

The Massacres in Rwanda : Hope is also a Victim

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Tiny Rwanda has never been strategically significant in world politics. But for more than two decades this poor, overpopulated central African country has been a successful laboratory for foreign aid.

Its small size, cooperative government, relative lack of corruption and excellent roads, telephone systems and electric utilities attracted hundreds of millions of dollars to test development projects and made the country largely dependent on international generosity.

But after two weeks in which tens of thousands of people have been massacred and thousands of Europeans and Americans have fled, much of Rwanda's gains have been threatened or lost. Even if stability is restored quickly, the hope of reclaiming the agricultural or industrial achievements in less than five years appears bleak.

The killing and the anarchy have now spread beyond Kigali, the capital, destroying the West's efforts to promote democracy and respect for human rights, the quid pro quo for aid in Africa in recent years. For the moment, several hundred million dollars of aid has been suspended. Without foreign aid workers, many programs have stopped.

Faced first with the crisis caused by the hundreds of thousands of refugees, Rwanda must also replace an educated

elite of Rwandans who have fled or have been killed.

Short Term Is Bleak

Diplomats and aid officials are also unsure of Rwanda's ability to maintain a stable democracy. They fear Rwanda may become another Somalia, whose society has been so torn apart by civil war that it is barely able to survive.

"They will have to start again on Square 1," said Armon Hartmann, head of the Eastern and Southern African section of the Swiss Development Cooperation, a major donor. "They will have to prove to us that they can qualify for our technical assistance. To come back to the level we had just a few weeks ago could take four or five years."

But in Kigali the violence continues. Rwandan police officers executed 16 people today who were pulled from more than 5,000 refugees huddled in the national stadium, *The Associated Press* reported. On Tuesday, Rwandan Army troops shelled the stadium, killing 40.

Hundreds of United Nations peacekeepers also withdrew today, reducing the contingent of 2,500 by half, *The A.P.* said. Among those who left were more than 450 Belgians, 213

Bangladeshis and 144 Ghanaians. The Security Council, preoccupied with Bosnia, has taken no decisive action on Rwanda since the killing began two weeks ago.

The Warring Parties

The fighting, provoked by a suspicious plane crash on April 6 that killed the Presidents of Rwanda and neighboring Burundi, both Hutu, has been fed by tribal hatred between the majority Hutu and the minority Tutsi.

But the killing, at least in its initial stages, was mostly politically motivated, set off by hard-line Hutu who disapproved of a new Government that integrated Hutu and Tutsi.

“There is a determination to dominate politically,” said David Rawson, the United States Ambassador to Rwanda, who was evacuated home last week. “It is heart rending – the beauty of the whole place, the responsiveness of the people, their desire for a better life, for democracy and development, set against this intense struggle to dominate, a struggle for political power.”

“If you get into a stalemate and trench warfare in which the country totally exhausts itself and there is anarchy in the countryside, then we could have taken a step backward into Somalia.”

Poverty Breeds Dependence

With about 8 million inhabitants in 10,169 square miles, Rwanda is one of the world’s poorest countries, the second most densely populated after

Bangladesh. With an economy more than 90 percent agricultural, nearly every bit of land is under cultivation. In 1992, it had a gross national product of \$1.6 billion and a debt of \$873 million, and more than 50 percent of its budget was covered by foreign aid.

Belgium, a former colonial power and one of the biggest donors, provided about \$30 million a year in the late 1980’s and early 90’s, followed by France, Germany and Switzerland. The United States provided \$20 million a year in development aid until last year, when the figure fell to \$14 million as Washington switched its funds to assistance for the hundreds of thousands of refugees created by the simmering civil wars in both Rwanda and Burundi.

Since the beginning of the civil war in 1990, foreign donors have been putting increasing pressure on the Government to make peace with the rebels of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, most of whom are Tutsi.

“This country was conscious of its situation and that it needed foreign help to survive,” said a senior Belgian diplomat in Nairobi. “After such a disaster, it will take some time to re-establish relations.”

Putting Aid to Good Use

Rwanda has attracted donors for many reasons. Its needs are desperate, but the country is small enough that the impact of aid can be quickly seen. Communications were good, and rural development was a Government priority.

“It was a country with a very good

record, proposing and implementing development activities,” Ambassador Rawson said. “Obviously our democratization efforts aren’t getting very far. If only we could somehow get a cease-fire, if you could find a number of qualified people still living or bring them back from abroad.”

But to many of the relief workers evacuated last week and now waiting in Nairobi in the hope of eventually providing food, medical care and other assistance, the biggest hurdle is not winning back donors but recreating an atmosphere of confidence among the Rwandans.

“There will be a lack of trust among Rwandans,” said Steve Wallace, field director in Rwanda for CARE Inter-

national. “I don’t think people will be wanting to work together and move the society ahead. There was a huge investment of time, effort and money. Many of the development projects will be casualties of this episode. It is pretty depressing.”

Correction: April 22, 1994

A picture caption yesterday with an article about Rwanda misidentified the group responsible for shelling a stadium on Tuesday, killing 40 refugees. As the article pointed out, the shells were fired by the Rwandan Army, not by rebel forces.