

HOTEL RWANDA: Hollywood and the Holocaust in Central Africa

By [Keith Harmon Snow](#)

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What happened in Rwanda in 1994? The standard line is that a calculated genocide occurred because of deep-seated tribal animosity between the majority Hutu tribe in power and the minority Tutsis. According to this story, at least 500,000 and perhaps 1.2 million Tutsis--and some moderate Hutus--were ruthlessly eliminated in a few months, and most of them were killed with machetes. The killers in this story were Hutu hard-liners from the Forces Armees Rwandais, the Hutu army, backed by the more ominous and inhuman Interahamwe militias--"those who kill together."

"In three short, cruel months, between April and July 1994," wrote genocide expert Samantha Power on the tenth anniversary of the genocide, "Rwanda experienced a genocide more efficient than that carried out by the Nazis in World War II. The killers were a varied bunch: drunk extremists chanting 'Hutu power, Hutu power'; uniformed soldiers and militia men intent on wiping out the Tutsi Inyenzi, or 'cockroaches'; ordinary villagers who had never themselves contemplated killing before but who decided to join the frenzy." [1]

The award-winning film Hotel Rwanda offers a Hollywood version and the latest depiction of this cataclysm. Is the film accurate? It is billed as a true story. Did genocide occur in Rwanda as it is widely portrayed and universally understood? With thousands of Hutus fleeing Rwanda in fear of the Tutsi government and its now operational village genocide courts, is another reading of events needed?[2] Is Samantha Power--a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist--telling it straight?[3]

Hundreds of thousands of people were killed, that's clear. There was large-scale butchery of Tutsis. And Hutus. Children and old women were killed. There was mass rape. There were many acts of genocide. But was it genocide or civil war?

"I think that's a very good question and it is not adequately answered," says Howard French, former East Africa Bureau Chief for the New York Times and author of Africa: A Continent for the Taking. French operated on the ground in Central Africa (1993-1999) and his reportage of the RPF Tutsi rebel army hunting down and massacring hundreds of thousands of Hutus in Congo is exceptional.[4]

"A minority of fifteen percent [RPF Tutsis] wages a determined effort to take over a country and rule in an ethnic way, by force of arms, and has been doing this for years. Two presidents are assassinated." Howard French is adamant. "These are not excuses for butchery. But these are things that lead one in the direction of civil war, as a descriptor, as opposed to the one-sided tale that we have been given, of these sweet, innocent Tutsis who remind us of Israel, versus the savage Hutus who cold-heartedly butcher people hand-to-

hand for three months.”

From the very first words, where the image has yet to appear and the screen is completely black, the film *Hotel Rwanda* sets up viewers to think a certain way about what happened in Rwanda in 1994. Here is a story about good versus evil. An ominous African voice is heard, clearly the announcer on a radio program, and he is describing the Tutsis as ‘cockrrrrRRROACHES.’ The voice is black and the cataclysm unfathomable, as anyone will tell you, and the black screen underscores the evil darkness of Africa. This voice of terror returns throughout the film to haunt the innocent Tutsi refugees, on screen, and the viewers gripping their seats.

The good guys are the Tutsis, the victims of genocide. They are not killers in the movie: they are never killers. At the end of the film, when a well-attired guerrilla force is shown--the “rebels” of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)--they are rescuers. They are disciplined, organized. They keep a tidy United Nations camp safely behind their lines. They don’t kill Red Cross nurses, or orphaned children, in the film: they reconnect them to their families.

The Hutus in the standard Rwanda genocide stories are always the bad guys, and they are all bad guys. Every Hutu is a genocidaire--to use the ominous French term deployed in English contexts to further underscore the horror, the horror (sic). The Hutus are the devil incarnate. The Tutsis are saintly. Indeed, they are beyond reproach, because they are the victims of genocide. The Hotel manager’s wife bears an obvious cross around her neck, to remind us that the Tutsis are the chosen people. When the now celebrated United Nations hero General Romeo Dallaire shakes hands with the devil--as his own popular book and film concur--he is shaking hands with Hutu. That is the framework of the *Hotel Rwanda* film. There is, today, an industry behind it.

The Tutsis are dehumanized by the Hutus and by the Hutu media, in the film, and there was some truth in this in real life. But the RPF pro-Tutsi media that operated in Rwanda after 1991, for example, was equally dehumanizing, and equally vicious, but the film does not tell us this. Tutsi guerrilla forces were the first to describe themselves as Inyenzi or cockroaches: they were not equated with the insects that everyone loathes, they were well trained, secretive and coordinated military forces who attacked at night and withdrew by day.[5] They would hit and run and kill with efficiency. It was not a pejorative usage, as it has been used in the film *Hotel Rwanda*, although it was bastardized and turned against the Tutsis by media outlets in Rwanda. Radio Mille Collines and the other anti-RPF media outlets of the President’s party, the National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND), [6] were not the only ones to incite hatred and murder. Indeed, RPF-controlled Radio Muhabura spread ethnic hatred and incited widespread killings, but this was--according to Hollywood--a war with only one army, the ruthless Hutus.[7]

The Pillars of *Hotel Rwanda*

When Human Rights Watch investigated the genocide, they sent Alison des Forges to tell the story, and the product of her long investigations was the fat treatise on genocide in Rwanda titled *Leave None to Tell the Story*. Irony is heaped upon irony when we consider that those who are left to tell the story are silenced by the authorized storytellers like Alison des Forges.

“Alison des Forges is a liar,” says Cameroonian journalist Charles Onana, author of *The Secrets of the Genocide*. “She is a LIAR.” Paul Kagame, RPF General and President of

Rwanda, sued Onana for defamation in a French court: Kagame lost.[8]

“Des Forges has written a book which has become the bible regarding Rwanda,” says Jean Marie Higiro, former Director of the Rwandan Information Office (ORINFOR) who fled with his family in early April 1994. “Everyone points to her book even though some of what she has produced is fiction. I don’t think she is an intentional liar, but I don’t know why she investigated Hutu human rights abuses but no RPF human rights abuses.”

Hotel Rwanda is built on the pillars of selective human rights reporting, but it really takes off from the celebrated text *We Regret To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* by Philip Gourevitch, the *New Yorker* magazine’s premier Africa expert.

“Gourevitch’s short book should be compulsory reading for Heads of State and Ministers of Defence all over Africa,” wrote Guardian reporter Victoria Brittain, “as well as for all UN officials involved in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian aid, from the Secretary General on down, and the heads of missionary orders in the US, France and Belgium.” Brittain is a *Nation* magazine contributor on genocide in Rwanda. Notably, a U.S. immigration judge in St. Paul Minnesota imposed Gourevitch’s book as compulsory reading for all attorneys dealing with Rwandan refugees requesting political asylum.[9]

What we never learn about Philip Gourevitch is that his brother-in-law, Jamie Rubin, was Madeleine Albright’s leading man and, through him, Gourevitch planted in the public mind a narrow perspective on Rwanda. Funding for Gourevitch’s book came from the United States Institute for Peace, a State Department offshoot.[10] An intimate pal of Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Philip Gourevitch is not an impartial journalist, regardless of how much you may have loved his book, or been moved by it, because he has taken sides, and he has told only one side of the story, and he has told it badly, and he has been rewarded for his fine job in telling it badly.

“Gourevitch begins the story with the Tutsi as these saintly victims,” the *Times*’ Howard French says. “And I don’t think Gourevitch is a stupid guy. I think that it’s just sheer intellectual dishonesty... Gourevitch was coming out in the *New Yorker* every other month with this very well written and-if you don’t know the facts-very compelling picture about Rwanda... as the Israel of central Africa and the Tutsis as the Jews of central Africa. That’s powerful stuff. But I’m on the ground in Central Africa seeing that the reality is very, very different.” [11]

The theme of genocide in Rwanda-whether true or false-has birthed an industry that revolves around a standard, simplified plot. The appearance of the film *Hotel Rwanda* marks the coup de grace in the long process whereby the facts, the ugly realities and dirty details of what really happened in Rwanda have been distilled into a neat and tidy story that proliferates in the media, in film, in literature, at seminars on genocide and workshops on reconciliation, and it is the predominant discourse in academia. Quebec journalist Robin Philpot calls it “the right and proper tale.” [12]

The Falsification of Amerikan Consciousness

It has become a mythology: the Rwanda genocide mythology or, better, the Tutsi Holocaust mythology. But as African scholar Amos Wilson puts it so simply in *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness*, “you cannot understand the present unless you first understand the past.”

To understand the growth of the mythology on genocide in Rwanda, consider first the text of *Hotel Rwanda—The Official Companion Book*, which describes the process of “bringing the true story of an African hero to film.” [13] The book deletes the most basic facts about the Rwandan Patriotic Front and its backers’ roles in the ongoing war for the Great Lakes region of Africa, war that has led to some seven million people dead since the initial RPF invasion from Uganda in October 1990. Instead the book offers an abbreviated timeline of events that accentuate or exaggerate those points that serve the predominant *Hotel Rwanda* mythology, and it excludes those facts that would undermine this mythology: the entire framework of the brutal, bloody war for control of Rwanda is obscured.

October 1990: Guerrillas from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invade Rwanda from Uganda; the RPF is mostly made up of Tutsis. A ceasefire is signed on March 29, 1991.

First: the above statement uses the definitive term for the RPF action: invaded. The Rwandan Patriotic Army invaded Rwanda from Uganda. However, the context of the RPF ascension to power is obliterated. RPF infiltration of Rwanda began around 1986 after Yoweri Museveni, with powerful western backers, shot his way to power in Uganda. Paul Kagame, current president of Rwanda, was head of Museveni’s Directorate of Military Intelligence. Later trained by the US Army at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Kagame became the General of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. But the RPF invasion was a gross violation of international law against a sovereign nation – a point the *Hotel Rwanda* industry ignores.

Never condemned by the “international community,” the RPF “struggle” was supported by powerful western agents and institutions, including the World Bank and the IMF, who shackled Rwanda with austerity programs in perfect synchronization with the RPF assault. This led to the heightened inculcation of structural violence throughout Rwanda. Combined with the crash of coffee prices on the world market, millions of Rwandans found it impossible to make ends meet as the 1990’s began. Suffering hit new lows not seen in Rwanda for decades.

The majority of people in Rwanda, besieged by the propaganda of competing factions—a spectrum of political interests aligned with or against the RPF or the Rwanda government of Juvenal Habyarimana—found scapegoats according to their positions in society. Economic interests predominated as a few elites increasingly controlled the life or death of the many. The rising insurgency and structural violence provoked hostility amongst and between groups, and elites controlling media outlets of all stripes began to use their venues to sow ethnic rivalry as the veneer for the deeper agenda: class warfare.

Hutus were dehumanized as often as Tutsis. “Pro-opposition newspapers represented MRND [Hutu government] leaders as essentially evil and corrupt,” writes Jean-Marie Higiroy. They were “liars, idiots, animals, bloodthirsty murderers and warmongers. Some of these newspapers published drawings of President Habyarimana covered with blood.” [14]

The RPF and Rwandan Tutsi refugees had their own publications. The best known of these is *Impuruza*, published in the United States (1984-1994). Tutsi refugees joined Roger Winter, the Director of the United States Committee for Refugees, to help fund the publication. The editor, Alexander Kimenyi, is a Rwandan national and a professor at California State University. Like most RPF publications *Impuruza* circulated clandestinely in Rwanda amongst Hutu and Tutsi elite.

“A nation in exile, a people without leadership, ‘the Jews of Africa’, a stateless nation,” wrote

Festo Habimana, the president of the Association of Banyarwanda in Diaspora USA, in the premier issue of *Impuruza*. Habimana called for the unity of Tutsi refugees. "But our success will depend entirely upon our own effort and unity, not through world community as some perceive... As long as we are scattered, with no leadership, business as usual on their part shall always be their policy. We are a very able and capable people with abundant blessings. What are we waiting for? Genocide?" [15]

The Association of Banyarwanda in Diaspora USA, assisted by Roger Winter, organized the International Conference on the Status of Banyarwanda [Tutsi] Refugees in Washington, DC in 1988, and this is where a military solution to the Tutsi problem was chosen. The US Committee for Refugees reportedly provided accommodation and transportation.[16] Winter is intimate with USAID, and a long-time ally of Susan Rice, former Assistant Secretary of State on African Affairs (1997-2001), Special Assistant to President Clinton (1995-1997), and National Security Council insider (1993-1997). Winter is also a staunch supporter of US Rep. Donald Payne.

Winter acted as a spokesman for the RPF and their allies, and he appeared as a guest on major US television networks such as PBS and CNN. Philip Gourevitch and Roger Winter made contacts on behalf of the RPF with American media, particularly the *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *Time* magazine. Roger Winter and US Rep. Donald Payne continue to manipulate African affairs: most notable are their recent exaggerations about genocide in Darfur, Sudan, for which Donald Payne sponsored the Darfur Genocide Accountability Act.

Second: the language of the above October 1990 timeline entry underscores the equally discrepant point that the RPF was "mostly made up of Tutsis." According to the genocide mythology, the cataclysm in Rwanda was a tribal struggle between Hutus and Tutsis, with some involvement of France.

Who were the non-Tutsi elements of the "mostly" Tutsi RPF? What is the implication? They were Hutus? How could Hutus be fighting alongside Tutsis if Hutus were exterminating all Tutsis based on an organized, premeditated plan? The term "moderate Hutu" invites a similar conundrum: what is a "moderate Hutu" in the international legal framework of genocide? [35]

The very definition of genocide would be questioned if it turned out that there were political, economic or class - as opposed to ethnic - motives behind the hundreds of thousands (or 1.2 million) of deaths that have been unequivocally attributed to Hutu genocidaires. A deeper examination of "genocide" in Rwanda raises just such inconvenient questions. The definition of what constitutes genocide is not so cut and dry as Hutus versus Tutsis, or lists of targeted Tutsis versus no lists, no matter the terror now invoked in one's soul on hearing the word *Interahamwe*.

After the October 1990 entry, the timeline in the companion book omits any reference to the RPF until February 1993, as if the supposed "heroic" rebels were patiently sitting out the war from the Ugandan sidelines. But massacres occurred in northern Rwanda after the October 1990 invasion and after the 1991 ceasefire and they were committed by the RPF. Tens of thousands of refugees fled the border districts in fear of RPF atrocities.

(I—the author—remember quite well the traumatized tourist who disembarked from the back of a small pick-up truck that had just crossed the border from Rwanda to Uganda in 1991. I was in Kasindi, in southwestern Uganda. The Rwandan man sitting next to this western

woman was shot by an RPF sniper as the truck drove down the road, and it was then stopped and searched by the RPF, and the dead man taken.)

From 1990 on, RPF terror cells began infiltrating Kigali, the capital, and all other areas of Rwanda, and with them came atrocities that were frequently blamed on the Habyarimana government, including assassinations, massacres and disappearances. By March 1993 internally displaced persons (IDPs) had reached one million people. The RPF practiced a scorched earth policy: they did not want to have to administer a territory or deal with local populations. The RPF displaced people, shelled the camps of internally displaced people, and marched on. They killed some captives, buried them in mass graves or burned corpses, and used survivors as porters to transport ammunition, dig trenches or cook their meals.

According to one Rwandan now in the US: prior to 1994, most Tutsis who had a job in Rwanda collected contributions for the RPF political and military program; people were afraid to refuse to pay the compulsory tax.

The Habyarimana government responded to terror with repression in kind, but the international human rights “community” had already taken sides in the war: the Hutu government of Habyarimana was accused of “genocide” against Tutsis as early as 1993; the RPF atrocities were ignored or explained away.

“There were many RPF killings in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994,” says Jean Marie Higiroy, “but these were not investigated; they were automatically attributed to Habyarimana’s [MRND] party by the international community. Even so we know that the RPF used that kind of strategy to tarnish the image of their opponents.” [17] Jean-Marie Higiroy also cites the Tutsi newspaper *Impuruza*, the publication edited by Professor Alexandre Kimenyi, with accusing the Habyarimana government of committing genocide against the Tutsis; this prior to 1993.

February 1993: The RPF again invades Rwanda. Hutu extremists cite the invasion as proof the Tutsis aim to eliminate them, and begin calling for preemptive measures.

To begin with, the RPF never left Rwanda, and they never stopped killing. Following the reasonable questions by journalist Robin Philpot, how would US citizens respond if Canadian guerrillas—arguing that their parents were born or once lived in the US—invaded from Toronto? Would we call Americans who complained “extremists”? What if a few Islamic militants purportedly invading the US took out the World Trade Center? Would the US government call for preemptive measures? Would we call the invaders a “rebel army”? Extremists? Would we call them terrorists?

“Is it normal in the search for justice to condemn one side in a war for human rights violations,” writes Robin Philpot, “and not even question the morality of the aggressors, those who violated the principles of all the charters of rights humanity has ever drafted? Is it right to shout about how a government violates rights and turn a blind eye to the launching of an aggressive war?” [18]

Hotel Washington

From 1993 onwards the RPF continued to stick its bloody foot in the door of Rwanda, and the international community continued to tighten the screws on the Habyarimana government. Ever vigilant and inflammatory in advertising the governments’ human rights

abuses—whether manufactured, exaggerated or real—the human rights community continued to close its eyes to RPF atrocities, terrorist infiltrations and bloodied land grabbing. Backed by powerful factions from the United States, England and Belgium, the RPF maneuvered and manipulated its way to the very seat of power, in Kigali itself, where—under the Arusha Peace Accords—a battalion of RPF soldiers was based at a strategic site within the city center. The RPF immediately fortified its defenses under the watch of UN General Romeo Dallaire (now regarded as a hero by Canadian politicians). The mythology credits the RPF with the imperative of “stopping the genocide” against Tutsis.

Mid-July 1994: The Tutsi RPF forces capture Kigali and the genocide is over. Over a period of 100 days, almost 1,000,000 Rwandans were murdered.

While it may very well be that “almost 1,000,000 Rwandans were murdered” in those 100 days, it is also true that the RPF slaughtered, bombed, massacred, assassinated or tortured hundreds of thousands of people—including Hutu and Tutsi soldiers, politicians and government officials and innocent civilians. The RPF employed state-of-the-art information control and psychological operations tactics practiced by the US military: reporters were embedded; access to battle zones was restricted; evidence of RPF massacres was erased, or massacres were blamed on Hutu extremists, Interahamwe militias or the government Forces Armee Rwandaise. British journalist Nick Gordon reported crematoriums where the RPF incinerated bodies. After the April 6, 1994 double presidential assassination the western press—including Joshua Hammer (Newsweek), and Raymond Bonner, James C. McKinley Jr. and Donatella Lorch (New York Times)—went out of their way to cite “professional discipline” and “remarkable self-control” exercised by the invading rebel RPF forces. The press turned the double Presidential assassinations into “a mysterious plane crash,” but this was a smoldering wreckage of the truth.

UN High Commission for Refugees investigator Robert Gersony reported in September 1994 on the RPF’s killing of more than 30,000 ethnic Hutus—in a period of two months—and gave a detailed account of locations, dates and nature of crimes, as well as the methods used to kill and to make the bodies disappear. Gersony also identified RPF leaders responsible for the killings. The classified UN report has never been released.

Interested moviegoers might want to hack through the perception management of Hotel Rwanda to get to United Artists parent company Metro Goldwyn Meyer.[19] MGM directors, unsurprisingly, given what the film does not tell you about the true US role in Rwanda, include current United Technologies director and US General (Ret.) Alexander Haig. United Technologies is in the business of war and “I’m in charge here!” Al Haig served as secretary of state under a Hollywood actor named Ronald Reagan.

The hotel in the film is not the real Hotel des Mille Collines. The Tutsi RPF rebels did not enter Kigali, Rwanda’s capital city, and save the day, they were in Kigali all along. The RPF gained a foothold in Kigali through their constant deceptions and manipulations of the “peace process,” and with the support of their international backers, especially the United States.

“When you look at the motivations of the Interahamwe leadership and young people in the Interahamwe they were motivated by money,” notes Jean-Marie Higiho. Some Hutu businessmen were giving out loans, contributing to political parties of both the Rwandan government and the RPF rebels. “These guys wanted to do business: people were motivated by different interests.”

“Many Hutu and Tutsi businessmen prospered under the Habyarimana regime,” Higirot notes. “They received government contracts and loans from government banks and suddenly became rich. During this period of uncertainty they contributed money to the RPF, MRND, and opposition parties—always speculating on the winner. That is why, after the war, very few Hutu businessmen who had contributed to the RPF reopened their business immediately. That is why some Tutsi businessmen who contributed to the RPF made an excellent calculation. After the war they reaped off the benefits.”

Professors Christian Davenport (U. Maryland) and Allan Stam (Dartmouth) published research in 2004 that showed that the killings began with a small, dedicated cadre of Hutu militiamen, but quickly cascaded in an ever-widening circle, with Hutu and Tutsi playing the roles of both attackers and victims. The research unleashed a firestorm: the media jumped on them for denying genocide.

“Our research suggests that many of the victims, possibly even a majority, were Hutus—there weren’t enough Tutsis in Rwanda at the time to account for all the reported deaths... When you add it all up it looks a lot more like politically motivated mass killing than genocide. A wide diversity of individuals, both Hutu and Tutsi, systematically used the mass killing to settle political, economic and personal scores.” [20]

Some facts in the film are true. To begin with, in every sense of the terms “human rights” and “humanitarianism,” the western powers betrayed the people of Rwanda. The whites were rapidly evacuated, the blacks abandoned, including the many African staffers of international agencies. The French armed the Hutu side, but the United States armed the Tutsis. There was a man named Paul Rusesabagina and he would, one day, be working at the Hotel des Mille Collines, but he was the manager of the Hotel Des Diplomats. The Tutsi rebels were blamed with the assassination of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, but the film convinces us they didn’t do it, when everything suggests they did. And it is certainly true that hundreds of thousands of Rwandans died.

Hotel Rwanda is a work of fiction. As a cultural artifact produced by an affluent industry in the West, and for affluent western consumers, but focused on a distant and exoticized culture about which the affluent western consumers know very little, it serves to consolidate the ideological pillars of disinformation that came before it, and upon which it was built.

According to many and varied knowledgeable sources, including hotel insiders:

Rwanda was not abandoned by the western powers: Belgium, France, Canada, England and the United States were all militarily involved in the 1994 conflict. Because there are Israeli connections to the current government, it is likely that Israelis were also involved. These were no bystanders to genocide, but active participants in a ruthless military conflagration.

The hotel was not under a state of siege early on as the movie suggests—an elegant wedding took place there during the fray, and it married the sister of the Tutsi businessman Kamana Claver, who had contracts with the Hutu government. According to one guest, powerful Hutus and Tutsis regularly came and went. When the water to the Hotel was shut off, forcing the “refugees” to drink the water from the swimming pool, it was not shut off by the Hutu genocidaires, as implied in the film, but by the Tutsi RPF army, who cut power to the city.

General Bizimungu appears in the very first scenes of the film, prior to the double presidential assassination: yet when the plane was shot down on April 6, 1994, General

Bizimungu was still a Colonel, and he was far from Kigali. According to one hotel guest, who remains unnamed for fear of retribution, Paul Rusesabagina in no way wielded the kind of influence as suggested throughout the film.

“Paul was a very simple man like me in front of the Interahamwe. If he succeeded to save some Tutsi from his home he was most probably helped by some influential Interahamwe friend, say Georges Rutaganda. He was as vulnerable as I was and could not oppose any action against the will of the militia and much less of the army. He lies when he feints to call General Bizimungu for help, because the Hotel Des Mille Collines was under the jurisdiction of Colonel Renzaho. Bizimungu lived at the northern war front lines, and he only came to Kigali four days after the plane was shot down and I never saw him at the hotel.”

Georges Rutaganda, the devil beer salesman and erstwhile murderer of Tutsis in Hotel Rwanda, writes that Paul Rusesabagina was no disinterested, apolitical hotel manager, but an important activist member of a national political party. On 12 April 1994, Rusesabagina shifted to the Hôtel Des Mille Collines where he acted as its new director because the other had been evacuated by foreign troops. Hotel Rwanda depicts Rusesabagina at the Hotel Des Mille Collines prior to the April 6 double presidential assassinations. Rutaganda claims to have visited the hotel and seen guests from both Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, including: Rubangura Vedaste; Mutalikanwa Félicien; Dr. Gasasira Jean Baptiste; Kamana Claver; Kajuga Wicklif; Rwigema Celestin; Kamilindi Thomas; and others.

Rutaganda claims that very few soldiers of UNAMIR (United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda) soldiers were around, and they were incidental to security: the Hutu Gendarmes of the FAR army were manning a roadblock at the main entrance. He also claims that the “refugees” in the UN convoy that were turned back at a roadblock “were the real elite cream of Tutsi ethnic tribe. Had one been really spurred by bad intentions this would have been a great occasion to decapitate the Tutsi ethnic group. Families of former ministers, of doctors, of lawyers, of big business men, of highly educated men, of professors, etc, were among them.”

If the “genocide” were so organized and calculated, and quick to strike, then Rutaganda has a very interesting point: how did it happen that the elite of the Tutsi tribe were protected and evacuated by UNAMIR troops and Hutu Gendarmes? Of course, all Hutus as killers, and no one will believe a genocidaire: Georges Rutaganda was sentenced to life in prison by the ICTR.

“Georges Rutaganda cooperated with the UN to save all those people.” ICTR investigator Phil Taylor offers a compelling portrait of the devil himself: Rutaganda didn’t incite hate crimes, he called for calm and respect for the Red Cross; Rutaganda was never accused of the rape and sexual slavery depicted in the film; and Rutaganda never traded in machetes. Indeed, Human Rights Watch in January 1994 identified an English businessman who had imported tens of thousands of machetes into Rwanda.[21] And Rape was off the agenda until Hillary Clinton showed up and pledged \$600,000 for the first ICTR rape conviction.

The film offers a fictitious UN Colonel Oliver (Nick Nolte) as a substitute for the Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, whose is absent from the film. (It is believed that Dallaire asked too much money from the filmmakers for the use of his name or character.) Apparently, General Romeo Dallaire worked not as an impartial United Nations soldier but as an agent for the invading RPF army. Dallaire reportedly approached Hutu military commanders to convince them to follow the winds of change and embrace the RPF program. Dallaire was rarely

present at the hotel, but his substitute (Nolte) is always there.

The Political Economy of Genocide

Prior to the cataclysm of 1994, the RPF set up its political base in Belgium. When Belgian “peacekeepers” are murdered by “Hutus” in Hotel Rwanda, the false inference is that the genocidaires’ calculated killing of the Belgians would provoke a UNAMIR withdrawal from Rwanda. In reality, the Belgians were immediately killed because they were seen as the political accomplices of a ruthless bunch of terrorists, the invading RPF army.

It was not UNAMIR soldiers who guarded the hotel but Hutu affiliated gendarmes dispatched by the Hutu government. This fact flies in the face of the “genocide” mythology. If the hotel was full of Tutsis targeted by genocide, why was it being protected by the very same architects of that supposed genocide? The Hotel was not filled only with Tutsis (refugees from genocide): it was full of powerful Tutsis and Hutus (with Tutsis in the majority) with political and economic connections to powerful factions both inside and outside of Rwanda.

Questions about the composition of the “mostly Tutsi” RPF invaders provoke questions about the ethnic composition of the Interahamwe militias and commercial relationships that transcended ethnicity. Such details are overlooked in the western reductionism on Rwanda—because they contradict the official and burgeoning Rwanda holocaust industry and the US State Department fictions:

- Robert Kajuga, was the Tutsi President of the notorious “genocidal” Rwandan Interahamwe;
- Kamana Claver was a Tutsi businessman and frequent recipient of large government-awarded contracts from the “genocidal” Hutu government;
- Celestin Sebulikoko was a Tutsi businessman and strong supporter of the main Hutu political party (MRND); he is believed disappeared by the RPF;
- A Tutsi named Mpangaza, who worked for the Rwandan government firm TRANSINTRA, reportedly manned a powerful machine gun at an Interahamwe roadblock in downtown Kigali in 1994; he was a well-known Interahamwe; he lives peacefully in Rwanda today;
- The son of Juvenal Gatorano, a Tutsi customs agent with the Habyarimana government’s Ministry of Finance, was always seen at Interahamwe rallies.

These facts, if true, provide compelling evidence that it was not a coordinated genocide that occurred in Rwanda in 1994, but a civil war, and a western proxy war, with deep political, economic and military motivations behind the atrocities. Acts of genocide certainly occurred, as did crimes against humanity, but “acts” of genocide do not constitute genocide as defined by the international legal frameworks on genocide. An entire ethnic group could be wiped out, say the last 100 Penan nomads in Sarawak, for example, but if they are incidentally eliminated in the process of logging their forests, it is not necessarily genocide. Equally troublesome, the US might have annihilated every last Japanese, but few today would characterize the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as genocidal.

The calculated nature upheld as the basis for genocide in Rwanda has always revolved around the supposed “lists” created by Hutu genocidaires: lists of Tutsis who were subsequently eliminated because, first and foremost, they were Tutsis. “Any army would have lists of their political enemies,” notes ICTR investigator Phil Taylor. “This is not unusual.” The Rwandan government likely had its lists, the RPF had their own lists, and both went about assassinating their enemies. Taylor notes that the prosecution has not produced

any lists as evidence used to convict.

US Pentagon lawyers from the Judge Advocacy General (JAG) Corps have heavily skewed the ICTR; it has not returned a single verdict against RPF Tutsi soldiers or leadership; and former ICTR prosecutor Carla Del Ponte was removed for her attempts to prosecute Tutsis.[22] “The ICTR risks being a part of the problem rather than the solution,” wrote Filip Reyntjens, Belgian Historian and expert witness on the genocide, in 2004. “I cannot any longer be involved in this process.”[23]

In Hotel Rwanda, the genocidal Hutus blame the Tutsi RPF rebels for shooting down the plane that killed the two presidents, and because the film demonizes every Hutu, the viewer is convinced that the Hutu’s are lying, deflecting attention from their own nasty deeds. However, evidence suggests that an RPF terror cell in Kigali shot down the Presidential airplane. Also on the plane was a Forces Armee Rwandais general, a pivotal target for the RPF. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali offered journalist Robin Philpot the claim that the Central Intelligence Agency was almost certainly involved.

“As early as 1997,” writes a Spanish legal team that (2005) filed suit against Paul Kagame and his RPF cadre, “a team of investigators appointed by the ICTR—Michael Hourigan, Alphonse Breaux and James Lyons—released reports, then held as classified, which revealed that the attack was masterminded by high-ranking RPF military and not by Hutu extremists as had been believed until then. These disclosures were corroborated in 2004 by the remarkable testimony of Abdul Ruzibiza, member of the RPF commando unit which perpetrated the attack on the presidential plane.”[24]

RPF defectors credit the RPF with shooting down the plane carrying the Rwandan and Burundian leadership. Long-time RPF officer Lt. Aloys Ruyenzi claims that the assassination plan was hatched at an RPF meeting on 31 March 1994:

“The Chairman of the meeting was Major General Paul Kagame, and the following officers were present: Colonel Kayumba Nyamwasa; Colonel Théoneste Lizinde; Lt. Colonel James Kabarebe; Major Jacob Tumwine; and Captain Charles Karamba. I heard Paul Kagame asking Colonel Lizinde to report about his investigations and I have seen Colonel Lizinde giving to Paul Kagame a map of the selected place for the plane shooting etc.” [25]

Ruyenzi also accuses General Paul Kagame and (now) General James Kabarebe of overseeing the massacres of Hutu and Tutsi civilians, both in the field and at crematoriums set up to dispose of the evidence. Ruyenzi is just one defector with a compelling story. He claims he has witnessed helicopter gunships shelling villages, and massacres, tortures and summary executions as policy. Many of human rights atrocities committed by the Kagame regime have been documented by human rights organizations.

“Gen. James Kabarebe was the commander of the reverse-genocide army,” says Howard French, referring to the Rwandan/Ugandan/US military campaign where hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees were hunted down and slaughtered in Congo. Eighty percent were women and children; 50% were under 15 years old.[26] The contra-genocide against Hutus continues today: at this writing the forces are aligned to exterminate the remaining 40,000 Hutus in Congo: they are all written off as genocidaires who fled Rwanda in 1994, even though most surviving FDLR were too young to have participated in genocide.[27]

Sabena officials were not surprised and horrified to be getting a call from some hotel

manager in Rwanda, as depicted in the film: one week prior to the October 1990 invasion of Rwanda by the RPF, Sabena Airlines rerouted its airline crews (pilots, hostesses) away from the Hotel Mille des Collines and off to Burundi for their overnights. This was no random decision: it was a calculated policy action meant to insure the safety of company employees in the face of a coming war. Sabena was well informed. A Belgian firm born out of the post-Leopold aviation era in Congo, Sabena was later used to ship diamonds, and probably coltan (columbium-tantalite), out of Kigali by the RPF elites, whose base, again, was in Brussels. It is believed that Sabena's eventual "bankruptcy" was intended to cover their tracks and shield principals from any possible future legal actions stemming from their pillage in the Congo.

What about the elusive American diamond magnate Maurice Tempelsman and his connection to Bill and Hillary Clinton and the diamonds coming out of Kigali? "I don't think that's ever been written about in the New York Times," said Howard French. French confers that Tempelsman employs Lawrence Devlin, former CIA station chief from Mobutu's Zaire, and that he maintains close ties with the CIA. Tempelsman is also on the board of directors of the Harvard AIDS Institute and the Africa-America Institute (Donald Payne is deeply involved with the AAI), he was reported to be Madeleine Albright's lover, and one of the 99 people who accompanied Bill Clinton on his victory tour of Africa. Tempelsman is one of the many untouchables behind the quagmire in Central Africa. [28]

Why has the United States blocked all attempts to investigate the shooting down of the plane and the double presidential assassination that sparked the cataclysm on April 6, 1994? Why hasn't the United Nations pursued an inquiry?

The RPF opposed any military intervention in Rwanda after April 1994. The RPF knew the military situation of the Rwandan army (morale and ammunition) and it did not want any military intervention to snatch its victory from it. Its officials in Washington, London and Brussels told whoever would listen that any international force would be met with RPF military resistance.

Heartless Darkness

Notably, the source for the Hotel Rwanda Companion Book timeline chapter is the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook 2004 (the previous chapter is filled with the standard deceptions, and it appears without attribution).[29] It is not surprising then that the roles of the US and other outside Western powers and multinational corporations are hidden.

The most egregious omissions revolve around the Democratic Republic of Congo: the ongoing destruction and depopulation of Congo receives remarkably little press coverage in contrast to the Darfur region of neighboring Sudan, despite the obvious evidence that the scale and nature of atrocities against innocent civilians in Congo has been far worse, over a longer period of time, and profound but unnecessary human suffering.

After consolidating power in Rwanda in 1994, and following on massive crimes against humanity there, the RPF shelled and dismantled refugee camps in eastern Congo (then Zaire) in the summer of 1996, in further massive and egregious violations of international law and the Geneva Convention. The new RPF government has never wavered in its efficacious tactic of calling attention to an ongoing genocide against the Tutsis - the Jews of Africa - who were "abandoned by the United States and Europe" to suffer the fate of genocide.

The pretext of ongoing “genocide” against the Tutsis has been used by the RPF over and over to justify the most egregious and hostile violations of international law and human rights. Continuing to implement what is now clearly a well-coordinated and premeditated plan, and with complete logistical and tactical military support from the Pentagon and its outsourced private military companies, including Halliburton, Ronco, and Military Professional Resources Incorporated, the RPF followed its Rwanda victory by invading the sovereign territory of Congo (Zaire), its huge western neighbor. Drawing on its previous military alliance, training and rear bases in Uganda, the RPF allied with Yoweri Museveni and the Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) to march across the Congo, unseat Habyarimana’s close friend, Congo’s (Zaire’s) President Mobutu Sese Seko, and conquer the vast, mineral rich Congo.

“The international community has refused to bring effective pressure to bear on Rwanda to create conditions of security,” wrote Rwanda scholar David Newbury, in 1996.[30] Marginalized groups like the Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda have repeatedly echoed this obvious truth. “The continuous prevalence of impunity has encouraged the leaders of the RPF/RPA to perpetrate crimes against humanity, war crimes and acts of genocide in Rwanda and DRC without fear of prosecution. It has consolidated the power and the wealth of criminal elements within the RPF-led dictatorial regime.” [31]

And so it continues today. Paul Kagame and James Kabarebe and the Tutsi government of Rwanda continue to destabilize the Great Lakes Region of Africa, with infiltration of terror cells throughout the neighboring Congo, just as they did in Rwanda (1985-1994). They are appeased or courted, the saintly victims of genocide, and they enjoy total impunity and all the benefits of an elite club. Similarly, the Human Rights Watch press alert of July 1, 2005, for example, targeting the Congolese government, is a veiled defense of Rwandan-US interests in DRC: it is written by Alison Des Forges, from Kigali.[32]

Both Hotel Rwanda film and the companion book neatly encapsulate the entire mythology of genocide in Rwanda and the invented heroism of now president Paul Kagame and the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF). The true and deeper facts that receive little attention, if any at all, are {1} the RPF’s illegal invasion of Rwanda from Uganda in 1990; {2} its record of war crimes committed from 1990-1994; {3} the RPF double assassination of the Hutu presidents of Burundi and Rwanda on April 6, 1994; {4} the RPF’s massive contre-genocide of hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees in Congo (Zaire), of refugees returning to Rwanda from Congo, and of Hutus in Rwanda itself; {5} the RPF’s repeated invasions and continuing looting and devastation of the Congo, with the involvement and sanction of RPF officials at the highest level, that continues today; and {6} the roles of Western institutions, individuals and corporations, and the economic and political benefits that accrue to them, at the expense of Africa and her people.

What has motivated Paul Rusesabagina? It is interesting to note that Rusesabagina has been widely lauded and financially rewarded for his story, the rights to his story, and for his alignment with US government and military officials in service to various political and military agendas. In 2000 he was awarded the Immortal Chaplain’s prize, and received the award with a handshake from US Senator Bob Dole. Rusesabagina traveled with a Pentagon escort and his namesake actor Don Cheadle to Darfur, Sudan in 2004, to draw attention to the questionable “genocide” occurring there. [33]Notably, Rwandan Defense Forces were dispatched to Darfur, where they serve as US proxy warriors.[34]

Hotel Rwanda is merely the latest production in a protracted campaign of psychological

warfare. It is a dangerous work of agitation propaganda because it wets the wide and naive eyes and touches the open and caring hearts of Western viewers. It is deceptive and when viewers depart the cinema with popcorn and chocolate stuck between their teeth they leave thinking they know something about what happened in Rwanda. We as viewers enjoy the idea that we are being educated, when instead we are being indoctrinated, and the insidious effects of the indoctrination are unappreciated. Hotel Rwanda exemplifies the careless, simplistic reductionism that is universally manifest in the West's representations of Africa.

Phil Taylor, former investigator for the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda (ICTR) says it aptly. "For anyone who followed closely the 1994 crisis in Rwanda the highly touted film Hotel Rwanda is merely a propaganda statement interrupted by bouts of acting."

The racism and segregation that played out in Rwanda cataclysm of 1994, where there were very different conditions and outcomes between whites and blacks, continues to be played out today. The telling and re-telling of the Rwanda 'genocide' story by its very nature revolves around a system of institutionalized segregation. Powerful whites in powerful 'gatekeeper' positions in the West hold a virtual monopoly over the information. Alongside of them are the select voices of non-whites who validate the predominant discourse. These 'experts' include Alison des Forges; General Romeo Dallaire; Philip Gourevitch; Victoria Brittain; Samantha Power; Mahmood Mamdani; and many, many others.

"They believe Alison des Forges because she is white and they don't believe me because I am black and I don't speak English so well," says Jean-Marie Higiroy. "She is the expert, even though she was an observer and I was a participant."

We can't intimately know the hardships of Paul Rusesabagina, or the trauma of Romeo Dallaire, or the sorrows of Jean Marie Higiroy, or the suffering of the other survivors of the cataclysm in Rwanda, and we must search our own souls on their behalf: the struggle of good versus evil reigns within us all. Indeed, there is a certain arrogance behind this writing, because neither was I a participant in Rwanda. But any hesitation I have in challenging the 'right and proper tale' is overwhelmed by the obscenity of the obvious injustice.

If truth is the first casualty in war, then those of us who are lucky observers must endlessly work to resurrect it. In Central Africa, today, truth mingles with the souls of the dead, forsaken amidst the unheard cries of some seven million—mostly innocent people—whose life on this earth ground to a gruesome, meaningless conclusion.

Keith Harmon is an independent freelance journalist and investigator entirely dependent on individual donations and voluntary contributions. He has lived under the poverty line for over a decade, and he has continues to work as a volunteer for three non-profit humanitarian organizations. Without your support, he cannot continue to do this important and insightful work. His website is www.allthingspass.com

NOTES:

1.Samantha Power, "Remember the Blood Frenzy of Rwanda," Los Angeles Times, April 4, 2004.

2 Village genocide courts, or Gacaca tribunals, began operating in Rwanda in March 2005. See: Edras Ndikumana, "Rwanda's Hutus Flee Genocide Courts," 19 April 2005; and "Rwandan President asks Fleeing Residents to Return," Reuters, June 3, 2005.

3 Samantha Power, A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide.

- 4 Howard French, "In Zaire Forest Hutu Refugees Near the End of the Road," New York Times, March 13, 1997; see also Howard French, *Africa: A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa*.
- 5 René Lemarchand noted in his authoritative text *Rwanda and Burundi* (Pall Mall Press, 1970) that "the term Inyenzi is currently used within and outside Rwanda to refer to small-scale Tutsi-led guerilla units trained and organized outside Rwanda and varying in size from about six to ten men."
- 6 Mouvement Republicain National pour la Démocratie et le Développement or National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND).
- 7 *The Iceberg of the Conflict in Africa of the Great Lakes Region: Lawsuit Against Those Responsible for the Concealed Crimes Against Humanity*, International Forum for Truth and Justice in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, .
- 8 Charles Onana, *The Secrets of the Genocide...*
- 9 See: Pierre-Damien Mvuyekure, "Philip Gourevitch's Platonic and Conradian Eyes on the Genocide in Rwanda, » in Ishmael Reed's *Konch*.)
- 10 See: <http://www.usip.org/peacewatch/1998/1298/profile.html>
- 11 Interview, Howard French, March 30, 2005.
- 12 Robin Philpot, *Rwanda: Colonialism Dies Hard*, English version published on-line by the Taylor Report, .
- 13 Terry George, Ed., *Hotel Rwanda - The Official Companion Book*, Newmarket Press, 2005.
- 14 A paper scheduled for publication, fall 2005, by Jean-Marie Vianney Higiro.
- 15 Some of them are: *Alliance* edited by Alliance National Unity (RANU), an organization that later changed its name into Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF); *Congo Nil*, edited in Belgium by François Rutanga; *Impuruza*, edited by Alexander Kimenyi in the United States; *Inkotanyi*, edited by the RPF; *Intego*, edited by José Kagabo in France; *Munyarwanda*, edited by the Association of Concerned Banyarwanda in Canada; *Avant Garde*; *Le Patriote*; *Huguka*; and *Umulinzi*.
- 16 The term Banyarwanda refers to ethnic Tutsis, and has been most often used to describe Tutsi refugees in Congo (Zaire).
- 17 Mouvement Republicain National pour la Démocratie et le Développement or National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND).
- 18 Robin Philpot, *Rwanda: Colonialism Dies Hard*, published in English on-line by the Taylor Report, .
- 19 "Perception management" is the contemporary term for "propaganda," and it too is an industry.
- 20 See: the GenoDynamics Project, .
- 21 Frank Smythe, *Arming Rwanda*, Human Rights Watch, January 1994.
- 22 See Wayne Madsen, *Covert Action Quarterly*.
- 23 See: Rory Carroll, "Genocide Tribunals 'Ignoring Tutsi Crimes,'" *Guardian*, January 13, 2005.
- 24 *The Iceberg of the Conflict in Africa of the Great Lakes Region: Lawsuit Against those responsible for the Concealed Crimes Against Humanity*, The International Forum for Truth and Justice in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, .
- 25 Second Lt Aloys Ruyenzi, Major General Paul Kagame Behind the Shooting Down of Late President Habyarimana's Plane: An Eye Witness Testimony, Norway, July 5, 2004.
- 26 David Newbury, "Convergent Catastrophes in Central Africa," November 1996, .
- 27 Front for the Democratic Liberation of Congo (FDLR) forces in eastern Congo number 40,000.
- 28 See: Wayne Madsen, *Genocide and Covert Operations in Africa, 1993-1999*, Mellon Press, 1999.

29 For more information, it adds, see: .

30 David Newbury, "Convergent Catastrophes in Central Africa," November 1996, .

31 RDR Calls for the Prosecution of Crimes Against Humanity and Other Violations of the International Law Committed by the Rwandan [RPF/RDF] Army, Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda, Press Release 9/2001, September 2001.

32 Alison Des Forges, D.R. Congo: Civilians Killed as Army Factions Clash, Human Rights Watch, Press Release, July 1, 2005.

33 See: < <http://www.immortalchaplains.org/Prize/Ceremony2000/Rusesabagina/rusesabagina.htm> >.

34 "Rwanda Defense Forces" was the name eventually adopted to rename the former Rwanda Patriotic Front/Army.

35 Jean Marie Higiro notes: "Academics and journalists divide Hutus into two categories: moderates and extremists following the myths of Hollywood. They never suggest that there were Hutu who did not belong to either category. There were those who were terrified by both sides and who just fled for their lives. Academics and journalists never do the same [segregating] for Tutsis and of course never for the RPF even though the RPF was a conglomerate of Tutsi supremacists, Republicans and monarchists. These supremacists are highly placed in the current government. Tito Rutaremara, one of the ideologues of the RPF is one of them, and General Ibingira, the butcher of Kibeho are some of them.

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