April 6, 1994 ground-to-air missile shoot-down of an airplane carrying **Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana** and **Burundi President Cyprien Niyamira**. Both of them were Hutus, which offered a convenient cover story to the Rwandan extremists who wanted to exterminate the Tutsis -- they blamed the Presidents' deaths on the Tutsi-led RPF.

This episode has never been satisfactorily explained. A recent **inquiry by a leading French jurist** tried to place the blame on Tutsi leader **Paul Kagame** and his **Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)**. However, Melvern's detailed account, as well as **declassified Pentagon analysis from May 1994**, suggest that it is much more likely that Hutu extremists in the Rwandan Army, Presidential Guard, and Cabinet were responsible for the plane crash. They were violently opposed to the power-sharing accord that Habyarimana had concluded with the RPF in August 1993, and was about to implement under pressure from neighbors like Tanzania.

Ugandan-born Tutsi Paul Kagame

What is undeniable is that the Hutu extremists immediately



seized on the plane's downing as an excuse to unleash the long-prepared massacre. And leading UN Security Council countries not only had been warned of this well in advance. They also knew almost immediately that a mass killing had begun. As the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence concluded on April 29, 1994,

The plan appears to have been to wipe out any RPF ally or potential ally, and thus raise the costs and limit the possibility of an RPF/Tutsi takeover... No end to the unprecedented bloodshed is yet in sight. (US State Dept., Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Intelligence Assessment, "Roots of the Violence in Rwanda", April 29, 1994)

Despite this knowledge, even as late as May 21, 2004, after more than 500,000 people had already been murdered, key officials at the US State Department were still debating whether it was appropriate to describe what was going on as "genocide"(!)

The reluctance on the part of the US to get involved has long been attributed to the supposed influence of the October 1993 Somalia incident, when 18 US soldiers died in a messy, pointless firefight with local warlords. But since the UK, France, and China, as well as the UN Secretary General, also opposed committing any troops to the area, other factors also have to be considered -- such as the close relationships that France, China (the machete supplier), and Egypt (the AK47 supplier) had with the Hutu-led Rwandan Army.

LEGACY

In the end, the slaughter only ended when Kagame's rebel RPF routed the Rwandan Army in late July 1994. By then, more than 2 million Hutus had been chased out of the country, 115,000 people had been jailed on charges of having participated in the killings, and thousands of children had lost their parents. There was an HIV/AIDS epidemic, encouraged by the fact that an estimated **250,000 women** had been raped by soldiers. Overall, the 1994 massacre not only took huge numbers of lives; it also crippled Rwanda's economy. More than 60 percent of the population now live in abject poverty, and the country is heavily dependent on foreign aid.

After all this, one might have hoped that the international community would have at least have seen to it that the tiny band of conspirators who were responsible for the genocide would be brought to justice promptly. However, a decade later, after spending an **incredible half billion dollars** on a 16-court judge and 800 staff members, the **"International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda"** has only achieved about a dozen convictions. Just this year, the UN finally ordered the tribunal to complete its investigations by the end of 2004, and finish all trials of senior conspirators -- nearly 400, of whom just 66 have been captured so far -- by 2008. This slow-motion approach to justice has permitted many of the worst -- and most influential and wealthy -- transnational human rights violators to escape **scott free**. If they just hold out another four years, they may have avoided punishment entirely for what is surely one of the most barbarous events in human history.



As noted, however, the UN did at least designate today as an **"international day of reflection on the genocide in Rwanda."** That must count for something.



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