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AFTER THE GENOCIDE

*When a people murders up to a million fellow-countrymen,
what does it mean to survive?*

By Philip Gourevitch

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Decimation means the killing of every tenth person in a population, and in the spring and early summer of 1994 a program of massacres decimated the Republic of Rwanda. Although the killing was low-tech—performed largely by machete—it was carried out at dazzling speed: of an original population of seven million seven hundred thousand, at least eight hundred thousand were killed in just a hundred days. By comparison, Pol Pot’s slaughter of a million Cambodians in four years looks amateurish, and the bloodletting in the former Yugoslavia measures up as little more than a neighborhood riot. The dead of Rwanda accumulated at nearly three times the rate of Jewish dead during the Holocaust. Members of the Hutu majority group began massacring the Tutsi minority in early April, and at the end of the month dead Tutsis were easier to find in Rwanda than live Tutsis. The hunt continued until mid-July, when a rebel army conquered Rwanda and brought the massacres to a halt. That October, a United Nations Commission of Experts found that the “concerted, planned, systematic and methodical” acts of “mass extermination perpetrated by Hutu elements against the Tutsi group” in Rwanda “constitute genocide.” (This week, the International Tribunal for Rwanda is expected to hand down its first indictment of Rwandans charged with participation in the genocide.)

Hutus in Rwanda had been massacring Tutsis on and off since the waning days of Belgian colonial rule, in the late fifties. These state-sanctioned killings were generally referred to as “work,” or

“clearing the bush.” The current crisis was triggered in 1990, when the Rwandese Patriotic Front, an army led by Tutsi exiles, attacked from Uganda, seizing a foothold in the northeast and demanding an end to Hutu Power, as the state ideology was called. The members of the R.P.F. were known within the Rwandan government as *inyenzi* (“cockroaches”), and, following the obvious logic that the brother of one’s enemy is also an enemy, all Tutsis—and any Hutus who opposed Hutu Power—were *ibytso* (“accomplices”). As Hutu youth militias were recruited and armed for “civil defense,” massacres of Tutsis and assassinations of Hutu oppositionists occurred with increasing regularity. In August of 1993, when the Hutu President Juvénal Habyarimana signed a power-sharing peace accord with the R.P.F., extremist Hutus began to speculate whether the President himself had become an accomplice.

“Let whatever is smoldering erupt,” *Kangura*, a Hutu extremist newspaper, advised in January of 1994. “At such a time, a lot of blood will be poured.” Most Rwandans cannot read a newspaper, much less afford one, but all the right people read *Kangura*. In March, when *Kangura* ran the headline “HABYARIMANA WILL DIE IN MARCH,” the article explained that the assassins would be Hutus bought by the cockroaches.

On the evening of April 6, 1994, Thomas Kamilindi was in high spirits. His wife, Jacqueline, had baked a cake for a festive dinner in their home, in Kigali, Rwanda’s capital. It was Thomas’s thirty-third birthday, and that afternoon he had completed his last day of work as a reporter for Radio Rwanda. After ten years at the state-owned station, he had resigned in

protest against the lack of political balance in news programming. Thomas was taking a shower when Jacqueline began pounding on the bathroom door. “Hurry up!” she shouted. “The President has been attacked!” Thomas locked the doors of his house and sat by the radio. President Habyarimana’s plane, returning from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, had been shot down over Kigali. There were no survivors.

Thomas, who had well-placed friends, had heard that large-scale massacres of Tutsis were being prepared nationwide by the President’s extremist entourage, and that lists of Hutu oppositionists had been drawn up for the first wave of killing. But he had never imagined that Habyarimana himself might be targeted. If the extremists had sacrificed him, who was safe? (Seven months earlier, in Burundi—Rwanda’s southern neighbor, and the only country to have the same Hutu-Tutsi mix as Rwanda—the assassination of the Hutu President by Tutsi soldiers had set off a two-month Hutu uprising that left at least fifty thousand dead, most of them Tutsis. Now the radio announced that Burundi’s new Hutu President, Cyprien Ntaryamira, had been on board Habyarimana’s plane, and had died alongside him.)

The radio normally went off the air at 10 p.m., but that night it stayed on. When the bulletins ceased, music began to play, and to Thomas the music, which continued through his sleepless night, confirmed that the worst had been let loose in Rwanda. The next day, Radio Mille Collines, a popular station founded by Hutu extremists, blamed the Rwandese Patriotic Front for the assassination. If Thomas had believed that, he would have been

at the microphone, not at the receiver. He didn't leave his house for a week. He collected news from around the country by telephone and filed reports for a French radio service.

Within hours of Habyarimana's death, roadblocks set up by the military and youth militias that were known as *interahamwe*—those who attack together—had appeared throughout Kigali, and assassins from the Presidential Guard were dispatched with lists of opposition leaders to kill, including the Hutu Prime Minister. The next day, soldiers killed ten Belgian blue helmets from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda, which had been deployed when the peace treaty with the R.P.F. was signed. After that, the U.N. troops offered little resistance to the killers, and foreign governments rushed to shut down their embassies and evacuate their nationals. “You cockroaches must know you are made of flesh,” a broadcaster at Radio Mille Collines proclaimed. “We won't let you kill. We will kill you.”

Encouraged by political and civic leaders, the massacring of Tutsis spread from region to region. Following the militias' example, Hutus young and old rose to the task. Neighbors hacked neighbors to death in their homes, and colleagues hacked colleagues to death in their workplaces. Priests killed their parishioners, and elementary-school teachers killed their students. Many of the largest massacres occurred in churches and stadiums where Tutsis had sought refuge—often at the invitation of local authorities, who then oversaw their execution. In mid-April, at least five thousand Tutsis were packed in the Gatwaro Stadium, in the western city of Kibuye; as the massacre there began, gunmen in the bleachers shot zigzag waves of bullets and

tossed grenades to make the victims stampede back and forth before militiamen waded in to finish the job with machetes.

Throughout Rwanda, mass rape and looting accompanied the slaughter. Militia bands, fortified with potent banana beer and assorted drugs, were bused from massacre to massacre. Hutu prisoners were organized in work details to clear cadavers. Radio announcers reminded listeners to take special care to disembowel pregnant victims. As an added incentive to the killers, Tutsis' belongings were parcelled out in advance—the radio, the couch, the goat, the opportunity to rape a young girl. A councilwoman in one Kigali neighborhood was reported to have offered fifty Rwandese francs apiece (about thirty cents at the time) for severed heads, a practice known as “selling cabbages.”

On April 12th, Thomas received a call from Radio Rwanda saying that Eliézer Niyitegeka wanted to see him. Niyitegeka, a former radio colleague, had just been appointed Minister of Information, replacing an oppositionist who had been killed. Thomas walked to the station, and Niyitegeka told him that he had to come back to work. Thomas reminded him why he'd quit, and the Minister said, “O.K., Thomas, let the soldiers decide.” Thomas hedged: he would not take a job under threat but would wait for an official letter of employment. Niyitegeka agreed, and Thomas returned home to learn from Jacqueline that, while he was gone, two soldiers from the Presidential Guard had appeared, carrying a list with his name on it.

Thomas was a Hutu, but he was not surprised to learn that he was on an assassins' list: at Radio Rwanda, he had refused to speak the language of Hutu Power and had led two strikes; he

was a member of the Social Democratic Party, which had ties to the R.P.F.; and he was from the city of Butare, Rwanda's second-largest city, in the south—a region known for its moderate politics. Considering these factors, Thomas went to bed determined to seek a safer refuge than his home. The next morning, three soldiers came to his door. He invited them to have a seat, but the leader of the contingent told him, “We don't sit when we're working.” The soldier said, “Come with us,” and Thomas said he wasn't budging until he knew where he was going. “You come with us or your family will have trouble,” the soldier said.

Thomas left with the soldiers, and walked up the hill, past the deserted American Embassy and along the Boulevard de la Révolution. At the corner in front of the Soras Insurance Building, across from the Ministry of Defense, there was a bunker, with soldiers around it. The soldiers scolded Thomas for describing their activities in his reports to the international media. He was ordered to sit down on the street. When he refused, the soldiers beat him. They beat him hard and slapped him repeatedly, shouting insults and questions. Then someone kicked him in the stomach, and he sat down on the street. “O.K., Thomas,” one of the men said. “Write a letter to your wife and say what you like, because you're going to die.”

A jeep drove up, and the soldiers in it got out and kicked Thomas. Then he was given pen and paper, and he wrote, “Listen, Jacqueline, they're going to kill me. I don't know why. They say I'm an accomplice of the R.P.F. That's why I'm going to die, and here's my testament.” Thomas wrote his will, and

handed it over. One of the soldiers said, “O.K., let’s finish this,” and stood back, readying his rifle.

“I didn’t look,” Thomas recalled when he told me of his ordeal. “I really believed he would shoot me. Then another vehicle came up, and suddenly I saw a major with his foot up on the bunker, and he said, ‘Thomas?’ When he called me, I came out of a sort of dream.”

Thomas is spry, compact, and bright-eyed. His face and hands are as expressive as his speech. He is a radio man, a raconteur, and, however bleak his tale, the telling gave him pleasure. After all, he was alive. His was what passed for a happy story in Rwanda. But the story made no sense: the major who had spared his life may have recognized Thomas, but to Thomas the major was a stranger. It was not unusual for someone to survive or escape from a large massacre—a man told me that his niece was macheted, then stoned, then dumped in a latrine, only to get up each time and stagger away—but Thomas had been deliberately reprieved, and he could not say why. He shot me a look of comic astonishment—eyebrows high, forehead furrowed, a quirky smile working his mouth—to say that his survival was far more mysterious than his peril had been.

During the genocide, the work of the killers was not regarded as a crime in Rwanda; it was effectively the law of the land, and every citizen was responsible for its administration. That way, if a person who should be killed was let go by one party he could expect to be caught and killed by somebody else. When the major called off Thomas’s execution, the soldiers who escorted him home told him he was still slated for death. In the ensuing weeks,

three assassins were sent for him, and each left with a warning that the next one would get him.

I spoke with Thomas this past July, on a soft summer evening in Kigali—the hour of sudden equatorial dusk, when flocks of crows and lone buzzards reel, screaming, between the trees and rooftops. Walking back to my hotel, I passed the corner where Thomas had expected to be killed. The Soras Insurance Building’s plate-glass portico was a tattered web of bullet holes.

“If I don’t kill that rat he’ll die,” Clov says in Samuel Beckett’s “Endgame.” But those who commit genocide have chosen to make nature their enemy, not their ally.

“WHY AM I ALIVE?”

Living came to seem an accident of fate.

I went to Rwanda last summer, a year after the killings, because I wanted to know how Rwandans understood what had happened in their country and how they were getting on in the aftermath. The word “genocide” and the images of the nameless and numberless dead left too much to the imagination.

Rwanda is spectacular to behold, the rival of any Tuscan idyll. Through its center, a winding succession of steep, tightly terraced slopes radiates out from small roadside settlements and solitary compounds. Gashes of red clay and black loam mark fresh hoe work; eucalyptus trees flash silver against brilliant-green tea plantations; banana trees are everywhere. The land presents hills of every possible variety: jagged rain forests, undulating moors,

broad swells of savanna, volcanic peaks as sharp as filed teeth, and round-shouldered buttes. During the rainy season, the clouds are huge and low and fast, lightning flickers through the nights, and by day the land is lustrous. After the rains, the skies lift, the terrain takes on a ragged look beneath the flat unvaried haze of the dry season, and in the savannas of the Akagera Park wildfire blackens the hills.

One day, when I was returning to Kigali from the south, the car mounted a rise between two winding valleys, the windshield filled with purple clouds, and I asked Joseph, the man who was giving me a ride, whether Rwandans realize what a beautiful country they have. “Beautiful?” he said. “After the things that happened here? The people aren’t good. If the people were good, the country might be O.K.” Joseph told me that his brother and sister had been killed, and he made a soft hissing click with his tongue against his teeth. “The country is empty,” he said. “Empty!”

It was not just the dead who were missing: when the genocide began, the R.P.F. resumed its war, and as the rebels advanced in the summer of 1994 some two million Hutus fled into exile at the behest of the leaders and radio announcers who had earlier urged them to kill. This most rapid exodus in modern history—two hundred and fifty thousand people crossed a single bridge into Tanzania in one day, and a million entered Zaire in one week—made the R.P.F. victory possible and, at the same time, rendered it incomplete. In effect, the refugees, clustered in camps just beyond Rwanda’s borders, constitute a rump state; the government, the army, and the militias that presided over the

genocide remain intact and in arms around the camps, reminding Rwanda by both their absence and their presence that the fight is not over.

Yet except in some rural areas in southern Rwanda, where the desertion of Hutus had left nothing but bush to reclaim the fields around crumbling adobe houses, I, as a newcomer, could not see the absences that blinded Joseph to Rwanda's beauty. Yes, there were grenade-flattened buildings, shot-up façades, and mortar-pitted roads, and I knew that the retreating Hutu Army and militias had left the country pillaged: a virtually empty treasury; the tea-curing factories and coffee-depulsing machines—Rwanda's source of foreign exchange—destroyed; electrical and telephone lines slashed; water systems sabotaged and often clogged with bodies. But these were the ravages of war, not of genocide, and by the time I arrived in Rwanda most essential services had been restored and most of the dead buried. Fifteen months before, Rwanda had been the most densely populated country in Africa. Now the work of the killers looked just as they must have wanted it to look when they were done: invisible.

From time to time, mass graves were discovered and excavated, and the remains were transferred to new, properly consecrated mass graves. But even the occasionally exposed bones, the conspicuous number of amputees and people with deforming scars, and the superabundance of packed orphanages could not be taken as evidence that what had happened to Rwanda was an attempt to exterminate a people. There were only people's stories.

"Every survivor wonders why he is alive," Abbé Modeste Mungwararora, a Tutsi priest at the cathedral in Butare, told me.

Abbé Modeste had hidden for weeks in his sacristy, eating Communion wafers, before moving to his study and, finally, into the rafters of a house where some neighboring nuns lived. The obvious explanation of his survival was that the R.P.F. had come to the rescue. By the time the R.P.F. had installed a new government, in mid-July of 1994, however, seventy-five per cent of Rwanda's Tutsis were dead. In this regard, at least, the genocide had been entirely successful: to those who had been targeted, it was not death but life that seemed an accident of fate.

Weapons collected at the refugee camp in Goma, Zaire. Photograph by Gilles Peress / Magnum

“I had eighteen people killed in my house,” Étienne Niyonzima, a former businessman who is now a deputy in the National Assembly, told me. “Everything was totally destroyed—a place of fifty-five metres by fifty metres totally destroyed. In my neighborhood, they killed six hundred and forty-seven people.

They had the number of everyone's house, and for the Tutsis and intellectuals they went through and painted the numbers with red paint. My wife was at a friend's, shot with two bullets. But she is still alive, only"—he waited a moment, then said, "she has no arms. The others with her were killed. The *interahamwe* left her for dead. Her whole family of sixty-five in Gitarama were killed."

Niyonzima was in hiding at the time. Only after he had been separated from his wife for three months did he learn that she and four of their children had survived. "Well," he said, "one son was cut in the head with a machete. I don't know where he went." His voice lowered, and caught. "He disappeared." Then Niyonzima clicked his tongue, and said, "But the others are still alive. Quite honestly, I don't understand at all how I was saved."

Laurent Nkongoli attributes his survival to "Providence, and also good neighbors, an old woman who said, 'Run away, we don't want to see your corpse.'" Nkongoli, a lawyer, was one of more than eight thousand oppositionists, most of them Tutsis, who had been jailed without charges for as long as six months following the R.P.F.'s 1990 attack. Many of the prisoners were tortured, and dozens died, but Nkongoli, who is now the Vice-President of the National Assembly, shows no outward sign of his recent ordeals. He is a robust man, with a taste for double-breasted suit jackets and lively ties, and he moves, as he speaks, with a brisk determination. In the third week of April last year, when his neighbor urged him to flee, Nkongoli left Kigali and sneaked through the lines to the R.P.F. zone, where his wife and children already were.

"Before leaving, I had accepted death," he said. "At a certain

moment, this happens. One hopes not to die cruelly, but one expects to die anyway. Not death by machete, one hopes, but with a bullet. If you were willing to pay for it, you could often ask for a bullet. Death was more or less normal, a resignation. You lose the will to fight. There were four thousand Tutsis killed here at Kacyiru—a neighborhood of Kigali. “The soldiers brought them here, and told them to sit down because they were going to throw grenades. And they sat.

“Rwandan culture is a culture of fear,” Nkongoli went on. “I remember what people said.” He adopted a piping voice, and his face took on a look of disgust. “‘Just let us pray, then kill us,’ or ‘I don’t want to die in the street, I want to die at home.’” He resumed his normal voice. “When you’re that resigned and oppressed, you’re already dead. It shows the genocide was prepared for too long. I detest this fear. These victims of genocide were being killed for so long that they were already dead.”

I reminded Nkongoli that, for all his hatred of fear, he’d said he had accepted death before he left. “Yes,” he said. “I got tired in the genocide. You struggle so long, then you get tired.”

Every Rwandan I spoke with seemed to have a favorite unanswerable question. For Nkongoli, it was how so many Tutsis had allowed themselves to be killed. For François-Xavier Nkurunziza, a Kigali lawyer of mixed ethnicity, the question was how so many Hutus had allowed themselves to kill. Nkurunziza, who was a Hutu by law and is married to a Tutsi, lost many family members last year. “Conformity is very deep, very developed here,” he told me. “In Rwandan history, everyone

obeys authority. People revere power, and there isn't enough education. You take a poor, ignorant population, and give them arms, and say, 'It's yours. Kill.' They'll obey. The peasants, who were paid or forced to kill, were looking up to people of higher socioeconomic standing to see how to behave. So the people of influence, or the big financiers, are often the big men in the genocide. They may think that they didn't kill, because they didn't take life with their own hands, but the people were looking to them for their orders. And in Rwanda an order can be given very quietly."

As I travelled around the country, collecting accounts of the killing, it almost seemed as if, with the machete, the nail-studded club, a few well-placed grenades, and a few bursts of automatic-rifle fire, the quiet orders of Hutu Power had made the neutron bomb obsolete. Then I came across a man in a market butchering a cow with a machete, and I saw that it *was* hard work. His big, precise strokes made a sharp hacking noise, and it took many hacks—two, three, four, five hard hacks—to chop through the cow's leg. How many hacks to dismember a person?

In Rwanda and in the border camps, both R.P.F. leaders and Hutu Power leaders believe that there will be another war, and soon. (Map illustration by Mike Reagan.)

At Nyarubuye, in the province of Kibungo, near the Tanzanian border, more than a thousand Tutsis were rounded up in the church, and hundreds of bodies had been left where they were found, for commemorative purposes: tangled skeletons with weather-greened skin and flowered clothing patched over them; lone skulls in the grass; a pelvis with a sneaker stuck in it; and a lower jaw attached to a neck and torso with the rest of the head gone. The killers at Nyarubuye killed with machetes all day, and at night they hobbled the survivors by severing their Achilles

tendons; then they went off to eat and sleep, and returned in the morning to kill again. When the operation was finished, even the little terra-cotta statues in the sacristy had been methodically decapitated. “They were associated with Tutsis,” the R.P.F. sergeant who showed me around the site explained.

The killers at Nyarubuye “had become mad,” the sergeant said. “They weren’t human beings anymore.” But Dr. Richard Mollica, the director of Harvard’s Program in Refugee Trauma, believes that mass political violence cannot simply be written off as madness. “It is one of the great human questions,” he told me. “Why, in these situations, is there always the extra sadism to achieve the political goal? You achieve your political power, why do you have to flay some guy alive like a piece of lox and then hang him out to suffocate in the sun? What does a guy get from raping a woman? One five-minute rape can destroy an entire family for a generation. Five minutes. Now we’re talking about a whole country, and my opinion is that the psychology of young people is not that complicated, and most of the people who commit atrocities in most of these situations are young males. Young males are really the most dangerous people on the planet, because they easily respond to authority and they want approval. They are given the rewards for getting into the hierarchical system, and they’re given to believe they’re building heaven on earth. In most atrocities, there’s a big utopian dream—a cleaner society, or purer society. Young people are very idealistic, and the powers prey on the young people by appealing to their more idealistic nature.”

Mollica also challenges the “presupposition in modern Western

society that people who commit a murder will live to regret it or that it will sicken their lives.” He said, “I haven’t seen it, to tell you the truth.” In fact, he told me, “people who commit murder find it very easy to rationalize it and to come to terms with it,” and this is particularly so “when it’s being condoned by the state.”

Nobody knows how many Rwandans it took to butcher as many as a million of their countrymen in three months, and nobody could have known in advance how many would be needed. The people were the weapon, and that meant everybody: the entire Hutu population was called upon to kill the entire Tutsi population. In addition to insuring obvious numerical advantages, this arrangement eliminated any questions of accountability that might arise. If everybody is implicated, then implication becomes meaningless.

“In a war, you can’t be neutral,” Stanislas Mbonampeka told me. “If you’re not for your country, are you not for its attackers?” Mbonampeka, a large man with a calm, steady manner, is the Minister of Justice in the Rwandan government in exile, a self-appointed body culled largely from the deposed government that presided over the genocide. Mbonampeka was not in the government himself during the killing, but he operated informally as its agent; he pleaded its cause both at home and in Europe, to the surprise of those who remembered that in the early nineties he had been a prominent human-rights activist. In 1992, during a brief stint as Habyarimana’s Justice Minister, he even issued an arrest warrant against Léon Mugesera, a Hutu Power ideologue who had delivered a famous speech calling for the extermination of Tutsis.

“This was not a conventional war,” Mbonampeka told me last June, when I found him living a few miles from the Rwandan border, at the Protestant Guest House in Goma, Zaire. “The enemies were everywhere.” I asked him if what he called civil defense was what the United Nations calls genocide. “It wasn’t genocide,” he told me. “Personally, I don’t believe in the genocide. There were massacres within which there were crimes against humanity or crimes of war. But the Tutsis were not killed as Tutsis, only as sympathizers of the R.P.F.” In fact, Mbonampeka said, “ninety-nine per cent of Tutsis were pro-R.P.F. There was no difference between the ethnic and the political.” Even the women and children? “Think about it,” he said. “When the Germans attacked France, France defended itself against Germany. They understood that all Germans were the enemy. The Germans killed women and children, so you do, too.”

I had seen Mbonampeka’s name on a list, produced by the government in Kigali, of four hundred and fourteen “suspected commanders, organizers and authors of genocide.” He did not seem concerned about the prospect of indictment. Even if the international tribunal condemns the leaders of Hutu Power, Mbonampeka said that “those who are condemned will remain heroes, because they saved their people. If not for them, we would be dead.”

In the famous story, the older brother, Cain, was a cultivator, and Abel, the younger, was a herdsman. They made their offerings to God—Cain from his crops, Abel from his herds. Abel’s portion won God’s regard, Cain’s did not. So Cain killed Abel.

Rwanda's first inhabitants were cave-dwelling Pygmies, whose descendants today are the Twa people, a disenfranchised group who make up less than one per cent of the population. Hutus and Tutsis came later, but their origins and the order of their immigrations are not accurately known. While convention holds that Hutus are a Bantu people, who settled Rwanda first, and Tutsis are a Nilotic people, who migrated from Ethiopia, these theories draw more on legend than on documentable fact. With time, Hutus and Tutsis spoke the same language, intermarried, followed the same religion, and shared the same social and political structure of small chiefdoms. Some chiefs were Hutus, some were Tutsis; Hutus and Tutsis fought together in the chiefs' armies; through marriage and clientage, Hutus could become hereditary Tutsis, and Tutsis could become hereditary Hutus. Because of all this mixing, ethnographers and historians agree that Hutus and Tutsis cannot properly be called distinct ethnic groups.

Still, the names Hutu and Tutsi stuck. They had meaning, and though there is no general agreement about what word best describes that meaning—"classes," "castes," and "ranks" are favorites—the source of the distinction is undisputed: Hutus were cultivators, and Tutsis were herdsman. This was the original inequality: cattle are a more valuable asset than produce, and the name Tutsi became widely synonymous with the political and economic élite. The stratification was accelerated after 1860, when the Mwami Kigeri Rwabugiri, a Tutsi king, launched a series of military and political campaigns to centralize his authority and extend it over most of the country. According to the American historian Alison Des Forges, a consultant for

Human Rights Watch/Africa, Tutsi élitism in the late nineteenth century derived more from financial and martial power than from racial identity. The new élite had “a sense of its own superiority,” Des Forges writes, and then asks, “But has there ever been an élite that did not?”

Within the jumble of Rwandan racial, or tribal, characteristics, the question of appearances is particularly touchy—last year, it often meant life or death—but nobody denies that there are physical archetypes: for Hutus, stocky and round-faced, dark-skinned, flat-nosed, thick-lipped, and square-jawed; for Tutsis, lanky and long-faced, light-skinned, narrow-nosed, thin-lipped, and narrow-chinned. Nature presents countless exceptions. (“You can’t tell us apart,” Laurent Nkongoli, the Vice-President of the National Assembly, told me. “*We* can’t tell us apart. I was on a bus in the north once, and because I was in the north, where they”—Hutus—“were, and because I ate corn, which they eat, they said, ‘He’s one of us.’ But I’m a Tutsi from Butare.”) Still, when the Europeans arrived in Rwanda at the end of the nineteenth century, they formed a picture of a stately race of warrior kings, surrounded by herds of long-horned cattle, and a subordinate race of short, dark peasants, hoeing tubers and picking bananas. The white men assumed that this was the tradition of the place, and they thought it a natural arrangement.

“Race science” was all the rage in Europe in those days, and for students of Central Africa the key doctrine was the so-called Hamitic hypothesis, propounded by John Hanning Speke, the Nile explorer. Speke’s idea was that all culture and civilization in the region had been introduced by the taller, fairer people, whom

he declared a Caucasoid tribe of Ethiopian origin, and therefore a race superior to the native Negroids. Speke had never been to Rwanda—no white man had until 1894; even the slave traders had passed the place by—but the Germans and Belgians who colonized the country took him at his word.

In 1897, two years after Rwabugiri's death, the Germans instituted a policy of indirect rule, which harnessed Tutsi chiefs as puppets and as feudal lords to the Hutus. The Belgians took over after the First World War, and, working in collaboration with the Catholic Church, proceeded to further dismantle local structures of Hutu autonomy. Then, in 1933-34, the Belgians conducted a census in order to issue identity cards, which labelled every Rwandan as either Hutu (eighty-five per cent) or Tutsi (fourteen per cent) or Twa (one per cent). The identity cards made it virtually impossible for Hutus to become Tutsis, and allowed the Belgians to perfect the administration of an apartheid system that perpetuated the myth of Tutsi superiority.

So the offering of the Tutsi herdsmen found favor in the eyes of the colonial lords, and the offering of the Hutu cultivators did not. While the great majority of Hutus and Tutsis still maintained their customary relations, Alison Des Forges writes, “extremist Tutsis, encouraged by European admiration and influenced by the amalgam of myth and pseudo-anthropology, moved from élitism to racism,” and there developed simultaneously “a corresponding and equally virulent formulation on the part of extremist Hutus.” Tribalism begets tribalism, and, as the mood in Africa moved toward independence and majority rule, the Hutu Power movement began to emerge. In 1959, when

violence erupted, the Belgians went with the tide, backing the Hutu revolutionaries as they themselves prepared to depart.

Rwanda's first President was Grégoire Kayibanda, inaugurated in 1962, and by the time General Juvénal Habyarimana ousted him, in 1973, the power struggle had become an internal affair of the Hutu élite, much like feuds among royal Tutsi clans had in the past. Rwanda's revolutionaries had become what V. S. Naipaul calls postcolonial "mimic men," who reproduce the abuses against which they rebelled, while ignoring the fact that their past-masters were ultimately banished by those they enchained. (France quickly drew Rwanda into its neo-colonial sphere of influence in Francophone Africa. When the R.P.F. attacked in 1990, France sent arms and also troops to fight alongside the Rwandan Army. After Habyarimana's death, the French continued to support his Hutu Power successors, providing arms, refuge, and diplomatic support throughout the genocide—support that followed them into exile. On the eve of the R.P.F. victory in late June of 1994, when France launched a "humanitarian" military operation into Rwanda from Zaire to assist its routed friends, *interahamwe* bands greeted the French soldiers with a sign proclaiming, "Welcome French Hutus.")

By 1990, the Tutsi diaspora, which began in the aftermath of the Hutu Power revolution, had become the largest and longest-standing unresolved refugee problem in Africa. But Habyarimana, citing Rwanda's chronic overpopulation, maintained that there wasn't room for the Tutsis to come home. Ninety-five per cent of Rwanda's land was under cultivation, and the average family consisted of eight people living as subsistence

farmers on less than half an acre. In 1986, Habyarimana had declared that Rwanda was full; end of discussion. The Rwandese Patriotic Front was founded the next year in Uganda, as a secret fraternity of Tutsi refugees who had become officers in the Ugandan Army. The R.P.F. formed itself against Habyarimana, just as Hutu Power had been formed in his image.

In October, 1990, the R.P.F. attacked Rwanda, demanding an end to tyranny and exclusion. The invasion came at a sensitive moment for Hutu Power: earlier in the year, Habyarimana, facing domestic political and economic crises, had adopted reforms that allowed for a host of opposition parties to spring up. For a time, the political scuffling was mostly an intra-Hutu affair, but then the R.P.F. offered Hutu Power its best weapon yet against the menace of pluralism: the unifying spectre of a common enemy. Three days after the R.P.F. attacked, the Rwandan Army staged a fake assault on Kigali, and the government, blaming infiltrators and accomplices, began arresting Tutsis and Hutu oppositionists en masse. A week later, Hutu officials in Kibilira were instructed to kill Tutsis as part of their communal work obligation; three hundred and fifty Tutsis died in what can be seen as the first massacre of the genocide. The widely circulated “Hutu Ten Commandments,” published in the newspaper *Kangura* shortly after the R.P.F. invasion, urged vigilance against the accomplices on all fronts—sex, business, and affairs of state. “The Hutus should stop having mercy on the Tutsis,” the eighth commandment went.

“We the people are obliged to take responsibility ourselves and wipe out this scum,” Habyarimana’s good friend Léon Mugesera

explained in his celebrated 1992 speech. “No matter what you do, do not let them get away.” Invoking the Hamitic hypothesis that Tutsis came from Ethiopia, Mugesera advised that they should be sent back there, by way of the Nyabarongo River, which ultimately feeds into the Nile. His message was understood; last year, tens of thousands of dead Tutsis were dumped in Rwanda’s rivers.

Genesis identifies the first murder as a fratricide. The motive is political—the elimination of a perceived rival. When God asks what happened, Cain offers his notoriously guileless lie: “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” The shock in the story is not the murder, which begins and ends in one sentence, but Cain’s shamelessness and the leniency of God’s punishment. For killing his brother, Cain is condemned to a life as “a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” When he protests, “Whoever finds me will slay me,” God says, “Not so! If any one slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” Quite literally, Cain gets away with murder; he even receives special protection. As the legend indicates, this blood-revenge model of justice was not viable. People soon became so craven that “the earth was filled with violence,” and God regretted his creation so much that he erased it with a flood. In the new age that followed, law would eventually emerge as the principle of social order. But that was many fratricidal struggles later.

THERE’S NO POL POT HERE

Rwanda’s most wanted are too numerous to track.

In criminal syndicates like the Mafia, a person who has become invested in the logic of the gang is said to be owned by it. This concept is organic to Rwanda's traditional social, political, and economic structures, which have been organized since precolonial times in tight pyramids of patron-client relationships. Every hill has its chief, every chief has his deputies and his sub-bosses; and the pecking order runs from the smallest social cell to the highest central authority. Rwanda's postcolonial civil bureaucracy followed the pattern with famous efficiency, and at the top sat the Hutu Power oligarchy, composed in later years largely of President Habyarimana, his extended family, and assorted business, political, and military cronies. Looking back in the wake of the genocide, Alison Des Forges writes that far from being "part of the 'failed state' syndrome that appears to plague some parts of Africa, Rwanda was too successful as a state." But if Hutu Power essentially owned Rwanda, who owned Hutu Power? Habyarimana was its chief patron, and after his assassination no single figure emerged to assume his stature.

Habyarimana's assassins have never been positively identified, but at the moment the bulk of circumstantial evidence collected by international investigators points to a job sponsored by members of the Hutu Power entourage. Immediately after the Presidential plane was shot down, the Rwandan Army sealed off the area around Kigali Airport, from which the surface-to-air missiles that hit the plane had been fired, thus preventing an investigation by the U.N. and adding to speculation that top Rwandan officers had something to hide. Leaders of the Hutu population in exile still insist that the R.P.F. fired the missiles. "The R.P.F. started last year's hostilities with the death of the President," Stanislas

Mbonampeka, the Minister of Justice in exile, told me. “That’s the key to everything.” But he acknowledged that the affair remains a mystery. “Whoever did that are the ones truly responsible for the situation in Rwanda. If it was the entourage of the President, that would change everything for us.”

Regardless of who killed Habyarimana, the fact remains that the organizers of the massacres were primed to exploit his death instantaneously. The Rwandan genocide, however, does not have a signal signature—a Hitler, a Pol Pot, a Stalin. The list of Rwanda’s most wanted is a hodgepodge of Hutu Power bosses, military officers, businessmen, mayors, journalists, civil-service functionaries, teachers, taxi-drivers, shopkeepers, and untitled hatchet men—dizzying to keep track of and impossible to rank in any precise hierarchy. Some were said to have given orders—loudly or quietly—and others to have followed orders, but what emerges is the picture of a society run according to a plan that had been conceived to look planless. (While Rwanda’s military and political élite spent the night of the assassination cranking up the genocidal engines, in Burundi, whose President had also been killed, the military and the United Nations worked for calm, and this time Burundi did not explode.)

Habyarimana’s death consolidated the Hutu Power leaders and their followers as he had never been able to do in life. No longer the traitor who had made peace with the R.P.F., the martyred leader became the patron saint of the genocide. Rwanda is predominantly Catholic, and five weeks after the President’s death Radio Rwanda reported that a renowned local visionary had had a colloquy with the Virgin Mary, in which the Virgin

indicated that Habyarimana was with her in Heaven, and that she approved the killing of Tutsis.

Three days after Habyarimana's assassination, Théodore Sindikubwabo, a pediatrician who was also the speaker of the Assembly at the time, was installed as President by the military. Sindikubwabo is from Butare, where he lived in a large villa. Although many of his former patients were killed last year, I met several survivors who recalled him from their childhoods, and they told me that he was a good doctor.

At the outbreak of the killings, Butare was the only district in Rwanda with a Tutsi prefect. While leaders elsewhere rallied their constituencies to massacre, this prefect, Jean-Baptiste Habyalimana, urged restraint. His example illustrates the power that authority figures exercised over Rwanda's population. For the first twelve days of the killing, Butare was calm, and Tutsis fleeing massacres elsewhere flocked to the district. Then Sindikubwabo visited Butare. He fired the prefect (who was subsequently killed) and held a rally. The next day, soldiers of the Presidential Guard were flown in, buses and trucks carrying militia and arms arrived, and the slaughter began. Some of the most extensive massacres of the genocide occurred in Butare: in just two or three weeks, at least twenty thousand Tutsis were killed in Cyahinda Parish, and at least thirty-five thousand in Karama Parish.

Sindikubwabo's old villa in Butare has since been smashed into a heap of stones, but he has a new one, in an exclusive enclave of Bukavu, Zaire, where he lives as President in exile. The property commands a stunning view of the hills of Rwanda across Lake

Kivu. Two black Rwandan-government Mercedes sedans stood in the drive when I stopped by, on a May morning, and a man at the gate introduced himself as Sindikubwabo's chief of protocol. He said that the press was always welcome, because the world must know that Hutus were Rwanda's true victims. "Look at us in exile," he said. Then he volunteered the opinion that Sindikubwabo is an innocent man, and asked me whether I believed in the idea of innocence until guilt is proved. I said I didn't know that Sindikubwabo had been charged with any crimes in any courts of law, and he told me that all Rwandan refugees were waiting for the judgment of the international tribunal. But, he asked, "Who is this tribunal? Who is influencing them? Who are they serving? Are they interested in the truth or only in avoiding reality?"

The chief of protocol told me to wait where I was, and after a while André Nkurunziza, Sindikubwabo's press attaché, took his place. Nkurunziza wanted to brief me before I talked to Sindikubwabo. "This is a government hurt by a media conspiracy that labels it a government of genocide," he said. "But these are not people who killed anyone. We hear them called planners, but these are only rumors planted by Kigali. Even you, when you go to Kigali, they could pay you money to write what they want." He put out a hand to touch my forearm soothingly. "I don't say that they did pay you. It's just an example."

Eventually, I was taken in to Sindikubwabo, who sat in his modestly furnished living room. He had a strikingly asymmetrical face, divided by a thick scar that drew his mouth up in a diagonal sneer. When I said that he was often mentioned as

a chief instigator of the massacres in Butare, and asked what he could tell me about that, he gave a dry, breathy chuckle.

“The moment has not yet come to say who is guilty and who is not guilty,” he said. “The R.P.F. can bring accusations against it doesn’t matter whom, and they can formulate these accusations it doesn’t matter how—reassembling, stitching together, making a montage of the witnesses.” His face began to twitch around his scar. “This becomes a bit of comedy that will be sorted out before the tribunal. I come from Butare, and I know what I said in Butare, and the people of Butare also know what I said.”

But he refused to tell me what he had said. “If the mayors of Butare affirm that the massacres began under my order, they are responsible, because it was their responsibility to maintain order,” Sindikubwabo said. “If they interpreted my message as a command, they executed a command against my words.” I said I wondered why he didn’t correct them, since he was the President and a doctor, and hundreds of thousands of people had been killed in his country. He said that if the time came he would answer that question in court.

A portrait of President Habyarimana hung behind Sindikubwabo. The dead leader—buttoned up in military dress and draped with braid—looked much happier than the exiled leader, and it seemed to me that as a dead man he did have the happier position. To his people, Habyarimana was the true President—many Hutus in the refugee camps of Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi told me so—whereas Sindikubwabo was regarded as a nobody. “He is President of nothing,” several refugees said—a man who had filled the job opening for only a brief, unfortunate

moment. Now he was spurned by the world and could do his people no good. To his enemies, too, Sindikubwabo was a nobody; R.P.F. leaders and genocide survivors saw him as an attendant lord, plucked from the lower echelons of Hutu Power at the moment of crisis precisely because he had no standing and seemed content to play the puppet. As for Habyarimana, he was still despised by his enemies, for they believed that the genocide was committed not only in his name but in his spirit, and, perhaps (aside from his assassination), even by his design.

Sitting with Sindikubwabo as he offered what sounded like a dry run of the defense he was preparing, I had the impression that he almost yearned to be indicted, even apprehended, in order to have a final hour in the spotlight, and I realized that Habyarimana still owned Hutu Power. The wild gamble of the genocide—that his death would bring his people to life—had backfired. Leaderless, the people had run amok; that had been the plan. But with no single commander to run the show, the twin demands of completing the extermination and repelling the R.P.F. had proved too much for the genocidal clique. As the Hutu Power leaders changed their message to the masses from an order to kill in self-defense to an order to flee for their lives, more than two million Hutus, many of whom had demonstrated their readiness to kill, abandoned their country before a rebel army of some thirty thousand.

The obvious question would seem to be: What had gone wrong? But the genocidal movement had been billed from the start as a resistance to Tutsi aggression. By starting the war, the line went, the R.P.F. had invited the genocide. In yielding Rwanda to the

R.P.F., the Hutu Power leaders could retain control of the mobs on whom they depended, and say that their fears were justified.

“You have to transport yourself into the twenty-first century and wonder what all this will look like,” says Jacques Franquin, a Belgian, who had been a field officer of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Ngara, Tanzania, since the first Hutu refugees flooded over the border, in June of 1994. “In fifty or sixty years, what will we say? Probably that the influx of refugees was organized, that they came because they knew there would be some relief while they reorganized themselves.”

By contrast, the Harvard psychiatrist Richard Mollica says, “In Rwanda, the new government is being demonized now. It’s just fascinating how the perpetrators become the victims.”

Since the R.P.F. came to power in July of 1994, and installed what it called a Broad Based Government of National Unity, some eight hundred thousand diaspora Tutsis (with one million cows) have returned to Rwanda—roughly a one-to-one replacement of the dead. The R.P.F. had never really expected to win Rwanda on the battlefield, and the irony is not lost on Rwanda’s new leaders that the genocide actually handed them more power. Yet, even so, they cannot properly declare victory. The enemy wasn’t defeated; it just ran away, and the country it left behind was so ravaged and divided that it was guaranteed to present its new rulers with temptations to extremism and revenge.

The new government included a Hutu President and a Hutu Prime Minister. Hutu Power leaders in exile proclaimed the

Hutus in the government to be puppets, since the R.P.F.'s military, renamed the Rwandese Patriotic Army (R.P.A.), and now at a strength of forty thousand men, still remained under Tutsi control. When the government abolished the despised system of ethnic-identity cards, which had served as death tickets for Tutsis during the genocide, Hutu Power leaders pointed out that Tutsis, and especially R.P.A. soldiers, seemed to have no problem identifying Hutus for the revenge killings that were reported to be taking place in Rwanda on a daily basis, or for arrest as suspected participants in the genocide.

“This gang made a genocide, then they say Hutu-Tutsi, Hutu-Tutsi, and everything is a genocide to them,” Major General Paul Kagame, an R.P.F. leader who is now Vice-President and Minister of Defense, told me. “I’m saying we have problems. I’m saying things are ugly. But if we take everything to mean the same, then we are making a mistake.”

The ugliest killing since the genocide ended took place in late April of this year, when R.P.A. soldiers began slaughtering Hutus at a camp for internally displaced people in the village of Kibeho, in southern Rwanda. The Kibeho camp was the last of several camps that together had held about four hundred thousand Hutus who fled their homes at the end of the genocide but hadn't made it into exile. The other camps had been closed, and their occupants sent back to their villages, with a minimum of chaos. But at Kibeho the closing operation went awry, and, after a five-day standoff, eighty thousand Hutus surged toward the R.P.A. soldiers. The soldiers responded by firing for hours into the stampeding crowd. The R.P.A.'s conduct was unrestrained; in

addition to machine guns, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and at least one mortar were fired. Eyewitnesses from the United Nations and international relief agencies counted between two thousand and four thousand bodies—many of people trampled to death in the stampede. But the numbers were only estimates; the thickness of bodies on the ground in some places made it impossible to navigate the camp, and the R.P.A. obstructed access. The Rwandan government put the body count at three hundred and thirty-four. An international commission of inquiry on Kibeho, convened by the Rwandan government, established that the killings resulted from a failure of the R.P.A. command structure rather than from design, and the Rwandan government has said that a high-ranking R.P.A. officer has been jailed and is facing court-martial for his role at Kibeho.

The wholesale killing at Kibeho placed Rwanda on the world's front pages again, and it played as the usual story: the tribe in power slaughtering the disempowered tribe. The massacre was just what the Hutu Power forces in exile had been waiting for—proof positive, their pamphleteers declared, that the R.P.F. was Rwanda's true genocidal aggressor. Kibeho also dealt a blow to the confidence of foreign observers who had been well disposed toward Rwanda's new regime. In Butare, Fery Aalam, a Swiss delegate of the Red Cross, who had been in Rwanda throughout the killings, told me, "Last year, when nobody in the world tried to stop the genocide, and I saw the first R.P.F. officer coming to liberate Rwanda, these guys were heroes—I went straight to shake his hand. After Kibeho, I don't know if I'd put out my hand first."

At the time I arrived in Rwanda, in May, at least thirty-three thousand men, women, and children had been arrested for alleged participation in genocide. By the time I left, in August, the number had climbed to forty thousand. Today, there are sixty thousand prisoners, the great majority of whom are packed into thirteen central prisons built to house twelve thousand.

Rwanda's prisons have no guards, and only a few soldiers outside the gates—both the prisoners and the soldiers are considered safer this way—and although nearly all the inmates are alleged murderers, fights are said to be rare and killings unheard of. The prisons have not elicited favorable press. They are widely viewed as a human-rights catastrophe, and since my visit access has been limited.

The prisoners are generally calm and orderly. They greet visitors amiably, often with smiles and hands extended for a shake. In the women's block at the central prison of Kigali, three hundred and forty women lay about, barely clad in the stuffy heat; babies crawled underfoot; and two inmate nuns in crisp white habits conducted a prayer service in a corner. In the Butare prison, old men stood in the yard in a downpour with bits of plastic over their heads, while young boys were scrunched together in a cell, singing a chorus of "Alouette." In the men's block of the Kigali prison, I was conducted past acrobatic and choral groups, three men reading "Tintin," and a scout troop by the captain of the prisoners and his adjutant, who wielded a short baton to clear a path through the throng of prisoners, squatting at our feet. The captain kept calling out, "Here's a journalist from the United States," and the huddled men clapped. It occurred to me that this

was the famous mob mentality of blind obedience to authority which is often described in attempts to explain genocide.

Between visits to prisons, I stopped by to see General Kagame, at the Vice-President's office in the Ministry of Defense. I was wondering why the government exposed itself to bad press about the prisons, and how he interpreted the prisoners' apparent calm acceptance of their horrible conditions. Kagame, who cuts a Giacometti-like stick figure and is generally regarded as the most powerful man in the government, had a question of his own: "If a million people died here, who killed them?"

"A lot of people," I said.

"Yes," he said. "Have you found many that admit they participated?"

I hadn't. Every prisoner I spoke with claimed to have been arbitrarily and unjustly arrested, and, in every case, the claim was entirely possible. I asked Kagame if it bothered him that there might be innocent people in jail. "Yeah," he said. "But that was the way to deal with the situation. If we would have lost these people through revenge, that would have even been a bigger problem for us. I would rather address the problem of putting them in prison, because that is the best way to do it for the process of justice, and simply because I don't want them out there, because people would actually kill them."

In July, Rwanda's National Commission of Triage—a sporadically functioning body charged with locating prisoners against whom the accusations seem insubstantial—ordered the release of

Placide Koloni from the prison at Gitarama, an hour's drive south of Kigali. Koloni, a Hutu, who had held the office of deputy prefect before, during, and after the genocide, had been arrested on February 15th. He was released on July 20th, and he returned to his office on July 24th. On the night of July 27th, a sentry in a U.N. brigade saw some men enter Koloni's house. A scream was heard, and the house exploded in flames. Koloni, his wife and their two daughters, and a domestic were killed. A week later, a Hutu deputy prefect in Gikongoro, just west of Butare, was shot to death, and a Catholic priest in Kamonyi Parish, not far from Kigali, was also shot to death, and dumped in a banana field. It was a tense week in Rwanda, but only because the victims were prominent civic leaders; rumors and reports of at least a dozen killings circulate each week in the country. General Kagame, who never tired of pointing out that some four hundred R.P.A. soldiers were in military jails for such crimes (today, the number is seven hundred), told me that soldiers are not the only Rwandans frustrated to the point of criminality. "But given the situation you have here, ordinary crimes are not going to be looked at as ordinary crimes," he said.

Kagame's distinction offers little comfort to frightened Hutus, who live under a cloud of collective suspicion. "When we see they are killed, we'd rather be in here than out there," a detainee told me at Gitarama prison, which last summer was known as Rwanda's worst prison. More than six thousand men were packed in a space built for seven hundred and fifty. That meant four prisoners per square metre: night and day, the prisoners had to stand, or to sit between the legs of those who stood, and even in the dry season a scum of dampness, urine, and bits of dropped

food covered the floor. The cramped prisoners' feet and ankles, and sometimes their entire legs, swelled to two or three times normal size. They suffered from an atrophying of the swollen extremities, and from rot, and from assorted infections; hundreds had required amputations.

Lieutenant Colonel R. V. Blanchette, a United Nations military observer from Canada, told me in early July about his first visit to Gitarama prison. "I went down in the back with my flashlight," he said, "and I saw this guy's foot. I'd heard it was pretty bad in there, but this was quite ugly—very swollen, and his little toe was missing. I shined my flashlight up to his face, and he reached down and just snapped off the next toe."

When I visited Gitarama prison a few weeks after Blanchette's encounter, prisoners told me that conditions were much improved—that the Red Cross, which supplies the food for Rwanda's central prisons, had installed duckboards and evacuated the worst medical cases. "We had eighty-six deaths in June, and in July only eighteen," a doctor at the prison clinic told me. On the day of my visit, six thousand four hundred and twenty-four prisoners formed a solid-looking knot. As the assistant director of the prison led me in, the mass parted slightly to make a path. It was difficult to figure out how the people fitted together—which limbs went with which body, or why a head appeared to have grown three legs without a torso in between. Many of the feet were badly swollen. The bodies were clad in rags.

Pressing through the throng, I received the usual welcoming smiles and handshakes. In the children's cell, sixty-three boys, ranging in age from seven to sixteen, sat in rows on the floor,

facing a blackboard where an older prisoner—a schoolteacher by profession—was conducting a lesson. They looked like schoolboys anywhere. I asked one why he was in prison. “They say I killed,” he replied. “I didn’t.” Other children gave the same answer, with downcast eyes, evasive, unconvincing. But who knows? Rwanda’s formal arrest procedures are rarely followed in the current emergency; it is generally enough for someone to point a finger and say, “Genocide.” Luc Côté, a lawyer from Montreal who was directing the Butare field office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, told me, “Most of the arrests are founded on some type of evidence,” which means that they may not be arbitrary even if they are technically incorrect.

Even if legal procedures were followed to the letter, it’s not clear what difference that would make, since Rwanda’s courts are closed, and no trials have been conducted or are currently planned. The government says it lacks the financial and human resources to open the courts—many of Rwanda’s lawyers are dead or in prison themselves. But nobody talks seriously about conducting sixty thousand murder trials in Rwanda. “It’s materially impossible to judge all those who participated in the massacres, and politically it’s no good, even though it’s just,” Tito Rutaremara, an R.P.F. genocide investigator, told me. “This was a true genocide, and the only correct response is true justice. But Rwanda has the death penalty, and that would mean a lot more killing.”

In other words, a true genocide and true justice are incompatible. Rwanda’s new leaders see their way around this problem by

describing the genocide as a crime committed by masterminds and slave bodies. Neither party can be regarded as innocent, but if the crime is political, and if justice is to serve the political good, then the punishment has to draw a line that would sever the criminal minds from the criminal bodies. “Inherently, the people are not bad,” General Kagame told me. “But they can be made bad, and they can be taught to be good.” At a press conference, he explained that “long ago” Rwandan justice was conducted in village hearings, where fines were the preferred penalties. “The guy who made the crime can give some salt or something, and that can bring the people back together,” Kagame said.

Salt for genocide?

“When you speak of justice with our peasants, the big idea is compensation,” the lawyer François-Xavier Nkurunziza told me. “You can kill the man who committed genocide, but that’s not compensation—that’s only fear and anger. This is how our peasants think.”

Government leaders talk of public-works programs and political education; the key to reconstruction, they say, is for perpetrators to acknowledge that they have done wrong. In theory, Kigali’s proposed approach is similar to that of de-Nazification in postwar, and post-Nuremberg, Germany. But the justice at Nuremberg was brought by foreign conquerors, and de-Nazification in Germany was conceived with the understanding that the group that had been killed would never again have to live side by side with the killers. Rwanda offers no such tidy arrangement. “Right now, if you were to give an amnesty you would be inviting chaos,” said Charles Murigande, the chairman

of Rwanda's Presidential Commission on Accountability for the Genocide. "But, if we could put our hands on the leaders, even an amnesty would be very well received."

That is a very big "if." Shortly after the genocide, in the summer of 1994, the Rwandan government appealed to the United Nations for help in apprehending the authors of the genocide who had fled into exile. The U.N. responded by creating the International Tribunal for Rwanda, which is essentially a satellite of the Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal. "We asked for help to catch these people who ran away, and to try them properly in our own courts," a Rwandan diplomat told me. "And the Security Council just started writing 'Rwanda' in under the name 'Yugoslavia' everywhere." The Rwanda tribunal is understaffed and its funding has been slow in coming. The fact that it is only now promising to indict a few fugitives is regarded in Kigali as proof not that the system is working but that it is not serious.

The majority of the genocidal fugitives live in Zaire and Kenya—states whose leaders, Mobutu Sese Seko and Daniel arap Moi, were intimates of Habyarimana and today often play host to his widow in their palaces. Habyarimana's remains are buried on the grounds of one of Mobutu's estates. The old-boy club of African strongmen protects its own, and seems eager to demonstrate that the notion of international law is spineless and an affront to sovereignty. In June, when I asked Honoré Rakotomanana, a Madagascan who is the Rwanda tribunal's deputy prosecutor, how he expected to extradite anybody from Zaire or Kenya, he said, "There are international treaties to which those countries are signatories. Those are the instruments by which we operate."

In early October, however, President Moi assailed the tribunal as a “haphazard process,” and announced, “I shall not allow any one of them to enter Kenya to serve summonses and look for people here. No way. If any such characters come here, they will be arrested. We must respect ourselves. We must not be harassed.”

Kenya has since made conciliatory noises, but even if a genocidal leader were handed over to the tribunal it is unlikely that Rwandan leaders would stand up and cheer. The tribunal has no power to recommend a death penalty, and Tito Rutaremara told me, “It doesn’t fit our definition of justice to think of the authors of the Rwandan genocide sitting in a Swedish prison with a television and *tout confort*.” According to General Kagame, when Rwanda protested that the tribunal should carry the death penalty, out of respect for Rwanda’s laws, the United Nations advised Rwanda to abolish *its* death penalty. To abolish the death penalty after the genocide “seems cynical,” General Kagame said at a press conference.

A CONFUSED REACTION

What is a humanitarian response to genocide?

Shortly after my conversation with Kagame, I ran into an American military-intelligence officer, who was having a supper of Jack Daniel’s and Coca-Cola at a Kigali bar. “I hear you’re interested in genocide,” he said. “Do you know what genocide is?”

I asked him to tell me.

“A cheese sandwich,” he said. “Write it down. Genocide is a cheese sandwich.”

I asked him how he figured that.

“What does anyone care about a year-old cheese sandwich?” he said. “Genocide, genocide, genocide. Cheese sandwich, cheese sandwich, cheese sandwich. Who gives a shit? Crimes against humanity—where’s humanity? Who’s humanity? You? Me? Did you see a crime committed against you? Hey, just a million Rwandans. Did you ever hear about the Genocide Convention?”

I said I had. It was passed by the United Nations in 1948, in the days after Nuremberg; it has been ratified by scores of countries; and it says that they will all undertake to prevent and punish genocide if it should ever happen again. “That convention,” the American at the bar said, “makes a nice wrapping for a cheese sandwich.”

For a time, in June, 1994, as the killing continued in Rwanda, the Clinton Administration instructed its officials to avoid calling it a genocide, although the possibility that “acts of genocide may have occurred” was acknowledged. “There are obligations which arise in connection with the use of the term [genocide],” Christine Shelly, a State Department spokeswoman, explained at the time. On April 21st of that year, two weeks after the slaughter of Tutsis began, General Roméo Dallaire, the Canadian commander of the U.N. force in Rwanda, had announced that he could end the genocide with between five thousand and eight thousand troops. Instead, the Security Council cut Dallaire’s existing force, of two thousand five hundred, to two hundred and seventy. Dallaire’s

claim that vigorous intervention could have prevented hundreds of thousands of deaths is now widely held as obvious; a Western military source familiar with the region told me that a few thousand soldiers with tanks and big guns could have knocked out the radio, closed off Rwanda's main roads, and shut down the genocide in one or two days.

Later, when United Nations and international relief agencies rushed in to wrestle with the humanitarian disasters that the genocide had created, they quickly discovered that there was nothing much to be done except bury the bodies. The crisis among the living was the crisis of the refugees, and the overwhelming portion of humanitarian assistance went to creating and sustaining the sprawling network of camps for fleeing Hutus in Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi.

John Keys, an American who ran the Kigali office of the American Refugee Committee, a private relief organization, had previously worked in the camps in Goma, Zaire, where he had felt deeply compromised. Many of those camps were controlled by *interahamwe* bands, and it had distressed Keys to find himself helping to support a genocidal political movement. "There's a right and a wrong in this case," he told me. "If neutrality is the ideal for the humanitarian community even in the face of genocide, then the humanitarian community has a lot of thinking to do."

Jacques Franquin, of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, agrees that the Rwandan crisis is a political crisis that requires political solutions, but he did not believe that was a matter for humanitarian aid workers to concern themselves about. Franquin

supervised camps that held more than five hundred thousand Rwandan Hutus, and he said he had no doubt that there were genocidal criminals among them. “But don’t ask me to sort them out,” he told me. “Don’t ask me to take the criminals out of the camps and put humanitarian workers in danger.”

Charles Murigande, of Rwanda’s accountability commission, told me, “The international tribunal was created essentially to appease the conscience of the international community, which has failed to live up to its conventions on genocide. It wants to look as if it were doing something, which is often worse than doing nothing at all.”

Murigande’s sentiment was prevalent among Rwanda’s leaders. “If the international community is coming, there’s no way you can stop it,” General Kagame told me. “But in the long run it creates a bigger problem, because room is created for a manipulation to make the genocide that took place here less and less visible as a very big crime that people should be hunted for and prosecuted for.”

Officials of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees say that ninety-five per cent of the Hutu refugees who have returned to their villages in Rwanda have done so without being arrested or attacked. As I toured the camps that ring Rwanda, however, every one of hundreds of refugees I spoke with told me precisely the opposite—that at least ninety-five per cent of those who returned had been killed or jailed.

Everywhere I went, inside Rwanda and in the border camps, to R.P.F. leaders and to Hutu Power leaders, to relief workers and to

prisoners, I was told that there would be another war, and soon. At the end of October, the United Nations reported that armed forays into Rwanda by Hutu refugees from Zaire had increased. On November 7th, the Rwandan government announced that it had overrun a deeply entrenched Hutu military and militia camp on Iwawa Island, between Rwanda and Zaire, on Lake Kivu. The battle lasted several days. The Hutu forces, whose arsenal included antitank cannons and anti-aircraft guns and a large cache of high-tech antipersonnel mines, were described in wire-service dispatches as “Hutu rebels,” just as the R.P.F. used to be described as “Tutsi rebels.” In response to the escalation of military activity there and elsewhere, United Nations agencies began stockpiling food and other supplies to draw on in the event of vast population movements. But the U.N.’s role in Rwanda is more in doubt than ever; when the peacekeeping mandate expired on December 8th, the Rwandan government, which has regarded the blue helmets’ presence as an insult to its sovereignty, asked that it not be renewed, and Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said he would honor the request. President Mobutu of Zaire has been threatening, in an on-again, off-again way, to force more than a million Rwandan Hutus out of his country at the end of this year, and there is little doubt that if he chose to do so he could clear the camps. Last week, Kigali expelled dozens of relief agencies—mostly those with ties to France—and Burundi, which holds two hundred thousand Rwandan refugees, was torn by heavy fighting.

As I followed these developments from afar, I was struck once again by the simple tactical brilliance of the Hutu Power forces. A renewed war, after all, could easily force the genocide out of

memory. Observers close to the Rwandan scene fear that a war could trigger reprisals against Hutus within Rwanda; prison massacres are a favorite scenario. And then who could talk of genocide? In a war of all against all, it is impossible to take sides, and the authors of the Rwandan genocide seem to have understood that what the so-called international community likes best is situations in which it can proclaim its neutrality.

“History is full of long wars,” Jacques Franquin told me. “That is how history is made. Now we have the humanitarian system and fast information, so we can stop people from killing each other—and good that we can. But what are we really doing? And where are we really going?”

THE FUTURE

Was the killing a prelude for worse to come?

The expectation that a new war could spark a regional conflict involving Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi raises the prospect of bloodshed on a scale that would make last year's horror seem a mere prelude. What makes this strange is that a new war would be a war *about* the genocide; for, while Hutu Power still seeks to make its crime a success by making it indistinguishable from the continuum of Rwandan history, the R.P.F. and the new government it leads depend on the genocide to justify their rule.

“This is a minority government, coming from a diaspora,” Fery Aalam, the Swiss Red Cross delegate, told me. “The genocide is the source of its credibility, and for the time being all political

thinking is based on military logic, not on social or economic or humanitarian logic. It is like the military logic of Israel for a long time, and to a large extent, as with Israel, it's justified."

When I saw General Kagame, I asked him if Israel's experience corresponded in any way with his own country's. "Maybe in terms of persecution and exile," he said. Kagame was born in Rwanda, but from the age of four until he forced his way into Kigali last year he lived in Uganda. "The whole world is now up in arms about these refugees, but for over thirty years *we* were refugees, and nobody talked about us. People forgot. They said, 'Go to hell.' It's a question of rights. Do you deny that I belong to Rwanda, that I am a Rwandan?"

Kagame thumped the arm of his chair rhythmically. He was opening up a vein: resentment, the feeling of being an outcast, even in his big, Vice-Presidential office in Kigali. "We came here," he said. "We took power, we overthrew the regime, we tried to do our best to bring the people of Rwanda together. But the others come and say, 'Ah, the Tutsi-dominated government.' " He laughed. "I am sorry to define people by their ethnic background, that's not my business and intention at all, but the President is Hutu, the Prime Minister is one—oh, but there is a Vice-President somewhere who is a Tutsi. So this is the man in charge."

I said, "You won the war."

"My business was to fight," Kagame said. "I fought. The war is over. I said, 'Let's share power.' If I weren't sincere, I would have taken over everything." His plea for understanding suddenly

seemed to carry a threat. He said, “If I wanted to be a problem, I would actually be a problem. I don’t have to dance around weeping, you see.”

Not long after this conversation, I was approached in Kigali by a man who had long been privy to the workings of Rwandan power and was himself now in the government. He told me that he wanted to be completely honest about what was going on in the country, but on an anonymous basis. He was a Hutu, and travelled with a Kalashnikov-toting soldier in tow. “Listen,” he said. “Rwanda had a dictatorship, Rwanda had a genocide, and now Rwanda has a very serious threat on the borders. You don’t have to be R.P.F. to understand what that means. You don’t have to fall into the old thinking—that if you’re not with these guys you’re with those guys.” The man went on to explain at length his view that Rwandans cannot be trusted. “Foreigners cannot know this place,” he said. “We cheat. We repeat the same little things to you over and over and tell you nothing. Even among ourselves, we lie. We have a habit of secrecy and suspicion. You can stay a whole year and you will not know what Rwandans think or what they are doing.”

I told him that this didn’t fully surprise me, because I had the impression that Rwandans spoke two languages—not Kinyarwanda and French or English but one language among themselves and another with outsiders. By way of an example, I said that I had spoken with a Rwandan lawyer who had described the difficulty of integrating his European training into his Rwandan practice. He loved the Cartesian, Napoleonic legal system, on which Rwanda’s is modelled, but he said that it didn’t

correspond to Rwandan reality, which was for him an equally complete system of thought. By the same token, when this lawyer spoke with me about Rwanda, he used a language quite different from the language he would speak with fellow-Rwandans.

“You talk about this,” my visitor said, “and at the same time you say, ‘A lawyer told me such-and-such.’ A Rwandan would never tell you what someone else said, and, normally, when you told a Rwandan what you had heard from somebody he would immediately change the rhythm of his speech and close himself off to you. He would be on his guard.” He looked up and studied me for a moment. “You Westerners are so honest,” he said. He seemed depressed by the notion.

“I’m telling you,” he said. “Rwandans are petty.” I wasn’t sure of the French word that he used for “petty,” which was *mesquin*. When I asked him to explain it, he described someone who sounded remarkably like Iago—a confidence man, a cheater and betrayer and liar, who tries to tell everyone what he imagines they want to hear in order to maintain his own game and get what he is after. Colonel Doctor Joseph Karemera, a founding officer of the R.P.F. who is now Rwanda’s Minister of Health, told me that there is a Rwandan word for such behavior. Having described the legacy of thirty-four years of Hutu Power dictatorship as “a very bad mentality,” Karemera said, “In Kinyarwanda we call it *ikinamucho*—that if you want to do something you are deceitful and not straight. For example, you can come to kill me”—he clutched his throat—“and your mission is successful, but then you cry. That is *ikinamucho*.”

My visitor liked the word *mesquin*. He used it repeatedly. I

remarked that he didn't seem to have a very high opinion of his people. "I'm trying to tell you about them without lying," he said.

A few days before I was to leave Kigali, I ran into Edmond Mrugamba, a man I had come to know around town, and he invited me to join him for a visit to a latrine into which his sister and her family had been thrown during the genocide. He had mentioned the story before, and I remembered that he made a sound—"tcha, tcha, tcha"—and chopped his hand in the air to describe his sister's killing.

Edmond drove a Mercedes, one of the few still left in Rwanda, and he was wearing a faded denim shirt and jeans and black cowboy boots. He used to work for a German firm, and his wife was German; she had remained in Berlin with their children after the genocide. As we drove, in the direction of the airport, Edmond told me that he was a well-travelled man, and that after many trips in East Africa and in Europe he had always felt that Rwandans were the nicest, most decent people in the world. Edmond spoke quietly, with great intensity, and his face was expressive in a subtle, wincing way. He had never imagined the ugliness, the meanness—"the disease," he said—that had afflicted Rwanda, and he could not understand how it could have been so well masked.

Near the outskirts of Kigali, we turned onto a red dirt track that descended between high reed fences surrounding modest homes. A blue metal gate leading to his sister's house stood open. The yard was crackly dry bush strewn with rubble. A family of squatters—Tutsis just returned from Burundi—sat in the living

room, playing Scrabble. Edmond ignored them. He led me around the side of the house, to a stand of dried-out banana plants. There were two holes in the ground, about a foot apart and three feet in diameter—neat, deep, machine-dug wells. Edmond grabbed hold of a bush, leaned out over the holes, and said, “You can see the tibias.” I did as he did, and saw the bones.

“Fourteen metres deep,” Edmond said. He told me that his brother-in-law had been a religious man, and on the twelfth of April last year, when the *interahamwe* came to his house, he had prevailed upon the killers to let him pray. After his prayers, Edmond’s brother-in-law told the militiamen that he didn’t want his family dismembered, so they invited him to throw his children down the latrine wells alive, and he did. Then Edmond’s sister and his brother-in-law were thrown in on top.

Edmond took his camera out of a plastic bag and photographed the holes. “People come to Rwanda and talk of reconciliation,” he said. “It’s offensive. Imagine talking to Jews of reconciliation in 1946. Maybe in a long time, but it’s a private matter.” He reminded me that he had lost a brother as well as his sister and her family. Then he told me that he knew who his brother’s killer was, and that he sometimes saw the man around Kigali.

“I’d like to talk to him,” Edmond said. “I want him to explain to me what this thing was, how he could do this thing. My surviving sister said, ‘Let’s denounce him.’ I saw what was happening—a wave of arrests all at once—and I said, ‘What good is prison, if he doesn’t feel what I feel? Let him live in fear.’ When the time is right, I want to make him understand that I’m not asking for his arrest but for him to live forever with what he

has done. I'm asking for him to think about it for the rest of his life. It's a kind of psychological torture."

Edmond had thought of himself as a Rwandan—he identified his spirit with that of his people—but after the genocide he had lost that mooring. Now, to prove himself his brother's keeper, he wanted to fix his brother's killer with the mark of Cain. I couldn't help thinking how well Cain had prospered: he founded the first city, and, though we don't like to talk about it all that much, we are all his children. ♦

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