



# America's Wars on Democracy in Rwanda and the DR Congo

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Justin Podur

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction: I Am Not an Africanist

*Independence Day, 2020.* Picture the scene. It's June 30, 2020, sixty years since the Democratic Republic of the Congo became independent of Belgium. At a stadium in Kinshasa, the country's stunning capital and the seat of the United Nations, the 95-year-old Lumumba, three-time prime minister, one-time president, later secretary-general of the United Nations, and now a retired senator, is asked to give what all Congolese suspect will be his last words in public, as he is frail and rarely leaves his house these days. Accompanied by his grandchildren, Lumumba shuffles up to the microphone to address the gathered thousands of people on the Independence Day celebration.

Men and women of the Congo, Victorious Independence Fighters, I salute you in my own name only today, for I am no longer a representative of the Congolese government.

“Sixty years ago, on this day, June 30, as promised, Belgium passed the reins of government over to Congo's elected parliament seamlessly, creating a giant Black Republic in the middle of Africa.” Tears welled up in the crowd, who remembered how the elected president, Kasavubu, was quickly overshadowed by the talented, energetic prime minister, Lumumba, who quickly emerged from the mentorship of Kwame Nkrumah to become the leader of a pan-African movement.

Over the next six decades, our Congo paved the way for democratic, parliamentary politics in Africa, while also using our immense mineral wealth, building on the undamaged infrastructure inherited from the era of Belgian colonialism to build a high-tech manufacturing base and become the engine of economic growth in Africa. The South African Apartheid regime was unable to hold on for very long after our country's two decade long rise. With our country's economy powering the growth of the rest of the continent, even as our democratic system inspired other African countries, the apartheid regime was not able to face down the extraordinary opposition of the South African people. The Soweto Uprising in 1976 was enough to finish that old racist project off.

Older people in the audience remember some of the frightening moments of those years, like the attempted coup by one of Lumumba's military officers, Joseph-Desire Mobutu, who was sacked, court-martialed, and briefly imprisoned in the late 1960s.

Those decades were not without challenges, for us and our neighbours. With our size and might, we had the obligation to intervene to put a stop to ethnic violence in Burundi and Rwanda and help negotiate peaceful, multiethnic parliamentary governments in these neighbouring countries. Let us honour the representatives of those governments, who are here today and who are celebrating their own independence in these days!

The elected presidents of Burundi and Rwanda stand to the applause of the crowd.

I am very old now, and leave the future to the young generation. But many years ago I made a speech here in this city, and I would like to reflect on what we have achieved. We have achieved peace, prosperity, and greatness. We have established social justice. We have showed the world what the black man, and the black woman, can do when working in liberty, and we have made the Congo the pride of Africa. We have instituted in the country a peace resting not on guns and bayonets but on concord and good will.

Lumumba coughs, takes a sip of water, and finished his speech: "Eternal glory to the fighters for national liberation! Long live independence and African unity! Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!"

Sadly, this is not what happened.



Instead of living to age 95 to give a speech on Independence Day to a prosperous and powerful nation, Lumumba was murdered at age 35, his country in ruins. Instead of intervening to stop the conflicts in the Congo's neighbors, those neighboring countries' conflicts spilled over into the political and military vacuum created by the Congo's collapse. Instead of Lumumba's dream coming to fruition, it was drowned in blood.

Instead of being quickly stopped by its powerful neighbor, the genocide in Rwanda has become the evergreen example of inhumanity, used in everything from anti-bullying books<sup>1</sup> to the example of evil, alongside the Nazis and the Taliban, in business books.<sup>2</sup>

In the presentation of Rwanda to Western audiences, the Rwandan Hutu population has a special role to play, the entire population demonized as guilty of genocide against the Tutsis, the massacres suffered by the Hutu community excused in advance in terms of revenge or reprisal. Through decades of dedicated effort by Rwanda's post-1994 rulers and their Western friends, Rwandan Hutus have been rendered what Italian scholar Giorgio Agamben calls *Homo Sacer*.<sup>3</sup> Writing in the late 1990s, after the genocide, Agamben found the Rwandan refugees (obviously Hutus based on the timing and the description) to be the quintessential example of *Homo Sacer*: "It takes only a glance at the recent publicity campaigns to gather funds for refugees from Rwanda to realize that here human life is exclusively considered (and there are certainly good reasons for this) as sacred life – which is to say, as life that can be killed but not sacrificed – and that only as such is it made into the object of aid and protection. The 'imploing eyes' of the Rwandan child... may well be the most telling contemporary cipher of bare life that humanitarian organizations, in perfect symmetry with state power, need."<sup>4</sup>

The special demonization in Western writing of the entire Hutu population of Rwanda has had a devastating impact on the whole region of Central Africa since the genocide and will be given commensurate attention in this book. Writing about the Nazi death camps, Agamben suggests that "The correct question to pose concerning the horrors committed in the camps is, therefore, not the hypocritical one of how crimes of such atrocity could be committed against human beings. It would be more honest and, above all, more useful to investigate carefully the juridical procedures and deployments of power by which human beings could

be so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives that no act committed against them could appear any longer as a crime.”<sup>5</sup> This latter question is what I pose in this book, and I argue that the way in which Rwandans and Congolese in the path of Western-supported dictatorships and war machines are written about in the West is a part of “the deployment of power by which they are deprived of their rights,” such that “no act committed against them could appear any longer as a crime.”

What about the rest of Lumumba’s fictional speech? The difference between Lumumba’s vision and today’s Congolese reality is not coincidence, bad luck, nor the failings of Congolese, but Western policy. The Belgians never intended for the Congo to become a sovereign, independent, parliamentary republic. The US never intended to let the Congolese run their own country. The South African apartheid regime was never going to tolerate an enormous African-ruled power on the continent. All set quickly to work after Independence to undermine those possibilities.

Aime Cesaire described the contours of neocolonial Africa in 1966: “look at it, our Africa! Brought down, tied up, trampled, fixed as a target! But you’ll say to me, she hopes! She suffers, but she hopes! It’s true! For from the bottom of the abyss, she sees the surface blaze and blush, and it grows, it grows, the stain of light!”<sup>6</sup>

American interventions to overthrow and kill Lumumba, to install Mobutu, to support the warlords Kagame and Museveni in Uganda, Rwanda, and beyond, are all extremely well documented, as I will show.

But when these American actions are invoked as the causes of the current broken state of the Congo and its neighbors’ politics and economies, a break occurs for many Westerners. A search for alternative explanations begins. Sure, the empire may have played a destructive role, but what about local corruption? What about the Russians and the Chinese in the Cold War? What about ancient ethnic hatreds, as between the Hutu and the Tutsi, the Hema and the Lendu, the Luba and the Lunda? What about the historical scars caused by Leopold and colonialism?

There are so many distinct tropes, images, arguments, and stories that are used to sow confusion about the relationship between Western interventions and their effects that half of this study is devoted to propaganda about the Congo and Rwanda. This propaganda pops up throughout scholarly and popular literature, as well as media portrayals—any sources Western audiences might try to find to begin to understand

what is happening in Central Africa. In his 2001 book *On the Postcolony*, Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe describes this confusion in terms of an anxiety in Western literature: “Africa as an idea, a concept, has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West’s desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world.”<sup>7</sup>

The first question to be addressed in a study of post-colonial Africa is: What was the role of the former colonizer, the West? There are, roughly speaking, two positions, both of which admit that nineteenth-century imperialism were destructive forces. Most of the writers that will be criticized in this book take the first position, which we can call *Traumatized Africa*: that the West did great harm to Africa through the slave trade and colonialism, then let their damaged, traumatized colonies go, such that the postcolonial condition of Africa is a result of these traumatized, abandoned societies trying to go it alone. I take the second position, which I call *Neocolonial Africa*: Upon Independence, the West (through its leader, the American empire) subverted African democracy, fomented, and supported dictators, warlords, and insurgencies in a neocolonial pattern. The post-colonial condition of Africa is an outcome of ongoing neocolonial policies, not past traumas.

Despite the fact that its author is not a proponent of the Traumatized Africa position, the backbone of the literature is Adam Hochschild’s *King Leopold’s Ghost* (1999). The book has had a ripple effect on Western culture, such that writing on global issues, when it mentions the Congo, always goes back to the book. For example, Canadian writer John Ralston Saul wrote in his *Collapse of Globalism* that the Congo is still grappling with the destruction wrought upon it by King Leopold. Saul is not unique. No one reading the Congo can (or should) avoid Hochschild’s work. Hochschild also points out that Mobutu’s thirty-year dictatorship, which re-traumatized the country, followed Leopold’s pattern in many ways.<sup>8</sup>

But Hochschild also nuanced this argument about the Congo’s special trauma, writing that “what happened in the Congo was indeed mass murder on a vast scale but the sad truth is that the men who carried it out for Leopold were no more murderous than many Europeans then at work or at war elsewhere in Africa.”<sup>9</sup> “Within a decade of [Leopold’s] head start,” he notes, “similar forced labor systems for extracting rubber were in place in the French territories west and north of the Congo River, in Portuguese-ruled Angola, and in the nearby Cameroons under

the Germans.” In French Congo, “Forced labor, hostages, slave chains, starving porters, burned villages, paramilitary company sentries, and the *chicotte* were the order of the day.”<sup>10</sup> In the German-controlled territories, it was simple genocide, announced in advance by signed extermination order.<sup>11</sup> It is true that among these other ex-colonies—Angola, Namibia, Congo-Brazzaville—there are no developmental models for the world. But all have recovered better than the DR Congo.

Japan, Germany, and Russia were all destroyed by World War II. Vietnam was destroyed by the US war against it. All were traumatized by war, more recently than the Congo and all have recovered far better than the Congo from Leopold. Something beyond distant national trauma is at work here.

The Congo’s lack of recovery is due to the country’s lack of sovereignty. The struggle for Congolese sovereignty began in the late 1950s under Belgian colonialism, when Leopold’s direct rule was long past. Congolese sovereignty was fought, and defeated, by a united coalition of Western powers organized and led by the United States. The defeat of Congolese nationalism by a determined Western coalition led by the US and including the UN explains what happened in the Congo since, and it explains it better than the idea of lingering trauma inflicted by Leopold. The Congo could have recovered from Leopold, however bad he was, had the Congo’s incipient democracy under Patrice Lumumb a not been overthrown. Though his work has been used to make the case about the Congo’s insurmountable traumas, I don’t think Hochschild would disagree.

But if there are neocolonial policies at work here—if the empire has been subverting African struggles for sovereignty and democracy since Independence—then the Traumatized Africa idea, despite its relatively benign and empathetic basis, can serve as a cover for America’s depredations in the continent. And in providing that cover, contemporary neocolonial propaganda shares much with the colonial propaganda of the last century.

Western writers on the Congo have not freed themselves from colonial traditions and depictions. Kevin Dunn has argued that almost all the Western writers on this region imagine the Congo through a set of images developed during the high point of imperialism in the nineteenth century: the Dark Continent.

The quintessential piece of colonial propaganda on Africa, on which contemporary propagandists continue to draw, is the *Heart of Darkness*

by Joseph Conrad. It took an African writer to show clearly what the *Heart of Darkness* was. Chinua Achebe wrote the definitive criticism in the essay “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.”<sup>12</sup> Achebe exposes not only the racism that underlies the worldview of the book, but also the aesthetic trick that makes it possible: “his method amounts to no more than a steady, ponderous, fake-ritualistic repetition of two antithetical sentences, one about silence and the other about frenzy,” as in “The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy.”<sup>13</sup> Achebe finds a passage in which Conrad describes a black woman as “savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent... with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose.” Later, a white woman is described as having “a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering.”<sup>14</sup> As the protagonist travels on the river, he encounters savage cannibals. They rarely speak, but when they do, it is to demand that people be handed over to them for eating.

“Joseph Conrad,” Achebe concludes, “was a thoroughgoing racist. That this simple truth is glossed over in criticisms of his work is due to the fact that white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking that its manifestations go completely unremarked.”<sup>15</sup> But while Conrad is “now safely dead,” “unfortunately, his heart of darkness plagues us still.”<sup>16</sup>

Achebe answers the argument that Conrad was there, sailing down the Congo River in 1890 when none of us were: “I will not accept just any traveller’s tales solely on the grounds that I have not made the journey myself. I will not trust the evidence even of a man’s very eyes when I suspect them to be as jaundiced as Conrad’s.”<sup>17</sup>

Achebe finds in Conrad’s memoir a recording of his first encounter with an Englishman, who “cast a glance of kindly curiosity and a friendly gleam of big, sound, shiny teeth... his white calves twinkled sturdily.”<sup>18</sup>

Popular literature on Central African politics is more plagued by Conrad’s heart of darkness than most fields. Conrad is alive and well in the writing of the Africanists, who would have greatly benefited from reading Achebe back in 1988.

The racism toward Africa infused in Western culture and writing described by Achebe has a material counterpart in the need to defend the racist, colonial regime that ruled in South Africa and held determining influence throughout the continent until the 1990s. A sovereign Congo would have proven the West wrong. The West would have had to be a different place to have allowed pluralistic, Black republics in Central

Africa while the apartheid regime flourished in South Africa, “the racist slave galleon, armed with its tanks with its machine guns, with its cannons, with its planes, with its Bible, with its laws, with its tribunals, with its press, with its hatred, with its lies.”<sup>19</sup>

Nor have all contemporary Western writers on Africa freed themselves from the scientific racism of the nineteenth century. Scientific racism and its relative, Malthusianism, still have a hold on scholarship in the Congo. The Belgians also decided that Burundi and Rwanda were overpopulated, and the Congo under-populated, “especially by ‘useful’ Africans. This led to programmes to transfer families from Rwanda to eastern Congo, with consequences that are still being felt.”<sup>20</sup> The concept of “overpopulation” is itself contentious and highly politicized.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, even modern scholars unthinkingly repeat these colonialist notions of an “overpopulated” Rwanda and an “underpopulated” Congo.<sup>22</sup> One of Kagame’s American biographers, Stephen Kinzer, made the Malthusian point like this: “I love Rwandans, but I don’t want there to be too many of them. There are enough already... It was and is one of the world’s most densely populated countries. If its population continues to grow at current rates, it is doomed.”<sup>23</sup>

Environmentalism grappled with the idea of “overpopulation” since the 1970s. Feminist scholars also have addressed the problem, including Betsy Hartmann (1987) and Angus and Butler (2011). Unfortunately, their contributions have not reached the mainstream scholarship on the Congo and Rwanda, in which writers frequently use the word overpopulation uncritically. “Overpopulation was reaching critical levels,” land hunger and cattle hunger “in a poor and increasingly overpopulated country” constituted “not a negligible incentive” for participating in genocide, wrote Prunier<sup>24</sup> about Rwanda in 1989–1994, when the population was two million less than it is currently. Refuting scientific arguments about population, Prunier first ridicules them: “This is still a taboo, because human beings are not supposed to be rats in a laboratory cage and Christians, Marxists, Islamic fundamentalists and World Bank experts will all tell you that overpopulation is relative and that God (or modern technology or the Shari’a) will provide. But let whoever has not at least once felt murderous in a crowded subway at rush hour throw the first stone.”<sup>25</sup> There are, of course, no subways, crowded or not, in Rwanda or the Congo. Another scholar similarly wrote that Rwanda was overpopulated. Yet another refers to Belgian colonization of the Kivus as a way to “alleviate overpopulation and periodic famine in Rwanda.”<sup>26</sup>

What is the obsession with presenting Africa in such a slanted way? Achebe's diagnosis: "the West seems to suffer deep anxieties about the precariousness of its civilization and to have a need for constant reassurance by comparison with Africa. If Europe, advancing in civilization, could cast a backward glance periodically at Africa trapped in primordial barbarity it could say with faith and feeling: There go I but for the grace of God. Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray – a carrier on whom the master unloads his physical and moral deformities so that he may go forward, erect and immaculate."<sup>27</sup> Mbembe argues further that Western "narrative about Africa is always pretext for a comment about something else, some other place, some other people."<sup>28</sup>

The main task these Western writers, who I call the Africanists<sup>29</sup> in this book, have taken up, as Achebe identifies it, is one of justification. The inequality between the West and Africa is so stark that it must be explained—by the West, in terms of the Africans' own flaws. The technical definition of "Africanist" is merely an academic specialist on Africa. But I use "Africanist" the way Edward Said used the word "Orientalist," as someone who deploys tropes about Africans in a way that shields the empire from scrutiny. The Africanist, like the Orientalist, interprets the continent and its people for the Westerner, explaining the complexities and intricacies of the strange and different African mind.

Take, as an example, a 2013 explainer by Amnesty International's Congo expert, Thomas Turner.

Turner's short book, called simply *Congo*, is a single-volume, definitive analysis of the Congo wars. And in it, readers can find passages about what the Congolese believe, like this one:

As we have just noted, many Congolese, particularly those who have gone to school, believe in the social contract. That is, they believe that the state should provide for their security and wellbeing in exchange for their loyalty. They also believe in the myth of the yoke, attributing all of their misfortune to foreign invasion. They will need to get beyond this myth, and take responsibility for their own futures. This is particularly the case for Congolese women.<sup>30</sup>

The Congolese believe in the *myth of the yoke*, a myth they "need to get beyond," *particularly women*. For a book analyzing wars that killed millions of people and involved foreign invasions and occupations by multiple countries, these are extraordinary assertions. And worse, in addition

to attributing to the Congolese mass misbelief in the myth of the yoke, Turner also argues that the Congolese needs to be under foreign tutelage:

The combination of great riches to be had, and a weak state largely incapable of repelling invaders, means that future wars are likely. The Congolese people will continue to need protection, from their own government and from other, stronger states, until they can protect themselves.<sup>31</sup>

In other words, Turner freely presents mutually contradictory arguments: a book full of evidence of foreign occupations and wars followed by an excoriation of that country's population for attributing the country's problems to those wars; an argument that Congolese need to take responsibility for themselves and their problems that is immediately followed by a somber reflection that the Congo needs to be controlled by "other, stronger states." This is Africa: There are no standards for consistency in reasoning in writing about it.

As Turner continues, he discusses one of the most contentious aspects of the Central African wars—the questions of how many people were killed, and by who. From the 1980s to the present, millions of people were killed by different antagonists in a series of connected wars from the Ugandan civil wars, to the Burundi civil wars, to the Rwandan Civil War, genocide, and counterinsurgency, to the Congo invasions and wars. Among these millions, only the figure of 800,000 killed in the Rwandan genocide, in which (mostly) Rwandan Tutsi civilians were killed by (mostly) Rwandan Hutu militias, is taken as definitive. The rest of the killings, especially those by the regimes currently in power in Rwanda and Uganda, are treated as contentious, inestimably complex, as can be read in Turner's book. Reviewing the sources and studies on death counts in the Congo wars, Turner comes to no definitive conclusions. "War zone statistics are inevitably political," he writes, noting that international organizations did have a "material interest in exaggerating the suffering of the Congolese."<sup>32</sup> The problem, Turner suggests with this line, is that international organizations are *exaggerating the suffering* of the people who lived through the worst wars since World War II.

Moving on to rape, Turner suggests that "far from being mainly produced by men in uniform, rape is often and perhaps increasingly the work of civilians, including women."<sup>33</sup> The Congolese woman rapist isn't discussed further in Turner, leaving the reader wondering. What



could explain the prevalence of these rapes? All of Turner's possible candidates are *cultural*: "The literature suggests three possibilities, not mutually exclusive. These are a culture of rape, a culture of violence, and a culture of impunity."<sup>34</sup> As he runs through these cultural explanations, he treats his readers to a comparison of rape in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to US "gangsta rap"—also a *cultural phenomenon*, to be sure.

Turner then suggests that the absence of colonial discipline is responsible as an explanation for rape by the armed forces: "The colonial administration maintained control over these men through harsh discipline. That control was lost in the mutiny that followed independence in 1960, and has never been fully restored."<sup>35</sup> Perhaps if the Belgians could come back to crack the whips, the problem of sexual violence might go away? Finally, Turner gives us a discussion of "the sense of entitlement on the part of the Rwandans and on the part of the Congolese," which is "key to understanding this violence."<sup>36</sup>

At the end of Turner's discourse, Western readers have nothing to go on—no idea why the Congo wars happened, no idea about why they took the violent form that they did—except for the idea that, like "gangsta rap" in the US, there are *cultural factors* and misbeliefs by the Congolese and Rwandan victims that have made them get invaded, raped, massacred, and exploited. Conrad's heart of darkness haunts us still.

American Congo specialist Jason Stearns, who worked on Congo for the UN and the International Crisis Group, says in his exotically titled 2011 book *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters* that he wants to "understand why war made more sense than peace, why the *regional political elites* seem to be so rich in opportunism and so lacking in virtue."<sup>37</sup>

He implies that he is seeking a systemic analysis. But what system is Stearns talking about? Since his object of study is *regional political elites*, it is not an international system. Stearns quotes "a Congolese friend and parliamentarian," who says "in order to survive, we all have to be a bit corrupt, a bit ruthless. That's the system here."<sup>38</sup> Describing doing business, Stearns talks of the "subtext" of an interview with a businessman, which was "this is the Congo – if we didn't get our hands dirty once in a while, we would be out of business." He continues that, "for many, cut-and-dry morality was out of place here."<sup>39</sup>

He provides a list of figures who failed because of their idealism: Etienne Tshisekedi, Wamba dia Wamba, Che Guevara—"the Congo has

always defied the idealists.” Wamba dia Wamba is supposed to be an illustration of the “tragic state of Congolese leadership: even when a man with pristine political and ethical credentials tries to effect change, the results are poor.”<sup>40</sup> Stearns tops off the story of Wamba with a series of racist statements from unattributed expatriate workers. “The Congolese like fun and dancing,” “you can buy anybody here,” “they are like children.”<sup>41</sup> Stearns doesn’t dispute these caricatures, though he calls them a “patronizing attitude” among “Indian, European, Arab, or American.” He simply takes these expatriates to task for refusing to “ponder why these alleged traits have developed.”<sup>42</sup> Having accepted that there is some kind of corrupting influence that the Congo has, Stearns creates a straw man to knock down by saying the corrupting influence is not due to “some genetic defect in Congolese DNA... or even something about Congolese culture.”<sup>43</sup> But what he offers instead? The dysfunction is apparently “deeply rooted in the country’s political history”—in slavery, colonialism, and Mobutu’s dictatorship which leaves idealistic leaders with “a lack of a popular base and the abject weakness of the state.” As a result, “the fiercest ideology or ethics that can be found in the country is ethnic.”<sup>44</sup>

Sometimes, Stearns writes, “it seems that by crossing the border into Congo one abandons any sort of Archimedean perspective on truth and becomes caught up in a web of rumors and allegations, as if the country itself were the stuff of some post-modern fiction.”<sup>45</sup> Stearns thinks this might be because of a “structural deficit,” with no free press, independent judiciary, or “inquisitive parliament.” “But it has also become a matter of cultural pride. People weave rumors and myths together over drinks or while waiting for taxis to help give meaning to their lives.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, *The Congolese lie. They can’t help it – it’s in their deep history.*

Conrad’s haunting is even more explicit in the top book about Mobutu’s dictatorship, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz* (HarperCollins 2001) by Michaela Wrong. The title of the book and its introduction naturally reference Joseph Conrad’s ubiquitous *Heart of Darkness*. As Achebe warned about apologists for Conrad, when explaining her choice of title Wrong argues that Conrad was really talking about Western depravity, not Congolese depravity. Even leaving aside Achebe’s answer to this—that making the Congo and its people a mere backdrop for a study of Western depravity is a problem in itself—Wrong’s own use of imagery belies her argument. For it is the Congo that corrupts those who touch it, including Mobutu himself, who, “like Mr. Kurtz... had been swallowed up by the forest and the fantasies it spawned.”<sup>47</sup>

One of Wrong's driving questions throughout her book is stated in her chapter on King Leopold's legacy: "whether there is any causal link between Belgium's exploitative regime and the excesses of Mobutu's rule, whether a frighteningly efficient kleptocratic system effectively softened up a community for a repeat performance."<sup>48</sup> Wrong's question is not about Western elites or Congolese ones. It is about the Congolese people. It is their deficiencies that Wrong is trying to explain. The mystery is "the country's capacity to take the faults of any normal African state and pitch them one frequency higher."<sup>49</sup>

And she explains it, once again, in psychological terms. "Dulled since Leopold to the notion of outside forces determining their fate, a defeatist population became convinced he could only be ousted by external intervention." The Congolese were "balked of expression, unable to advance," and so their "mindsets froze over somewhere in the 1960s."<sup>50</sup> It was all "nurtured by a brutal colonial past, followed by a unique level of meddling by the Western powers."<sup>51</sup>

This idea of trauma and amnesia is a *psychological explanation* that recurs throughout Wrong's text. But the idea of the softening up of the population is a fuzzy one, when the reality is concrete. Trained under Belgium, Mobutu made policies modeled on Belgium's. And like Belgium's colonial enterprise was underwritten by Britain, the great power of the time, Mobutu's policies were underwritten by the US. Since Mobutu, the country has become a virtual protectorate of the donor countries. These are political and economic realities that are fundamental to understanding any conflict in any part of the world. There is no need to resort to the mysteries of mass psychology, of trauma and amnesia. But this is Africa, the land of mystery, so mysterious explanations must be found.

Wrong's book has some quotes from Congolese, and some interviews with former officials of Mobutu's, but the bulk of the material of the book comes from Westerners and their views on the Congo—expatriates, Belgian and US officials, settlers: The chapter on Belgian colonialism relies on Belgian scholars Jules Marchal and Jean Stengers; the chapter on Mobutu's family relies on interviews with a young "Belgian social climber" named Pierre Janssen who married the dictator's daughter not because of his "fascination with celebrity," but because of his "natural predilection for black women."<sup>52</sup> Wrong illustrates the insecurity and looting at the end of Mobutu's reign through the eyes of a French farm owner who made a fortune in the Congo and then lost it to looters.<sup>53</sup>

These detailed portraits are supplemented with quotes from a German banker possessed of “very Prussian meticulousness, wrapped in a thick layer of obstinacy,”<sup>54</sup> US State Department officials, and former Belgian colonials like the one who tells her, combining colonial and sexist attitudes, that “This country is like a woman. She cheats on you once and you forgive her and come back. Then she cheats you again and you forgive her once more. She keeps cheating and you keep coming back.”<sup>55</sup>

Her chapter on Rwanda’s genocide is based on Prunier’s book *The Rwanda Crisis*, which she calls “the definitive account,” “clear, authoritative and utterly compelling.”<sup>56</sup> From it, she got the explanation of the genocide in terms of Hutu obedience, “the instincts of unquestioning obedience nurtured in one of Africa’s most rigidly bureaucratic states. Sure enough, Hutu villagers did precisely as they were told.”<sup>57</sup> As for the refugee camps where the millions of Rwandans who fled from Kagame’s RPF lived and died in eastern Congo, they “coalesced, solidified, and implanted themselves in the flesh” of the country like... you guessed right, “a monstrous cancer.”<sup>58</sup>

The image of a cancer in these African bodies politic, feeding off of the healthy structures the benevolent colonialists tried to bequeath, of a trauma corrupting the very mind of the African polity, substitutes for the hard thinking that needs to be done about how we got here and what to do now. And even though the idea that the Congolese are irrational because they are traumatized seems like a more humane approach than the (seemingly conflicting but usually coexisting) idea that they have a collective personality disorder (“the myth of the yoke”) and blame others for their problems, it is no improvement. For trauma victims are not responsible for their actions—they need to be treated and cared for, and others need to make decisions for them. The argument of African trauma amounts to another justification for Western tutelage.

The experts reinforce one another’s authority. Jason Stearns (on whom more below) is another recipient of Michaela Wrong’s praise: a blurb on the back of his book *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters* reads: “anyone who knows the Congo will tell you there’s no one to rival Jason Stearns on the topic.”

This might come as a surprise to some Congolese.

Describing the collapse of Mobutu’s state in the face of the Rwandan invasion in 1996, Wrong takes a moment to ridicule the established fact that the invasion was supported by the US, refuting it with a colorful, if hard to picture, image: “the AFDL’s lightning advance was not the result

of massive logistical support from Anglophone Western nations determined to destroy their former ally. Zaire's security system was collapsing like a maggot-eaten fruit."<sup>59</sup>

Wrong's methods are based on an architecture of psychological explanation, answering well-established arguments with ridicule, and substituting imagery and anecdote for argument. These aesthetic and analytical choices are shared by other Congo experts, especially Gerard Prunier and Jason Stearns, who I will discuss later in the book.

Wrong's chapter on decolonization and Lumumba is based on time Wrong spends with CIA station chief Lawrence Devlin, who Wrong notes talked to her because he had "time on his hands" and was "the kind of man who clearly enjoyed female company," which made sitting with Wrong a "not entirely unpleasant opportunity to set the record straight."<sup>60</sup> Essentially the sole source for her reporting of Lumumba's rise, fall, and assassination is this CIA agent, Devlin, whose task was removing Lumumba from power and installing Mobutu and who has every reason to lie about it. That she treats Devlin as a fair witness is remarkable. "Poor Lumumba," she writes, quoting Devlin, "He was no communist. He was just a poor jerk who thought 'I can use these people'... it didn't work for him."<sup>61</sup>

Summarizing what she learns from Devlin about Lumumba, she writes: "In the space of a couple of months, Lumumba had managed to outrage the Belgians by insulting their king, appal the West with his flirtation with Moscow and alienate the United Nations." Then, in a summary that clearly comes from Devlin but that is so bizarre that it isn't even substantiated by the many horrifically anti-Lumumba sources available, Wrong continues: "He had also frightened former colleagues by hatching a series of cack-handed assassination plots against his Congolese rivals." The metaphorical fecal matter on Lumumba's hands aside, there is no corroboration of this likely CIA fabrication in any other source, but Wrong repeats it without hesitation.

More from Wrong about Lumumba: "With Mobutu in charge, Lumumba was now in detention, but his Napoleon-like ability to whip up the crowds and convert waverers to his cause – even at times his own jailers – meant he remained a dangerous loose cannon."<sup>62</sup> The possibility that Lumumba may have had popularity and legitimacy because of his nationalist program or the fact that he was the elected and constitutional leader of the country is not presented here. These things couldn't possibly matter to African "crowds" who could be "whipped up." Nor

do they fit with the package the CIA agent wants to present four decades later, through Wrong's book, of Lumumba as a "dangerous loose cannon." Scholars should not allow themselves to be used in this way, as part of the now five decades-old operation to present Congolese nationalism as an untenable proposition and its elected representative, Lumumba, as an untenable leader.

From the footsteps of Mr. Kurtz, the Congolese are exotic and strange, their rituals described as such. Half a chapter is dedicated to describing Congolese men who dress in fancy clothing and dance in clubs, called sapeurs, and features text like this: "The Etutana dance, based on the principle of rubbing yourself vigorously against your partner and with a chorus of 'ca c'est bon', was a reaction to the AIDS awareness campaign which was trying to persuade young Congolese to stop having unprotected sex."<sup>63</sup> Can you picture these Congolese rubbing themselves on their partners? The look of these sapeurs has changed over the years, Wrong notes, mentioning "recent signs that La Sape was being infected by the 'slob' look embraced by America's blacks."<sup>64</sup> In case anyone picking up this book on Mobutu's dictatorship was wondering what it is that is "embraced by America's blacks,"<sup>65</sup> they can find it here.

Describing Mobutu's wife and mistress and how they controlled the finances, she says the two women had "the simplicity of the African peasant who keeps her money tucked under her hat and never goes near a bank."<sup>66</sup> When describing a press conference in Belgium held by Kabila, Wrong's imagery runs over the top: "Pinned under the blazing television studio lights, Kabila radiated a kind of suppressed fury. Drops of sweat stood out on the huge bald head that seemed to blend seamlessly with his torso."<sup>67</sup>

The final image in Wrong's book is one of the author herself (for the author's journey is always a major component in these books) looking at old colonial picture book in her local library in London. The pictures show a prosperous, well-ordered, apartheid colony. "The photographs showed jungle bulldozed to form a city street, oxen making way for cars of the 1950s, a model Congolese family relaxing in a spotless lounge, sipping tea as they listened to the radio. But a vital chapter was missing. Now. That would reveal... the jungle growing back through the potholed tarmac, running water tainted with sewage, neighbourhoods without electricity, walking replacing the car." Wrong is put off by this, bewildered because she cannot recognize the Congo she knows in the

photos of this prosperous colony. “Where were the house-high piles of rubbish, the polio victims in their tricycles?” She is relieved when she finds a picture of a policeman. She looks closely at his face and sees “gold-rimmed, slanting sunglasses – pimp’s sunglasses, sinister trademark of... the torturer possessed of arbitrary, undefined powers. Now there, in that tiny, telling detail, was the country I had come to know and love.”<sup>68</sup> Ordinary Congolese peasants or workers, students or teachers, parents or children—these, Wrong would not recognize. But show her a police wearing the sunglasses of a pimp and a torturer, and in that picture she will see the essence of the Congo.

Turner, Stearns, and Wrong are just three examples—there will be more Africanist writing about Congo to critique as I follow the story of post-colonial Central Africa from Independence to the present. The Traumatized Africa idea hides an *essentialism*: the idea that there is something essential in the racial or cultural character of the Orient (or Africa) that determines the politics and economics of that place. Of course anyone can be traumatized, but the particular dysfunctions of African politics must be explained by the West in terms of their unique responses to these traumas.

Essentialism also takes the form of assigning ethnic and tribal explanations to conflicts in a way that covers up the Western footprint. Hutu-Tutsi. Luba-Lulua. Hema-Lendu. The Congo and its neighbors are understood by the West in terms of *ethnic* conflicts, intractable conflicts between tribes. The information presented is anthropological, the conflicts based on competition over resources. Studies help Western conflict-resolution professionals to go into these regions and help these tribes make peace.

The characteristics Africanists assign to Rwandans, to Hutus and to Tutsis, differ from those assigned to Congolese—in fiction writing, characters should be carefully orchestrated to tell a maximally satisfying story. Kinzer sketches Rwandan character like this: “It is always dangerous to assess a national character, but many who visit Rwanda come away with similar impressions of its people. They seem restrained and introverted. The embrace with which they greet friends is a cool and distant one. They do not like to gossip, tell stories, or give personal advice. Some outsiders find them opaque. ‘Rwandans developed the practice of lying on an individual scale’, says a handbook for teachers prepared by the education ministry... People in countries near Rwanda have for centuries produced some of the world’s most magnificent tribal art. Rwandans do

not overflow with that kind of creativity... Africa's next great poet, novelist, painter, or singer will probably not come from Rwanda, but that does not bother most Rwandans. They have different ambitions."<sup>69</sup>

Unlike Turner's Congolese, always complaining about the yoke of colonialism to anyone who will listen, Kinzer's Rwandans are cool, distant, opaque, uncreative, and a bunch of liars. Rwandans also have a very special type of genetic obedience, assigned to them by Africanists who studied them closely, reported by Prunier: "Rwandese political tradition, going back to the Banyiginya Kingdom through the German and Belgian colonial period, is one of systematic, centralized, and unconditional obedience to authority."<sup>70</sup> Citing a colonial anthropologist named Jean-Jacques Maquet, Prunier states that "unquestioning obedience" of Rwandans "was to play a tragic and absolutely central role in the unfolding of the 1994 genocide."<sup>71</sup> Prunier reminds readers that "there had always been a strong tradition of unquestioning obedience to authority in the pre-colonial kingdom of Rwanda... When the highest authorities in that state told you to do something you did it, even if it included killing."<sup>72</sup> Beyond the authoritarian tradition, there is also "an equally strong acceptance of group identification. In Rwanda, as elsewhere, a man is judged by his individual character, but in Rwandese culture he does not stand alone but is part of a family, a lineage and clan, the dweller on a certain Hill."<sup>73</sup> The idea that Rwandans identify as members of groups might not seem to be something that differentiates them from the rest of humanity, but perhaps readers lack a certain Africanist nuance. In any case, group identification and obedience meant that the genocide was predictable: "the main colouration of the impending violence was deeply Rwandese, deeply embedded in the ambiguous folds of the natural culture." He contrasts these Rwandese minds with French Cartesian minds, suggesting that "it was indeed difficult for Westerners – and especially for French Cartesian minds – to make a meaningful connection between such obscure cultural allusions and the magnitude of the horror then being planned."<sup>74</sup>

Rwandan obedience, according to Prunier, facilitated the genocide. And Rwandan obedience is also why Hutu villagers went to open-air meetings where Kagame's soldiers slaughtered them with pickaxes: They went to the meetings "in typically Rwandese fashion to be told what the new power wanted them to do."<sup>75</sup> In addition to special obedience, Prunier's Hutus also have a special thirst for blood, which is why the Tutsis supported their suppression after 1994. The Tutsis collectively



knew, Prunier writes, “that among the Hutu many were totally unrepentant and hoped for a new occasion to kill again.”<sup>76</sup> Prunier combines the unique Africanist ability to read minds with the most colorful prose as he describes what motivated the Hutus who joined the militias and killed Tutsi civilians: the militias “drew around them a cloud of even poorer people, a lumpenproletariat of street boys, rag pickers, car washers and homeless unemployed. For these people the genocide was the best that could ever happen to them. They had the blessings of a form of authority to take revenge on socially powerful people as long as these were on the wrong side of the political fence. They could steal, they could kill with minimum justification, they could rape and they could get drunk for free. This was wonderful... Social envy came together with political hatred to fire the Interahamwe bloodlust.”

After the genocide, Rwanda was a “world of zombies, satisfied murderers and guilt-ridden killer-victims,”<sup>77</sup> he writes, in the same mode.

As writer Barry Collins notes, “the claims about Rwandans having peculiar cultural traits that enabled them to be exhorted into becoming participants in genocide would clearly set them apart from the rest of humanity.”<sup>78</sup> This is of course the point: to justify what has been done to them, Rwandans must be defined apart from humanity in Western writing.

Essentialism numbs the mind. It prevents the need for a deeper analysis. And from a Western perspective, it also exculpates. For if Africa is poor, perpetually wracked by war, and full of human tragedy, these are all essential to its character, not matters of policy, and certainly not matters of deliberate policy or design.

To make essentialist arguments, the Africanists must ignore counter-evidence. Prunier himself tells a story of when Rwanda’s President Gregoire Kayibanda in 1972 tried to organize vigilante committees against Tutsis following the Burundi genocide against Hutus, Prunier writes, he found that “in the hills the peasants showed no interest.”<sup>79</sup> Hardly the behavior of unquestioningly obedient pawns who would drop whatever they were doing to kill their neighbors at a word of the dictator. But the “obedience” theme continues.

So too does the theme of the eternal categories of Rwanda being Tutsi and Hutu, ignoring the many cleavages in Rwandan society that weren’t Hutu-Tutsi. Northern vs. Southern; Ugandan anglophone vs. Rwandan francophone; class; region; gender. Ignoring as well the fluidity of ethnicity, as discovered by one scholar who interviewed a widow of a local organizer of the genocide.

“During our last interview,” Fujii writes, “I began asking general questions about Therese’s family’s background. At one point, her grandparents did lose some of their cows... but the family never became so poor as to be considered Hutu. During the transition to independence, however, when the newly installed (Hutu) authorities were targeting Tutsi for violence, her grandparents and parents obtained new identity cards that said they were Hutu. I asked Therese why her father had changed his ethnicity. She responded “It was a question of protecting himself and saving his life. Even [today], if there is a change in government, lots of Rwandans would change to Hutu.” Therese’s remark that “even today” people would change their ethnicity to Hutu if the government were to change indicates a very strategic attitude toward ethnicity, not a deeply held, affective attachment, as ethnicity-based approaches assume.”

Fujii continues: “The possibility that people can change their ethnicities creates a level of ambiguity about what it really means to be a Hutu or Tutsi, for a Hutu today may have been a Tutsi before.”<sup>80</sup>

Search through the literature on each phase of modern Congolese history and you will find a set of Congo experts who cite one another, who share “images, themes, motifs,” who “represent” the Congo or “speak on its behalf.” This is no different than scholarship on any topic, since this is how scholarship works: communities of academic experts evaluating and promoting one another’s work. The danger in any field of study is that a set of fashions and assumptions take hold in the community that close off areas of inquiry and bodies of evidence that deserve scrutiny. That danger is more pronounced in fields of study where power and wealth are at stake. It is still more pronounced in fields of study where great crimes have been committed and where great efforts have been made to cover up those crimes. In the Congo and its surroundings, all of these dangers are present.

The Europeans and North Americans who govern the Congo through mining corporations, smuggling operations, international financial institutions, NGOs, United Nations operations, and foreign aid programs read Africanist books and adopt their assumptions. They develop a certain perception of their subjects and of themselves.

One sociologist hanging out in Ituri, in the Congo, came to think of the “international community” there—NGO workers, journalists, UN workers, embassy staff, academics from North America and Europe—as an ethnic group with their own solidarity. Attending a local meeting

between the “international community” and local people, he found “representatives of local society were the ones who did not belong.”<sup>81</sup> He recorded the perceptions of this “international community” toward the locals: “...Strikingly, the perspective on these local actors appeared unanimous to an extent not detectable regarding any other item on the agenda. Local society was either portrayed as *criminal, subordinate, demanding, or endangered*: brutal militias, unruly soldiers, police ordered by the UN to protect expatriates from these soldiers, untrustworthy administrators of toll money, district administration and local chiefs calling for coordination and material support, and market dealers seeking protection from armed groups.”<sup>82</sup> By contrast, the international community’s self-perception “necessarily appeared as *lawful, in charge, donating, an arbiter of local conflict, and protector from fear*.”<sup>83</sup>

These perceptions help in justifying their rule, an undemocratic regime in which “inherently illiberal” because “subjects of intermediary rule may hold neither intermediary nor high authorities to account. Nor may they claim legal rights from whomever. Key government and international organizations remain distant. Subjects’ immediate interlocutors, intermediaries of indirect rule, are able to evade accountability to the extent they can appropriate external resources.”<sup>84</sup>

Western organizations were supposed to eventually turn matters over to locals, but “these transnational institutions continued to appear unable to govern for the public good, and worse, they created new conflicts instead of appeasing existent ones.”<sup>85</sup> But Westerners in Africa are never punished for getting it wrong, nor for harming the people in whose names they work.

I first went to the DRC for some workshops at the Universite Evangelique en Afrique (UEA) in Bukavu. I met the justifiably famous Dr. Denis Mukwege, whose Panzi hospital is a hub for treating the South Kivu’s survivors of rape. To get there, I traveled through Rwanda and spent a few days in Kigali and in Bujumbura in Burundi. I went back again years later to teach summer courses at UEA.

But my politics were not shaped by what I saw or heard in the DRC. I am an internationalist: I believe basically that people are the same all over the world—I don’t trust explanations based on national psyches, racial biology, or cultural character.

I prefer explanations based on material interests and contests for power. I believe historical evidence can shed light on these interests and contests. I study Western foreign policy and wars in the former colonial

world, and I write about the wars and the accompanying propaganda. Somehow the lies that are told to cover up atrocities offend me more than the atrocities themselves. The clouds of confusion that prevent people from being able to understand who is doing what to whom—these are a permanent feature of contemporary war.

In this book, I am trying to start over, burying Conrad's heart of darkness and recognizing where the Africanist literature on Central Africa becomes sophisticated propaganda that exists to justify neo colonialism. Westerners and Africans are all actors in this story, making the country's post-Independence history from the material they had to hand. But the Western actors, while more distant, sell the arms and win the wars, finance and set the policies, and in their writings decide who is worthy of life and death. In particular, as I will argue in this book, the demonization of the Hutus, and to a lesser extent the Congolese, is a poisonous Africanist propaganda line with devastating consequences.

In Chapter 2, I describe how Belgium's colonial policies deliberately de-educated the Congolese and built a racial apartheid system that colonial officials assumed would continue indefinitely. The Independence movement forced Belgium to give up its formal status as colonial master, though it had every intention of continuing as a neocolonial master. Lumumba's speech on Independence Day made it clear to everyone that the Congolese would not be satisfied with neocolonialism. Chapter 3 is a critique of the way Africanists talk about African leaders. When the Africanists write about Lumumba, they make a range of arguments to try to discredit him. Africa wasn't ready for democracy; he would likely have become a petty tyrant; he was uneducated; he was a sexual deviant; he was mentally unstable; he committed strategic blunders. I question the sources of these claims and dispute these assessments. Chapter 4 continues the narrative of Lumumba's struggle with the colonialists up to the moment of his murder, and Chapter 5 follows CIA station chief Lawrence Devlin and his efforts to create a post-Lumumba order beneficial to the US, settling on Mobutu.

Chapter 6 tells the story of the next phase of the struggle. The Lumumbist rebels were a force to be reckoned with for years after their leader's death. To crush the rebellion, the US organized a Western coalition of white supremacist mercenaries on the ground with air support from American planes piloted by anti-Castro Cubans. Che Guevara believed that the Congo was strategically important in the struggle against the empire, and linked up with the Lumumbist rebels in the

east. By the time the Lumumbists were finally defeated, the Congo had passed from a Belgian colony to a US neocolonial possession. Chapter 7 analyzes the political and military consequences of Mobutu's rule and other momentous happenings in the region. In Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, the US supported dictators, including through the Burundi genocide of 1972. The Ugandan Bush War was the training and proving ground for the leadership of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, who would later invade Rwanda and spark the civil war and genocide. Chapter 8 analyzes the economic consequences of the Central African dictatorships. Mobutu's disastrous economic projects were sponsored by the international financial institutions. Western advice, loans, and markets drove Rwanda's economy to collapse, which exacerbated the ethnic violence that culminated in the war and genocide.

Chapter 9 begins the third phase of the story, opening with the Rwandan Civil War and genocide. After Rwandan President Habyarimana's assassination in April 1994 (almost certainly by the RPF), Rwandan government forces were gradually defeated by Kagame's forces while behind government lines, militias massacred (mainly Tutsi) civilians. Kagame, Dallaire, and the US disallowed any international mission to protect civilians, prioritizing their military strategy for conquering the country. Against the opposition of both Kagame and the US, France negotiated Operation Turquoise, the creation of a corridor for refugees to flee into Zaire. I describe the genocide as well as the contemporary RPF massacres, how it was conducted, by whom, and how many were killed and how we know. In Chapter 10, I show the devastating consequences of the Africanist trope of portraying the entire Hutu population as "evil" and of Rwandan dictator Paul Kagame as "good." To do so, the Africanists suppress counter-evidence, define Kagame's crimes as necessary in the face of evil, maximize the numbers of Hutu involved in the genocide, minimize the numbers killed by Kagame to the point of absurdity, and imply that no political, negotiated solution is possible with such evil people. Worse, the Africanists claim, since Hutus are the majority, their evil nature makes democracy impossible as well. As Chapter 11 shows, these beliefs do not stay on the pages of academic texts, but are the bedrocks of an infrastructure of judgment, including the mainstream human rights organizations and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. In Chapter 12, I present the dire and largely unreported consequences of Kagame's rule for Rwandans.

In Chapter 13, I analyze how Africanists claim to know the inner workings of Congolese and Rwandan minds. Africanists argue that Kagame's crimes, to the extent that they occurred at all, were excesses, slippages, whereas the Hutus' crimes were committed out of evil and genocidal intent. Political objections to Kagame's seizure of power are dismissed as irrational fears. These Africanist claims were ideally placed for the rationalization of some of the worst wars of our new century: the two Congo wars, which are taken up in the rest of the book. Chapter 14 tells the story of the 1996–1997 Congo war, following RPF commander James Kabarebe and Rwandan refugee Beatrice Umutesi. Chapter 15 describes the breathless admiration with which the Africanists describe Kagame's military feats while covering his atrocities under the veil of "complexity." Chapter 16 is a narrative of the 1998–2003 Congo war, which resulted in the de facto partition of the country and an insurgency in the Rwandan-occupied east.

In Chapter 17, I show how all of the events and crises narrated in the book have culminated in the creation of a specific system through which the empire rules Central Africa. The same way that the wars became self-financing, the empire's system for governing Central Africa has become self-sustaining. Rwanda is a dictatorship and an exporter of military power. The DR Congo is strung along on a shoestring of aid and mostly bled of revenue, trying to get back on its feet. The region is a source of income and adventure for donors, NGO workers, mining corporations, smugglers, mercenaries, humanitarians, diplomats, UN soldiers, journalists, and scholars. The possibilities for the future are in the hands of the young populations of Rwanda and the DR Congo. To free themselves from the empire, they will have to develop their ideas independently from the Africanists, who have made careers of shaming and silencing young Rwandans and Congolese, the better to speak on their behalf.

## NOTES

1. Barbara Coloroso's *The Bully, The Bullied, and the Bystander* uses the Rwandan genocide as the extreme example of bullying.
2. Robert Mnookin's *Bargaining with the Devil* gives three examples of evil: "The Nazis' persecution of the Jews, the Hutus' slaughter of the Tutsi, and the Taliban's penchant for throwing acid in the face of girls who dare go to school." In two of these examples, evil is ascribed to a

- political group (Nazis, Taliban, as opposed to Germans or Afghans). In the African example, evil is ascribed to an ethnic group (Hutus). This idea of the Hutus as an evil ethnic group is typical in casual Western writing on Rwanda.
3. Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA. Agamben's well-known work didn't coin the term Homo Sacer, but evokes the term from Ancient Roman history.
  4. Agamben 1998, p. 134.
  5. Agamben 1998, p. 171.
  6. Césaire, Aimé. 1966. *A Season in the Congo*. Seagull books edition 2010, translated by Gayatri Spivak. p. 105.
  7. Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles. p. 2.
  8. Adam Hochschild. 1999. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. p. 304.
  9. Hochschild 1999, p. 283.
  10. Hochschild 1999, p. 280.
  11. Hochschild 1999, p. 282.
  12. Achebe, Chinua. 1988. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness," in *Hopes and Impediments*. Doubleday, New York.
  13. Achebe 1988, p. 4.
  14. Achebe 1988, p. 8, quoting Conrad.
  15. Achebe 1988, pp. 11–12.
  16. Achebe 1988, p. 14.
  17. Achebe 1988, p. 15.
  18. Achebe 1988, p. 14, quoting Conrad's *A Personal Record*.
  19. Césaire, 1966. *A Season in the Congo*. p. 105. In Césaire's play about the Congo crisis, these lines are put in the mouth of Lumumba, who is appealing to "Mokutu" (Mobutu) to reverse his coup.
  20. Thomas Turner. 2007. *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth, and Reality*. Zed Books. p. 29.
  21. See, for example, Betsy Hartmann's excellent 1995 book *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control*. South End Press.
  22. Severine Autesserre, in her book *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge University Press 2009), writes: "After the Belgian colonizers brought people (mostly Hutu) from **overpopulated** Rwanda to the **lightly populated** Kivus in the 1930s, antagonisms over land and local social, economic, and political power emerged between a handful of villagers, with the newly arrived immigrants in opposition to the populations indigenous to the area" (p. 7, emphasis mine).

23. Kinzer 2008, p. 248.
24. Prunier 1995, pp. 87, 142.
25. Prunier 1995, p. 353.
26. Autessere, *The Trouble with the Congo*, p. 72.
27. Achebe 1988, p. 17.
28. Mbembe 2001, p. 3.
29. There are Africa specialists who are honest scholars and not “Africanist” in my sense—Rene Lemarchand being the best example, Filip Reyntjens being another.
30. Turner 2013, p. 139.
31. Turner 2013, p. 179.
32. Turner 2013, p. 123. Turner calls the section “Killing and Raping: The Numbers Game”. Would it be acceptable to discuss the numbers of dead in the Holocaust as a “numbers game”? Or the Rwandan genocide?
33. Turner 2013, p. 124.
34. Turner 2013, p. 131.
35. Turner 2013, p. 133.
36. Turner 2013, pp. 134–135.
37. Stearns 2011, p. 6.
38. Stearns 2011, p. 9.
39. Stearns 2011, p. 302.
40. Stearns 2011, p. 201.
41. Stearns 2011, p. 214.
42. Stearns 2011, p. 215.
43. Stearns 2011, p. 215.
44. Stearns 2011, p. 216.
45. Stearns 2011, p. 282.
46. Stearns 2011, p. 283.
47. Wrong 2001, p. 235.
48. Wrong 2001, p. 59.
49. Wrong 2001, p. 317.
50. Wrong 2001, pp. 214–215.
51. Wrong 2001, p. 317.
52. Wrong 2001, p. 223.
53. Wrong 2001, p. 184.
54. Wrong 2001, p. 195.
55. Wrong 2001, p. 184.
56. Wrong 2001, p. 326. I will discuss Prunier in much more detail below.
57. Wrong 2001, p. 243.
58. Wrong 2001, p. 245.
59. Wrong 2001, p. 253. I was unable to find any images of collapsing fruit on the web. Other readers may have more luck.



60. Wrong 2001, p. 65.
61. Wrong 2001, pp. 68–69.
62. Wrong 2001, p. 79.
63. Wrong 2001, p. 181.
64. Wrong 2001, p. 180.
65. In the 2019 Netflix series *When They See Us*, one character, watching Donald Trump on television, asks another “What is a Black?”.
66. Wrong 2001, p. 231.
67. Wrong 2001, p. 308.
68. Wrong 2001, pp. 318–319.
69. Kinzer 2008, p. 239.
70. Prunier 1995. *The Rwanda Crisis*, pp. 210, 141. Cited in Collins, Chapter 6, p. 247, fn 45 and 46.
71. Prunier 1995, p. 57.
72. Prunier 1995, p. 245.
73. Prunier 1995, p. 245.
74. Prunier 1995, pp. 210–211.
75. Prunier 2008, p. 17.
76. Prunier 2008, p. 23.
77. Prunier 1995, p. 327.
78. Collins 2014, pp. 178–179.
79. Prunier 1995, p. 61.
80. Fujii 2009, p. 118.
81. Veit 2010, p. 192.
82. Veit 2010, p. 192. My emphasis.
83. Veit 2010, p. 192.
84. Veit 2010, p. 236.
85. Veit 2010, p. 236.



## CHAPTER 2

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# The Politician's Words Against the Empire's Weapons

The territory now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, two million square kilometers, today more than sixty million people, became the personal possession of one man through what was sold as a humanitarian intervention. King Leopold said he was liberating the Congo from the slave trade. The humanitarian interventionists of the time pointed the finger at the Arab slave traders who answered to Tippu Tip of Zanzibar. But Tippu Tip and the Arab traders were part of a global network of raiders, slave ships, and plantation owners that spanned the Atlantic World. And from which the European powers and the rising power of the United States were the principal profiteers.

The slave trade was an unimaginable scourge. No precise numbers will ever be known, but estimates are that 12 million people were taken, 2 million died in the passage, and 7 million were killed in raids, which means that Africa lost about 21 million people between 1650 and 1850. The world population is estimated to have been 500 million in 1650, and 1.2 billion in 1850, and Africa's share of world population in those centuries was probably between 10% and 20%. This was a period of demographic expansion for Europe, and of demographic decline for Africa. As a quick calculation, if we say Africa's share of world population was 15% in 1650, there were 75 million people in Africa at roughly the beginning of the slave trade.

Africa lost 21 million on a base of 75 million people.

Imagine one out of three people disappearing from your society, and you start to get an idea.

Even though the global population was rising at the time, and the absolute number of Africans was higher in 1850 than in 1650, the proportion of Africans in the world population was lower. Slavers took a higher proportion of men than women and gradually took a higher and higher proportion of children,<sup>1</sup> resulting in permanent demographic changes.

The economic impact was even greater than the demographic impact. The slave trade stimulated a slave economy within Africa<sup>2</sup>—this was one of the evils that Leopold offered to solve through colonialism. A relatively minor point in the overall set of evils: Africa's share of world trade declined as the continent came to specialize in slaves<sup>3</sup> and its economy became "a monoculture of human beings."<sup>4</sup>

The social and political impacts of slavery are more difficult to measure, but are easy to imagine. Slavers used the money they acquired for selling human beings to purchase more weapons to conduct more raids. The increase of slavery within Africa was spurred by the slave trade-blighted societies.

Leopold's Belgian colonists first came into this devastated Congo subcontinent in collaboration with Tippu Tip's slave and ivory enterprise. They prepared documents they put in front of chiefs to mark with an X. The documents were carefully written and discussed matters that would have been utterly inconceivable to the villagers who signed them. Quoting Adam Hochschild:

... In return for 'one piece of cloth per month to each of the undersigned chiefs, besides present of cloth in hand,' they promised to 'freely of their own accord, for themselves and their heirs and successors for ever... give up the said Association the sovereignty and all sovereign and governing rights to all their territories... and to assist by labor or otherwise, any works, improvements, or expeditions which the said Association shall cause at any time to be carried out in any part of these territories... All roads and waterways running through this country, the right of collecting tolls on the same, and all game, fishing, mining and forest rights are to be the absolute property of the said Association.'<sup>5</sup>

The Belgians' principal tool was not slips of paper, however.

Adam Hochschild described the movement against Leopold's practices in the Congo as an early human rights movement. A prominent activist, E. D. Morel, was a shipping clerk who deduced that horrendous

violations must be taking place from the fact that ships were leaving for the Congo empty and returning with vast wealth.<sup>6</sup>

At Morel's request, Mark Twain wrote a pamphlet in 1905 assuming the character of Leopold. Titling it *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, Twain used Leopold's voice and quoted direct testimonies from Leopold's Congo Free State, for example, a report from 1903 by British missionary A. E. Scrivener, who told of how villagers were made to get rubber, first in exchange for money, but then in exchange for nothing.

.... at last they were told to bring in the rubber for nothing. To this they tried to demur; but to their great surprise several were shot by the soldiers, and the rest were told, with many curses and blows, to go at once or more would be killed... Many died in the forests of hunger and exposure, and still more from the rifles of the ferocious soldiers in charge of the post. In spite of all their efforts the amount fell off and more and more were killed... A careful estimate made the population of, say, seven years ago, to be 2,000 people in and about the post, within a radius of, say, a quarter of a mile. All told, they would not muster 200 now, and there is so much sadness and gloom about them that they are fast decreasing.<sup>7</sup>

Twain also provided a quantitative assessment of the toll of the Congo Free State: The Congo's population went from 25 million to 15 million under Leopold's reign, when it would have naturally increased to 30 million—a mind-boggling toll of 15 million lives over two decades.<sup>8</sup>

The Congo Reform Movement helped force an end to Leopold's Congo Free State, but only to be replaced with full Belgian colonialism. The Free State became the Belgian Congo.

Congolese did not merely endure this: They killed colonial officials, sometimes in large numbers; they rose in revolt in some areas, including Katanga; and Congolese soldiers in the *Force Publique* mutinied more than once.<sup>9</sup>

In the new and reformed Congo, Belgian colonials used forced labor laws to make Congolese people work in mines. A 1918 survey found that 11% of forced laborers recruited from Kasai died on the way to the mines.<sup>10</sup> In 1917, Belgium issued ordinances compelling peasants to cultivate cash crops, making it impossible for peasants to escape colonial monopolies.<sup>11</sup> Congolese workers also built missions, villas, and roads for Belgian enjoyment. The Belgians had porters carry their things and servants wait on them hand and foot. Their military force, the *Force*

*Publiqu e*, had Congolese foot soldiers and white Belgian officers. Work camps and mandatory cultivation created what one writer called a “totalitarian” level of control by the 1930s.<sup>12</sup> Profits of firms from this “totalitarian” period through to the late 1950s are recorded: Belgian firms were making single-digit profits (7–9%) in Belgium between 1936 and 1958, and double-digit profits in Congo (10–21%) in the same period.<sup>13</sup>

The European empires created a theory not only enshrining their own racial superiority as whites, but subdividing the populations under their control into subraces. The Luba of Kasai, according to the Belgian race theory, were hard workers; the Hutu of Rwanda good farmers; the Tutsi of Rwanda were natural aristocrats; others were good at being clerks. In Rwanda, Africans had to carry identity cards that included ethnic group.<sup>14</sup> Congolese villagers had to pay taxes in cash to exist: The cash could only be got by working for Belgian corporations.<sup>15</sup> The *chicotte* was a ritual in which Congolese prisoners were whipped twice a day, at 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. The whipping was done near the Belgian flagpole, at the same time that the flag was raised each morning.<sup>16</sup>

Except for a small amount of vocational training, education was denied to the Central Africans under Belgian control. Exceptions were made for those who fit Belgian race theories, but that explosive element (knowledge) was carefully rationed to prevent, or at least delay, the arrival of a Congolese elite that could challenge their rule. A Belgian colonial official wrote: “If we have no black doctors, veterinarians, engineers, it is because we can send white doctors, veterinarians, and engineers.”<sup>17</sup> In about fifty years of colonial rule the Belgians produced virtually no Congolese university graduates: By 1954, there were 30 Africans enrolled in Congolese universities. Amid growing nationalist sentiment and anger at the closure of any opportunities to Congolese, by 1959, the Belgians generously increased enrolment and had a total of 421 Africans studying at Congolese universities<sup>18</sup> (the population at the time was about 14 million). In January of 1959, uprisings in Leopoldville shook the Belgian feeling of eternal power over their colony. In October of that year, Congolese leaders were arrested and jailed by the Belgians for inciting riots. One of these leaders was Patrice Lumumba.

Born in 1925, the son of a peasant, educated by missionaries, Lumumba’s first job (at age eighteen) was as a file clerk in Kindu. In the Belgian apartheid system, Lumumba was one of 150 Africans to receive a “matriculation certificate” granting him the status of an “evolue,” a

member of the tiny, Belgian-recognized, Congolese elite. He became a postal clerk in Stanleyville in 1944, met the Belgian king in 1955, and was allowed to go on a study trip to Belgium in July 1956 with other "evolue." He was arrested upon his return and put in jail, where he wrote his book, *Le Congo: Terre d'avenir est-elle menacée?* (translated as *Congo: My Country*). Published after his death, but drafted in 1956, the book was a plea to the Belgians to slowly grant rights and integration to the Congolese, while thanking them for bringing their superior civilization to the Africans. The book shows Lumumba struggling to find a liberatory program that could appeal to the country's Belgian overlords all within the limits of a vocabulary bestowed by a colonial education. Once out of jail, Lumumba got a job as a sales manager at a brewery and worked on political organization. He attended the World's Fair in Brussels in August 1958, where he met Belgian and other political contacts. By October 1958, Lumumba had organized his party, the Congolese National Movement (MNC), and found a nationalist and pan-Africanist mentor in Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah. He wanted Independence for the Congo, and never again wavered from his goal.

Lumumba was able to transcend the Belgians' policy to maintain the Congolese at a low educational level. One observer wrote that "only if it is intended that the Congolese people remain permanently under European tutelage, can a disjointed system of education, which denies them effective training beyond the rudimentary and limited vocational levels, be justified."<sup>19</sup>

What the religious schools taught, before and after Independence, was poisonous European race theory: "For decades," Thomas Turner writes, "Congolese learned in their schools (largely run by missionaries) that there were four kinds of people in their country: Bantus, Sudanese, Nilotics, and Pygmies. These people were characterized by their language, their physical appearance or 'morphology', and their way of life (agriculturalist, pastoralist, hunter-gatherer)."<sup>20</sup>

Rene Lemarchand wrote in 1964 that Belgian education policy made nation-building difficult while failing to prevent the emergence of nationalism, failing both nationalism and colonialism. It "discouraged the emergence of cross-cultural, supraethnic patterns of social communication... the chances of success of a unified, territorial nationalist movement were seriously compromised by the absence of cultural bridges to initiate and carry on the process of national unification."<sup>21</sup>

The Belgians denied education to Africans and then argued that the Africans were not ready for independence—because they lacked education. One Belgian administrator for Burundi told the United Nations in 1948 that having elections “would require from the masses an understanding of electoral procedures, and from the chiefs a moral preparation which neither has yet attained.”<sup>22</sup> He told them that they were “wary in bringing about too drastic democratic reforms before the people are sufficiently educated to higher standards and really understand what responsibility means and implies.”<sup>23</sup>

Congolese resistance continued to grow. A religious movement called the Kitwala battled the Belgians in the 1930s; a nearly generalized uprising occurred against Belgian rule between 1941 and 1945, including a general strike in the key mining province of Katanga and another mutiny in the Force Publique.<sup>24</sup>

At the end of World War II, during which Congolese uranium made the atom bombs dropped on Japan, American planners, according to one missionary, experienced “a great awakening to the tremendous industrial possibilities of the Congo.” American investors complained that the Belgians, French, and British were putting barriers in their way. The US responded with tactical declarations of anticolonialism, which would open up African economies that were sealed up in colonial spheres of influence to US business.<sup>25</sup> Belgium, in turn, tried to lobby within the US, as Leopold had once lobbied in Britain, that Belgium’s colony (or neocolony) was in the Western interest.<sup>26</sup> Still, the nationalist winds were blowing all over the world and could not be denied. With Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) growing from 47,000 in 1940 to 340,000 in 1955, urbanization had made some of the old colonial methods obsolete.<sup>27</sup>

A global economic downturn in 1957 that threw tens of thousands of urban Congolese out of work over two years.<sup>28</sup> This was the last straw. In the face of European moves to grant African colonies independence (France offering Congo-Brazzaville independence in 1958, Ghana becoming independent from Britain in 1957) and riots in Leopoldville and elsewhere,<sup>29</sup> Belgium saw the risk of an Algerian situation developing—and an alternative.<sup>30</sup> Belgium agreed to grant independence in six months. In Sean Kelly’s words, “It was a calculated decision. A newly independent Congo would continue to require substantial direction from Brussels. Virtually all of the responsible positions in the colony’s civil service were held by Belgians, and all of the officers in the *Force Publique* were Belgian. Even the judicial system was run by Belgian judges... In

effect, Brussels would continue to collect the benefits from its African colony without having to accept the responsibility for running it.”<sup>31</sup>

What Belgium envisioned for Central Africa were several apartheid states along the lines of the Congo's neighbors to the south: apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia, internally ethnically divided, each individual group of Africans looking to Belgians for patronage. A Canadian air force commander wrote approvingly in 1951: “There is a complete colour bar in the Congo, and the natives have nothing approaching the rights of white men. It is common practice in the cities to have the native quarter and to ensure that the natives are in there by 9 p.m. There are separate railway cars, waiting rooms, restaurants and sometimes stores, for the natives. The natives have no voice in the Government. At present and for a long time to come, this system seems to be the only practical one.”<sup>32</sup>

Cities were divided into Western and indigenous sections. Congolese were referred to as monkeys. Congolese were issued certificates if they were deemed sufficiently “evolved” to go to school. They required permits to buy wine and could only get such permits after having their toilets inspected by a Belgian official.<sup>33</sup>

This was not a unique view or plan held by the Belgians. It was the Western consensus. President Dwight D. Eisenhower praised for his prescience in foreseeing the rise of the “military industrial complex,” initiated the US war on the Congolese nationalists. He considered the Congo to have “a restless and militant population in a state of gross ignorance - even by African standards,” thought that Europeans should continue to hold “key positions in communications, armed services, government, and such industry as existed,” and thought that the “determination of the peoples [in Africa] for self-rule, their own flag, and their own vote in the United Nations resembled a torrent overrunning everything in its path, including, frequently, the best interests of those concerned.”<sup>34</sup> This should not be surprising. Eisenhower was the president of an apartheid state<sup>35</sup> at the time, still subject to racial segregation through the Jim Crow laws.

From the 1950s, the Belgians put their plans in motion for an ethnically segregated, apartheid post-colonial dispensation in Central Africa—all to be achieved through controlled elections and negotiated agreements.

And the occasional assassination.

In 1952, Belgium introduced advisory councils, consisting of local leaders, to their administration in Rwanda and Burundi. The Belgian



concept was to hold communal elections at the level of the subchiefdom and have the kings change from absolute monarchs to constitutional monarchs with mostly ceremonial powers.<sup>36</sup> Each level of administration (subchiefdom, chiefdom, district, and territorial) had an advisory council. Each level's councillors were co-opted from members of the lower councils.<sup>37</sup> The Belgian system was based on their racial beliefs: While there were Hutus at the bottom level of subchiefdom, a majority of the "electable" at that level were Tutsis. Higher levels were elected from lower levels, so the higher the level, the higher the proportion of Tutsis.<sup>38</sup> The introduction of these councils did not constitute meaningful political freedom. They entrenched existing inequalities and created greater resentment among the excluded.

On November 10, 1959, relying heavily on the model for negotiated decolonization they had developed in the Congo, the Belgians made a declaration on the future political institutions of Ruanda-Urundi.<sup>39</sup> At the time, Rwanda and Burundi were ruled by (Tutsi) monarchs under a Belgian Suzerain, or Resident. In 1959, both territories' rulers were unifying figures.

In Rwanda, the monarchist faction organized itself into the Union Nationale Rwandaise (UNAR). Because of its opposition to the Belgians, UNAR allied with the MNC-Lumumba in the Congo, which was strong in the Congolese lands bordering Rwanda. The MNC-Lumumba came to UNAR's aid after its leadership was expelled.<sup>40</sup> Although its leaders were Tutsi and it was effectively a party of Tutsi privilege, UNAR's public political stance was one of Hutu-Tutsi unity. An UNAR communique circulated on September 16, 1959, said: "There are no Tutsi, Hutu, Twa. We are all brothers! We are all descendents of Kinyarwanda!"<sup>41</sup>

Rwandan Hutus had several parties of their own, including the Party of the Movement for Hutu Emancipation (PARMEHUTU). One writer noted that "the main Tutsi party claimed to be both 'Rwandese' and 'nationalist' in name, the main Hutu party claimed to be 'Hutu' and 'democratic' in the same name."<sup>42</sup> As the party of the oppressed majority, PARMEHUTU sought democratization of the country's institutions before independence—a situation from which the Hutu majority would benefit, and one which the powerful Tutsi minority feared. Another Hutu-led party, the Association for Social Promotion of the Masses (APROSOMA) sought, as Mamdani writes, to "unite Hutu and Tutsi poor against Tutsi privilege," holding out "the possibility of transcending Hutu and Tutsi as colonially constructed political identities."

APROSOMA lost the political battle for the Hutu majority, “at least in part, because Tutsi privilege and Tutsi wealth were not the same thing. Although the wealthy were a minority among the Tutsi, Tutsi privilege was a legal/political arrangement that affected all Tutsi.”<sup>43</sup>

Mutara Rudahigwa, the ruler of Rwanda, had credibility with Tutsis and Hutus, reformers and revolutionaries. He made a visit to a Belgian doctor in Burundi in July 1959 and suddenly died (he was 48 years old).<sup>44</sup> His successor was a much more conservative monarchist from UNAR.

A month later, UNAR militants attacked a PARMEHUTU leader, which sparked clashes all over Rwanda, with PARMEHUTU killings focusing on “the Tutsi chiefs in the local authorities. Some of the chiefs were killed; others were forced to resign.”<sup>45</sup> The Belgian response was to declare a state of emergency and replace the local Tutsi chiefs with Hutu chiefs and to create a Hutu-dominated militia. The administrative machinery was now in the hands of Hutu chiefs, and the next elections were a landslide for PARMEHUTU.<sup>46</sup>

From this point on, the Hutu party, with its “Hutu” and “democratic” politics, was to dominate Rwanda, while the Tutsi-led “nationalist” and “Rwandese” party went into exile and began to work to reverse the 1959 revolution. A 1963 invasion by Tutsi-led forces was militarily defeated. Militias killed thousands of Rwandan Tutsis in massacres.<sup>47</sup> The government arrested and executed twenty leading Tutsi personalities, including the leaders of the UNAR party and RADER (a moderate Tutsi party).<sup>48</sup> These killings were devastating to integrative politics in Rwanda, as Mamdani argues:

As opponents of Tutsi power who had chosen to return home to work in postrevolutionary Rwanda, they were killed because they were Tutsi determined to participate in post-1959 politics as Rwandans... By killing leading champions of the cause of accommodation and reform, those who had fought restorationists among the Tutsi... strengthened... the proponents of Hutu power within the country and those of Tutsi power in exile... these post-colonial twins... were ideological offspring of Rwanda's poisoned colonial past.<sup>49</sup>

As the Congo crisis unfolded over the next few years, Tutsi-led guerrilla forces in the Congo and in Uganda organized on Rwanda's borders and raided into the country. The Hutu-dominated government responded with reprisals against the local Tutsi population, a pattern that would

continue to unfold over decades and culminate in civil war and genocide decades later.<sup>50</sup>

Louis Rwagasore of Burundi was from Burundi's royal family and also a capable politician who came to lead Burundi's Party of Union and National Progress (Uprona). Rwagasore's wife was Hutu and, with independence looming, he was poised for electoral success against the conservative Christian Democratic Party (PDC). The Belgian vice-governor of Rwanda and Burundi didn't like Rwagasore, describing him as "stupid, conceited, spendthrift and party-going" and Uprona as "radical, anti-Belgian, pro-Lumumba, and dangerously pro-Communist."<sup>51</sup>

Initially both these parties, the PDC and Uprona, were fronts for aristocratic families, but they evolved into real political parties.<sup>52</sup> In Rene Lemarchand's words, "the outcome of the struggle was now largely conditioned by the strategic choices made by the Belgian Residency on behalf of the PDC candidates against the Uprona. Ultimately, however, the critical decisions were to be made not in Bujumbura but in New York, by the United Nations Trusteeship Council."<sup>53</sup> The Belgians "brought the full panoply of resources available to the residency – campaign funds, vehicles, stencil machines, and 'technical advice' – into the hands of the PDC while at the same time using his authority to impose crippling restrictions on Uprona candidates."<sup>54</sup> In the communal elections of November 1960, Rwagasore was placed under house arrest, and PDC won 942 of 2876 seats to Uprona's 545.<sup>55</sup> But in the legislative elections of September 1961, with Rwagasore campaigning, Uprona won 58 out of 64 seats in the assembly, and Rwagasore became prime minister designate.<sup>56</sup>

Lemarchand characterizes Rwagasore as follows:

...there can be little doubt that Rwagasore's credentials were uniquely suited to his political ambitions. As the mwami (king's) eldest son, he was in an ideal position to claim a share of the legitimacy surrounding the Crown; as a Western-educated intellectual, he was appropriately sensitive to the expectations of the newly emergent, urbanized elites; as the founder and president of the Cooperative de Commerçants du Burundi, he also had a wide range of strategic contacts in both the urban and rural sectors – and access to cash. Above all, his image had a special appeal to the Hutu masses. Physically, his look was much closer to the standard Hutu stereotype than... the distinctly aristocratic traits of [his] father... furthermore, the presumption that he took a Hutu girl for a wife was enough to dissipate all suspicions of ethnic prejudice. In short, Rwagasore was uniquely

qualified to give meaning and substance to the twin objectives of 'Unity and Progress' to which the Uprona claimed to aspire.<sup>57</sup>

Rwagasore was assassinated on October 13, 1961, by a Greek national named Jean Kageorgis, who was working for the PDC.<sup>58</sup> What role did the Belgians play? Lemarchand again:

...On the face of the evidence supplied in the pretrial investigation, it is reasonable to assume that certain Belgian functionaries actively encouraged the PDC leaders to go ahead with their plans. Resident Regnier appears to have played a key role. In the course of a meeting at the Residency, attended by a Ms. Belva, the European secretary of the PDC, Regnier is reported to have flatly stated 'Rwagasore must be killed.' He added: 'Nothing is lost if one gets of Rwagasore in time... Once the deed is accomplished the lake is not too far away.'<sup>59</sup>

It has been pointed out before, by Adam Hochschild at the end of *King Leopold's Ghost*: the Belgians in Africa were not much worse than the French, Germans, or British. All set up colonial extraction, all set up racial apartheid, and all waged genocidal wars to get what they want. The British took the territories that became Uganda during the scramble for Africa in 1894. As the anticolonial movement advanced, the British sought a negotiated independence that would integrate Uganda's territories into an apartheid east African region including Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

In the 1950s, the British sought to preserve their colony and their color line by fighting a genocidal counterinsurgency in Kenya against the Mau Mau (*Mau Mau* has the same origins as the Congolese *Mai Mai*, based on the rituals used to induct fighters into the secret organization). In the end, the British plan failed and in the 1960s the only apartheid states were South Africa and Rhodesia. Tanzania and Kenya were more successful in building post-Independence states than Uganda. Uganda's leaders were regionally divided. Two years after Independence, when Uganda's government under Milton Obote faced a mutiny, the British sent troops to keep Obote in power.

In 1959, Congolese leaders were invited to Belgium and spent a month in Brussels (January 20–February 20, 1960). Among them were Patrice Lumumba of the MNC (National Congolese Movement) released from jail on January 25 to attend the meeting, Joseph Kasavubu of the Association of Lower Congo (Abako), and Moïse Tshombe of the

Katanga province's Conakat party. Each leader had a different vision for the future. Lumumba sought a sovereign, powerful, centralized state for the Congo and believed in mobilizing the masses on a nationalist basis. Kasavubu, who would be described by US Ambassador Clare Timberlake as "naive, not very bright, lazy, enjoying his new found plush living and content to appear occasionally in his new general's uniform,"<sup>60</sup> sought a decentralized, federal system, and built his career on an ethnic and patrimonial basis. Tshombe, whose party was under the tutelage of Belgian settlers, sought a continued relationship with Belgium. The Belgians provided a quick timetable: elections in May, independence in June.

At the national level, Lumumba's nationalists emerged strongest from the May 1960 elections. In the Congo's 137-seat National Assembly, Lumumba's faction won 36 seats, while Kasavubu's Abako won 12, and others, such as the National Progress Party, won up to 14.<sup>61</sup> The compromise government included Kasavubu as President and Lumumba as Premier.

In Rwanda and Burundi, Belgian racial theories had been applied to Tutsi and Hutu. In the Congo, the Belgians applied their creativity to painting racial virtues and vices onto many groups. In Katanga and Kasai, these included the Baluba and the Lulua. Nzongola-Ntalaja writes that in Kasai, the Belgians,

...Having enlisted the Luba during the previous 60 years as their auxiliaries in all three sectors of the colonial enterprise – business, government, and evangelization – the Belgians began to fear them in the 1950s because of their unrelenting criticism of racism and discriminatory practices... Belgian authorities and the Catholic Church sought to deepen the process of ethnic polarization by developing a counterweight to the Luba elite. In 1952, they helped set up an exclusive ethnic association called Lulua Freres, with the double aim of improving the socio-economic position of the Lulua... and promoting a Lulua counter-elite. This organization eventually... provided overall direction for ethnic cleansing against the Luba in 1959-60.<sup>62</sup>

In 1959, a Luba clerk found a Belgian proposal to resettle Luba farmers from Lulua back to south Kasai, and many Baluba engaged in demonstrations against the plan in August. All out war between Lulua and Baluba broke out in October 11, 1959,<sup>63</sup> and spilled into the May 1960 election. In Kasai's provincial assembly, Lumumba created a coalition with 50 out of Kasai's 71 seats. When Lumumba appointed a Lulua named Barthelemy Mukenge to the provincial leadership, Baluba leaders

from Kasai, including one Albert Kalonji, grew alienated from the MNC and came to hate Lumumba. But the Baluba of Katanga favored the MNC and the nationalist vision for the Congo—neither ethnicity nor Belgian racial doctrine mapped easily onto Congolese political realities.

June 30, 1960, was Independence Day for the Congo. The scene has been described by many writers over the years.<sup>64</sup> A hot day at the Palais de la Nation in Leopoldville, with a statue of mass-murderer Leopold II looming over the front entrance. The Belgian elite had come over to watch the festivities. At the back of the semicircle, the 48-year-old Belgian head of colonial intelligence, Frederic Vandewalle, who in a few years would lead a mercenary column across the eastern Congo to achieve the final destruction of the Congolese nationalists, observed and took notes.

The Belgian monarch, infamous for his lack of charisma, spoke first. He told the assembled crowd that “The independence of the Congo is the result of the undertaking conceived by the genius of King Leopold II... Don’t compromise the future with hasty reforms, and don’t replace the structures that Belgium hands over to you until you are sure you can do better... Don’t be afraid to come to us. We will remain by your side, give you advice, train with you the technical experts and administrators you will need.”<sup>65</sup>

Next, the president of the elected government, Kasavubu, provided an innocuous speech written by a staffer of the Belgian colonial governor general.<sup>66</sup> Had it been the closing of the ceremony, Kasavubu’s speech would have produced the smooth transition from colonialism to apartheid that the Belgian King had hoped for.

But instead, the president of the elected house of representatives invited the premier to speak. This was not on the program. The King and the Belgian Prime Minister, Gaston Eyskens, were shocked.

Lumumba’s speech addressed “Men and women of the Congo, victorious independence fighters.” He said that “no Congolese worthy of the name can ever forget that it is by struggle that we have won, a struggle waged each and every day, a passionate idealistic struggle, a struggle in which no effort, privation, suffering, or drop of our blood was spared.” He condemned “the humiliating slavery that was imposed on us by force.” He continued:

We have known sarcasm and insults, endured blows morning noon and night, because we were ‘niggers’. Who will forget that a Black was

addressed as the familiar *tu*, not as a friend, but because the polite *vous* was reserved for Whites only? We have seen our lands despoiled under the terms of what was supposedly the law of the land but which only recognized the right of the strongest. We have seen that this law was quite different for a White than a Black: accommodating for the former, cruel and inhuman for the latter. We have seen the terrible suffering of those banished to remote regions because of their political opinions or religious beliefs; exiled within their own country, their fate was truly worse than death itself... And, finally, who can forget the volleys of gunfire in which so many of our brothers perished, the cells where the authorities threw those who would not submit to a rule where justice meant oppression and exploitation.<sup>67</sup>

Lumumba concluded:

Finally, I ask you unconditionally to respect the life and property of fellow-citizens and foreigners who have settled in our country; if the conduct of these foreigners leaves much to be desired, our Justice will promptly expel them from the territory of the republic; if, on the contrary, their conduct is good, they must be left in peace, for they, too, are working for our country's prosperity. The Congo's independence is a decisive step towards the liberation of the whole African continent. Our government, a government of national and popular unity, will serve its country. I call on all Congolese citizens, men, women and children, to set themselves resolutely to the task of creating a national economy and ensuring our economic independence. Eternal glory to the fighters for national liberation! Long live independence and African unity! Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!

Lumumba was interrupted eight times for applause and had a standing ovation at the end—from the Congolese present. In a later chapter, I will discuss how scholars, Congo experts, have talked about this moment and about Lumumba. For now, though, look at how Vandewalle, the colonial intelligence officer, assessed it, from the back of the room: “That release of pent-up emotions, incongruous and offensive to the Belgians, was an act of revenge for many Congolese. It was an instant success with those attending the ceremony uninvited. Their applause was echoed by the crowd outside.”<sup>68</sup>

Even before this speech, back in April, the CIA Africa Division Chief was writing to the State Department with the assessment that Lumumba was “one of the few, if not only, Congolese leaders with a Congo-wide

appeal and standing. We feel it is almost certain that he will play an important political role in the Congo for at least the next two years,” and that as a result “an anti-Lumumba campaign could backfire.”<sup>69</sup> At this early stage, the US deferred to the Belgians. The Belgians wanted anti-Lumumba, and the US gave it to them. They went after Lumumba as he repeatedly salvaged situations bungled by their own men and prevented violence from erupting several times using the power of his words.

Five days after Lumumba's speech, the Belgian general in charge of the army (Emile Janssens) gathered his Congolese subordinates around a blackboard at Camp Leopold and gave a speech, at the end of which he wrote on the board “Before Independence = After Independence.”<sup>70</sup>

So began the Congo Mutiny, and the Congo Crisis.

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## CHAPTER 3

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# Sow Doubt, Aestheticize, Essentialize: How to Write About African Leaders

Africa does not sustain the interest of the Western media's foreign correspondents. Coverage of foreign countries is limited; coverage of countries of the Global South even more so. Stories on Africa are sporadic and unsystematic. While dinner table discussions of the wars in the Middle East might take place after a daily news update, Africa is a realm for specialist discussion. As a consequence, specialist authors and university-based Africa scholars—Africanists—have more power to shape public opinion than their counterparts. The shared tropes they deploy have a numbing effect on critical thinking and on ordinary human solidarity.

This relationship—between a Western public informed by sparse media and Western Africanists who communicate in crude tropes—has been the basis for Western representation of Africa for decades, perhaps centuries. Kwitny writes about 1960:

Back in the US, where only a few college professors understood the difference between Baluba and Balunda, the secessionist movements came to dominate intellectual debate between liberals and conservatives... Thus, from his office in New York, William F. Buckley, Jr., looked at Katanga and saw the spirit of Edmund Burke in the eyes of the secessionist Balunda, while across town Eleanor Roosevelt favored the Bangala and Bakongo to move in.<sup>1</sup>

Kwitny is being wry, but he is guilty of what he accuses these political figures of. While trying to critique the ignorance of American foreign policy players, he himself portrays the Congo's politics incorrectly in simplistic ethnic terms. Katanga's secession was not a Balunda ethnic movement, but one set up entirely by the Belgians. The movement for the territorial integrity of the Congo was not an ethnic thrust by the Bangala and Bakongo—it was a politicized, nationalist movement.

Nonetheless, his point stands: When it comes to African politics, Western commentators—the Africanists—face an audience with so little knowledge that their assumptions go unchallenged and their facts can be loose. Decades later, the broad contours of the story can be admitted, but the analysis that accompanies them ensures that the West is absolved and that the responsibility for the tragic outcomes is assigned either to the victims or to no one at all.

The Western scholarship on Lumumba and the 1960s Congo Crisis admits that the US, Belgium, and the UN conspired to kill Lumumba, destroy the nationalist movement, and install Mobutu as a dictator. It does so in a way that blunts anti-imperialist lessons that might be drawn from the experience, breaks the relationship between the facts and the conclusions, and preserves a pro-Western perspective. Through subtle, grinding choices of images and descriptions, favored African leaders are portrayed as modern, capable, and innocent. Those on the wrong side of the empire are portrayed as blundering, corrupt, even physically misshapen. These portrayals of leaders generalize to portrayals of ethnicities and indeed of whole countries. In the process, the West is absolved and, following the nineteenth-century fantasy, the “dark continent” and its people are portrayed as corrupt, corrupting, and self-destructive.

The starting point for the ubiquitous Africanist assessments of the capacities of African leaders is the idea that in the 1960s, Africa was not ready for democracy. What is a country ready for? When is a country ready for reform? When revolutionaries lose, a ready explanation is always available: They tried to do too much, too fast. The country wasn't ready. Imperial powers back insurgencies that commit atrocities—these insurgencies are explained away by the fact that the government they were fighting tried to do too much.

Given his importance in African history and the potential of the Congo and of the continent under his leadership, Lumumba is a focus of a great deal of Africanist disdain. But the charges—that we don't really know what he would have done had he lived, that he was

insufficiently educated, that he had an erratic personality, that he blundered—are subjective and create more of a negative impression than a solid case about a leader.

The gentlest way to criticize Lumumba is to suggest that he was chasing a mirage and that the Congo would have broken his democratic spirit, if he ever sincerely had one.

Lumumba really believed in a constitutional order, in a parliamentary system that derived its authority from the people. But to even sympathetic writers like Jonathan Kwitny, Lumumba was merely an illusion. “If the illusion of democratic order, civility, and law – which is what Lumumba represented when he took office – could have been maintained longer, would it have become the reality of democratic order, civility, and law? In the Congo, we forfeited our chance to ever find out.”<sup>2</sup> The most sympathetic writers about Lumumba emphasize the uncertainty about Lumumba, that we don’t know what he would have done in power. Arguing that the US was wrong to assume Lumumba was headed for the Soviet bloc, Kwitny writes that perhaps he was “trying to rid his country of all foreign control and make it truly independent. Or that he wanted the Congo allied with other African powers and independent of non-African forces. Or that he didn’t really know where he was headed. He may have been in it for the money. Africa has had more than its share of petty tyrants.”<sup>3</sup>

Kwitny goes on: “That Lumumba could have survived in office very long... is doubtful. Because of its hugeness, its complex tribal makeup, and the presence of great potential wealth, the Congo might have been more apt to follow the pattern of Nigeria, which has had a long, alternating succession of civilian and military rulers.”<sup>4</sup>

The education, the level of literacy of Congolese leaders, also always arises, even from friendly quarters. Gibbs cites Crawford Young who noted that the guerrilla leaders of the 1964 revolts were “far less educated than the generation of 1960,”<sup>5</sup> who of course were similarly derided for barely understanding Marxist doctrines themselves. What academic qualifications do nationalists require to please Western writers?

No Western source that discusses Lumumba can avoid the many contemporary characterizations of Lumumba’s “personality,” nor can most seem to avoid repeating various allegations leveled against his character by the Western interests that were working toward his downfall and murder.

A 2015 book critical of US intervention in the Congo<sup>6</sup> repeats the tale of Lumumba asking for a “blond girl” while staying at the Blair House in Washington. The source? The CIA. The authors quote Canadian officials who find Lumumba “vain, petty, suspicious, and perhaps unscrupulous.”<sup>7</sup> They cite Ralph Bunche, who called Lumumba a “fluent but utterly maniacal child,” who “could not keep agreements or even appointments.”<sup>8</sup> They call “reasonable” the assessment of “a State Department official who wrote: ‘an unscrupulous opportunist and probably the most able and dynamic politician in the Congo’.”<sup>9</sup>

The authors are quick to point out, in their chapter on “Africans against Lumumba,” that “Lumumba’s murder brought him laurels he might never otherwise have acquired... Few African politicians who actually wielded power for any length of time in the twentieth century have escaped the stain of corruption, accusations of neocolonialism, the taint of warmongering, or the label of ineffectiveness.”<sup>10</sup>

Another temptation succumbed to by even friends of the Congo is to enumerate Lumumba’s supposed blunders. He may have been principled, these writers argue, but he was a blundering leader whose mistakes got his country broken up and himself killed.

Congolese scholar and author of the Congo’s People’s History, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) argues that appointing Barthelemy Mukenge, a Lulua, to the leadership of Kasai, was a “major blunder” by Lumumba, because it alienated the Baluba of Kasai. But there may have been any number of good reasons to do exactly this. Lumumba would have been looking for a Congolese nationalist, not someone who identified in terms of Baluba or Lulua. Albert Kalonji was mobilizing on ethnic lines against Lumumba at the time—had Lumumba chosen a Baluba leader, might he have alienated the Lulua? We will never know Lumumba’s thinking on this appointment, but it is not immediately clear that this was a “blunder.”

Kent (2010), who points out how Lumumba had contained the mutiny before Belgium attacked, argues that he “blundered by accusing the United States of supporting Belgian desires not to withdraw in defiance of the UN, when in fact the Americans were in favour of withdrawal but feared the consequences of exerting too much pressure on Belgium to do so.”<sup>11</sup> Was that, in fact, a blunder? Given the intractability of US opposition, and given that they were shortly to begin implementing an imaginative array of plans to kill him, was it such a “blunder” to accuse them of supporting Belgium, who they supported, over the Congolese independent government, who they had decided had to go?

One military decision that may have genuinely been a blunder occurred in late August, when Lumumba decided to force Kasai and Katanga back into the union:

The Armee Nationale Congolaise, under the leadership of the recently promoted black servicemen Victor Lundula and Joseph Mobutu, would move against the secessionists. Soldiers loyal to Lumumba would quash the rebellion in Kasai, and then do what the UN would not: end the independence of Katanga... The military operation proceeded in disarray. In the breakaway areas Lumumba had as much support as his adversaries, chief of whom was Tshombe in Katanga. In the last week of August, the prime minister's army scored some victories in Kasai, though essentially without a fight as the opposition took flight. But officers could not control their men, who were forced to live off the land without resources. At the end of August in a perplexing battle at Bakwanga in southern Kasai, with which Lumumba had little to do, his troops massacred some two hundred Baluba. In another set of incidents that extended over four days at the close of the month and the beginning of September, Lumumba's soldiers in a search for food indiscriminately killed another forty-five civilians.<sup>12</sup>

Sending ill-prepared and incompetently commanded troops into battle was a "blunder," and one that cost hundreds of lives, including the lives of civilians. As the one who gave the order to the army, Lumumba has responsibility for what occurred. This responsibility is shared, however, with the military commanders, including Mobutu, who was eventually rewarded for his role in this murderous "blunder," along with many other "blunders," with the dictatorship of the Congo for three decades.

To compare with these armchair assessments, we have a few facts about what Lumumba actually did in the few moments when he had power to take action. As Sartre noted, Lumumba's oratory skill was sufficient to de-escalate numerous situations. He used his skill to bring the original army mutiny under control. He used it to build a party based on principles other than tribal ones. He would have used it to bring the secessionist states back into the fold, but he was prevented by force from doing so—literally prevented from landing his plane so that he could get out, unarmed, and talk. After he brought the army mutiny under control, the Belgians intervened, sending paratroopers into resolve a law and order problem that Lumumba had already resolved without any need for paratroopers.<sup>13</sup>

One Western author who does not fall prey to the tendency to disdain African leaders is Ludo De Witte, whose 2001 account of Lumumba's



assassination is also the strongest defense of Lumumba. De Witte pointed out how that the operation to defeat the Kasai secession, commanded by Mobutu, has been enfolded into all operations against the Baluba of both Kasai and Katanga, by both Mobutu's and Tshombe's (truly genocidal) forces, and blamed as a package on Lumumba. In the 1960s, this served the end of helping to oust him and tarnish his reputation. But it is still being repeated even though it is inaccurate: Defaming Lumumba remains politically important in the West, even decades later.

What about Lumumba's slow pace in his travel to Stanleyville in November 1960? Was that the blunder that got him caught and killed? Gerard and Kuklick certainly think so<sup>14</sup>:

Blockades and rain reduced Lumumba's speed. He traveled slowly because of rudimentary roads and a reasonable desire to stay in friendly territory. Some of the politicians in the convoy got to safety. They might all have made it to Stanleyville had Lumumba simply chosen to get there as quickly as possible. Instead, he stopped along the way to speak to villagers... Lumumba could not resist. His eloquence might bring his people to nationhood. The parade of cars progressed less quickly than it could have, and the atmosphere of a joyous campaign journey made Lumumba's trail easy to pick up. His enemies apparently spotted the motorcade from above on November 30.

But was this a blunder? Might Lumumba have been less foolish in attempting a high-profile security strategy rather than a low-profile one? If he understood the forces arrayed against him and the resources they had, was it foolish to assume that his enemies would eventually find out where he was, but that his friends might not, unless he traveled in something less than secrecy? Gerard and Kuklick emphasize throughout their book that we don't know, and will never know, what kind of Prime Minister Lumumba would have been. Why, if we know so little, is it so difficult to imagine that he may have had sound reasons for some of the decisions he made? If he was the comedic figure portrayed in these accounts, why was the West so deadly serious about keeping him out of power, about killing him, about wiping his followers out of existence and memory?

Africanist defamation of African leaders is on display with Lumumba. Another general trope in writing about Africa is the aestheticization of political commentary. To situate a political situation, a Western writer must write about the people that are making history. These people must

of course be described physically. But descriptions that Africanist writers craft seamlessly echo the political points they are trying to make about the unfitness of Africa's politics and Africa's leaders. The aesthetics are drawn from works of art: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, of course, but more recently, Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*.

In his discussion of Kisangani in the wake of the 1998 war, Stearns quotes V. S. Naipaul.<sup>15</sup> Quoting Naipaul, like quoting Conrad, can serve as a public signal to other Africanists both of one's expertise and one's general political position. And nobody does it like Naipaul: "Zabeth was a big woman with a coppery complexion; there were times when this copper glow, especially on her cheekbones, looked like a kind of make-up. There was something else about Zabeth. She had a special smell. It was strong and unpleasant, and at first I thought – because she came from a fishing village – that it was an old and deep smell of fish... But the people of Zabeth's tribe whom I met didn't smell like Zabeth. Africans noticed her smell... they wrinkled their noses and sometimes they went away... I thought myself that it was this smell that kept men away from Zabeth, in spite of her fleshiness (which the men here liked)... But the smell was meant to keep people at a distance... Zabeth was a magician, and was known in our region as a magician. Her smell was the smell of her protecting ointments. Other women used perfumes and scents to attract; Zabeth's ointments repelled and warned. She was protected. She knew it, and other people knew it."<sup>16</sup>

Fiction writers can, perhaps, be forgiven for taking license. But these aesthetics run throughout enlightened liberal commentary on the Congo: White writers caricaturing black people's physical characteristics in order to reveal their inner character is a standard trope, arising again and again.

Stearns describes Laurent Kabila, president of the DRC from 1996 until his assassination in 2001, as a man who had a "chubby face somehow too big for his still relatively trim frame."<sup>17</sup> Michaela Wrong, also writing about Kabila, felt that his "huge bald head... seemed to blend seamlessly with his torso."<sup>18</sup> Kabila also distributes pamphlets printed on "cheap paper" (according to Stearns, who would have had him choose a more expensive paper, no doubt) and does so "like an outmoded professor," and an "overhauled, aging guerrilla commander." In the rebel declaration preceding the 1996 invasion, Kabila's "outdated verbosity shines through."<sup>19</sup> In Bukavu after its capture in 1996, Kabila is "fat, with a big smile and sweat pouring down his neck."<sup>20</sup> Several pages are devoted to

a story of Kabila sending his Tutsi mistress out of the country at the end of the 1998 war<sup>21</sup>: The sex lives of these African leaders are, of course, endlessly fascinating.

Stearns draws the scene of Kabila's January 17, 2001, assassination by describing Kabila's "habitual safari suit – off white this time." After setting out the shooting in gory detail, Kabila describes the difficulties his men had in transporting the dying president to a medical clinic: "He was so heavy that even four of us had a hard time lifting him', an aide remembered."<sup>22</sup>

Like Mobutu the "dinosaur," Kabila can hardly show up on Stearns's stage without a reminder to the reader that he is, overweight, not normally proportioned, and a man of a previous time.

Kabila is not alone in coming in for this treatment. Stearns describes a Congolese militia leader fighting the RPF in 1996 (Anzuluni Bembe) as a "short, pudgy firebrand."<sup>23</sup> The "portly" Uganda-backed MLC leader Jean-Pierre Bemba's "ego became more and more bloated, even as he himself put on more weight."<sup>24</sup> A pilot involved in smuggling minerals, Pierre Olivier, "has chestnut-colored eyes and big, muscular features that make his limbs seem oversized, almost bloated."<sup>25</sup> Some of these Africans have heads that are too big—Pierre has oversized limbs. The search for the Platonic ideal black man continues.

In Romeo Dallaire's account of the Rwandan Genocide, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, the former United Nations commander insists on his anti-racist credentials. Dallaire says that he heard Belgian soldiers "came to UNAMIR with a very aggressive attitude. My staff soon caught some of them bragging at the local bars that their troops had killed over two hundred Somalis and that they knew how to kick 'n\*#@' ass in Africa." Dallaire told them that he "would not tolerate racist statements, colonial attitudes, unnecessary aggression or other abuses of power."<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, Dallaire has no problem describing brutality, extremism, and deception as a local art when he writes that he "was in uncharted waters – the geography, the culture, the politics, the brutality, the extremism, the depths of deception practised almost as a Rwandan art form – all were new to me."<sup>27</sup>

Dallaire then proceeds to use the same kinds of imagery, in which physical descriptions reflect the subtle moral characteristics of the men he describes. Kagame's front man, Alexis Kanyarengwe, who would later fall out of Kagame's favor, is described in a way as to illustrate both his virtues and hint at his tragic flaw. Kanyarengwe is "plumb and bright-eyed

and wore a difficult smile,” the head of the RPF in 1993, “a Hutu and seemed a little uneasy with his leadership role, constantly checking for the reactions of the others after making a remark.” Another Hutu RPF man, Pasteur Bizimungu, who would eventually end up under house arrest by Kagame, is “both impatient and eloquent,” “a Hutu, passionate, argumentative and inflexible, devoid of real charisma.”<sup>28</sup>

General Deogratias Nsabimana, Rwandan government army chief of staff, “was a big man with facial expressions that betrayed a deceptive nature.”<sup>29</sup>

Theoneste Bagosora, minister of defense, “a bespectacled and *pudgy man*.”<sup>30</sup>

Dallaire meets Andre Ntagerura, minister of transport and “the acknowledged dean of the MRND” at a restaurant on January 24, 1994. He “found Ntagerura seated at a secluded table, a *small pudgy man* with a jovial air about him and an *exceptionally round face*. His features were unusual, with *exaggerated curves*, and he could overwhelm you with the power of his expressions, whether of joy or anger.”<sup>31</sup> “As he warmed to his subject, his essential mean-spiritedness showed through... His eyes grew wild and his voice rose alarmingly as he insisted that the RPF was going to impose a Tutsi hegemony over the Great Lakes region of Africa.”<sup>32</sup> “Stabbing the air with *his chubby finger*, he charged that UNAMIR had not found out who had committed the November killings.”<sup>33</sup>

The “good” black people in the story are aestheticized differently from the “bad” ones. There are some shared characteristics. Western writers ascribe characteristics not only to African individuals, but to whole ethnic groups. While leaders like Lumumba or Kabila are portrayed as both physically and morally deformed, favored groups and leaders are designated virtuous, innocent, and victims.

Dallaire, having described the Hutu RPF men in his book, goes on to describe their supreme leader and Rwanda’s future dictator, Paul Kagame: “Then there was Kagame, easily the most interesting of the three, although he was the most self-contained. Almost stereotypically Tutsi, he was incredibly thin and well over six feet tall; he towered over the gathering with a studious air that didn’t quite disguise his hawk-like intensity. Behind his spectacles, his glistening charcoal eyes were penetrating, projecting his mastery of the situation.”<sup>34</sup> Later, Dallaire finds that he has “to admire the moxie of Major Paul Kagame” for choosing the National Assembly site in Kigali for RPF headquarters, seeing “the

tactical advantage of such a site.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Dallaire can’t get enough of describing Kagame. He goes to Mulindi in January 1994: “Kagame had a modest bungalow set apart from the rest. Birdsong and the gentle sigh of the wind in the trees were the only sounds you could hear. I found him sitting on the patio attached to the bungalow, and he slowly unfolded his long, angular body from one of the chairs as he stood to greet me. He has incredibly powerful eyes that lock on your own, probing, searching, testing, and he wastes little time on social niceties.”<sup>36</sup> At the close of the meeting, he notes “It had been amazing to see Kagame with his guard down for a couple of hours, to glimpse the passion that drove this extraordinary man.”<sup>37</sup>

We return to American author Jason Stearns, who describes the Tutsi community in North Kivu raising funds for the RPF as “a Congolese version of a neighborhood bake sale.”<sup>38</sup> Compared to Kabila the “fat” and “outmoded,” Rwandan dictator Paul Kagame’s men are the “new, younger, cosmopolitan generation of rebels” who “worked with laptop computers and satellite phones.”<sup>39</sup> One of these men, James Kabarebe, is often singled out for praise. Stephen Kinzer describes Kagame’s 1996 invasion of Zaire, which caused the final collapse of that state and became the worst conflict in the world for several years, killing millions of people, “one of the most remarkable military campaigns in modern African history. For the next four months, led by Lt. Col. James Kabarebe, a battle-toughened veteran of the Rwandan civil war, the anti-Mobutu force hacked its way through dense jungle.”<sup>40</sup> Kabarebe isn’t fat, he’s “battle-hardened.” His warfare—which was as ruthless to civilians as any commander’s in the 1996–1997 war—was a “remarkable military campaign,” not to be confused with genocides or massacres committed by the other side.

And as Dallaire noted, Kagame is as thin as Kabila is fat—a point also thrown in as if relevant by Carla Del Ponte, former prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, who describes a meeting in Kigali in which Kagame led her to a pair of couches. “I sat on one and Kagame, *so thin*, on the other.”<sup>41</sup>

Gerard Prunier, who writes in a more world-weary and cynical Africanist style, still attributes tremendous powers to Kagame, who binds the Western donor community with his “ruthless determination, his capacity to fine-tune white guilt as a conductor directs an orchestra.”<sup>42</sup>

Stearns describes the RCD, the Rwandan proxy forces who committed the Kasika massacre in August 1998, marching into town “led

by Commander Moise, a legendary fighter.”<sup>43</sup> The “legendary fighter’s forces are pitted against “a young upstart chief called Nyakiliba,” who was “a small time thug but could stir up trouble nonetheless.”<sup>44</sup> Nyakiliba does stir up trouble, and in Stearns’s account, more or less forces the RCD to massacre the villagers. The subtle descriptions of the Africans on either side help paint the picture of a Congolese village that provoked the innocent militiamen into slaughtering them. *Look what you made Rwanda do*, again, a theme I will return to.

The Africanists whose works I’ve quoted above would be the first to note that they are sympathetic commentators, people who have spent time in the places they write about and worked hard to try to get the stories out to what must seem like an indifferent Western audience. But through the imagery of their writing about African leaders, through their aestheticization of political commentary, they cannot seem to escape the nineteenth-century imagery that forms a backdrop for Western political writing on Africa. In this way, subconscious impressions are left: Lumumba would have become a corrupt tyrant had we let him live; our proxy forces and chosen winners like Kagame and Rwanda are uniquely virtuous and innocent, their violence uniquely justified; our enemies are uniquely corrupt, physically misshapen.

Western writers deliver the facts—that we killed Lumumba, crushed his followers, and sponsored Kagame’s campaigns that killed millions of people, for example—surrounded by these subconscious impressions. And because the facts were delivered in these texts, no one can quite say they have been lied to, even when we have.

## NOTES

1. Jonathan Kwitny. 1984. *Endless Enemies: The Making of an Unfriendly World*. Congdon & Weed Inc., New York. p. 64.
2. Kwitny 1984, p. 85.
3. Kwitny 1984, p. 60.
4. Kwitny 1984, p. 76.
5. Gibbs 1991, p. 150.
6. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 65.
7. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 65.
8. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 80.
9. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 59.
10. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 122.
11. Kent 2010, p. 23.

12. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 87.
13. Kent 2010, p. 16.
14. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 179.
15. Stearns 2011, p. 236.
16. V.S. Naipaul. 1979. *A Bend in the River*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. pp. 9–10.
17. Stearns 2011, p. 62. To give the reader a sense of how common this disproportionate head trope is, consider that American author Michael Deibert wrote this about a completely different Black leader, Jean Bertrand Aristide of Haiti, in 2005: “his large head, seemingly too big for his body, bobbing expressively” (p. 158).
18. Wrong 2001, p. 308.
19. Stearns 2011, p. 88.
20. Stearns 2011, p. 144.
21. Stearns 2011, pp. 198–200.
22. Stearns 2011, p. 268.
23. Stearns 2011, p. 94.
24. Stearns 2011, pp. 226, 227.
25. Stearns 2011, p. 296.
26. Dallaire 2003, p. 113.
27. Dallaire 2003, p. 101.
28. Dallaire 2003, pp. 65–66.
29. Dallaire 2003, p. 68.
30. Dallaire 2003, p. 72.
31. Dallaire 2003, p. 162.
32. Dallaire 2003, pp. 162–163.
33. Dallaire 2003, p. 163.
34. Dallaire 2003, pp. 65–66.
35. Dallaire 2003, p. 127.
36. Dallaire 2003, p. 154.
37. Dallaire 2003, p. 156.
38. Stearns 2011, p. 76.
39. Stearns 2011, p. 89.
40. Kinzer 2008, p. 205.
41. Del Ponte, 2009. p. 184.
42. Prunier 2008, p. 332.
43. Stearns 2011, p. 253.
44. Stearns 2011, p. 253.



## Killing Hope in the Congo

By the first week of July 1960, the Congo Mutiny had begun.

Congolese soldiers' principal demand was the removal of Belgian officers. The soldiers attacked Belgians in the capital. Lumumba acted quickly and negotiated a solution to the mutiny within three days—he replaced Emile Janssens with a Congolese officer named Victor Lundula and appointed Joseph-Desire Mobutu as the army chief of staff, raised soldiers' wages by 30%, and dismissed Belgian officers from all but advisory roles. The Africanized units returned to normal by July 8.<sup>1</sup>

But the Belgians had spent the previous days stirring a moral and racial panic about the mutiny. Spurred by reports that the African troops were raping white women and killing white men, Europeans began to flee on July 8, the very day Lumumba had resolved the mutiny.<sup>2</sup>

On July 9, the Belgians moved the 2500 troops they had stationed in the Congo. Initially, they claimed they had mobilized to protect European nationals. But the mutiny had been resolved. On July 10, 800 paratroopers set up in Moïse Tshombe's Katanga province at Tshombe's invitation. The Belgians disarmed the Congolese soldiers and sent for 1200 more troops from the metropole. On July 11, Tshombe declared the secession of Katanga from the Congo. Lumumba and Kasavubu flew to Katanga to try to negotiate with Tshombe the next day, July 12—their plane was not allowed to land.<sup>3</sup>

The Katanga secession did not come out of any organic nationalist feeling in the province. Tshombe's party, Conakat, had a manifesto written by its Belgian sponsors in 1959. The introduction to the manifesto



provided as a historical overview that “the black race has nothing behind it. It is a people without writing, without history, without philosophy, without any consistency.” The text said that Conakat’s aim was to “maintain the trust of the good people who came to help us out of our state of stagnation.”<sup>4</sup> The Katanga secession was supported by the British, French, and Portuguese colonial powers operating out of Rhodesia, Congo-Brazzaville, and Angola respectively. Apartheid South Africa furnished aircraft and pilots.<sup>5</sup>

Katanga’s secession was followed by Kasai’s. Another mineral-rich province, another Belgian-backed secession, this time led by Lumumba’s rival Albert Kalonji. Kalonji’s name for independent Kasai was revealing of his vision for the country: he called it “Republic de Forminiere,”<sup>6</sup> or “Mining State,” had himself declared President, and asked the UN and Katanga for help defending its borders.

The Belgians tried to crack the Congo even further apart, attempting unsuccessfully to foment secessions in Equateur and Kivu provinces as well.<sup>7</sup>

Thanks to the Katanga and Kasai secessions, the Belgians had a new pretext to stay. Lumumba would never have invited them to continue to run the country, but the head of the country’s wealthiest and most developed province would. Belgian troops would be the guarantor of Katanga’s secession, working from there to defeat the nationalists and get their colony back. The logic was spelled out in an editorial in a Belgian daily on July 14: “Will public opinion accept a guerrilla war in the Congo where hundreds and perhaps thousands of our boys will be massacred? The only ray of hope in all this chaos is Katanga... A strong Katanga, linked to Belgium, constitutes an element of order and prosperity in central Africa, around which a larger confederation could be built.”<sup>8</sup> As long as the secessionist claim remained on the table, any attempt by Lumumba to unify the Congo could be cast as an act of hostility. According to one of the masterminds of Belgian operations in the Congo, Vandewalle, the Katangan constitution provided “a veneer of legality which, in a world to a certain extent ruled by law, was a good cover to have.”<sup>9</sup> A Belgian journalist wrote that Katanga was a “police state,” where “order and discipline of a military occupation” reigned.<sup>10</sup>

Lumumba knew that his newly Africanized Congolese National Army, under Mobutu’s command, was short on skills, equipment, and organization—all of which had been carefully rationed out by the Belgian officer corps. The Belgians had looted the treasury and seized

the Congo's wealthiest province, its economic engine. Belgium continued to control the Union Miniere, the state-owned mining company that brought in 80% of Katanga's revenues and was the biggest subsidiary of the Societe General, the Belgian company that controlled 70% of the Congo's economy.<sup>11</sup> An important stake in Union Miniere was also held by Britain and British investors, and even British workers who were present at the top of Katanga's mining industry by the 1910s.<sup>12</sup> With 250,000 tonnes of copper production annually in the 1950s, and 75% of the world's cobalt production,<sup>13</sup> Union Miniere was a prize that Belgium (and Britain) did not want to give to a sovereign Congo after independence.

When the US wanted the Belgians to stand down from supporting Katanga in 1961, a US official told the press: "Union Miniere pays about 80% of the tax revenues of Katanga and... would rather see Katanga as an easily-controlled 'separate nation' than as part of a larger Congo nation whose government might not be as friendly as Mr. Tshombe."<sup>14</sup> Epstein (1965) provides a bit more background:

Union Miniere had been formed in 1906 to exploit Katanga's huge copper reserves. The firm produced an estimated 60% of the world's cobalt and 8.4% of its copper. It employed 1,700 whites and 22,000 Africans. It controlled concessions totaling 7,700 square miles, nearly the area of New Jersey. The firm's assets were valued at \$2.5 billion in 1960, before Congolese unrest brought a drop in value of its shares from approximately \$1,000 to \$220. 18.14% of Union Miniere's stock was held in trust for the Congo; 14.47% was held by Tanganyika Concessions, Ltd. (Britain's Rhodes interests); 13.11% was held by Belgian interests; 53.98% was held by 120,000 shareholders, 25% of them French. According to the Dec. 12 (1961) New York Times, Union Miniere spokesmen in Brussels estimated the firm's payments to the Katanga government at approximately \$52 million in 1961. This included taxes, franchise payments and dividends on the stock held in trust for the Congo as a whole. The Katanga government had made the dividend payments a condition for uninterrupted Union Miniere production.<sup>15</sup>

Other Western powers had a piece of this business:

- American Metal Climax (AMAX) was in Central Africa and had William Burden, the US Ambassador to Belgium, as an investor, as well as CIA Director Dulles.

- Morgan Guaranty Trust had loaned tens of millions to the Belgian Congo and counted on director Robert Murphy, who was a Congo advisor to the US government and his fellow Morgan Guaranty Trust associate Thomas S. Gates Jr., the secretary of defense.
- Secretary of State Christian Herter married into a Standard Oil family; his son was a Mobil Oil executive in 1961, and invested in Katanga.
- Undersecretary of State C. Douglas Dillon was related to the owners of Dillon, Read and Company, which managed the Belgian Congo's bond issues.<sup>16</sup>

The Belgians used Union Minière to make the Katanga secession pay for itself—copper production actually rose from 280,000 tonnes in 1959 to 300,000 tonnes in 1960.<sup>17</sup> Union Minière paid its 1960 taxes, 1.25 billion Belgian francs, directly to Tshombe, when it should legally have gone to Lumumba's government.<sup>18</sup>

Lumumba would not have relished the idea of sending Mobutu's troops to face off against well-equipped Belgian paratroopers in Katanga. He turned to the logical place: the United Nations and its secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld. From Lumumba's perspective, the situation was clear-cut: The UN existed to preserve the sovereignty of its member states. Here was a new member state whose sovereignty was threatened by aggression from its former colonial master.

For Hammarskjöld, though, the situation was not so clear-cut. The Swedish would-be peacemaker's organization, the UN, depended on the Jim Crow-segregated superpower, the US, for funds. And the former colonial powers of Africa—the UK, France, Belgium—all had the military and covert capacity to spoil UN initiatives. For Hammarskjöld, world peace—and peace in the Congo—depended on winning these Western powers over to some kind of accommodation with the African countries' demands for independence. Hammarskjöld himself was a Westerner and had little time for anti-imperialist talk or practice. He appointed a Swedish mining company official, Sture Linner of the Liberian-American Swedish Minerals Company (LAMCO), to head civilian UN operations in the Congo, and his older brother (Bo Hammarskjöld) sat on the board of a Swedish mining company with interests in Liberia.<sup>19</sup> The Belgians in UMHK argued that the UN opposed the Katanga secession because the Swedish LAMCO wanted the central government to nationalize copper, which would be disruptive to the industry as the Belgians

left and Congolese had to be trained to lead the industry. This would cut out the Katanga copper competition (8–10% of world output) from the glutted copper market of the early 1960s, benefiting Hammarskjöld's family, among other competitors.<sup>20</sup>

Hammarskjöld's interest wasn't in the liberation of Africa, but in ensuring that the UN managed the transition and, if possible, in showing the value the UN could have in achieving peace.

Hammarskjöld asked the Security Council for authority to intervene, which was granted on July 14. Hammarskjöld's idea was to replace Belgian troops with UN troops, with what today would be called a "Chapter 6 mandate," only able to fight in self-defense. To Lumumba, the UN troops were invited to help a newly independent state against external aggression by its former colonizer, which was using the Katanga secession as a cover. To Hammarskjöld, UN troops were not meant to be a party to internal conflicts in the country, which, he assured the king of Belgium in a report in August 1960, the Katanga secession was one.<sup>21</sup> The Security Council resolution of July 14 called for Belgian troops to withdraw from the Congo. A week later, UN troops replaced the Belgian troops occupying the Congo's major cities—except in Katanga, where the Belgians remained.<sup>22</sup>

Lumumba wanted to use the UN to stop the Belgians from rolling back the Congo's independence, using separatist Katanga as a Belgian base area. To the secretary-general though, the UN mission in the Congo was a *Western* mission, one that much preferred a Congo under extended Belgian control than an independent Congo with a nationalist agenda. Lumumba began to understand this when the UN troops began to arrive and sought to restore order without addressing the presence of Belgian troops. A British general based in Ghana was the interim commander of the UN mission. He arrived and told the Congolese soldiers to stand down while the Belgians used their control of highways and airports to continue their troop buildup.<sup>23</sup>

Lumumba wasn't allowed to land his plane in Katanga to talk to Tshombe. But Hammarskjöld met Tshombe and his minister Munongo on August 12. He told Tshombe that UN troops would help Katanga *against* the Congolese government if necessary. He also assured them that the UN would take over the key Kamina and Kitona bases, denying them to the Congolese government for use against Katanga's separatist government.<sup>24</sup> By guaranteeing the Katangan secession, the UN changed the direction of the Congo Crisis. Belgian ministers D'Aspremont

Lynden and Robert Rothschild cabled Brussels very happy with the outcome: “from now on we can be optimistic about the way the general situation in Katanga will evolve. Barring new accidents, the Katangan structures will be protected by UN troops and, in the not too distant future, by Katangan troops under the command of Belgian officers, instead of on an extremely precarious basis by Belgian troops.”<sup>25</sup>

Private meetings and cables attest to the UN’s support for Tshombe’s secessionist Katanga. But publicly Tshombe discredited the UN, continuing to refuse to allow the UN to enter the province. Not only were Belgian troops allowed control of Katanga, but Tshombe also ordered a mobilization of civilians to resist the UN if they tried to enter. Hammarskjold tried to insist that the UN was coming to Katanga only to remove and replace Belgian troops, but that was the point: the Belgians were the guarantors of the Katanga secession. In fact, they were more than that. They *were* the state of Katanga.

When Hammarskjold’s Swedish battalion entered Katanga on August 12 with Tshombe’s permission,<sup>26</sup> Lumumba hoped that it would be a major step to an independent and united Congo. Instead, it was the first step in making the UN replace the Belgians, who did withdraw from the Congo in September to bases in Ruanda-Urundi,<sup>27</sup> not as forces of order, but as guarantors of Congo’s instability. Hammarskjold and Tshombe communicated that the UN troops would follow the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, neither helping the central government nor the Katanga secession, but replacing the Belgians in the restoration of order.<sup>28</sup>

In the face of this, Lumumba told Hammarskjold that the UN mandate allowed it to aid the central government in subduing the Katanga separatists, and that by working with the Belgians and Tshombe, Hammarskjold had lost the confidence of the Congolese people and government.

Hammarskjold raised the stakes even higher, to the point where the UN secretary-general was calling for regime change. He told US officials on August 16 that the UN mission was not viable so long as Lumumba was in office, that “one or the other would have to go.”<sup>29</sup> Lumumba told the press on August 20 that he wanted a speedy withdrawal of UN troops because he feared a substitution of “United Nations colonialism for Belgian colonialism.”<sup>30</sup>

Lumumba appealed to the USSR for help. Much is made of the Soviet Union and its role in the Congo Crisis. The importance of the

Cold War is a major talking point for the Africanists. The Soviets sent some transport planes to replace the Belgian-piloted ones whose defection to Katanga would have left the pilotless, planeless Congolese military grounded. Lumumba tried to use the agreement with the USSR to pressure the West to stop the aggression. The UN passed a resolution banning foreign interference in the Congo, nominally aimed at both Belgium and the USSR. Lumumba toured the Western capitals, asking for help. Western reactions to him reeked of racism and propaganda. Lumumba was told in Ottawa and Washington that help from Western governments would not be forthcoming. Behind the scenes, the CIA chief in the Congo was “already monitoring parliament and encouraging and aiding the actions of various parliamentary opposition groups that we had penetrated. We were seeking political leaders who might marshal their supporters against Lumumba when a vote of confidence was called. We were also using Jacques [a CIA asset] to insert anti-Lumumba articles in the country’s leading newspaper.”<sup>31</sup>

Lumumba returned home knowing that the West would never help him put the Congo back together. He ordered the Congolese National Army (ANC) into action. They were no match for the Belgians or the UN, but the Kasai Mining State would not be as formidable an opponent. Nationalism was popular. Though members of the Baluba ethnic group in Kasai were opposed to the Congolese army, the Baluba in Katanga were against the secession and would help the Congolese army.

Geographically, Kasai is closer to the Congolese capital and on the way to Katanga. Mobutu led the Congolese army into Kasai at the end of August. Mining State’s military force quickly collapsed. The Congolese army seized Bakwanga, the capital of Mining State, around August 27.<sup>32</sup> Lumumba’s government’s military successes stopped at Kasai when Colonel Mobutu unilaterally declared the end of the military action in Kasai on September 1, a few days before the first coup against Lumumba.<sup>33</sup> Tshombe ordered the bridges and roads leading to Katanga from Kasai destroyed, to prevent the ANC from entering Katanga.<sup>34</sup> More importantly, the UN moved their troops to block the Congolese army’s entry from Kasai or Kivu.<sup>35</sup>

Under the command of Mobutu, the ANC committed crimes against civilians in these areas during this campaign,<sup>36</sup> killing an estimated two hundred civilians.<sup>37</sup> This allowed Lumumba’s many enemies, including Hammarskjöld, to claim that he had ordered a genocide against the

people of Kasai, with no evidence to that effect.<sup>38</sup> It also allowed writers, at the time and since, to conflate this action by the central government to stop a secession with two distinct military conflicts: the ongoing Baluba-Lulua ethnic conflict in Kasai, and Tshombe's suppression of the Baluba revolt in Katanga.

Kalonji and Tshombe were joined by the Congo's president, Kasavubu, as their demands started to change from a demand for an independent state to a demand for a Congo without Lumumba. They sought international support for a loose federation of Congolese territories, opposed to Lumumba's vision of a strong centralized state.<sup>39</sup>

As the politics and diplomacy began to shift to an anti-Lumumba position, the danger to a sovereign future for the Congo escalated. The idea of an independent Congo came to be associated with Lumumba, and toppling Lumumba became a priority. The US Ambassador, Timberlake, approached President Kasavubu with the idea to oust Lumumba in mid-August.<sup>40</sup> UN diplomats raised the idea with Kasavubu and other Congolese politicians the following week.<sup>41</sup> The Belgian ambassador in Leopoldville, the Belgian consul in Congo-Brazzaville, the Belgian prime minister (Gaston Eyskens), the Belgian foreign minister (Christophe Wigny), and Belgian military officers all made entreaties to Kasavubu to overthrow Lumumba in the two last weeks of August.<sup>42</sup>

As the Congolese army advanced on Katanga from Kasai in early September of 1960, Tshombe feared that the Baluba of Katanga would link up with the Congolese army. The United Nations, which had grounded planes at all Congolese airports, allowed Katanga to be resupplied with weapons from Belgium on September 7, and then allowed Elizabethville to send troops to north Katanga on September 9 to take the offensive against the Baluba ahead of the possible arrival of the Congolese army.<sup>43</sup> Epstein describes the beginning of a Baluba revolt in Katanga against Tshombe, and Tshombe's suppression of it, as follows:

Secy. Gen Hammarskjold warned Pres. Tshombe Sept. 21 that the 4,000 UN troops in Katanga had been ordered to use force if necessary to prevent the massacre of Baluba tribesmen by provincial troops and police. Hammarskjold's message to Tshombe marked the first public authorization of the use of force by UN troops in the Congo.

The warning was based on UN reports of the slaughter of 68 Balubas by Katanga provincial police Sept 15-16 in Luena, a tin-mining center 250

miles north of Elisabethville. The Katanga Balubas, enemies of Tshombe's Lunda tribe, were said to have killed 2 persons in an attack on Tshombe supporters in Luena Sept. 13. 125 Katanga provincial police arrived in Luena Sept. 15 and reportedly began random shooting of Balubas in sight of an Ethiopian UN contingent based in the town. The Luena incident was described by Katanga officials as one of several police actions made necessary by a Baluba tribal revolt (An estimated 1/3 of Katanga's 1.5 million inhabitants were Balubas.) 35 Balubas were reported to have been killed in attacks on provincial police in Manono Sept. 13-14.<sup>44</sup>

Tshombe was given a free hand to crush this Baluba revolt by the West and by Mobutu, the Congolese army chief of staff at the time. Mobutu was paying his troops with funds from the US and Belgium, and those funds were made conditional on his leaving the Baluba of Katanga to Tshombe's mercy. The Congolese army held off from linking up with the Balubas in Katanga. Tshombe allowed the UN to enter north Katanga on October 15, and the UN protected the mines, factories, and railway lines against the Baluba rebels.<sup>45</sup> When UN soldiers captured a group of Baluba fighters, they handed them to Katangan gendarmes to be massacred. The total number of Balubas killed by December 1960 is estimated to be up to 70,000.<sup>46</sup> The Katangan secessionists were given the reprieve they needed to build up their forces against the nationalists—by the UN.<sup>47</sup> When 200 Baluba deaths could be attributed to Lumumba, Hammarskjöld called this a genocide. When Tshombe's white mercenaries killed 70,000 Baluba the same year, the UN was silent.

By the end of the summer, the US and the Belgians were planning in earnest to eliminate Lumumba.

In an August 11, 1960 memo, the CIA chief of station (Larry Devlin) described a series of actions that the CIA would be taking to bring about the fall of Lumumba. Among them:

- B. "Launch extensive [less than 1 line not declassified] campaign ([less than 1 line not declassified] meetings) by assisting local political groups with the funds and guidance to take anti Commie line and oppose Lumumba"...
- D. "Attempt infiltrate govt with [CIA] controlled assets such as [name not declassified] to obtain political intel and try limit influence Commies and incompetent Congolese officials"...
- F. "Cultivate and attempt recruit members current govt to keep foot in Lumumba camp. Although believe would be better oust him, do not



want become tied irrevocably to opposition, if it not able achieve goals. Also would use such assets to try moderate Lumumba govt and obtain political intel.”

The first openness to Lumumba’s assassination was expressed in an August 18, 1960 NSC meeting, which Robert H. Johnson testified to at the June 10, 1975, Church Committee, and which was released in August 2000: “Johnson recalled Eisenhower turning to CIA Director Allen Dulles ‘in the full hearing of all those in attendance and saying something to the effect that Lumumba should be eliminated.’ After that ‘there was a stunned silence for about 15 seconds and the meeting continued.’”<sup>48</sup> The intensity of the need to eliminate Lumumba continued to grow, as did the leniency about means. The CIA wrote to the chief of station in the Congo on August 27, 1960, that Lumumba’s “removal must be an urgent and prime objective and that under existing conditions this should be a high priority of our covert action,” and giving the station “wider authority,” “including even more aggressive action if it can remain covert.”<sup>49</sup>

On September 3, President Kasavubu met with Hammar skjold’s executive assistant, an American named Andrew Cordier who had moved from the State Department to the UN in 1945. When Kasavubu said he was considering ousting Lumumba, Cordier told him “the President had no doubt weighed the consequences of whatever action he proposed to take and that before taking it, he would make sure of his ground.”<sup>50</sup> Two days later, Kasavubu told Cordier that he was going to remove Lumumba and announce as much at 8:15 p.m. on the radio. He asked the UN to arrest Lumumba and 25 others, including ministers, and to guard Kasavubu’s palace and the radio station. Cordier green-lighted the coup, said he would provide the guards but he wouldn’t make the arrests.<sup>51</sup> He cabled Hammar skjold about the conversation. Hammar skjold told him not to interfere in any way but to otherwise exercise his discretion—in effect endorsing Cordier’s green-lighting of the coup. Hammar skjold told Cordier that he would in the meantime consult legal experts about Kasavubu’s position.<sup>52</sup> In its own cables, US personnel summarized these conversations as saying that Kasavubu’s coup had been “coordinated with UNOC at highest levels here.”<sup>53</sup>

Hammar skjold’s envoy, Rajeshwar Dayal, arrived on September 5, the day of Kasavubu’s coup. In his memoir, he wrote that he had been

surprised by Cordier's green-lighting of the coup. American scholars Gerard and Kuklick add some detail that may have helped jog Dayal's memory about how events actually unfolded: "In his memoirs Dayal forgot that he had been in the UN cable office in New York on September 3, when the Congo Club discussed the proposed change in government by teleprinter... He also forgot to note that when his flight touched down on the morning of September 5, he at once had the title of special representative and spent the day in Leopoldville... By November, when Dayal himself was pressed, he maintained his bona fides by boasting that he had been responsible for 'deflating' Lumumba. So much for Dayal's hand-wringing."<sup>54</sup>

Dayal's hand-wringing aside, Cordier remained in charge for a few days after Dayal's arrival and used his time carefully. He closed the airport, preventing Lumumba's troop transports from landing and denying him the ability to restore constitutionality by force. He closed the radio station, preventing Lumumba from communicating with the public. Cordier argued this was an even-handed move: The radio station was also closed to Kasavubu. The trouble was Kasavubu, whose relative Abbe Fulbert Youlou was president of the former French colony Congo-Brazzaville across the river from Leopoldville, was able to continue to broadcast into Leopoldville from there. The Belgians also set up their anti-Lumumba headquarters across the river in Brazzaville.<sup>55</sup> Gerard and Kuklick summarized Cordier's actions as follows: "for five days Cordier took instructions from politicians who had no justifiable authority. He had closed the radio station and shut the airports because Kasavubu asked him. The UN had no problem of law and order, and Lumumba, the only candidate for legal prime minister, opposed the decisions, while Cordier allowed the secessionist Tshombe to defy them."<sup>56</sup>

As for Hammarskjöld, "From the thirty-eighth floor of UN headquarters in New York, he esteemed himself as schoolmaster of the Congo, made up reasons for his policies as he went along, and did what he could to kill the Lumumba government."<sup>57</sup>

Lumumba rejected the ouster and went on the radio himself, saying he was ousting Kasavubu and appealed to the UN and to Kasavubu to settle the issue in parliament.<sup>58</sup> Devlin wrote that the CIA "were prepared to go almost any length to get Lumumba off the air... we were afraid that his strident speeches would soon have his supporters thronging in the streets. We considered cutting off power to the radio station

but neither Jeff [a colleague of Devlin's] nor I knew how."<sup>59</sup> A justifiable fear, perhaps, but Lumumba ceased broadcasting later that night for reasons unknown to Devlin.

The Congolese National Assembly and Senate met two days later and declared both Lumumba's dismissal and Kasavubu's dismissal null and void, by 60-19, and to express confidence in Lumumba's government.

On September 9, the CIA wrote to Devlin with detailed orders for Kasavubu. The orders included who Kasavubu needed to contact, and what he needed to say to them:

You [chief of station] should approach [Kasavubu] soonest recommending in strongest terms he send message to SYG [UN Secretary General Hammarskjold] and publish same. Timing is crucial since Kasavubu's message to SYG must be available before SC [Security Council] meeting, now scheduled Saturday a.m., Sept 10. Kasavubu should declare he is Chief of State and that he has, in accordance with legal procedures prescribed in "fundamental law" deposed Lumumba. Latter has no official status. 3. He should appeal to UN in name legally constituted authority to remain in Congo and to assume full control public safety sector including control all armed Congolese units so that people of Congo can freely express their feelings rather than live in fear and intimidation.

The US cables are full of such very detailed instructions for Congolese politicians, including Kasavubu, Tshombe, Ileo, and Adoula. While the US official line was one of the defense of Congolese sovereignty from communist aggression, it was actually writing and scheduling the exact words to be spoken by Congolese politicians.

Congolese troops briefly arrested Lumumba on September 12, but released him hours later. Even though Lumumba held a victory parade after being released, the arrest showed that he was in physical danger.<sup>60</sup>

At the UN session in September followed the same pattern, the supposed neutrality of the UN strengthened Lumumba's opponents and weakened the Congolese government's ability to respond to Belgian and Western support for secession. The UN refused to seat Lumumba's delegation and equally refused to seat Kasavubu's delegation.<sup>61</sup> This even-handedness between the Katanga secession and the extension of Congo's governmental authority over Katanga, meant the UN effectively supported the status quo of a divided Congo with a Belgian-backed Katanga and an ongoing plot to overthrow Lumumba.

The CIA's principal tool was American dollar bills by the briefcase load. Among the politicians Devlin worked with on the agency's behalf, his favorite was the Congolese army's chief of staff, Joseph-Desire Mobutu. Devlin made a plan for a coup to overthrow Lumumba that was "step-by-step-by-step," starting with the "buying of the first senator."<sup>62</sup> When they made contact with Mobutu, the CIA proposed "to offer a personal subsidy to Mobutu further to insure his continued cooperation."<sup>63</sup> When planning for the post-Lumumba government after his arrest, the CIA said the "operation cannot succeed if we do not 'put something in pocket' of many people."<sup>64</sup> A February 9, 1961 CIA cable to the chief of station in the Congo gives a flavor for the payment system:

Per oral discussions with you HQS, this is to confirm Leop authorized expend up to [number not declassified] dollars in clandestine support [cryptonym not declassified] operations. These funds to provide military support for [cryptonym not declassified] ops (purchase of arms, commo equipment, transport, etc) as well as to influence loyalty of GOC military personnel and to bribe [less than 1 line not declassified] military and civilian personnel. Sum authorized is in addition to [cryptonym not declassified] expenditures already authorized for purely political and propaganda ops.<sup>65</sup>

When Devlin met Mobutu, the CIA proposed "to offer a personal subsidy to Mobutu further to insure his continued cooperation."<sup>66</sup> The young military man had already become the West's chosen recipient for subsidies to the Congolese army. The UN had provided \$1 million on September 6, via the US, for army salaries.<sup>67</sup> Other US and Belgian embassy staff would meet Mobutu with briefcases full of money.<sup>68</sup> Mobutu used the cash to maintain a force of a few hundred men, "by far the most affluent soldiers in Africa," who "constituted virtually the only functioning units in the Congolese National Army."<sup>69</sup>

The way Devlin tells the story, it was Mobutu and Bomboko who came to him, telling him "I've got to get back to my commanders. I have to give them a 'go' or a 'no go' order." Devlin says he "held out my hand to Mobutu and said with as much conviction as I could muster: 'I can assure you the United States government will recognize a temporary government composed of civilian technocrats.'<sup>70</sup> It makes for a dramatic moment in a memoir—the momentous decision taken in the

moment—but Mobutu’s coup was carefully planned by the US, not spontaneously endorsed by Devlin in a late night meeting.

On September 14, Mobutu overthrew Lumumba’s government in a coup and arrested Lumumba. Kasavubu, as well as the premier Kasavubu had attempted to use to replace Lumumba in the previous coup attempt, Joseph Ileo, backed Mobutu and signed decrees suspending the National Assembly.<sup>71</sup> Mobutu quickly expelled all Russian, Czech, and “other socialist” personnel from the country<sup>72</sup> installed a government with the title of “College of High Commissioners” to replace the constitutional government.<sup>73</sup> Lumumba, released after a brief arrest, and his followers, attempted to resist the coup, but failed. Reconciliation efforts also floundered, as Mining State (Kasai) founder Kalonji and Tshombe refused to attend a reconciliation meeting presided over by Lumumba.<sup>74</sup>

The UN insisted that they would only protect Lumumba, the legitimate leader of the country, if he stayed at home. On September 15, the Belgian press recognized the key role of the UN in keeping Lumumba out of office. “Without the UN,” the article in *La Libre Belgique* stated, “Lumumba could turn the situation round with a few hundred followers.”<sup>75</sup> Four days later, on September 19, *Time* magazine reported that “Congolese army leaders<sup>76</sup> and UN officers had worked out arrangements of their own: weapons were to be kept locked in central arsenals, and a cease-fire was arranged in the Katanga campaign... For the UN, all this was... far beyond anything that its original architects had envisioned... [The UN] were trying to undo the actions of the premier who had invited the UN into the country in the first place.”<sup>77</sup>

US and Belgian assassination plans were closing in on Lumumba. Belgium’s foreign minister Wigny wrote to Brazzaville on September 10 that “the constituted authorities have the duty to render Lumumba harmless.”<sup>78</sup> The Belgians developed a plan for “Operation Barracuda,” which would see a group of commandos attack Lumumba’s house in Leopoldville, where he was under house arrest, and kill him there.<sup>79</sup> d’Aspremont Lynden, Belgium’s minister for African Affairs, cabled Brazzaville and Elisabethville (Katanga’s capital) on October 6, telling them that “the main aim to pursue, in the interests of the Congo, Katanga and Belgium, is clearly Lumumba’s *elimination definitive*.”<sup>80</sup>

Unlike his opponents (Tshombe, Mobutu, Kasavubu), who were either unknown or considered to be the creatures of foreign powers, Lumumba continued to have the ability to attract large crowds and to rally the people. Mobutu had the Congolese army surround Lumumba’s

house on October 9, stopping Lumumba from using his ability to rally the people in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), the capital, or to get to Stanleyville (Kisangani), where the nationalists were strongest.<sup>81</sup> The UN told Lumumba that he was only under their protection while in his home.<sup>82</sup>

At this time, Mobutu traveled to Katanga and reached an accord with Tshombe: Katanga was to remain in the Congo, and the coup against Lumumba's government would stand.<sup>83</sup> Tshombe's quick agreement to this resolution shows that Tshombe's Katanga secession was never about Katanga's independence from the Congo, but rather about preventing the Congo's independence from the West, under Lumumba's leadership. Once Lumumba was removed, supposed centralizer Mobutu, supposed federalist Kasavubu, and supposed secessionist Tshombe were all able to agree easily, at least on paper. The eventual dissolution of their coalition came not over principle, but over the division of power.

At the end of October, as Mobutu crushed yet another pro-Lumumba revolt in the army, Belgian troops and personnel began to return to the Congo, despite protest by the UN.<sup>84</sup> UN representative Rajeshwar Dayal reported that Mobutu's government had brought the country to the brink of administrative collapse,<sup>85</sup> but the UN voted on November 22 to seat the coup government's delegation by a vote of 53-24, with the Western countries voting in favor, and the socialist bloc voting against.<sup>86</sup> In order to accomplish this, Dayal said, the Western countries organized "one of the most glaring examples of the massive and organized application of threats and pressures - along with inducements - to member states to change their votes."<sup>87</sup> The coup government's delegation, led by Kasavubu, obtained the international recognition that it wanted. It then set about trying to block all attempts at reconciliation or restoration of the national assembly.<sup>88</sup>

Devlin suggested after the coup that ousting Lumumba might not be enough, and his Congolese interlocutors got the message. "To COS comment that Lumumba in opposition is almost as dangerous as in office, [Identity 1] indicated understood and implied might physically eliminate Lumumba,"<sup>89</sup> and that "Only solution is remove him from scene soonest."<sup>90</sup>

Lumumba escaped from house arrest on November 27 and tried to get to Stanleyville to reorganize the nationalist forces. All of the Western agencies operating in the Congo, including the CIA, cooperated to assist the Congolese army in recapturing Lumumba: "When Dayal and the

UN learned of Lumumba's flight, the organization telexed its forces and administrators along the prime minister's likely getaway routes that the peacekeepers should not assist the hunters. However, while the international organization would protect Lumumba in his home, the UN would do nothing for the hunted."<sup>91</sup>

Lumumba was arrested by Mobutu's troops on December 1, while Ghanaian UN troops watched, permitting the arrest.<sup>92</sup> These UN soldiers told Lumumba that it was not their job to protect him and proceeded to watch while Lumumba was beaten and taken away by Mobutu's soldiers.<sup>93</sup> These soldiers "had received very clear instructions that on no account was any action to be taken in respect of Lumumba. These instructions were rigidly adhered to."<sup>94</sup>

The UN commander-in-chief in Leopoldville, van Horn, had reiterated to his troops the day before that "No, repeat no, action is to be taken by you in respect of Lumumba. We were responsible for his personal safety only in his house at Leopoldville. It has always been understood and made known that he would venture out of his house at his own risk and responsibility." The UN representative, Dayal, cabled Hammarskjold confirming that order on December 1: "We have taken firm position that he was under UNOC guard at his residence only."<sup>95</sup>

Behind the scenes, the UN and the US both celebrated their good luck. Von Horn wrote later that "Most of us felt quite rightly that there was now a genuine chance of the Congo returning to some degree of tranquility."<sup>96</sup> Publicly, the UN complained about Lumumba's beating. The US appealed for "humane treatment" and a "fair trial" for this leader, ousted in a coup.<sup>97</sup> Lumumba was held in Thysville prison camp for a month and a half.

Even in prison, Lumumba's power to mobilize Congolese people terrified his opponents. "if he could have gotten out and started to talk to a battalion of the Congolese army," one State Department official wrote, "he probably would have had them in the palm of his hand in five minutes."<sup>98</sup> Lumumba had Christmas dinner with the Thysville officers, his captors.<sup>99</sup> Mutinies were happening at army bases. But luck was with the empires, this time: Thysville camp was under the command of a colonel loyal to Mobutu named Louis Bobozo. De Witte tells this remarkable story:

"On 27 December, Colonel Bobozo had to put his life on the line to keep Lumumba under lock and key: that night he stood in front of the cell

door to stop a few dozen soldiers setting the former prime minister free. According to Schoonbroodt, Colonel Bobozo told the soldiers: “You have no choice, if you want to free the prisoner, you’ll have to kill me.” The soldiers finally withdrew one by one.”<sup>100</sup> Thirteen days before his death, a letter smuggled out from Lumumba to his wife said that the food he was given was “disgusting and dirty and I don’t eat for three or four days at a time”; “if a soldier gives us so much as a banana, he’s arrested and put in a cell. Despite everything several soldiers come secretly to try to help me.”<sup>101</sup>

Lumumba was moved from Thysville camp near Leopoldville (Kinshasa) to Tshombe’s Katanga on January 17. In Epstein’s words, “UN troops who witnessed the transfer reported that Lumumba and the 2 others were beaten repeatedly and that UN troops had been ordered not to intervene.”<sup>102</sup> This transfer sealed his fate—Lumumba and two of his companions (Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito) were murdered in Katanga, although Tshombe’s government did not announce the fact until one month later.<sup>103</sup>

Mobutu received one million francs—about \$20,000 USD at the Bretton Woods exchange rate of 50:1—from Tshombe (which effectively means from Tshombe’s Belgian sponsors), the leader of the Katanga secession, for handing over Lumumba to be killed.

A cable from Devlin to the CIA dated January 17, 1961, reports of the plan to transfer Lumumba from his prison in Thysville to his death in Katanga.<sup>104</sup> A CIA field report on January 18 described Lumumba’s transfer, his arrival in Katanga, and his condition: “Lumumba and two fellow detainees debarked chained together and showing signs of having been badly beaten in flight. All Lumumba teeth have been knocked out beaten after disembarked but not too roughly, then removed unknown prison.”<sup>105</sup> On January 19, 1961, a cable so redacted as to be almost incomprehensible, from a non declassified source to the CIA from a non-declassified location, stated: “1. Thanks for Patrice. If we had known he was coming we would have baked a snake.”<sup>106</sup> The same cable stated that the government of Katanga “does not plan liquidate Lumumba. [name not declassified] fears chances of Balubakat uprising in Eville considerably increased.”<sup>107</sup>

Lumumba’s death was confirmed in a CIA field report on February 7, 1961: “Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Okito and Maurice Mpolo were executed shortly after their arrival in Elisabethville the evening of 17 Jan. Katanga soldiers shot and killed Okito and Mpolo. A Belgian officer of Flemish origin executed Lumumba with a burst of submachine gun fire



at 2300Z 17 Jan. An ear was severed from Lumumba's head and sent to Albert Kalonji, President of Sud-Kasai. The three bodies were buried in a common grave."<sup>108</sup>

The Katanga government announced Lumumba's death on February 12, 1961, along with an elaborate story of Lumumba's escape and recapture which led to his death by "tribesmen."<sup>109</sup> Internationally, Belgium faced protests and censure. Tshombe vetoed a UN investigation into Lumumba's death on February 14.<sup>110</sup> A UN commission nonetheless produced a report rejecting Katanga's story of the murder and, based on testimonies from unnamed witnesses, concluded that Lumumba was killed by Katanga government forces under coordination by Belgians.<sup>111</sup>

From the announcement of independence for its Central African domains in 1959 to the beginning of 1961, the Belgians assassinated the leaders of each country (the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi). They severed the Congo's economic engine (Katanga) from it and brought a mercenary army to guarantee the secession. They looted the Congo and engineered its financial dependence for years to come.

Under Hammarskjold, the United Nations was never going to be an instrument of the decolonized African countries. Instead, Hammarskjold walked a middle path, trying to please the West and placate African nationalism. When he had to choose, he chose the West—he protected the Katanga secessionists and allowed the Belgians to kill Lumumba. In the process, he empowered forces that would end his life.

When the Belgians needed help with their restive colonies, they turned to the United States and told the Americans what they wanted to hear: that African nationalists were actually communists, and that Lumumba's dreams of sovereignty were a coded message for a Soviet takeover. Just behind those anti-communist frames lay the real coded message: the racial understanding of apartheid powers and imperialists in Africa with the Jim Crow superpower.

Lumumba was dead. The newly independent Congo was broken. Postcolonial Rwanda and Burundi were poisoned. Now the United States would try to put the pieces back according to its own ideas.

## NOTES

1. de Witte 2001, pp. 6–8.
2. Epstein 1965, p. 10.
3. Epstein 1965, p. 12.

4. Quoted in de Witte 2001, p. 32.
5. Gibbs 1991, p. 117.
6. The Belgian-run mining company in Katanga was Union Miniere du Haut-Katanga (UMHK); the Belgian-run mining company in Kasai was La Societe Internationale Forestiere et Miniere du Congo, or FORMINIERE. Shareholders included New York's Guggenheim family and J. P. Morgan.
7. Gibbs 1991, p. 88. Citing Stephen R. Weissman. 1974. *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960–1964*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca. p. 72 and *NYT* July 13, 1960.
8. Manu Ruys, de Standaard, July 14, 1961. Cited in Ludo de Witte. 2001. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. pp. 9–10.
9. F. Vandewalle, *Mille et Quatre Jours*, Vol. 2, p. 166. Quoted in de Witte 2001, p. 32.
10. Manu Ruys, De Standaard, August 18, 1960, quoted in de Witte 2001, p. 35.
11. de Witte 2001, p. 31.
12. Gibbs 1991, p. 62.
13. de Witte 2001, p. 31.
14. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Carl T. Rowan, speaking on December 27, 1961 in Philadelphia. Cited in Epstein 1965, p. 123.
15. Epstein 1965, p. 123.
16. Gibbs 1991, p. 100.
17. de Witte 2001, p. 32.
18. de Witte 2001, p. 32.
19. Roberts, Dick. 1965. *Revolution in the Congo: A Young Socialist Pamphlet*. Pathfinder Press, New York. p. 4.
20. Gibbs 1991, p. 105.
21. de Witte 2001, p. 12.
22. de Witte 2001, p. 9.
23. The British general's name was Henry Templar Alexander. He was succeeded by a Swedish commander named Carl Carlsson van Horn. Epstein 1965, p. 14.
24. de Witte 2001, p. 12.
25. Dated August 13, 1960, the cable was cited in de Witte 2001, p. 13.
26. Epstein 1965, p. 26.
27. Today Rwanda and Burundi, Ruanda-Urundi was then a jointly administered former colony of Belgium.
28. Epstein 1965, p. 27.
29. Cable of August 16, 1960, in M. Kalb, 1982. *Congo Cables*, p. 51. Cited in de Witte p. 15.
30. Epstein 1965, p. 31.

31. Larry Devlin. 2007. *Chief of Station: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Country*. p. 63.
32. Ludo de Witte. 2001. *The Assassination of Patrice Lumumba*. Verso Books. p. 16.
33. de Witte 2001, p. 16.
34. Epstein 1965, p. 32.
35. de Witte 2001, p. 18.
36. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, pp. 105–106.
37. Gibbs 1991, p. 94. Citing Ilunga Kabongo, “The catastrophe of Belgian Decolonization,” p. 39 in Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, eds., *Decolonization and African Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).
38. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 106.
39. Epstein 1965, p. 33.
40. de Witte 2001, p. 17.
41. de Witte 2001, p. 17.
42. de Witte 2001, p. 18.
43. de Witte 2001, p. 21.
44. Epstein 1965, p. 42.
45. de Witte 2001, p. 28.
46. Gibbs 1991, p. 87. Citing Jules Gerard Libois. 1966. *Katanga Secession*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison. pp. 125–6.
47. de Witte 2001, p. 28.
48. FRUS vol. 23, pp. 52–53.
49. FRUS vol. 23, p. 52.
50. Dayal 1976, p. 29.
51. Dayal 1976, p. 30.
52. Dayal 1976, p. 30.
53. FRUS vol. 23, p. 56.
54. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 98.
55. Dayal 1976, pp. 38 and 45.
56. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 102.
57. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 106.
58. Epstein 1965, p. 37, de Witte 2001, p. 20.
59. Devlin 2007, p. 68.
60. Epstein 1965, p. 39.
61. Epstein 1965, p. 44.
62. FRUS vol. 23, p. 59.
63. FRUS vol. 23, p. 82.
64. FRUS vol. 23, p. 87.
65. FRUS vol. 23, p. 133.
66. FRUS vol. 23, p. 82.

67. de Witte 2001, p. 27.
68. de Witte 2001, p. 27, Gibbs 1991, p. 96, citing Rajeshwar Dayal, *Mission for Hammaraskhold*. Oxford University Press, Delhi. p. 66.
69. Gibbs 1991, p. 96.
70. Devlin 2007, p. 80. This is likely another inversion of reality—from the memos it is more likely that Devlin approached Mobutu with the idea and the plan, not the other way around.
71. Epstein 1965, p. 47.
72. Epstein 1965, p. 48.
73. Epstein 1965, p. 48.
74. Epstein 1965, p. 51.
75. cited in de Witte 2001, p. 22.
76. For which we can read, Mobutu.
77. cited in de Witte 2001, p. 26.
78. de Witte 2001, p. 23.
79. de Witte 2001, pp. 24–25.
80. de Witte 2001, p. 25.
81. de Witte 2001, p. 30.
82. de Witte 2001, p. 30.
83. Epstein 1965, p. 53.
84. Epstein 1965, p. 54.
85. Epstein 1965, p. 55.
86. Epstein 1965, p. 59.
87. Rajeshwar Dayal. *Mission for Hammaraskhold*. p. 119. Quoted in de Witte 2001, p. 51.
88. Epstein 1965, p. 59.
89. FRUS vol. 23, p. 59.
90. FRUS vol. 23, p. 67—cable of Sept 16/1960. FRUS Volume 23 includes some of the cables detailing the plans for the assassination of Lumumba by poisoning and by commando raid (pp. 69, 73, 77, 78, 94).
91. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 179.
92. Gerard and Kuklick 2015, p. 181.
93. de Witte 2001, p. 55.
94. de Witte 2001, p. 56.
95. de Witte 2001, p. 55.
96. de Witte 2001, p. 57.
97. Epstein 1965, p. 63.
98. C. Douglas Dillon, quoted in United States Senate. 1976. *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*. Norton, New York. p. 63. Cited by Gibbs 1991, p. 98.
99. Gibbs 1991, p. 98.

100. de Witte 2001, p. 61. Schoonbroodt is Lt. Schoonbroodt, assistant to Colonel Bobozo, interviewed for J. Brassine's "Enquete sur le mort de Patrice Lumumba", which was his unpublished 1990 PhD thesis at the ULB, Brussels, Volume 1, pp. 115–116.
101. de Witte 2001, p. 60.
102. Epstein 1965, p. 75.
103. Epstein 1965, p. 77.
104. FRUS vol. 23, p. 112.
105. FRUS vol. 23, p. 113.
106. FRUS vol. 23, p. 114.
107. FRUS vol. 23, p. 114.
108. FRUS vol. 23, p. 126.
109. Epstein 1965, p. 77.
110. Epstein 1965, p. 80.
111. Epstein 1965, p. 82.



## The Agency's Kingmaker

The Belgian and British network of assassins and spies ousted and killed Lumumba along with promising leaders in Burundi and Rwanda. The Americans and the United Nations helped. Indeed, America was slowly taking over the old colonies. In Central Africa, America's private and public interests overlapped without concern over conflict of interest.<sup>1</sup> Rockefeller purchased holdings in the Congolese bauxite industry in 1959 and in the Katanga mining company (UMHK), as did corporations American Metal Climax and Tempelman and Son (who would later employ the CIA Chief of Station, Larry Devlin, as a private consultant). By 1963, US private investment in the Congolese mining industry had reached \$1.2 billion.<sup>2</sup> American investors and government personnel were intertwined with Swedish investors in the Liberian mining industry, and with British investors in Rhodesia and South Africa. Western businessmen expected their governments to protect their investments. And they got what they expected.

But after Lumumba's murder, the business environment was complicated. With the Lumumbist revolt in Province Orientale, the Kivus, and Katanga, the Katanga and Kasai secessions, the Baluba revolt in Katanga and Kasai, and Mobutu's unconstitutional government at the center, the Congo was partitioned.

The nonaligned countries and the socialist bloc had hoped to restore Lumumba to power. Once he was killed the American strategy was to use the UN to put down the Lumumbist rebellion while stabilizing the

Congo just enough to prevent a collapse. Their man on the scene was CIA Chief of Station, Larry Devlin.

Devlin's plan was to work with Mobutu to crush the Lumumbist rebellion, the Baluba revolt, and the Katanga and Kasai secessions. The UN Security Council, meeting in mid-February 1961, ordered UN troops to "use force as a last resort to prevent civil war."<sup>3</sup> The Security Council rejected a range of other proposals at that meeting, including a proposal "that would have authorized UN troops to use force to prevent the arrest, deportation, or killing of Congolese political leaders."<sup>4</sup> Hammarskjöld "rebutted Soviet charges of his alleged responsibility for Lumumba's death, asserting that even direct UN intervention against the Katanga regime could not have saved Lumumba."<sup>5</sup> That was a lie. Of course, the UN could have saved Lumumba, and without any invasion of Katanga.

Lumumba was captured by while trying to reach his base of support in Stanleyville (now Kisangani) in Province Orientale. Several of his lieutenants, including Antoine Gizenga, had already arrived. The Lumumbists came to control much of Province Orientale and part of the Kivus, building a base large enough to threaten a nationalist return to power.

At the end of July 1961, Gizenga agreed to stand down the Stanleyville (Kisangani) regime and join a national unity government in a reconvened parliament. Kasavubu was president, Cyrille Adoula was premier, and Gizenga's African Solidarity Party was well represented—until the next coup, which would come soon enough.

Prime Minister Adoula promised to reintegrate Katanga into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also to allow greater local autonomy to the provinces than Lumumba had been willing to do.<sup>6</sup> When he joined Adoula's government, Gizenga said: "the government will have to follow the Lumumba line, and if ever the government departs from this line... I am ready to fight again."<sup>7</sup> Maybe Gizenga was morally ready to fight again. But when the inevitable departure happened, he was unable politically or logistically to rekindle the revolt. That task would fall to other leaders.

Through the CIA Chief of Station Devlin, the US set about organizing their Congolese allies to prevent these disarmed rebels, Gizenga and the Lumumbists, from returning to power through the ballot box. The author of a National Security Council memo of June 5, 1961 argued for the necessity of working toward an anti-nationalist majority in the

Congolese parliament, because “it is assumed that it is in our interest... to prevent the Lumumba/Gizenga forces of the Stanleyville regime from gaining power in the Congo through legal means.”<sup>8</sup> The memo contained detailed estimates of how many seats the pro-US party would win in the parliament’s two houses, and details of how the US would go about using money to influence the parliament: “funds may be used to induce regional political, labor union, or other leaders... to put pressure on deputies from their respective regions,” “outright payments of money, promises of foreign travel, scholarships, etc. as required for particular deputies,” “demonstrations by youth groups can be organized to support personalities and policies of the developing GOC coalition,” and “funds may be utilized to discourage the possible shift of allegiances to the Gizenga forces. [31/2 lines not declassified]”<sup>9</sup>

Lumumbist politicians like Gizenga came back into the parliamentary fold. But rebel leaders—Gaston Soumialot, Pierre Mulele, and Laurent Kabila—kept the east in open rebellion against the central government and its Western sponsors. Putting down the nationalist revolt became the highest priority for US planners.

Devlin’s 1961 memos carefully outline those he views as America’s enemies in the Congo—Lumumbists, nationalists—and his plans for manipulating the Congolese political process. But his 2007 memoir is full of fake fear of the Soviet Union: “sooner or later, the Russian bear would seize its chance and pounce... There was no doubt in our minds,” Devlin continues, “that the Congo was a strategic linchpin in that epic struggle.”<sup>10</sup> For nearly a century, Russia has been offered as an excuse for Western depredations against African nationalists. But if the Congo was really such a “strategic linchpin” in a supposed US-Russia struggle, Devlin would have mentioned Russia and Russian players more in his memos at the time. If he was unable to find any Russian influencers, this would hardly accord with his reputation as a superspy.

For Devlin and the Americans, the Belgian-sponsored Katanga secession was a secondary consideration to defeating the nationalist rebellion and was treated much more delicately. The US role was central: Americans planned and implemented the diplomatic offensives and the warfare. They organized the Congo’s government in the capital and worked with the United Nations and the Belgians to hold the Western coalition together.

In September 1961, with support from the United States,<sup>11</sup> the United Nations attacked Katanga in the first of three attempts to forcibly



end the Katanga secession.<sup>12</sup> While Lumumba lived, the UN refused to contemplate such a move. But once Lumumba was dead and his supporters disarmed, national unity could be good for business. Tshombe's casual dismissal of UN and the central authority's requests to remove the Belgians and rejoin the Congo, tolerated since independence, was now, suddenly, intolerable. The UN also found its voice to criticize the way Tshombe's forces were crushing the Baluba revolt in Katanga, through massacres and the creation of thousands of refugees.<sup>13</sup> The UN arrested and deported hundreds of Belgian mercenaries and demanded the removal of Katanga's interior minister Munongo, who was organizing the repression of the Balubas.<sup>14</sup> On September 13, 1961, after occupying Elizabethville (today's Lumumbashi) the UN commander declared that the Katanga secession was over.

Despite the declaration, the fighting continued. When UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld attempted to travel to Katanga from Rhodesia (today's Zimbabwe) on September 18 to negotiate a cease-fire, his plane crashed and he was killed.<sup>15</sup> Scholar Susan Williams Beckhorn, in her 2011 book *Who Killed Hammarskjöld?* suggests that a conspiracy between Tshombe's Katanga separatists, Belgian colonialists, and Rhodesian white supremacists were responsible for Hammarskjöld's death.

In South African archives, Williams found documents with plots to assassinate Hammarskjöld, first with a bomb, and then with the type of fighter jet (a French-made Fouga) that was in the employ of the Katanga secessionists and was likely used to crash Hammarskjöld's plane. The prime suspect was the pilot of that Fouga, Hubert "The Black Eagle" Julian, who worked for Tshombe as a mercenary.<sup>16</sup> White Rhodesians maintained control of the crash site in the critical early hours. Williams's book contains some striking photos of sad Swedish investigators and their smiling white Rhodesian counterparts at the scene of Hammarskjöld's death.<sup>17</sup> The man who had used the UN to subvert the Congo's nationalist government had been murdered, probably by the very separatists he had wrung his hands about.

The loss of the secretary-general sapped the momentum from the UN operation to end the Katanga secession. Tshombe managed to negotiate much better terms, as well as to repel the central government's forces attempting to enter Katanga at the end of October.<sup>18</sup> Tshombe's regime conducted low-level warfare with the UN in Katanga through November 1961, firing on UN planes, assassinating troops, and attacking and beating officers.<sup>19</sup> The UN went on the offensive again in December, seizing

key strategic centers.<sup>20</sup> This action, supported again by the US, Canada, and commanded by an Indian military officer, was opposed by the UK, France, and of course Belgium.<sup>21</sup>

For a while, the US insisted on a negotiated solution with the Katanga secessionists and ignored the war the Katangan gendarmes had unleashed on the Baluba of Katanga. After UN Secretary-General Hammarskjöld was killed<sup>22</sup> though, the US was gradually brought around to the notion that a separate Katanga was bad for US interests in the Congo. At that point, the separatists were doomed. The Americans first tried diplomacy, forcing Tshombe to negotiate with Adoula.<sup>23</sup>

As Tshombe negotiated, his secessionist forces in Katanga kept trying to crush the Baluba rebellion. The Katanga and Mining State (Kasai) governments had troops occupying the Baluba and the Baluntu territories. The UN reported outright massacres in those areas, as well as South Kivu, in June, July, and August of 1961.<sup>24</sup> These massacres were well known to the CIA, who received a cable from a non-declassified source discussing the government of Katanga's "desire inflict heaviest possible casualties on Balubakat" in a battle in Bukama in February 1961.<sup>25</sup> In November 1961, the Congolese premier Adoula sent troops to support the Baluba of Katanga against the Katangan secessionist government. The CIA station chief noted: "Adoula hopes Balubakat and ANC pressure in north Katanga will put sufficient pressure on Tshombe to bring him back into the Congo fold."<sup>26</sup>

Throughout 1962, Tshombe's government resisted attempts at reunifying Katanga with the Congo. Acting UN Secretary-General U Thant, after spending half the year trying to obtain a negotiated solution, began advocating economic sanctions against Katanga by July 1962. "Mr. Tshombe is a very unstable man," U Thant said on July 20 in Europe, "I have tried to get Tshombe and the central government to negotiate, but without any results. I don't know what I can do with such a bunch of clowns."<sup>27</sup> The UK and Belgium refused to participate in economic sanctions. America brought a proposal for economic pressure short of sanctions, which was adopted.<sup>28</sup> Tshombe repeatedly accused the Balubas of working with the Congolese central government against him,<sup>29</sup> and used his Katanga police (gendarmes) and mercenaries against the Baluba throughout this period.

Around August 1962, the US began to lose patience and decided that the Katanga secession had to be resolved if only for the sake of credibility in their efforts against the rebels. Devlin wrote home to the

CIA that “the issue of reintegrating Katanga province is emotionally foremost” of all of the Congo’s pressing problems.<sup>30</sup> To Devlin, the Katanga issue was one of the Congo’s stability. “With each failure of solution,” he wrote, “left extremists have been emboldened... and the right extreme have become more convinced that Adoula’s fall would secure Katangan independence.” He went so far as to recommend that “Tshombe... be advised privately that the U.S. will assign troops to UNOC unless Katanga comes to terms with the GOC and submits to U.N. decisions.”<sup>31</sup>

On November 28, 1962, Devlin reported that the Adoula government had barely survived a no-confidence vote in parliament, and that its near collapse was due to the government’s failure to end the Katanga secession.<sup>32</sup>

Devlin organized the anti-Lumumba politicians, including Mobutu, Adoula, Nendaka, and Bomboko, into a collective called the Binza Group—so named for the part of Leopoldville in which they lived. In November, Binza Group members Ndele and Nendaka asked Devlin if the US would back a coup to keep Adoula in power, and the chief reported that he gave them an equivocal answer: “he could not promise the necessary U.S. aid for a coup, since the U.S. position would depend on many things, including alternative leaders should the government fall, the Bloc position, and the policies followed by the government installed by a coup.”<sup>33</sup> The CIA ultimately agreed to support a coup and submitted a detailed plan (most of which remains classified) for a possible coup to keep Adoula in power.<sup>34</sup>

The UN and Mobutu were frustrated by the fact that the Katanga secessionists had air support: French planes with white mercenary pilots providing air cover for their white mercenary-led forces. Mobutu complained to the Devlin about this unfair advantage. The CIA argued successfully for a stepping up of air support for the Congolese government in December 1962. Now with US air support, the UN and Mobutu’s army moved on Katanga. They ended the secession in six weeks, in January 1963.<sup>35</sup> When they did finally decide to do battle, they did so in a way that raised suspicions that commercial interests were at play, using “1,000 pounds blockbusters on Katangese industrial centers, civilians, and hospitals – military weapons well suited to destroying large industry (competitors), members of the (British) House of Commons pointed out, but hardly applicable to the battle against Tshombe’s small mercenary forces.”<sup>36</sup>

Finally under real military pressure, Tshombe attempted to negotiate. But the UN, now with US backing, accepted only surrender.<sup>37</sup> The UN occupied Katanga, formed a unity government, and drove Tshombe to exile in Europe in May 1963.<sup>38</sup> The Baluba continued their rebellion in Katanga.

In July 1964, through a bizarre series of events, Tshombe was brought back, this time to become prime minister of the Congo. The man who had done so much to destroy the country as a separatist was now the leader of the undivided nation. He immediately announced a plan to repatriate 4000 of his exiled gendarmes, soldiers who had retreated into Angola after they lost to the US-Mobutu operation in 1963, to “restore order in North Katanga and retake the provincial capital from the [Baluba] rebels.”<sup>39</sup>

Having solved the separatist crisis, the Americans had several additional problems. Economic stabilization was challenging because most resources were going to covert programs. The main overt program was a US-UN coordinated PL 480 (Food for Peace) program of monetized food aid in the Congo. The plan involved selling US food supplies and financing UN work relief programs with the funds. The size of the program in July 1961 was 160 million BCF<sup>40</sup> which, at a 50:1 exchange rate, was worth \$3.2 million USD in 1961. The UN also had “technical specialists” to help with administration, but in the station chief’s estimation, with only 450 civil affairs officers in the whole country, there were “not enough and many are not first-rate types.”<sup>41</sup>

Nor was the US impressed with its local clients. The Americans found Congolese politicians wanting. Assessing the politicians they hoped might be useful against Lumumba, the CIA noted: “No one leader has shown himself to be a disinterested statesman. Each of the many party and party-fraction leaders has been utilizing his tribal associations and followers for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. No one seems to have evolved a political platform on the basis of ideology.”<sup>42</sup> The CIA felt that the Congo “lack[ed] politicians in opposition Lumumba who can match him in force and appeal”<sup>43</sup> and told Devlin as much.

Devlin had someone in mind.

The chief of station had long since been meeting with the army chief of staff, Mobutu, to give him money. Devlin gave suitcases of cash to this young military man, which the commander used to keep his troops afloat and build his own patronage network. The money started moving on September 13, 1960.<sup>44</sup> Remember that Kasavubu ousted

Lumumba on September 5, and that Mobutu struck with his own coup on September 15. Mobutu's original plan, he told Devlin, was to arrange for Lumumba's murder through mob violence:

Mobutu "explained he strongly opposed Lumumba but wished avoid arresting him for fear starting civil war. Instead said plan was to have opposition parties mount large demonstration, with police and troops arriving too late to prevent people from getting Lumumba." He was advised that "UN troops would intervene if public order disturbed by mob, but Mobutu refused change plan." Although it doubted the feasibility of the plan, the Station "decided to bet on long shot."<sup>45</sup>

A week later, the Mobutu's coup government was itself threatened by another coup. Lucky for him: the CIA's early warning system was at his service. In a cable on September 24, 1960, the CIA reported for the first time that it had performed a service that it was to perform many times: that of an early warning system to keep Mobutu in power:

In telegram 0002 from Leopoldville to CIA, September 23, the Station reported that upon learning of a coup plot against Mobutu and the Council of Commissioners, the Chief of Station immediately informed Mobutu and had the Embassy warn Kasavubu. Kasavubu did not act upon the warning, but Mobutu had two of the plotters arrested.<sup>46</sup>

When, on October 22, 1960, Mobutu expressed a desire for "another coup with the objective of a full takeover of the government and the neutralization indefinitely of President Joseph Kasavubu and Patrice Lumumba," Mobutu was told that "both the Station and the Ambassador believed such a move would fail," and as an alternative, "the Station proposed a program, with the concurrence of the Ambassador, based on Mobutu's remaining in the background as the strong man."<sup>47</sup> As incentives for this program, "He would be assured of adequate funds to maintain control over troops in the Leopoldville area and expand his authority in the provinces. It is also proposed to offer a personal subsidy to Mobutu further to insure his continued cooperation."<sup>48</sup>

Back in the US, officials searched for elected politicians who could replace Lumumba, oscillating between Kasavubu, Adoula, Ileo, Tshombe, and others, none of whom had Lumumba's "force and appeal." For Devlin, the search for elected alternatives was naive. A

military dictatorship by Mobutu would do the job far more efficiently. On November 30, 1960, the chief of station wrote to the CIA explaining that real democracy was unattainable, and that the US “must be satisfied with democratic facade as, with possible exception Nigeria, there no real democracy in Africa and Congolese are less prepared than most Africans for true democracy. We have alternatives between [Lumumba] dictatorship which would be anti-Western and pro-Western coalition which would try give Congo stable if not fully democratic govt.”<sup>49</sup>

The station chief told the CIA on December 10, 1960, that the US “position strong with [Mobutu] as we give him help and guidance in early days when his chances were slim indeed.”<sup>50</sup>

But Mobutu alone couldn't do the job in the early phase: Political wrangling was both intense and expensive.

Devlin's cables home sought more and more commitment and more resources. “If we do not aid and guide our friends, many if not all will drift into the extremist camps and [U.S] policy will encounter numerous setbacks at best and at worst a major defeat.”<sup>51</sup> In October of 1961, Devlin cabled home to the CIA outlining the needs of the mission in the Congo. “Because the need is so great and the problems are so huge, [US] responses and initiatives [in the Congo] must likewise be in heroic proportion.”<sup>52</sup> And by the end of November, he was able to write home quite pleased: The CIA's “covert action program... has been relatively successful. [The CIA] can take major credit for the fall of the Lumumba govt, the success of the Mobutu coup and considerable credit for Adoula's nomination as premier.”<sup>53</sup>

Given the lamentable lack of ideology among the Congolese politicians the West hadn't assassinated, keeping Congolese politics on a pro-US track required constant infusions of cash:

- On March 3, 1961, the CIA told the station chief that they “received reaffirmation of authority to expend funds both to bribe [name not declassified] forces and supplement pay of selected [Mobutu] forces where needed to assure loyalty.”<sup>54</sup>
- August 1, 1961, from station to CIA: “Basis experience past year, believe bribes for limited number politicians in Leop is merely stop gap effort which eventually bound to fail.”<sup>55</sup>
- October 14, 1961, from CIA to station: “There is no objection to psych activity in media field and bribes as such but conclusion

which we share is that value is transitory unless such activity follows in wake of strenuous, continuing actions by [cryptonym not declassified] activists.”<sup>56</sup>

- On January 19, 1962, the station chief reported to the CIA that it would be necessary to “grease many palms” to keep a moderate government in power and exclude the nationalists.<sup>57</sup>
- On May 12, 1962, the station chief used both “bribe money” and “unorthodox funding methods,” but reported that he’d told his Congolese interlocutors that “neither station nor HQS believes vote buying to be more than interim step.”<sup>58</sup>
- On November 22, 1965, NSC staffer R. W. Komer wrote to McGeorge Bundy about the need to support Mobutu to find some solution to a political crisis between Kasavubu and Tshombe. “You’ll probably have a new plea at 303 for baksheesh to this end.”<sup>59</sup>
- Discussing the electoral prospects for what was probably the Binza Group (see below), the station chief wrote to CIA headquarters on June 24, 1963, that this group of pro-US politicians “doubted they could win free elections, were uncertain as to the extent to which CIA would support them against mounting opposition, and were considering running Justin Bomboko for prime minister or the equivalent office next year. *[text not declassified] did not specify just how unfree elections might have to be to accomplish a [text not declassified] victory.*”<sup>60</sup>

With their various Congolese clients in place, the next problem the US faced was how to coordinate the Western alliance. To what extent would they use the UN, and to what extent would they use the Belgians? All agreed that the Stanleyville rebels had to be crushed. Mobutu wanted the whole of Congo under his American-friendly rule.

In a long strategy paper in January 1961, the Embassy in the Congo discussed three alternatives: I. Support Continuation of the United Nations Effort on Essentially Its Present Basis. II. Redirect and Beef up UN Effort III. Active and Direct Western Intervention Outside the UN. Support for the present UN mission was quickly dismissed, with no advantages and the potential for a nationalist victory. While intervening through the UN was considered less predictable and effective than direct western intervention, intervening outside the UN might alienate Afro-Asian support. The Embassy concluded a combination of II

(redirected and beefed-up UN effort) and III (active and direct western intervention outside the UN) was best.<sup>61</sup>

The alienation of Afro-Asian support was a serious consideration. The CIA told Devlin that the State Department “accepts nationalism as a fact of life support of which is only basis successful long term US policy. Thinks artificial injections to uphold conservative forces which do not represent mainstream Congo opinion will inevitably alienate and isolate [the US]... HQS shares this view.”<sup>62</sup>

The fear of alienation drove US support underground. So much so that Devlin and Mobutu lamented the lack of overt US support for their efforts. Devlin complained that “With the exception of the PL 480 agreement signed 18 Nov 61, the only unilateral [US] program in the Congo available for political action purposes was (and is) the [CIA] covert action program... [the US] was not able to assist overtly persons and govts favorably disposed toward [the US] and the UNOC failed to fill the void. Unfortunately, the [CIA] action program has not and realistically could never have been expected to be a substitute for a strong and effective govt, nor could it provide the guidance and aid necessary to shore up the GOC, retrain the CNA and revitalize the economy.”<sup>63</sup> Mobutu told Devlin that “overt [US] support... would have solidified the moderates’ position and avoided the present situation in which the Government of the Congo was dependent upon support of Stanleyville elements,” though he also acknowledged that “he would not have been able to mount his coup on September 14, 1960, or maintain the commissioner form of government in power without U.S. help.”<sup>64</sup>

US officials in Washington complained bitterly in their memos to one another about how the US should not have to shoulder the burden of defeating nationalism and establishing a pro-western regime in the Congo, when its actions were benefiting the whole west. But in communication with the western powers, especially Belgium, the US was unfailingly diplomatic. In a memo from the US’s NATO Ambassador to the Secretary of State on January 18, 1961, efforts to encourage Belgium toward covert, as opposed to overt, aid to Mobutu are described:

“As we see the situation in the Congo, in relation to Western interests generally and in relation interests member countries of NATO in African developments, believe covert operation stands best chance of reversing present unsatisfactory situation while avoiding large, obvious dangers implicit in overt bilateral aid by Belgians or any other Western country”.



NATO expected the US to keep it covert, the NATO Ambassador said: “They would expect us to use sufficient skill, determination and force to make it succeed, without traceable evidence of complicity on the part of any member country.”<sup>65</sup>

In a cable of August 2, 1963, after the Katanga session ended, Devlin wrote to headquarters using a telling phrase: “Whatever the final decision may turn out to be on the extent to which we are to *‘give the country back to the Belgians’*, the Station is satisfied that [the CIA] must as a minimum continue to give strong support to the Army and to the Security Services, as the best guarantee against a takeover either by the Communists or by the more unreconstructed Belgian conservatives, neither of which eventuality would be in the interest of [the US].”<sup>66</sup>

Before giving the country back to the Belgians, however, the country would have to be secured. Obtaining Belgian mercenaries to command the Congolese army against the Stanleyville rebels became a high priority of the US. On August 6, 1964, the US Secretary of State wrote to the Belgian Foreign Minister to appeal for military co-operation. “It is our judgment,” he wrote, “that events in the Congo have reached so critical a point that you and we and all our European friends must move immediately and vigorously to prevent total collapse.”<sup>67</sup> Rusk sought Belgian help in the form of a joint military force; Belgian forces to strengthen both the Congolese and Rwandan governments; the assumption by Belgian troops of “de facto command of operational ANC forces in the field,” and political efforts to help Tshombe and Kasavubu to get support from other African countries.<sup>68</sup> While the Belgians initially demurred<sup>69</sup> by August 7, 1964, they had agreed to a plan for a mercenary-led force, commanded by Col. Van de Walle, to roll back the rebellion.<sup>70</sup> McGeorge Bundy briefed President Johnson about the plan by telephone on August 8, 1964.<sup>71</sup>

The Americans organized the Western coalition. Their man on the ground was Devlin. Devlin in turn had chosen America’s man in Joseph-Desire Mobutu. Katanga was beaten and then cajoled back into the fold, and in the strangest move of all, its secessionist leader Moise Tshombe had been recruited to be the prime minister of the entire Congo. The US was ready to lead the fight to finish what the Belgians started when they killed Lumumba: the fight to crush Congolese nationalism and the Stanleyville rebellion. The troops the Americans assembled were an eclectic collection of white supremacist mercenaries. On the other side, the rebels had help from an unexpected quarter.

## NOTES

1. Though such conflicts were mentioned at the time. An article in the Indianapolis Star on September 13, 1962, reported that Congressman Donald Cogley (R-Indiana) outlined the various connections between the State Department, the UN, and Western mining interests in Africa, commenting that "The question naturally arises as to possible conflict of interest on an international scale, when we see an unbelievably bad policy in relation to an extremely rich little country Katanga formulated for the USA in Washington, on the one hand, by Ball and his subordinate, Fowler Hamilton, and for the U.N., on the other hand, in New York by Dag Hammarskjold, and in the Congo by Sture Linner and Sven Schwartz, and by Berj Hjortsberg-Nordlund (a Swedish financier)."
2. Roberts, Dick. 1965. *Revolution in the Congo: A Young Socialist Pamphlet*. Pathfinder Press, New York.
3. Epstein 1965, p. 83.
4. Epstein 1965, p. 83.
5. Epstein 1965, p. 83.
6. Epstein 1965, p. 99.
7. Epstein 1965, p. 100.
8. FRUS vol. 23, p. 142.
9. FRUS vol. 23, p. 143.
10. Devlin 2007, p. 34.
11. Epstein 1965, p. 104. Britain and France, as well as of course Belgium, opposed the UN action.
12. Epstein 1965, p. 101.
13. Epstein 1965, p. 102. Remember that the killings of Baluba by Tshombe's forces were blamed on Lumumba while he was alive.
14. Epstein 1965, p. 102.
15. Epstein 1965, p. 104.
16. Williams pp. 203–204.
17. Williams Figure 22.
18. Epstein 1965, pp. 107–108.
19. Epstein 1965, p. 112.
20. Epstein 1965, p. 112.
21. Epstein 1965, p. 115.
22. FRUS vol. 23, p. 159.
23. Epstein 1965, p. 121.
24. Epstein 1965, p. 101.
25. FRUS vol. 23, p. 136.
26. FRUS vol. 23, p. 169.
27. Epstein 1965, p. 133.
28. Epstein 1965, p. 135.

29. Epstein 1965, p. 137.
30. FRUS vol. 23, p. 200.
31. FRUS vol. 23, p. 200.
32. FRUS vol. 23, p. 212.
33. FRUS vol. 23, p. 212.
34. FRUS vol. 23, p. 217.
35. FRUS vol. 23, pp. 213 and 222.
36. Roberts 1965, p. 10.
37. Epstein 1965, p. 146.
38. Epstein 1965, p. 151.
39. Memo from Harriman to Bundy, July 11, 1964, p. 301. FRUS vol. 23.
40. FRUS vol. 23, p. 168, Cable November 28, 1961 from station chief to CIA.
41. FRUS vol. 23, p. 168, Cable November 28, 1961 from station chief to CIA.
42. FRUS vol. 23, p. 43. Cable August 12, 1960 from CIA to station chief.
43. FRUS vol. 23, p. 50. Cable August 12, 1960 from CIA to station chief.
44. FRUS vol. 23, p. 62.
45. FRUS vol. 23, p. 63.
46. FRUS vol. 23, p. 71.
47. FRUS vol. 23, p. 79.
48. FRUS vol. 23, p. 82.
49. FRUS vol. 23, p. 87.
50. FRUS vol. 23, p. 98.
51. FRUS vol. 23, p. 156. Cable of August 24, 1961 from station chief to CIA.
52. FRUS vol. 23, p. 160. Cable October 12, 1961.
53. FRUS vol. 23, p. 166, Cable November 28, 1961. Repeated August 1962, FRUS vol. 23, p. 202.
54. FRUS vol. 23, p. 137.
55. FRUS vol. 23, p. 154.
56. FRUS vol. 23, p. 161.
57. FRUS vol. 23, p. 177.
58. FRUS vol. 23, p. 195.
59. FRUS vol. 23, p. 682.
60. FRUS vol. 23, p. 243.
61. FRUS vol. 23, pp. 121–126.
62. FRUS vol. 23, p. 192. Cable of April 23, 1962 from CIA to station chief.
63. FRUS vol. 23, p. 166. Cable from station chief to CIA, November 28, 1961.
64. FRUS vol. 23, p. 175. Cable from station chief to CIA, December 2, 1961.

65. FRUS vol. 23, p. 114.
66. FRUS vol. 23, p. 244.
67. FRUS vol. 23, p. 316.
68. FRUS vol. 23, p. 316.
69. FRUS vol. 23, p. 317.
70. FRUS vol. 23, pp. 326–327, cable from Embassy in Belgium to Dept. of State August 7, 1964.
71. FRUS vol. 23, p. 328.



## CHAPTER 6

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# The Revolutionary and the White Supremacist

In 1965, the Congo's regional situation was not yet "post"-colonial: South Africa, the continent's great economic and political power, was a combative apartheid state fully supported by the West and pursuing a nuclear program. Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in that year—to prevent a transition to black majority rule. A wave of independence had come in 1960 and included the DRC, but Botswana, Mozambique, Angola, and many others were still colonies in 1965.

In the Congo, the West had three distinct positions. Belgium sought a decolonized Congo in name, one that would continue to provide Belgium with its resources and a colonial, apartheid playground for white Belgians to play out their careers and their fantasies. The United States, with its own color line, its own antiwar movement, and restive population, wanted to keep the Belgians happy but not let them drive the increasingly nationalist Congolese to revolution. The United Nations wanted to demonstrate its efficacy as a manager of conflict, to show the West that the rising nations of Africa could be pacified short of revolution and war. Trying to straddle these positions led the UN and US to help Belgium kill Lumumba, partition the country, and spark a nationalist rebellion. The problem got beyond the ability of the UN or Belgium to control it.

Lumumba was dead, murdered by the Belgians, the UN, and the US trying to reach his followers in Stanleyville after exhausting the parliamentary and diplomatic paths to freedom. Hammarskjöld, the

Secretary-General of the UN, who tried to walk a narrow path between the Belgian colonialists and white supremacist powers of southern Africa on one side and the rising African independence movements on the other, was assassinated for his trouble. The Americans worked through their CIA station chief, Larry Devlin, and his favorite Congolese military man, Joseph-Desire Mobutu. Other politicians—Adoula, Ileo, and Tshombe—played smaller roles. Out of the US Embassy, Lawrence Devlin excluded the nationalists by using cash and military aid to coordinate a group of Congolese leaders who sought the throne—Mobutu, Tshombe, Kasavubu, and others. The Belgians had partitioned the country rather than allowing a nationalist to come to power. Now, the nationalists and separatists were both in rebellion in different parts of the country. The US took on the task of putting the country back together under the control of their chosen Congolese clients. By 1965, the Katanga secession had been resolved.

What remained for the US to do was to defeat the nationalist rebellion. To do so, they assembled a coalition of mercenaries: white South Africans, ex-Nazis, Belgian colonialists, and right-wing Cuban pilots. This crowd was placed under the command of the ultimate Congo expert, the Belgian former head of colonial intelligence, Colonel Vandewalle.

In what was then called the Third World (and today the Global South), it was possible to dream about a world of sovereign, rising, developing, democratic countries with socialist economies. The people who had fought and won independence in Africa and elsewhere had these dreams. They met at conferences and strategized. They developed relationships with one another. They thought about how to confront the Western powers, who they called—following Marx and Lenin—the imperialists.

One of these strategists was Che Guevara. Watching the genocidal war fought by the United States against Vietnam (a war that would kill between 2 and 5 million Vietnamese), Guevara believed that only a growing armed struggle against imperialism could be victorious. If the imperialists could focus their firepower on a small country like Vietnam, could they be forced to disperse that firepower by uprisings elsewhere? His slogan was “Two, Three, Many Vietnams,” which he hoped would force imperialism to “disperse its forces under the lash of the growing hatred of the peoples of the world.”

Guevara studied the war in the DRC and spoke to the Lumumbist revolutionaries. In 1965, he decided that supporting those rebels was the most strategic move in the battle against imperialism. He was led to this analysis not by the particularities of the Congo war, the country's economy or politics, but by a global perspective. He sought to create a school of guerrilla warfare in the territories controlled by the Congolese rebels. The plan received some support from the newly independent former British colonies of Tanzania, then led by Julius Nyerere, and Uganda, then led by Milton Obote and his military man, Idi Amin.<sup>1</sup> Revolutionaries from all over Africa could come to that school, learn the methods and ideas of guerrilla warfare, and return to their countries to lead uprisings against imperialism. To Guevara, developing and teaching individuals were the key to successful revolution. His method for organizing guerrilla warfare depended on finding and developing individuals with the right qualities of guerrilla leaders: self-sacrifice, discipline, and the consciousness to work for a better society. The frustrations he felt were measured in terms of the difficulty he experienced finding these qualities among the Congolese rebel leaders.

The idea for the jungle school arose at a meeting with African revolutionaries. Guevara spent months preparing. He selected a team of Cuban soldiers to form the core group of instructors. At the request of his African contacts, only Afro-Cubans were selected for the mission (except for Guevara himself). Guevara later regretted the decision and wrote in his debriefing notes that it would have been better to have selected a group of both white and black soldiers. Being white didn't hurt the mercenaries that the Congolese revolutionaries were fighting—being black probably didn't help the Cubans. They set up in revolutionary Tanzania and made the journey across Lake Tanganyika with their military equipment. They set up their camps in the jungle and began to teach as military instructors did—through fighting real battles in the field.

While Guevara was planning to build the nucleus of an African school of guerrilla warfare in Congolese rebel territory, a white supremacist army of mercenaries was being built to destroy the rebellion. Like Guevara, its leader kept a diary.

For Mike Hoare, colonialism was part of the natural order. He was born in British India in 1919, serving in both India and Burma as an officer in the British military. After World War II, Hoare continued to fight—for money. Mercenary warfare, one of Africa's scourges, came into its own in the DRC, used by the Belgians in 1960/1 to threaten to

partition the Congo. Once the Belgians killed Lumumba, a partitioned Congo became an inconvenience and the colonialists decided to reunify the country as they had broken it up—with violence. Hoare participated in both campaigns—the one to break up the Congo and the one to put it back together.

Guevara went to the Congo to fight imperialism. Hoare went to defend it. Guevara helped strengthen the rebels, inspired an example of international solidarity, but left feeling like a failure. Hoare's men rampaged across the continent's second-wealthiest country, raping, looting, and killing, leaving the place in ruins but feeling obviously self-congratulatory. Guevara died two years later in 1967, still fighting the imperialists. Hoare was still alive in 2019, having reached 100 years of age.

Like Guevara's, Hoare's story is interspersed with his analysis of the problems of the Congo and of Africa, and tells us something not only of the individual's worldview but also of the political context in which he operated. "Mercenary soldiering is what one makes of it," Hoare wrote. "For my part I wanted only the adventure and fulfilment of command, but in the event I found myself taking a substantial part in the political life of the Congo and the shaping of the future of that great and magnificent country."<sup>2</sup>

Hoare described the famous Kamina Air Base as a "military marvel" erected at "fantastic cost by the Belgians," with "paved runways... capable of taking the heaviest planes," a housing complex that could accommodate 30,000 soldiers that "included a complete air training school and the usual complement of cinemas, post offices, swimming baths, married quarters and so on. In brief, it was a garrison town built deep in the African bush." By 1964, though, "every house and establishment was in a state of utter disrepair. There was no water; the pump house had long since ceased to function. There was no electricity, no bulbs and no wiring. This had been torn down and looted. There was no plumbing. Excreta littered the floors of nearly every dwelling. The whole place was a hideous monument to neglect and a sizeable threat to the health of the men about to arrive."<sup>3</sup>

As Hoare's merry band laid waste to the Congolese landscape, he described "Beautiful towns and cities with prosperous and thriving industries... won from the suffocating equatorial jungle. Magnificent schools and missions [that] had arisen"<sup>4</sup>; missions with "every house slate roofed and built to the latest agricultural design"<sup>5</sup>; the segregated,



apartheid city of Stanleyville is described as having the “very latest design with split level floors and every modern contrivance from lifts to air conditioning. Luxurious riverside villas, well-kept lawns and long, palm-shaded avenues.”<sup>6</sup> The Congolese of Stanleyville, meanwhile, lived in fully segregated *cites*, which he called “rabbit warrens.” The mercenary attributed the collapse of all of these colonial marvels to post-independence neglect by unworthy Africans. That perhaps the unremitting war he waged on the country may have had something to do with it was lost on him.

Hoare wrote: “Future generations of Congolese will come to look upon the Belgian town makers in the same way as the English still look upon the ancient Roman road makers of Britain.”<sup>7</sup> Roman warfare was genocidal: Their enemies were crucified in their thousands, their forests cut and burned, their crop fields sown with salt, their leaders brought back to the capital for ritual execution. But as Hoare points out, they built roads. Another question arises: If the Belgians were the Roman road builders, didn’t that make Hoare and his mercenaries the barbarian invaders who sacked the empire?

For Hoare, Congolese women were a sexual buffet, “a collection of the most remarkable dolls I have seen... some had on gold lame knee-length dresses... others wore tight satin jobs, cut deliberately to accentuate the goods... In a word, they were the sort of dress every man likes to see on a woman... providing she is not his wife.”<sup>8</sup> What Hoare likes about these “dolls” is that they are “completely westernised in their dress and manners... well turned out, polite, and well acquainted with the social graces... They fill a much needed want in this respect.”<sup>9</sup>

The trouble from which this “much-needed want” arose was, as Congolese politicians told Hoare, many of their wives were “still in the mud-hut stage,” “totally incapable of behaving in public according to western standards.”<sup>10</sup> Not so, the courtesans of Leopoldville.

The women may have been in the “mud hut stage,” but the men were also inadequate. “The African, generally, has not the makings of a good soldier and lacks the necessary self-discipline and courage essential to the task.”<sup>11</sup>

Hoare’s broad worldview was shared by Belgians and US planners. In 1964, the US was preparing the plan to use mercenaries to crush the Stanleyville rebellion, coordinating with the Belgians. They coordinated the Congolese leaders—President Kasavubu, Prime Minister Moïse Tshombe, and Devlin’s favorite, Marshal Joseph-Desire Mobutu. They

provided equipment, pilots, crews, and money: six T6 aircraft which they replaced with T28 fighters, six H21 helicopters, ten C47 aircraft, seven B26s, and swift boats on Lake Tanganyika.<sup>12</sup> The air support provided an immense advantage to the government, but Mobutu's Armée Nationale Congolais (ANC) was "worthless" in battle. Tshombe, who had built an army of Katangan gendarmes with Belgian help for the war of secession, recalled them from Angola to fight the Stanleyville rebels at US behest. In the US view, expressed by Averell Harriman from the State Department, the troops had to have white officers to be effective. These would come from the apartheid states of South Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>13</sup> The National Security Council sent a memo to President Johnson arguing that the rebels were weak and that the situation "could probably be retrieved by a small security force (ideally white, at a minimum white-led, and if really good, as few as 1000.)"<sup>14</sup>

Hoare would provide the whites. In a series of brief character sketches, Hoare described the men in his company. This one is typical: "Siegfried Mueller was forty-two and as Prussian as a Pickelhaube. He had a marked guttural accent and had been a Sergeant in the Wehrmacht during the last war... He took over most of the foreigners in the group and began by asking permission to wear his Iron Cross."<sup>15</sup> Whatever differences Imperial Britain and Nazi Germany may have had in the 1940s, their soldiers certainly saw eye to eye about what needed to be done to the Congolese. Mueller took the front of the column, with Congolese scouts and forced recruitment of civilians to carry the mercenaries' bags—continuing the colonial practice of using porters.<sup>16</sup>

Guevara, for his part, hated the practice and was enraged to see it among the rebels, blaming it for the ultimate failure of the revolution:

If someone was given something to carry, he said: 'Mimi hapana motocari' – that is, 'I'm not a truck.' In some cases, when he was with Cubans, this would become: 'Mimi hapana cuban' – 'I'm not a Cuban.' The food, as well as the weapons and ammunition for the front, had to be carried by the peasants. Clearly, an army of this kind can have a justification only if, like its enemy counterpart, it actually fights now and again. As we shall see, this requirement was not met either. As it did not change the existing order of things, the Congolese revolution was doomed to defeat by its own internal weakness.<sup>17</sup>

Magic played a role as well. Congolese soldiers on both sides—Mobutu’s ANC and the Stanleyville rebels—believed in the power of magic spells in deflecting bullets. The rebels would take a ritual bath, and the enemy bullets, they believed, would turn to water instead of doing them harm. The practice was impervious to evidence: If a rebel died after going through the ritual, it was because he didn’t believe strongly enough. Like the use of porters, Guevara hated the magic, which was referred to locally as the *dawa*, and “did quite a lot of damage to military preparations.” Guevara “tried several times to have a talk about the *dawa* with someone in a position of responsibility, so that an effort could be started to win people away from it – but it was impossible. The *dawa* is treated as an article of faith. The most politically advanced say that it is a natural, material force, and that they, as dialectical materialists, recognize its power and the secrets held by the medicine men of the jungle.”<sup>18</sup>

Hoare told his readers the materialist explanation that Guevara never uncovered: In the colonial era, the Belgian police, the Force Publique, would fire blanks to disperse crowds and frighten them with the flash and the noise<sup>19</sup>—for people unfamiliar with firearms, this was enough to create the seeds of a belief in immunity to their power.

Given his racialist worldview, Hoare attributed the superstitions of Congolese to their nature. But the Belgians were notorious for the lack of education they imposed on their African colonies, even compared to other colonial powers. Congolese had superstitions about bullets and magic based on what they were taught as children. Today’s Westerners have superstitions about Western benevolence and superiority based on what they are taught as children. The true source of superstitious beliefs is found in a society’s education system.

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On their side, Hoare’s mercenaries had air support, equipment, magic, and a complete lack of restraint. “Suit your tactics to your enemy,” Hoare wrote. “Queensbury rules when you are fighting gentlemen; no holds barred when you are up against savages.”<sup>20</sup>

With a colonial lack of self-consciousness, Hoare documented the behavior of the mercenaries and their methods of warfare. “I know my men looted,” he wrote, excusing them with the knowledge that “with the atrocities occurring all round me, I put it in its right perspective.”<sup>21</sup> When he heard his explosives unit—with skills learned in apartheid South Africa’s mining industry—blowing up safes throughout the night in

Stanleyville, he wrote that he was “forced to assume that my men were blowing up safes to see if any rebels were hiding inside them.”<sup>22</sup>

But the mercenary forces traded looted gold and ivory for weapons and ammunition.<sup>23</sup> When a mercenary killed and stole for the army, Hoare reported it as an amusing anecdote:

A large Mercedes Benz truck lumbered towards his position at midnight. As it rounded the bend Hogan stepped into the middle of the road and put up his hand. The truck slithered to a stop, the driver jumped out and was promptly shot dead. Those in the back were dealt with by the ambush party and Hogan drove the truck back to our lines in great style.<sup>24</sup>

The mercenaries had no problem using torture and mass reprisal as they spread across the countryside killing rebels. Hoare described the interrogation of a village leader in rebel territory: “A man kicked him in the small of his back and flattened him in the mud. A large boot trod on his neck to help him remember...” Hoare told him: “I will give you fifteen minutes to tell me exactly where the white fathers have been taken and what has happened to the civilians of Isangi. If you fail, I shall burn down your village and kill every man, woman and child here.” Hoare took the chief’s son with them when they left, “as insurance.”<sup>25</sup>

In another torture episode, this time with a Congolese identified only as a “mulatto”: “The lives of my men were at stake and I gave permission to use whatever force was needed to get the truth. Horrible screams came from the mulatto, as one of my military policemen twisted his wounded leg. There was a spine chilling crunch of jagged bones, but he spoke. It was enough. He knew everything and he told us all. In return, I promised him his life, subject to his information being correct.”<sup>26</sup> The tortures used by Hoare’s forces are inventive, though typically attributed by Hoare to Mobutu’s army (the ANC) and not Hoare’s own men, as when Hoare sees a chimpanzee and retells the story of how “the ANC had bound and gagged a rebel lieutenant and thrown him to this animal for their amusement. The chimpanzee had torn off the rebel’s genitals and left him to bleed to death.”<sup>27</sup> A castle built by a Belgian colonial administrator on the Dungu River, Hoare wrote, came complete with a dungeon, “dank and damp, as befits castle dungeons, and was used to house one or two of the viler rebels before they were finally executed.” The Belgian administrator in charge, Hoare wrote, “was Lord of the Manor and ran the place like a medieval despot.”<sup>28</sup>

The idea that a racial war by white mercenaries against Africans would be subject to the Geneva Conventions would have been laughed at by Hoare, who casually describes war crimes by his forces. Captured rebels were forced to walk across a minefield: “The civilians said that the [rebels] had mined it; it was justice, therefore, that they should be used to un-mine it. A gang of them were roped together and marched across the airfield as human mine detectors.”<sup>29</sup> Combatants and noncombatants were not distinguished, except through a general rule that Hoare’s commanders found a way around, to his amusement: “my general rule was that a man with a weapon was a rebel, all others were to be regarded as civilians and left alone... I noticed John Peters’ jeep was stacked full of spears. One was issued to each dead rebel, posthumously, just in case!”<sup>30</sup>

The mercenaries had no problems burning entire villages to the ground and killing their populations. When the mercenary column was ambushed, they stopped. “The village was razed to the ground and the column rolled on for Faradje. War, as fought by the Congolese, is a harsh and revengeful business and, although he tried hard to restrain his men, Tavernier was unable to stop the slaughter.”<sup>31</sup> As the column accelerated and encountered evidence of rebel violence against Europeans, “An unspoken order ran down the column – kill everything that moves. There is no stimulus like revenge and the column swept forward, searing the countryside with the bright flame of retribution.”<sup>32</sup>

Having succinctly celebrated the sexual availability of Congolese women in the neocolonial DRC, Hoare described rape under his command as an anomaly that he personally punished. The soldier found a girl in a town after its capture. He stripped her, ordered her to shower, walked her to the river’s edge, and shot her. He was then captured by Hoare’s men, who pleaded with Hoare: “if you let him get away with this, sir, it’ll set a standard of behaviour in Stan which will sicken you. Every man will think he’s got a license to kill and rape.”

“Not my men, Jack.”

“How well do you think you know your men?” one of the mercenaries asked Hoare.<sup>33</sup> Hoare decided to shoot the rapist’s toes off, and reported that the rapist later died in a plane crash.

Given the effort dedicated to Western propaganda even decades later to portray Lumumba in particular and Congolese men in general as sex fiends, Hoare’s account suggests that the real issue is a Western sexual obsession with the Congolese.

Speaking of Lumumba, Hoare's men attacked symbols of the Congolese leader with genocidal fervor. When Hoare discovered among his men mining engineers and explosives experts, "I gave them a task worthy of their combined talents – to blow up the Lumumba monument. The life-size photograph of Lumumba, framed behind heavy plate glass in a cabinet not unlike a telephone booth, flew into the air in a million pieces, destroying the blood-caked marble tiles which surrounded it."<sup>34</sup> In their invasion of Stanleyville, Hoare's forces withdrew to the beachhead, "stopping on the way to blow up the Lumumba monument and set fire to it with palm oil."<sup>35</sup> When they killed a rebel leader in Stanleyville, Khingisa, Hoare was disappointed—he had "plans for him" alive. But he had been killed, his body "dragged around the city for all to see," and then dumped—on to the Lumumba monument.<sup>36</sup>

When the mercenaries were not committing atrocities against civilians, they developed a method of warfare based on their Belgian predecessors' practices. They used air support and armored columns to seize villages and towns. If they had to travel to the interior, they used local scouts, forced villagers to serve as porters, tortured villagers for information, and used mass atrocities and reprisals to clear potentially hostile populations from their path. A Belgian soldier's first-hand account of Stanleyville after it was taken:

We arrived at the village [on the outskirts of Stanleyville] before nightfall. The women were carrying water and the children were playing and laughing in the streets. We stopped for a while and watched. Then came the order to open fire. Our new Belgian machine-guns began to fire. Women screamed and fell. Some children were shot down. We just continued to fire. Some of our people threw petrol against the huts and set fire to them. Others threw phosphorus grenades, which transformed the victims into human torches.<sup>37</sup>

Taking a step back from the diaries, how can we assess the human toll of the mercenary war? Ludo de Witte quotes the following estimates: "mercenaries admit that they killed about 3000 Congolese in Kindu alone, and according to Belgian officer Jean-Claude Marlair, the rebellion and the subsequent repression cost the lives of 'about 300 Whites and more than 200,000 Congolese.' All the evidence implies that a much larger number of lives were sacrificed."<sup>38</sup> In an AP dispatch from February 5, 1961, a French mercenary commented that "People don't like us. We get good pay for killing women and children."<sup>39</sup>

The most visible and respected Lumumbist leader was Pierre Mulele, who set up headquarters in Kwilu. Mulele's vision for the Congo was the same as Lumumba's: a centralized, independent Congo whose riches were developed for its people. Where Lumumba tried to use the parliamentary machinery, Mulele's strategy was to develop a revolutionary, guerrilla struggle.<sup>40</sup> Unlike other rebels operating at the time, Mulele's guerrillas were taught to respect the people and held to high standards of personal behavior.<sup>41</sup> Mulele launched his war in January 1964, but while they held on until 1967, they failed to expand beyond their district of Kwilu. Mulele only left the guerrilla zone, for Brazzaville, when he needed medical treatment in 1968. He returned to Kinshasa under an amnesty offer by Mobutu and was tortured and killed upon his return on October 3, 1968.<sup>42</sup>

On January 21, 1964, Congo's President Kasavubu declared a state of emergency in Kwilu Province, the site of a new nationalist rebellion by followers of Pierre Mulele.<sup>43</sup> The US State Department contacted the Belgian Foreign Ministry on February 10, 1964 about "the prospect of widespread chaos in the Congo" after the projected June 1964 UN withdrawal, with the "insurgency in Kwilu Province, organized by a Congolese trained in Communist China" as an example.<sup>44</sup> Secretary of State Dean Rusk advocated that Belgium, "because of its historical affiliation with the Congo," had a "special responsibility": "With your unique knowledge of and vast investment in the Congo, in manpower, in industry, and in relevant experience, this particular part of the free world defense effort should rest primarily, I believe, with your Government. I think it would not be too much to say that this is the most important security task which Belgium can assume in the common interest."<sup>45</sup>

US preoccupation with the Kwilu insurgency only grew. The under-secretary of state for political affairs Averell Harriman wrote in a memo to Deputy Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on March 18, 1964 that the "insurrection in Kwilu province" posed "a most serious threat to the overall security problem," and that if not rolled back, Kwilu could catalyze other insurgencies in the Congo.<sup>46</sup> Harriman suggested that to roll back the insurrection would require "additional equipment and transport capacity": "helicopters, light aircraft, and vehicles for immediate use in Kwilu."<sup>47</sup> The equipment began to move quickly, as did Belgian cooperation against the insurgency. In a meeting in France on April 1, 1964, Harriman and Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak agreed that Belgium would send 100 officers to the Congo, press Mobutu to accept

Israeli training, and improve Belgian intelligence on various Congo matters.<sup>48</sup>

Success against the rebellion was elusive, however. An NSC memo of June 15, 1964 to President Johnson describes the Congolese army as “almost a complete failure in the Kivu rebellion; well armed troops are being routed by Pygmies carrying spears and machetes. The rebellion is largely tribal with no real evidence of foreign intervention or supply... there is no significant evidence of [Congolese army] leadership or fighting ability.”<sup>49</sup>

In mid-1964, a new counterinsurgency dilemma emerged. US planners wanted to be able to use their Congo assets to the fullest against the insurgency, but were concerned that the insurgents could endanger US citizens (missionaries and diplomatic personnel) in retaliation. When some US-contracted pilots used the T28s in air strikes against rebels in June 1964, CIA Director John McCone applauded their success and saw no reason for them to stop such actions, while Harriman “took violent exception” to continued air strikes by US citizens.<sup>50</sup>

Harriman’s view changed within a few months, however. A January 18, 1965 note from the NSC’s R. W. Komer to McGeorge Bundy describes new authorizations for bombing rebels in this part of the Congo:

Ball and Harriman now approve Leoville request to let ‘our’ planes hit truck convoys and arms depots in ‘villages.’ We’ve held off on this previously, in order to avoid scare stories of US planes massacring civilians from the air (and also further murders of hostages). But hostages now apparently mostly gone (except possibly Watsa and Aba, which would still be off limits). Also rebels know our policy so are travelling at night and holing up in village ‘safehavens’ during day. So there is real need to go after them, if we’re to have a decent chance of holding (we can always change back later). Finally, we’re already so damned that any likely increase in anti-US propaganda would be marginal.<sup>51</sup>

The JCS agreed with this view, asking McNamara to lift the bombing restrictions in a memo on January 21, 1965.<sup>52</sup>

When the rebels regrouped in December 1965, State Department planners reported some regional connections of the rebellion: “in addition to Rwandan Tutsis, some Burundi nationals have been involved in the fighting in the Bukavu-Fizi region.”<sup>53</sup> The “Rwandan Tutsis”



described by the State Department were exiles from the monarchist UNAR, and Che Guevara recounted having Rwandan soldiers among his guerrillas in the east. Rebel leader Gaston Soumialot promised “to help the Tutsi reconquer Rwanda” in exchange for their support in the Congolese rebellion.<sup>54</sup>

The US elected to continue its counterinsurgency aid to Mobutu’s government and to continue to coordinate with Belgian mercenary forces.

On the political front, keeping the Congolese government organized involved the creation of a new contingency fund “from which covert payments to Congolese leaders could be made for the preservation of the Kasavubu-Tshombe tandem.”<sup>55</sup>

The Americans believed that the nationalist rebels could have won. A CIA paper prepared on August 13, 1964 is representative. Rebel “successes have been loudly broadcast by Stanleyville Radio and their indominability is becoming accepted by both Congolese and Europeans alike. A general attitude of defeatism has set in not only in the towns in their path but even in Leopoldville.”<sup>56</sup> It was only through continuously escalating US involvement and resources—mobilizing help from the Belgians and South Africans, scrambling air assets, and helping Kasavubu and Tshombe organize their internal and international political campaign to accompany the war that the US was able to win.

Had the US not won at the level of commitment they decided upon, they would have done even more. In a memo to Robert McNamara on September 1, 1964, the Joint Chiefs of Staff contemplated a full US military intervention:

Direct US military intervention with combat forces could suppress rebel military operations, preserve the existence of the pro-Western Government, and provide short-term protection of US objectives. However, this probably would not insure the objective of Congolese unity, communist infiltration would continue to be a threat. Also, the US Government would be vulnerable to severe international reactions. While US forces might be quickly disengaged, there would be a risk of continuing involvement.<sup>57</sup>

Neither the escalating US involvement nor the cruel mercenary tactics intimidated Guevara. An army that depended on motorized transportation across long distances surrounded by forests was vulnerable to ambush. Guevara's tactics centered on developing ambushes, which would also supply the guerrillas with material. If the ground was carefully chosen, guerrillas could also defend villages against attackers coming inland. If they couldn't defend, they could retreat, harass, and again, set ambushes.

From Guevara's perspective, the trouble was that these tactics could not win a revolutionary victory unless the guerrilla army could continuously grow and win more and more villagers to its side. In part, Guevara believed the rebel leaders to blame for the failure to grow. Laurent Kabila was a frustrating, distant figure who didn't listen. Gaston Soumialot, to Guevara, was "useful as a middle grade leader of the revolution... the main things he does are traveling, living well, and giving sensational press conferences – that is all. He lacks any ability for organization."<sup>58</sup> Christopher Gbenye, who led the Comite National de Liberation (CNL) and had been minister of the interior under Lumumba and had infiltrated fighters into Leopoldville and attempted to kidnap Mobutu,<sup>59</sup> was not worth speaking of, "simply an agent of the counter-revolution."<sup>60</sup> Pierre Mulele, who he never met Guevara, could only assess from afar: "He was never seen at meetings, nor did he ever leave his zone after the struggle began. There are many signs that he is a man of superior qualities, but his envoys – or those said to be his envoys – presented all the negative features of their counterparts in the various commissions and sectors of the Liberation Movement who roam the world swindling the revolution."<sup>61</sup>

But the problem, Guevara recognized, was deeper. His revolutionary theory was built on experience in Latin America, where the concentration of land in the hands of a small number of landowners leads to land hunger by the peasants. The situation in the Congo was different:

What could the Liberation Army offer these peasants? That is the question which has always bothered us. We could not speak here of dividing the land in an agrarian reform, because everyone could see that it was already divided; nor could we speak of credits for the purchase of farm tools, because the peasants ate what they tilled with their primitive instruments and the physical characteristics of the region did not lend themselves to credit-fuelled expansion. Ways would have to be found of fostering

the need to acquire industrial goods (which the peasants were obviously willing to accept and pay for) and therefore a need for more widespread trade.<sup>62</sup>

Certainly, Mobutu's ANC and Hoare's mercenaries inflicted horrors on the people, but, Guevara asks, in the grand scheme of things, "what had we to offer?"

We did not give much protection, as our story has shown. Nor did we offer any education, which might have been a great vehicle of communication. Medical services were provided only by the few Cubans there, with inadequate medicines, a fairly primitive system of administration, and no sanitary organization. I think that some deep thought and research needs to be devoted to the problem of revolutionary tactics were the relations of production do not give rise to land hunger among the peasantry.<sup>63</sup>

Without something to offer, the guerrillas would come to a village after the mercenaries had burned it:

"...there was practically nothing to eat there. It was full of refugees, all silently blaming the men who had come to take away their security, filled them with faith in eventual victory and then withdrawn to defend their own homes and fields. All this mute anger was expressed in one disconsolate and unconsoling phrase: 'Now what do we eat?' For indeed, all their fields and little animals remained down below. They had fled with what they could carry in their own two hands, loaded down with children, as always, and unable to take food for more than one or two days. Other peasants explained to me how the soldiers had suddenly appeared and captured their women, adding in a rage that with a rifle they might have been able to defend themselves, but with a spear all they could do was run."<sup>64</sup>

Guevara and the Cubans had to flee, in the end, the rebel positions overrun.

While Hoare was in the field, Prime Minister Tshombe overstepped his bounds and America's favorite, Marshal Mobutu, took power in a coup. Hoare liked Tshombe and had shared a tender moment with him in a garden,<sup>65</sup> but he thought Mobutu's coup was necessary, if harsh, medicine. He assessed Mobutu as "one of the truly great Africans of our time, and for whom I had nothing but unstinted admiration and praise."<sup>66</sup>

Hoare believed that the best long-term solution for the Congo's troubles was partition. He could visualize "the country divided into three parts - Orientale and Kivu as one, Katanga another, and the rest as the third."

In addition, Hoare thought that white settlers could help save the Congo: "The Congolese may do worse than consider the advisability of encouraging immigration from Europe for settlement in the eastern side of the country, between Bunia and Bukavu, if only as a buffer to counter Communist infiltration and to be a source of strength in time of trouble. The country is certainly hospitable enough and that part of the Congo is undeniably the most beautiful and healthy part of Africa."<sup>67</sup>

Reading Hoare's descriptions of the war against the rebels and his prescriptions for partition and white settlement, something else starts to become clear. Hoare's armored column raced across the east on a racially charged mission to rescue white people—Belgian settlers, Belgian religious missionaries—from Congolese rebels who kidnapped and killed them. Sometimes Hoare succeeded in rescuing the whites. Sometimes he failed and took racial revenge on the Africans he encountered. Ultimately, the rebels were defeated, their leaders were killed, and the independence they sought was crushed. But if they were trying to make the Congo an undesirable place for a neocolonial settler-colony, if they were trying to stop the Congo from becoming another white-ruled apartheid state like Rhodesia or South Africa, the Congolese rebels succeeded. Guevara may have thought of the Congo as a failed anti-imperialist war: Hoare may have thought of it as a successful anti-communist one. But what if the rebels were fighting to prevent the creation of another apartheid state in Africa? If so, they were victorious in a way that isn't counted by history, because we have forgotten the force of apartheid in Africa just decades ago.

The rebels may have prevented the maximalist apartheid dreams of the Belgian neocolonialists, but the dream of a sovereign Congo they shared with Guevara had definitely been crushed.

Guevara's diary begins with the words: "This is a story of a failure." Hoare's account of the war ends with a letter from Mobutu, who would rule the Congo for the next thirty years. The new dictator told Hoare "The Congolese nation owes you a great deal, and will keep of you, a living and very edifying remembrance."<sup>68</sup>

## NOTES

1. Obote and Amin were in 1966 accused of taking advantage of their support of the Congolese rebellion by looting Congolese gold and diamonds. See, for example, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/SpecialReports/ugandaat50/Daudi-Ochieng-motion-and-the-Congo-gold--loot-/1370466-1479352-9r46b0/index.html>.
2. Hoare 1967, p. 14. Hoare wasn't the only mercenary who left records of his time in Congo. Bob Denard, Jean Schramme, Christian Tavernier, Vic Oglethorpe, and Dougie Lord are all names that come up in the history of this mercenary campaign. There is a site dedicated to them here: <http://www.mercenary-wars.net/congo/list-of-congo-soldiers.html>.
3. Hoare 1967, pp. 60–61.
4. Hoare 1967, p. 283.
5. Hoare 1967, p. 153.
6. Hoare 1967, p. 136.
7. Hoare 1967, p. 19.
8. Hoare 1967, p. 25.
9. Hoare 1967, p. 26.
10. Hoare 1967, p. 26.
11. Hoare 1967, p. 195.
12. Cited in the US Foreign Policy cables declassified in 2010, pp. 268, 272, 393, 650, 658.
13. FRUS cables, p. 305.
14. FRUS cables, p. 319.
15. Hoare 1967, p. 45.
16. Hoare 1967, p. 51.
17. Guevara 2000, p. 26.
18. Guevara 2000, p. 14.
19. Hoare 1967, p. 20—footnote.
20. Hoare 1967, p. 131.
21. Hoare 1967, p. 129.
22. Hoare 1967, p. 137.
23. Hoare 1967, p. 194.
24. Hoare 1967, p. 107.
25. Hoare 1967, pp. 151–152.
26. Hoare 1967, p. 207.
27. Hoare 1967, p. 226.
28. Hoare 1967, p. 225.
29. Hoare 1967, p. 212.
30. Hoare 1967, p. 158.
31. Hoare 1967, p. 202.

32. Hoare 1967, p. 235.
33. Hoare 1967, pp. 127–133.
34. Hoare 1967, p. 137.
35. Hoare 1967, p. 150.
36. Hoare 1967, p. 144.
37. Roberts 1965, pp. 9–10. Citing UN Security Council Provisional Verbatim Record, December 30, 1964.
38. de Witte 2001, p. 164, citing F. Vandewalle, *L'Ommegang*, p. 14 and J. C. Marlair, *Les Reves de Noko*, p. 144.
39. Roberts 1965, p. 10, citing AP, February 5, 1961.
40. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja. 2002. *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*. p. 128. For the definitive study of Mulele: B. Verhaegen, with J. Omasombo, E. Simons, and F. Verhaegen. *Mulele et la revolution populaire au Kwilu*. L'Harmattan, Paris. 2006.
41. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 129.
42. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, pp. 129–130.
43. FRUS vol. 23, p. 255.
44. FRUS vol. 23, p. 255.
45. FRUS vol. 23, p. 255.
46. FRUS vol. 23, p. 260.
47. FRUS vol. 23, p. 260.
48. FRUS vol. 23, p. 263.
49. FRUS vol. 23, p. 286.
50. FRUS vol. 23, p. 287.
51. FRUS vol. 23, p. 593.
52. FRUS vol. 23, p. 596.
53. FRUS vol. 23, Memo of December 27, 1965, p. 703.
54. Kisangani 2012, p. 122.
55. FRUS vol. 23, 303 Committee memo, September 24, 1965, p. 656.
56. FRUS vol. 23, p. 349.
57. FRUS vol. 23, p. 389.
58. Guevara 2000, p. 225.
59. Gibbs 1991, p. 148.
60. Guevara 2000, p. 225.
61. Guevara 2000, pp. 224–225.
62. Guevara 2000, p. 223.
63. Guevara 2000, p. 224.
64. Guevara 2000, p. 151.
65. Hoare 1967, p. 32.
66. Hoare 1967, p. 286.
67. Hoare 1967, pp. 284–285.
68. Hoare 1967, p. 286.



## The Tyrant Subcontractors: America's Chosen African Dictators, 1965–1990

Less than a decade after independence, the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi had fallen into the hands of dictators acceptable to the West. Uganda and Angola were wracked by postcolonial wars.

In the Congo, which Mobutu would rename Zaire, the dictator's hold was shaky and needed constant maintenance by his US patron.

Mobutu had two sources of power: the creaky Congolese army and his relationship with the US. The Americans had invested \$543 million in Mobutu from 1960 to 1967: \$349 million in economic and \$194 million in military aid. The CIA probably gave Mobutu another \$150 million in his first decade in power, according to Roger Morris of the National Security Council.<sup>1</sup> The Americans would not easily let that investment fail.

When Mobutu overthrew Moïse Tshombe in 1965, he charged the former separatist and erstwhile prime minister with treason. The Americans tried to broker a deal between these two men who had been so useful to them, to convince Mobutu to be lenient toward Tshombe, but ultimately they chose Mobutu. Tshombe fled to Spain, then a dictatorship under Franco.

Tshombe was a real threat: He was close to the Belgians, had good relationships with a large group of white supremacist mercenaries, and had a loyal force of soldiers from Katanga (at the time called the Katangan gendarmes). Mobutu was haunted by the threat that Tshombe would mobilize his Katangans and the mercenaries and try to make a play for power.

The threat was far from idle. In July 1966, the Katangan gendarmes rose in mutiny where they were stationed—in the former rebel capital of Stanleyville (Kisangani). The CIA reported the plot to the National Security Council on July 13, monitoring the movement of South African and Rhodesian mercenaries into Elizabethville. The NSC told the US President’s office that the plot would upset the Congo’s neighbors, restart the Congolese Civil War, and “create serious pressure for us to move in. Further, if Mobutu finds out that we know about the plot and have not told him, it will cut our influence substantially.” The NSC concluded that the best course would be “that we very quietly give Mobutu the information we have (as we did six weeks ago when he stifled another incipient coup), and advise him to take precautionary steps to head the rebels off.”<sup>2</sup>

Dean Rusk of the State Department told the US Ambassador to the Congo to warn Mobutu that it “would be most harmful to his image and our interests if he lashed out widely in all directions and initiated series of reprisals against Congolese or Europeans... you should impress upon Mobutu that it is essential he react rationally and calmly if he learns any real evidence of a plot.”<sup>3</sup> The US approved contingency air support, but noted the “possible future embarrassment potential should the CIA-backed air force ever actually go into action against South African and other white mercenaries. Although unlikely, the strafing and killing of a Major Hoare or so would make a big story and an unfavorable one, depending on the journalist’s slant.”<sup>4</sup>

The mutineers quickly took most of Kisangani.<sup>5</sup> Mobutu, distrusting his own army to do the job, went straight to the US Embassy for help—if US soldiers couldn’t come, could the Americans help him find troops from other countries? In the meantime, Mobutu sent his Prime Minister Leonard Mulamba and Tshombe’s former man Godefroid Munongo (now governor of Katanga) to negotiate with the mutineers.<sup>6</sup> The US sent Devlin to explain what America would and wouldn’t do to help. In their negotiations, Rusk told Devlin, “you should try find opportunity to add that any turn to left and search for bloc assistance would do Congo no good... any such development would create entirely new situation in Congo which US would have to take into account in its future relationships with him.”<sup>7</sup>

Mobutu did find a military solution to this mutiny: He turned to French mercenary Bob Denard to put a force together to rout the mutineers.<sup>8</sup> The commander of the mutiny, Ferdinand Tshipola, was captured



and sentenced to death in March 1967.<sup>9</sup> Some of the Katangans fled to Angola, still a Portuguese colony, and Mobutu complained to the UN that the Portuguese were helping train them to return to the Congo.

In December 1966, some Spanish emissaries for Tshombe approached the US Department of Defense with a “list of benefits which would accrue to the West and capitalism if Tshombe returned. They requested loan of \$4 million to assist Tshombe, who, they claimed, expected return to Kinshasa no later than December 31.” The US officials rebuffed them—they replied that France was planning to help and the US could get frozen out. The US, as always, warned Mobutu.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of July 1967, Tshombe was kidnapped on a hijacked flight (the details of who hijacked the flight and why remain murky) and dumped in Algeria, where he was imprisoned and would die two years later. Tshombe had been on his way from Spain to Africa. His kidnapping triggered another mutiny, this time with even heavier participation by the white mercenaries led by Jean Schramme, a veteran of the war against the pro-Lumumba rebels of Stanleyville. Schramme started his rebellion by shooting down 400 unarmed people—mostly soldiers, but also women and children—during a flag-raising ceremony on July 5, 1967.<sup>11</sup> Schramme’s strategy was to open with a major atrocity to ensure that mercenaries were so hated by the Congolese that the whites would have to side with him for their own safety. It worked: In the first week, Schramme’s force had grown to over 150 mercenaries from his initial 25.<sup>12</sup>

The Americans suspected that Schramme’s mutineers were “backed by individual Belgians in financial and mining circles.”<sup>13</sup> Mobutu went straight to the US, asking in a formal letter to the US President that the Americans “make available to us as quickly as possible necessary men and material to permit us to rid ourselves once and for all of this group of brigands.”<sup>14</sup> His patrons provided troop transport planes to drop ammunition and supplies to Mobutu’s army.

The Americans privately complained that Mobutu and his army were “mesmerized by supposed mercenary invulnerability.”<sup>15</sup> Something to note here: Even generations later, Western scholars uniformly ridicule the pro-Lumumba Stanleyville rebels for being intimidated by the vicious white mercenaries and for engaging in mystical rituals to try to boost their courage. Western officials made sure they were in private when they vented their frustration against the exact same attitudes in Mobutu’s soldiers.

Facing a counterattack, the mercenaries loaded into their vehicles and fled Kisangani. Mobutu's Congolese army was back in control of Kisangani by mid-July. The Katangans and the mercenaries moved southeast to Punia and from there to Bukavu, "holed up," and began inciting the Congolese army to desert over the radio. To little avail. By August, they were talking to Belgian diplomats about a scheme to get safe passage to Rwanda. The US Embassy in Rwanda tried to broker a deal with Rwanda's President Gregoire Kayibanda. A letter directly from President Johnson assured Kayibanda that America would "make every effort to assist in the feeding of the Katangans while they remain in Rwanda through the provision of available PL 480 foodstuffs."<sup>16</sup> The first attempt collapsed, and the US resumed a CIA air force program to support Mobutu's troops against the mercenaries.

After Mobutu's troops moved successfully into Bukavu, the evacuation plan eventually did go into force. By November, the mercenaries and Katangans were gone over the border in Rwanda. Some of the Katangans left Rwanda, first for Zambia and eventually to return to Angola; the mercenaries remained in an internment camp in Rwanda until April of 1968, when they were finally flown back to Europe.

Other Katangan soldiers suffered Mobutu's revenge, killed by the thousand, buried, burned alive, or thrown from helicopters when the battles were over in 1967.<sup>17</sup>

Once secure, Mobutu's reign became more, not less, bloody. Amnesty documented the deaths of 2309 prisoners in a single year in a single one of Mobutu's prisons—from malnutrition and disease.<sup>18</sup> The army killed hundreds of students for demonstrating at the University of Kinshasa in 1969 and massacred villagers by the hundreds every year over the dimmest of pretexts.<sup>19</sup>

Anthropologist Michael Schatzberg, who did fieldwork in Lisala, a small town of 35,000 people in Equateur, documented the presence of forty secret "militant informers" in the city in 1974–1975.<sup>20</sup> Schatzberg described delays in the filing of routine bureaucratic reports, which take days to travel back and forth, in the first case because of the poor communications network (roads, rail, telephone, telegraph), lack of vehicles, and because of Mobutu's policy of keeping state officials moving from post to post to prevent them from forming local power bases.<sup>21</sup> The political police (named the Centre National de Documentation), however, are able to provide information "fast and, in the Zairian context, relatively accurate information on political, social, cultural, and economic

affairs... far superior to the efforts of other branches of the state.”<sup>22</sup> The CND did so by maintaining “regular surveillance on all citizens,” with “regular pilfering of the postal service,” as well as gathering information through “arbitrary arrest and imprisonment”<sup>23</sup> and “tortures of all kinds, ranging from crude beatings to more ‘scientific’ applications of electric current,” which were common.<sup>24</sup>

The armed forces, while inadequate against armed opponents like Tshombe’s rebels and mercenaries, had a “stellar record” against “essentially unarmed peasants, students, or schoolteachers.”<sup>25</sup> The armed forces were famous for “too much drink, too much hemp, excessive familiarity with the local population, and disdain for officers from other regions or ethnic groups... rape, theft, assault, extortion, manslaughter, and aiding convicts to escape.”<sup>26</sup> Soldiers also had a tendency to “establish themselves as petty tyrants or local war lords and then inflict all manner of abuse on civilians in their vicinity.” In one zone, troops killed two villagers, arrested thirteen more, and abused them at headquarters, causing the remaining villagers to flee to the forest.<sup>27</sup>

The armed forces committed economic abuses alongside the political ones. In one case, generals sold weapons to rebels, who obtained the money for the weapons by robbing local gold mines.<sup>28</sup> Military leaders also stole US trucks, C-130 aircraft, guns, fuel, and rations—for private use or sale.<sup>29</sup> By the end of the 1980s, 70% of the army’s tanks and air force equipment was dysfunctional. The army had to use commercial air transport and came to owe millions of dollars to commercial operators in wartime.<sup>30</sup> In some cases, corruption was formalized: The army in this period removed military salaries from centralized listings, so that commanders controlled the funds meant to pay salaries.<sup>31</sup> The commanders appropriated the salaries, and the troops responded by preying on the population: “Monies, goats, chickens, and all worldly goods are fair game for gendarmes on a rampage.”<sup>32</sup>

Mobutu continued the conspiracy against education started by the Belgians. Having arrived in 1885 with a civilizing mission, the Belgians managed to found two universities in the Congo just a few years before independence: Lovanium in 1954 and the Université Officielle du Congo (UOC) in 1956. When students at Lovanium occupied the administration building demanding university democracy, they were told that “the educative relationship is essentially aristocratic.”<sup>33</sup> This aristocracy was particularly unproductive and parasitic toward the student serfs. Between 1958 and 1968, Lovanium awarded only 470 degrees to

Congolese, out of 630 degrees total (itself a low number), and the UOC in twelve years had granted 170 degrees to Congolese.<sup>34</sup> Enrollments were not especially low. Instead, professors at these universities, many of whom were Belgian, were systematically failing the majority of their students. At Lovanium's Faculty of Medicine, the failure rate was 81%. At the UOC, it was 75% overall and 89.5% in pharmacy and agriculture from 1963 to 1968.<sup>35</sup>

In Mobutu's early years, his programs of Africanization and the decolonization of names and curriculum won him the support of the student movement that arose against the educational aristocracy. But when US Vice President Hubert Humphrey visited the Lumumba monument on January 4, 1968, this was too much for the students, who demonstrated against Humphrey's "profanation" of Lumumba's memory, since the US were the ones who made "the great fighter for Congo's and Africa's freedom disappear."<sup>36</sup> Mobutu picked the national student president, Andre N'Kanza-Dolumingu and banished him to his village of origin for twelve years.<sup>37</sup> Students continued to protest against high failure rates, an irrelevant curriculum, and impossibly low stipends.<sup>38</sup> On June 4, 1969, soldiers opened fire on protesting students, killing 60. In 1971, Mobutu responded to student protests by doing something the Belgians did to him when he was a student<sup>39</sup>: He enrolled an entire class into the armed forces. The effect was not what he intended, as the students began to win the soldiers over and politicize them, and they were eventually removed from the army.<sup>40</sup> In 1975 and 1978, Mobutu court-martialed and executed capable senior officers in his armed forces.<sup>41</sup>

Mobutu spent the decade from 1967 to 1977 taking revenge on Katanga, which he had renamed Shaba, for nearly overthrowing him in the 1966–1967 mutinies. Mobutu ensured that the soldiers posted to Southern Katanga were from other regions. In Katanga, these soldiers "behaved like conquerors," raping, arresting, and abusing local people. The mining company was directed not to hire local Balunda, Tshombe's ethnic group.<sup>42</sup>

Many people fled across the border to Angola, including a few veterans of the Katanga mutinies. A group of these Katangans, under the leadership of a man named Nathaniel Mbumba, formed a hard core of fighters that helped the communist MPLA come to power at the end of 1975. Mobutu, along with the CIA, had backed the other Angolan faction, UNITA (and continued to back them through a decades-long civil war in Angola). Angola's President Neto acknowledged the role of

Mbumba and his forces in the MPLA victory in 1976, promising him help in returning to Congo. Mbumba alienated his Angolan hosts, however, acting like a warlord in his border zone of Teixeira de Souza and even imprisoning rivals.<sup>43</sup>

In 1977, after Angolan President Neto ordered Mbumba confined to his residence for violating Angola's territorial integrity, Mbumba took his troops, now called the FLNC, and crossed the border into Congo to overthrow Mobutu. Mbumba's troops found support among local Balunda (Tshombe's ethnic group) in Katanga and centered their rebel effort on Kolwezi, one of the Congo's major mining towns.<sup>44</sup> They took Kisenge and Dilolo, looting Gecamines mineral depots to the tune of around \$88 million.<sup>45</sup>

Mobutu sought military aid from France and the US. The immediate appeal for an American rescue operation for Mobutu was presented in racial terms. The US media presented the invasion as a "hunt for the white man," "rebel tribesmen on a rampage of murder and rape," and "the worst massacre of Europeans in modern African history."<sup>46</sup> The fact that Cuban troops were in Angola only came up later.<sup>47</sup> The racial script, of rebels massacring whites, was ready from the Stanleyville rebellion a decade before, to be dusted off and read out to stir up the right feeling and get the European boots on the ground.

The French Air Force ferried Moroccan troops to strengthen Mobutu's army, and they moved quickly to crush the rebels.<sup>48</sup> As in the previous war, "far more blacks were killed by the white 'rescuers' than whites were killed by black rebels."<sup>49</sup> Friendly fire incidents in which French and Belgian troops accidentally killed white civilians, involuntary evacuations of white people living in Kolwezi, and civilian casualties from urban warfare all were used to racialize the battle and present it as an "Angolan invasion,"<sup>50</sup> and not a repressive, vengeful attack on the people of Shaba.

In the aftermath, Mobutu became even more vindictive toward the Balunda accused of supporting the rebels. Hundreds of thousands of more people fled to Angola as Mobutu's soldiers killed thousands and raped hundreds of girls and women throughout 1977.<sup>51</sup>

The rebels regrouped in Angola and invaded again on May 8, 1978, in Shaba II, this time with a well-planned attack on Kolwezi. Mobutu's defenders fled in such disorder that they were strafed by their own side, as French Mirage jets killed hundreds of Congolese army troops mistaking them for rebels.<sup>52</sup> The French Foreign Legion came to Mobutu's

rescue, along with Belgian paratroopers, airdropped into central Kolwezi by US troop transports on May 19.<sup>53</sup> They retook the town and drove the rebels back out.

Exhausted after two rounds of warfare, Angola's President Neto signed a peace treaty with Mobutu, leaving Mbumba and his rebel forces out in the cold. They would be unable to mount another attack on Mobutu: There would be no Shaba III.

The next time troops would enter Congo from Angola, it would be to finally overthrow Mobutu—but that was decades away.

Mobutu's handling of the Congo's multiethnic composition created kindling for the explosions of the 1990s. Mobutu favored his own ethnic group in recruiting for the armed forces, drawing recruits mainly from the northwest corner of Equateur, from Gbadolite and Gemena in southern Ubangi.<sup>54</sup> A group of dissident parliamentarians wrote a memo to US congressmen expressing fear that the "tribalization of the Army" would result in a "genocide conceived as an efficacious means for subduing all other regions politically and economically."<sup>55</sup>

In 1972, Mobutu conferred Congolese nationality on all those who had been in the Congo since 1950 (called the citizenship law). In 1973, he declared that customary land tenure was disqualified (through the land law) and that all businesses were the property of the state (zairianization). In the east, these laws combined to turn vast amounts of land from traditional landholders of one ethnicity (Nande or Hunde) to another (Congolese Tutsi, or Banyarwanda).<sup>56</sup> In 1981, Mobutu threatened to cancel the citizenship of the Banyarwanda.<sup>57</sup> In 1990,<sup>58</sup> Mobutu devolved a degree of power to the regions—in the east, the new local powers purged the Banyarwanda from government.<sup>59</sup>

Disaffected by Mobutu's manipulations and their uncertain status in Zaire, the Banyamulenge became a major pool of recruits for Kagame's RPF in the Rwandan Civil War. A military observer, Amadou Deme, would report seeing these Zairian Banyamulenge in Rwanda among the RPF as second-tier soldiers: "They were not equally treated, on the origin of the soldier, and ties to its military core leadership. Soldiers from Uganda and Anglophones were considered at the top of the ladder, and Francophone Tutsi from eastern Zaire (now Congo), usually called 'Banyamulenges', were at the bottom."<sup>60</sup> Thousands of RPF fighters were recruited from the eastern Congo in the 1990s.<sup>61</sup>

In April 1995, after the Rwandan Civil War ended, the genocide had taken place, and eastern Zaire was host to millions of Rwandan refugees, Mobutu had the Banyamulenge stripped of their citizenship rights by parliamentary resolution.<sup>62</sup> In late 1995, the parliament declared the equivalent of “all people of Rwandan origin naked and out.”<sup>63</sup> Because the Banyamulenge were armed, organized, and backed by the Rwandan army and ultimately the US, this gesture was suicidal for Mobutu’s regime. Kagame’s recruiters got “thousands of volunteers – predominantly jobless youths – by attracting them with promises of regular pay, and the idea of capturing the Kivu provinces in Zaire and incorporating them into Rwanda.”<sup>64</sup>

Multipartyism was a movement in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. The US controlled this transition by sponsoring “new African leaders,” armed rebel movements under their control. This method was a preferred method of transition and played out like the Arab Spring. The similarities are worth exploring. Democratic movements pushed for reforms of dictatorial states. Armed movements arose within these states and found covert support from the West. Where they succeeded, in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Rwanda<sup>65</sup> they set up new dictatorships equally beholden to the West, after protracted civil wars that ended in the destruction of their societies. Mobutu had come to power through a similar movement in the 1960s.

Repression of movements against Mobutu’s dictatorship attracted international attention as the movement for multipartyism in Africa grew. In 1990, Mobutu sent the army on to the University of Lubumbashi campus and killed students.<sup>66</sup> Mobutu’s indisciplined, unpaid army also began to loot more systematically starting in 1991.<sup>67</sup> By the time Bill Clinton came to power, the US was looking around for an alternative. Michaela Wrong quotes a State Department official to discuss a meeting to look for “a Zairean who hasn’t been tainted by Mobutu.”<sup>68</sup>

Indeed, at least for a while, the US supported the multiparty movement in Zaire. “During the late 1980s and early ‘90s, Presidents Reagan and Bush had supported an increasingly emboldened Zairean pro-democracy movement. Church groups, NGOs, journalists, and others courageously denounced the corruption of Mobutu’s government and marched into prisons and paid lawyers to defend dissidents. Civil society groups supported by U.S. funds created draft

laws and a new constitution and elected their own prime minister, Etienne Tshisekedi.”<sup>69</sup> This process was called the Sovereign National Conference (CNS), which began in 1990 and was supposed to bring multipartyism to Zaire.

But Mobutu was able to manipulate the process to stay in power by preventing the CNS from meeting, stacking it with loyalists to control the agenda, and supporting ethnic and citizenship conflicts, especially in the eastern Congo, between the so-called autochthones and the Banyamulenge. Mobutu’s ethnic strategies in the Kivus were complex. In Nord-Kivu, he sought to “tip the balance of numbers in favor of the Hutu at the expense of the Nande,” while in Sud-Kivu, he “sacrificed the Banyamulenge for his electoral strategy to rally the electoral majority.”<sup>70</sup>

Meanwhile, “as soon as Clinton took office, U.S. funds for democratization activities dried up; the embassy in Kinshasa remained without an ambassador for months, and the U.S. Cultural Center, which had once hosted numerous civil society activities, closed, as did the USAID office... Just as in Rwanda, the Americans clearly supported a military, rather than a political solution to Zaire’s problems.”<sup>71</sup> The CNS withered and the multiparty moment passed Zaire by.

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Post-independence, Rwanda and Burundi suffered from other Belgian conspiracies.

In Rwanda, the Belgians picked the Hutu Movement and Emancipation Party (PARMEHUTU) as the winner, with its “Hutu and Democratic” politics, over the Rwandan National Union (UNAR). UNAR was the conservative, monarchist choice. Both parties were strongly influenced by Belgian racist beliefs and by Belgian advisors of different political stripes. UNAR was influenced by the Belgian idea that there was a natural racial hierarchy, with Tutsis at the top and Hutus at the base. The Belgians had actualized their idea by provisioning higher education to a small number of Tutsis and to no Hutus.

PARMEHUTU was influenced by these ideas, too, conflating the fact that Hutus were a majority with the idea that majoritarian democracy meant Hutu democracy. The result was a debate that liberal democrats could endorse neither side of. The UNAR side argued that Hutu and Tutsi shared an interest in national independence, but held to an agenda of inequality, favoring the Tutsi minority as the ruling class. PARMEHUTU argued for majoritarian democracy, but shared the



static and essentialist idea of what Hutus and Tutsis were, only diverging from UNAR in believing that Hutus should dominate as a democratic principle.

In the run-up to independence, UNAR struck first, with a campaign of killing Hutu intellectuals and leaders between 1955 and 1958. They failed to prevent the PARMEHUTU-led majority revolt they feared, and the Tutsi monarchy was overthrown violently in 1959.<sup>72</sup>

UNAR organized itself into a guerrilla army, assassinating Hutu politicians and Belgians in the north of Rwanda. The Belgian military intervened directly, attacking UNAR positions in Uganda and patrolling the north. These battles sent Hutu civilians from the north fleeing to the capital, Kigali, and elsewhere in southern Rwanda, where Tutsi civilians would become victims of “revenge” attacks because they shared the Tutsi identity with the UNAR raiders. The government persecuted its political opponents, summarily executing dozens and organizing mass killings of thousands.

Gregoire Kayibanda was the leader of PARMEHUTU and became the country’s first president. He pleased the West by banning communist activity and propaganda, and recruited Western (and especially Belgian) aid by calling his UNAR political enemies communists. His army was built and supported by the Belgians, with command handed over to a Belgian-trained officer named Juvenal Habyarimana only in 1963. The Belgian Major Vanderstraeten remained in Rwanda to support and advise his successor.

On December 22–23 of 1963, Habyarimana’s army—stiffened by Belgian intervention forces—faced an UNAR invasion from Burundi, the Congo, and Uganda. Most of the UNAR fighters were halted at the border, captured, and executed. But a group from Burundi marched into the Camp Gako military base, routed the Rwandan National Guard, rallied volunteers at the Nyamata refugee camp, and marched on Kigali. They were stopped by a Belgian-led National Guard unit 19 kilometers from the capital and decimated by the National Guard’s heavy weapons. The UNAR forces fled back to Burundi. Kayibanda’s government then organized massacres against Tutsis (estimates of those killed are between 10 and 12,000) and executions of rival politicians, accused of collaborating with UNAR.<sup>73</sup> In part, the West looked away from these massacres because Kayibanda suggested that UNAR was a proto-communist organization.<sup>74</sup>

Playing up the UNAR-Communist-Tutsi threat to his domestic constituents and to Western patrons, Kayibanda enacted one-party rule, appearing as the only leader on the ballot in 1965 (he won the election) and again in 1969 (he won again).

But for all his “Hutu and democratic” credentials, Kayibanda was not a unifying figure even among the Hutu majority. Kayibanda was from the south of Rwanda, in Gitarama, and most of those he appointed to run the government were from the south too. In the post-independence violence, many Tutsis fled north to Uganda (UNAR was active among this refugee population). Most of the country’s remaining Tutsis lived in the south. As a minority with higher educational and economic status than the majority but restricted by quota to 9% of government jobs (the Tutsi share of population according to the census), Tutsis ended up disproportionately in business and private sector employment. Although there were plenty of poor Tutsi villagers living alongside Hutus, and despite the quotas limiting their government participation, the Tutsi minority acquired a reputation as a privileged class.

In the conflict between UNAR and PARMEHUTU, the pro-Lumumba rebels in the Congo favored UNAR, whose guerrillas fought alongside them against Tshombe’s white supremacist mercenaries. The Lumumbists felt an affinity with UNAR’s nationalist ideology and they opposed Belgian intervention in support of Kayibanda, seeing in it analogies with Belgian intervention in support of Tshombe in the Congo. In his diary, Che Guevara describes training and fighting with Rwandan soldiers from UNAR. When the Cubans left and Tshombe’s mercenaries finally crushed the rebellion in the eastern Congo in 1965, UNAR lost its base there.

By 1968, Burundi, Uganda, and Tanzania all banned UNAR from operating in their territories as well,<sup>75</sup> freezing for a generation the ambitions of the UNAR rebels for a triumphant return.

The Rwandan conflict between UNAR and PARMEHUTU in the 1960s could obviously be read as a Tutsi-Hutu conflict, in which the Belgians (and following the Belgians, the West) supported the PARMEHUTU (Hutu) side. Nonetheless, I use the acronyms UNAR and PARMEHUTU to describe the conflict in the 1960s instead of using “Tutsi” and “Hutu.” This is analytically and historically more accurate: The conflict at this time was one of class, ideology, and politics as much as ethnicity. PARMEHUTU had “Hutu” in its name, but its political claims would not have succeeded had they been phrased in

purely ethnic terms. Instead, the formula PARMEHUTU used was “Hutu and democratic.” The formula gave too much power to ethnicity, but to simplify PARMEHUTU as “the Hutus” is to implicitly claim that Hutus were a unified ideological bloc, which they never were. The same goes for UNAR: While the leadership of UNAR was from the old Rwandan monarchist ruling class, which was “Tutsi,” UNAR’s political claims were based on nationalism and on national independence.

The 1994 genocide was the ultimate *essentialist* project, reducing people to their ethnicities. Historians should avoid writing that essentialism onto the past, when realities were more complex.<sup>76</sup>

\* \* \*

Returning to Burundi: When a gunman from Greece assassinated Prince Rwagasore in 1961, he killed Burundi’s best hope for post-independence. Political power drifted back to the Burundian monarchy. A legislative election in 1965 saw Hutu politicians win 23 out of 31 seats; the King of Burundi appointed a member of the royal family as prime minister and said no elections would stop him from extending to his people “the benefit of his protection.”<sup>77</sup> When Hutu officers in the army grew restive after this democratic frustration, the army moved to purge its ranks through “the physical liquidation of every Hutu leader of some consequence.”<sup>78</sup> The king, though, fled to Europe. The crown prince took over on July 8, 1966, and made Army Captain Micombero his prime minister. On November 28, Micombero led a coup to overthrow the crown prince and made himself president.

Micombero had a Tutsi-first agenda, but made some moves toward unity: Five of his thirteen cabinet ministers were Hutus.<sup>79</sup> He made the nationalist move of dismissing Belgian advisors in 1968.<sup>80</sup> But Micombero was not a unifying figure even among Tutsis, preferentially appointing men of his tribe and region to the government. Burundi’s rulers tried to forge ruling-class unity by playing up the Hutu threat. Once the Belgians were dismissed, Burundi’s rulers moved to “eliminate as many Hutu from both the army and the government as was politically feasible. This was done by bringing trumped-up charges against Hutu elements in government and the army to justify ethnic purges in both.”<sup>81</sup>

Hutu-led political factions tried to strike first, in a coup attempt on the night of September 16–17, 1969. The Burundi government rounded up most of the prominent Hutu leaders and executed 100 of them. The few Hutu leaders that survived raised another rebellion three

years later, on April 29, 1972. That same night, the ex-king of Burundi arrived in the capital, his safe passage negotiated by the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Micombero had promised Amin that the ex-king would be unharmed and treated as an ordinary citizen. But Micombero instead had him immediately arrested and executed that same night.<sup>82</sup> It was the opening shot in the Burundi genocide.<sup>83</sup>

The rebels emerged from refugee camps housing Congolese fleeing the wars in eastern Congo, and from bases in Tanzania. Eastern Congolese rebels affiliated with Pierre Mulele's rebellion bolstered the ranks of the Burundian rebels. Here, in Burundi, the Congolese nationalist rebels supported "Hutu" forces; in Rwanda, they had supported the "Tutsi" UNAR—revealing again that the cleavages in the region were not solely explicable in "ethnic," Hutu-Tutsi terms.

Nonetheless, the rebels were classified by the Burundi government as "Hutus and Mulelists," and the rebels initiated their military campaign by attacking Tutsi civilians, "including women and children as well as those few Hutu who refused to join them."<sup>84</sup>

The government counterattacked the next day, with the army and youth militias beginning to "coordinate their efforts to exterminate all individuals suspected to have taken part in the rebellion."<sup>85</sup> Mobutu sent paratroopers and air support to Burundi—many of the rebels were Congolese and had rebelled against his government too. Mobutu's troops secured the airport while the Burundian army and youth militias rounded up all Hutu leaders and anyone with any intellectual background or potential. Students, teachers, church leaders, and social leaders were targeted, rounded up, and shot or bludgeoned to death with rifle butts.<sup>86</sup> One writer observed:

Local Tutsi, sometimes soldiers, sometimes civil servants, arrived and motioned Hutu teachers, church leaders, nurses, traders, civil servants into Landrovers with their guns. Bands of Tutsi combed the suburbs of Bujumbura and carted away Hutu by the lorry load. Throughout May and half June 1972, the excavators were busy every night in Gitega and Bujumbura burying the dead in mass graves. In secondary schools teachers stood helpless as many of their Hutu pupils were removed... Those arrested were usually dead the same night, stripped and practically clubbed to death in covered lorries on the way to prison, then finished off there with clubs at nightfall. Using bullets would have been wasteful.<sup>87</sup>

Burundian government forces targeted Hutus and Hutu intellectuals, but also killed Tutsis accused of disloyalty and Tutsi refugees from Rwanda (some of whom had likely fought alongside UNAR as rebels in the Congo, or were accused of such).<sup>88</sup> The government targeted especially school youth and children. In Mamdani's words, "the objective was to crush the flower from which would come tomorrow's intelligentsia... the prerequisite for initiative, independence, and leadership."<sup>89</sup>

As it conducted the genocide, Burundi's government claimed that it faced an existential threat from the Hutu rebellion, "officially described as the outcome of a gigantic conspiracy aiming at the physical liquidation of all Tutsi."<sup>90</sup> Lemarchand's description of the motives behind the genocide echoes those of Rwanda 1994:

Fear of an impending slaughter of all Tutsi men, women and children – reminiscent of what happened in Rwanda in 1959-1962, and again in 1964 – certainly played a crucial part... the most astonishing feature... is the rapidity with which it transformed itself into a genocidal-type operation aiming at the physical liquidation of nearly every educated or semi-educated Hutu... the aim was to decapitate not only the rebellion but Hutu society as well, and in the process lay the foundation of an entirely new social order.<sup>91</sup>

The first Memo from the State Department to President Nixon came four days after the invasion, on May 3. In it, the State Department concluded that "Except for the potential danger to American citizens residing in Burundi, no American interests are threatened."<sup>92</sup> But two months later, by the end of June, the National Security Council was writing to Kissinger estimating that 100,000 had been killed in a "slaughter" that was "systematic and extensive." The NSC wrung its hands, arguing that "there's not much we can do realistically. Our leverage in the country is miniscule."<sup>93</sup> The NSC recommended humanitarian and diplomatic responses. The US purchased 80% of Burundi's coffee that year.

French military assistants flew the Burundian military's helicopters, "holding the helicopters sturdy while Burundi soldiers were machine gunning Hutu rebels out of the side windows."<sup>94</sup> The UN, which a decade before had organized and sent a force to the Congo that guaranteed the death of its first elected leader (Lumumba) and the installation of its first dictator (Mobutu), scraped together the resources to send two

five-person teams to Burundi. As one observer put it, “the UN said little, even when their own vehicles were requisitioned and used to take Hutu to their deaths.”<sup>95</sup>

In post-genocide Burundi, Lemarchand and Martin wrote, “a new society has in fact emerged, in which only Tutsi elements are qualified to gain access to power, influence and wealth; what is left of Hutu society is now systematically excluded from the army, the civil service, the university and secondary schools... Hutu status has become synonymous with an inferior category of beings; only Tutsi are fit to rule.”<sup>96</sup>

Though the genocide solidified elite rule against challenges from below, Micombero himself was not able to hold on to power long. He was ousted in a coup by one of his military men, Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, in 1976. Micombero fled to Somalia.

Burundi’s government was overthrown again in an 1987 coup. The trigger was when Burundi’s president, working under an internationally supervised austerity program, forced early retirement on a group of military officers.<sup>97</sup> With no prospects outside of the army and impending forced retirement, the officers opted instead to overthrow the government. The new president, Pierre Buyoya, promised to maintain Tutsi supremacy, but freed large numbers of Hutu political prisoners and raised hopes for the Hutu majority.<sup>98</sup> Two districts with large numbers of Tutsi refugees from Rwanda, Ntega, and Marangara were particularly hard-hit by the austerity measures and the collapse of international coffee prices because of their lack of social infrastructure.<sup>99</sup> With less than 40% of school-age population enrolled in primary schools in these districts, ethnic competition between Hutu and Tutsi in education was intense. When a leaked report showed that the Ministry of Education, which publicly disavowed all talk of Hutu and Tutsi, actually tracked ethnic origins as a criterion for school admission (effectively discriminating against Hutu), the tension got worse.<sup>100</sup> Finally, in 1988, local elections, which brought Hutu candidates into local governmental committees, were effectively overridden by appointed Tutsi officials.<sup>101</sup>

Some of these officials, seeing the tensions building, gathered communities together and threatened them with a repeat of the 1972 massacres.<sup>102</sup> Hutu mobs formed, killed these officials, and then commenced indiscriminate massacres against Tutsis in the areas. The language and methods of these mobs prefigured those of the 1994 Rwandan genocide:

...The language of the assailants reveals the depth of their collective anger. 'Cutting down' the Tutsi is how some described their mission; to kill meant to 'work', as if the act of killing had become a necessary job. It is little wonder that the killers were, in turn, referred to by Tutsi survivors as 'beasts'. Bestly is indeed the only way to describe the appalling massacres.<sup>103</sup>

Similarly, the army's reprisals prefigured the mass reprisals unleashed by the RPF in Rwanda and the Congo. Lemarchand quotes Amnesty International on the government reprisal:

... The scale of resistance offered to the soldiers is not known, but the inclusion of a large number of women and children among the victims suggests that the troops were engaged not just in quelling armed resistance or indeed in searching for those who had participated in killings of Tutsi, but rather in reprisals aimed at the Hutu civilian population as a whole.<sup>104</sup>

Lemarchand estimates that about fifteen thousand Hutus were killed in these government massacres, and that fifty thousand Hutu peasants fled to Rwanda. Most returned to Burundi, many of whom were arrested upon arrival back home.<sup>105</sup> In a succinct summary of the 1988 massacres that could summarize much of the dynamic in Rwanda and Burundi since independence, Lemarchand writes that "Uncontrolled fears of what might happen next... led Hutu extremists to unleash their fury against innocent Tutsi, thus bringing on themselves and their kinspeople a devastating retribution. Anticipated violence inexorably led to preemptive violence."<sup>106</sup>

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Since Rwanda's President Gregoire Kayibanda presented himself as the leader of "Hutu and democratic" aspirations, his followers demanded a response to the 1972 genocide against Burundi's Hutus. Kayibanda's response was to launch another campaign against Rwanda's Tutsi population, but it failed to satisfy his critics. In frustration against mounting criticisms, he challenged his opponents to try to overthrow him if they thought they could do better.<sup>107</sup>

Kayibanda's military man, defense minister and chief of staff of the National Guard, Juvenal Habyarimana, took his president up on the offer, arresting Kayibanda and taking over the government on July 5,

1973. Habyarimana made some moderating moves initially, calling off the anti-Tutsi campaign, reorganizing the military and putting them under the control of the Ministry of Defense, and reducing Rwanda's dependence on Belgium in exchange for increased dependence on France, which provided the weapons and kept the Air Squadron operating.<sup>108</sup> In addition to Belgian and French training, the Rwandan army under Habyarimana had units trained in the US, West Germany, Libya, Algeria, and of course Mobutu's Zaire.<sup>109</sup>

Over time Habyarimana replaced Kayibanda's southern elite, putting Habyarimana's people from the north into the key government jobs. In the north, the Tutsi minority was far smaller than in the south. The northern Hutu experience of Tutsis was less one of neighbors and fellow villagers and more one of a militarized border zone. Hutus in the north were easier to convince of the threat of Tutsi raiders coming from Uganda (and also Burundi and the Congo) because these raids occasionally did occur throughout the 1960s. This north Rwanda orientation, fearful of invasion and with less neighborly experience with Tutsis, took a stronghold in the elite over the next two decades.

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Uganda spent the 1970s and 1980s tearing itself apart in wars and coups, only settling into a stable dictatorship in 1986. The Ugandan carnage would spill over in the late 1980s into Zaire, Burundi, and especially Rwanda.

The British colonies in East Africa (now Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania) were ruled by different British governors. Like the Belgians, the British imposed their rule through genocidal violence: "The British, their Baganda troops, and Sudanese mercenaries committed numerous atrocities including mass rape, the torching of entire villages, the herding of people into concentration camps, the theft of cattle and the humiliation of local leaders. In Acholiland, Acting Commissioner J.R.P. Postlethwaite, nicknamed 'chicken thief' by the Acholi, publicly strung up a rebellious chief and lowered him head-first into a pit latrine until he died. In a British-backed operation against the Bavuma people, 'such was the enormity of the slaughter,' wrote historian Michael Twaddle, 'that, not only were sections of Lake Victoria 'all blood'; there were so many dead bodies bobbing up and down in the water that their heads resembled a multitude of upturned cooking pots.'<sup>110</sup> All this slaughter upheld a situation in which the Ugandan king and the British imperialists that



controlled him lived a “life at the palace... seemed like an endless round of shooting parties, picnics, and outings on Lake Victoria.”<sup>111</sup>

The hope was to maintain these territories after independence as playgrounds for British, but the anticolonial rebellions disabused the colonists of that fantasy. Uganda had been built out of one big kingdom (Buganda) and numerous smaller territories. The relationship of the smaller territories and the smaller ethnic groups in a unitary state with the kingdom became a major problem in the leadup to independence. Political parties ran on regional and ethnic lines. The king, or Kabaka, was the post-independence head of state, while the prime minister, Milton Obote, led the government.

Obote and the king clashed until the prime minister overthrew the king in 1966 in a violent ouster led by his military man, Idi Amin. Obote declared Uganda a Republic and himself president. Obote’s coup was triggered by an investigation into his and Idi Amin’s role in smuggling Congolese gold and ivory while supporting the Lumumbist rebels against Tshombe’s government.

Obote himself was overthrown in a coup by Idi Amin in 1971. The British supported Amin’s coup, having clashed with Obote over proposals in 1970 to nationalize foreign import and export businesses, oil companies, manufacturing, banks, and insurance; and over British support and arms for apartheid South Africa, which Obote opposed.<sup>112</sup> Nationalization would have upset British firms operating in Uganda like Grindlays, Standard And Barclays, Shell/BP, and others.<sup>113</sup> When Idi Amin overthrew him, he made a quick statement welcoming private investment. The British Foreign Office wrote that Amin’s new policy “should go a long way towards the restoration of foreign investment confidence in Uganda.”<sup>114</sup> The British sold Amin weapons systems throughout the first year of his dictatorship: armored cars, aircraft, helicopters, radar, and small arms.<sup>115</sup> Amin is famous for expelling the Asian (Indian) minority in 1972, whose ancestors had been brought as indentured laborers by the British colonials and who had formed a small business class, but his campaigns in Northern Uganda were far more horrific.

Idi Amin sent his military to fight a counterinsurgency in Obote’s base in the north (among the Lango and Acholi), killing perhaps 300,000–500,000 people.

In 1979, Amin overreached and invaded Tanzania, which triggered a Tanzanian invasion that ousted Amin and restored Obote to power

pending elections,<sup>116</sup> which Obote promptly stole, dismissing district electoral commissioners and sacking judges.<sup>117</sup> The Bush War started that same year, when Museveni—who had fought on Obote’s side against Amin—began a rebellion with the stolen election as the *casus belli*.

During the Bush War of 1980–1986, Obote (and his successor) fought a “near-genocidal” counterinsurgency in the Luwero Triangle, with government forces killing between 100,000 and 300,000 people in 1984–1985.<sup>118</sup> The British Foreign Office helped Obote diplomatically when they claimed that there was “no evidence to substantiate” these US government figures.<sup>119</sup> Throughout this period, British trainers were working with Obote’s army, threatening to cut off aid only in June 1985.<sup>120</sup> World Bank loans kept flowing to Uganda during the war, as Obote had been cured of the economic nationalism that had earned Western wrath before his 1971 overthrow. Obote sweetened his 1980s budgets for Westerners with tax exemptions for corporations, commended for his “intention to dismantle an inefficient system of state-controlled companies.”<sup>121</sup>

The Bush War ended with Yoweri Museveni in power in 1986 after perhaps 500,000 deaths in total. Like Amin before him, Museveni sent his forces North to quell the region that had supplied his rival (Obote) with troops. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) arose out of the decades-long warfare in this northern region.

Stretched out over 15 years, Uganda’s wars and insurgencies were responsible for about 800,000–1,000,000 deaths between 1971 and 1986, more than 50,000 per year. Specific ethnic groups were targeted, and specific war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed (including the recruitment of child soldiers, the use of antipersonnel land mines, and targeting civilians). Like the Burundi genocide of 1972, Uganda’s wars do not receive the same attention as the Rwandan Civil War and genocide of the 1990s or the Congo wars, despite the fact that both events were important antecedents to events in Rwanda and the DRC.

The hard core of what would become the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) was formed in this, Museveni’s Bush War. Who were these Rwandan refugees? Mamdani cites UNHCR figures of 82,000 registered Rwandan refugees in Uganda in the early 1990s,<sup>122</sup> with the actual number including unregistered refugees closer to 200,000.<sup>123</sup> Rwandan refugees in Uganda were not offered citizenship. Some had joined Idi Amin’s forces in the 1979 war, and others joined Museveni’s forces in the 1981–1986 Bush War

(by 1986 constituting 20% of Museveni's forces<sup>124</sup>). The elite among these refugees were able to rise high in Museveni's guerrilla army. Paul Kagame went to the same high school Museveni had in southern Uganda, fought alongside him for 7 years, and was his chief of intelligence for 4 more.<sup>125</sup> Fred Rwigyema was the commander of one of six sections of Museveni's guerrilla army by 1981 (the 5th section, later called the Mondlane unit—the 1st section was commanded by Museveni himself).<sup>126</sup> But overall, the Rwandan refugees in Uganda had a precarious status: “They were the butt of popular prejudice and official discrimination, the readily available explanation for any situation... from poverty to sabotage.”<sup>127</sup>

From their experiences at Museveni's side in the Bush War, Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame developed a doctrine of guerrilla warfare that involved leftist methods of organization without leftist redistributive politics: “although the NRA used a typical leftist vocabulary and was organised along ‘classic’ Leninist and Maoist patterns inherited from earlier liberation struggles, its ideology was first and foremost nationalistic: it never attempted to implement any kind of radical social changes (like land redistribution, for example).”<sup>128</sup> The RPF also “abandoned their Marxist rhetoric and social radicalism.”<sup>129</sup>

Rwigyema and Kagame learned other strategic lessons from being in Museveni's war, mastering intelligence and counterintelligence, cultivating their own sources, including children who worked as scouts and messengers<sup>130</sup>: “the insurgents proved capable of using Obote's security services to do the dirty job for them – for example by leaking manipulated intelligence to compromise the government's own informers. By 1984, the insurgents successfully eliminated – whether by conversion, assassination, or simply forcing them to flee – nearly all of the government's sources of intelligence in their area of operations.”<sup>131</sup> They received validation of their strategy of targeted assassination of enemy leaders when they killed the most effective of Obote's military commanders, Major-General David Oyite-Ojok, in a helicopter crash in 1983. Oyite-Ojok had been Obote's “most popular officer, well-liked and trusted” by the people in the areas where he operated.<sup>132</sup> The death of Oyite-Ojok turned the tide of the war to Museveni's side.

Having helped Museveni win power, they also helped him quell rebels in the north, committing atrocities in the process, including “torture, rape and murder of civilians suspected of supporting the other side,” creating a counterinsurgency strategy in 1989 that involved “the policy of forced relocation of around 120,000 villagers into protected camps

to create free-fire zones.”<sup>133</sup> One commander from the RPF, Chris Bunyenyezi, “locked 120 suspected [enemy] sympathizers into a rail wagon at the Okungolo railway station and left them inside for the entire day: 69 died from thirst, heat and lack of breathing space... worse... an estimated average of 15 people died each day in different camps as a result of harsh living conditions and endemic outbreaks of cholera and dysentery between 1987 and 1992.”<sup>134</sup>

In 1988, an Italian priest lamented the way the Rwandans “use the most unacceptable counterinsurgency strategies. They herd women, children and old people into houses and set the houses on fire. They rape women in the presence of their male relatives, and at times they force the male relatives to sleep with the women after they [the soldiers] have exhausted their sexual desire... These people are determined to spread [AIDS] to the Acholi. I also witnessed them mutilate unarmed people, including school children, from the Holy Rosary primary school... the surviving victims are often paraded by the soldiers or government functionaries before a group of reporters and told to expose those who mutilated them. Naturally, they say the rebels did it...”<sup>135</sup> The use of rape and sexually transmitted infection as weapons of war by the RPF is documented for the Congo wars: Here we find it goes back to the 1980s.

Specific torture tactics characteristic of Museveni’s forces in these 1980s wars were to become RPF trademarks as well. In the “three-piece tie,” “the arms of the victim are tied tightly behind the back above the elbows so that the chest protrudes outward, producing searing pain.”<sup>136</sup> When the time came to kill these helpless victims, “they would dig a shallow grave, tie you up and lie you facing the ground and crack your skull using an old hoe called *Kafuni*.”<sup>137</sup> One Ugandan journalist watched bodies floating down the Kagera River from RPF-held areas of Rwanda into Tanzania in April of 1994 and noticed that “many of them were tied ‘three-piece’.”<sup>138</sup> Rwandan survivors of RPF massacres would often report the use of the skull-cracking *kafuni*.

In the Bush War, Rwigyema and Kagame decided that their military alone should be the arbiter of military crime and punishment.<sup>139</sup> Honored in the breach, the NRA code of conduct, like the RPF’s, was a stern piece of military discipline, forbidding rape, looting, and atrocities against civilians. But Kagame pardoned Bunyenyezi for the massacre at the railway station, which should have brought the latter a death sentence.<sup>140</sup>

Rwigyema and Kagame had their rivals in the RPF. Having learned at Museveni’s side about protracted people’s war, they were prepared

to attempt a long campaign in Rwanda. They faced more impatient commanders who had fought beside them: Peter Bayingana and Chris Bunyenyezi, who “traveled among refugee communities and presented themselves as the true RPF leaders.”<sup>141</sup> They accelerated their timeline.

Because they had joined armed groups, Obote government viewed the Rwandan refugees as having “sinned twice.”<sup>142</sup> Obote’s government attacked civilian Rwandan refugee populations in the southwest in a pogrom:

...Houses claimed as Banyarwanda-occupied were looted and set aflame, or walls were pushed in and corrugated roofs were stolen. Occupants fled with their cattle and what they could carry. Local authorities tried to broaden popular support for the repression by redistributing confiscated land, cattle, and petty property to followers... Estimates from the period suggest that some 40,000 had crossed into Rwanda, driving some 25,000 cattle ahead of them. When Rwanda closed its border in November of 1982, another 4000 were said to be trapped on the Ugandan side of the border, while almost 30,000 were under supervision in camps in Uganda.<sup>143</sup>

Even though Museveni had depended on these Rwandan refugees militarily, in post-Bush War Uganda was unsympathetic to them. In the process of rewarding his Rwandan warriors, Museveni created land conflicts between Ugandans and the 200,000 Tutsi refugees in southern Uganda.<sup>144</sup> The conflict was symbolized in what Museveni called the “Ranch Restructuring Scheme.” In the 1970s, USAID had broken up Uganda’s commons, the “cattle corridor” in southern Uganda where “for centuries pastoralists had moved their animals back and forth... following the rains.” USAID privatized the corridor into individual ranches “to encourage large-scale ranchers to provide meat for local and export markets.”<sup>145</sup> Museveni took aim at this corridor: “Rwandan pastoralists moved in by force, cutting fences, smashing in windows and doors, pulling out pumps, and stealing animals. When the ranchers armed themselves, Museveni sent hundreds of soldiers to set up roadblocks in the area.”<sup>146</sup> But could Museveni fight an insurgency in the south and in the north at the same time?

A 1990 local dispute over land between Rwandan refugees and Ugandans, called “the squatter uprising,” was eventually settled by Museveni in favor of Ugandan citizens.<sup>147</sup> Rwandans in high-level government posts, like Fred Rwigyema, were demoted and removed. Mamdani describes the situation as follows:

...With every passing year, the search for noncitizens in the army moved from the rank to the file, from the pinnacles of power to those below, literally turning into a witch hunt, and was extended to other organs of the state. The consequence of the squatter uprising of August 1990 was to brand Banyarwanda cattle-herders as refugees, not citizens... [and] to swing the balance of opinion, among both refugee commoners and refugee leaders, decisively against naturalization in the countries of their residence and tilt it in favor of an armed return to Rwanda.<sup>148</sup>

Like the Katangan soldiers in the Shaba wars against Mobutu in the 1970s, the solution the RPF hit upon was an armed return to Rwanda, sponsored by their Ugandan hosts.<sup>149</sup> America's assistance for the RPF was laundered through Uganda: "In 1991, Uganda purchased ten times more U.S. weapons than in the preceding forty years combined."<sup>150</sup> In 1992, donors doubled aid to Museveni's government and "allowed his defense spending to balloon to 48% of Uganda's recurrent budget, compared to 13% for education and 5% for health – even as AIDS was ravaging the country."<sup>151</sup>

When Kagame's RPF moved freely across the Uganda border, they "would cross into Uganda and eat and sleep at the house of President Museveni's military advisor."<sup>152</sup> Museveni provided the RPF "with weapons, medicine, and a rear base from which to operate."<sup>153</sup> In "one of the boldest and largest-scope covert operations ever to spring from the conspiratorial mind," Rwigyema and Kagame "built their guerrilla army in a way no revolutionary group ever had: within the national army of another country... They launched a brilliantly successful covert operation that involved thousands of people and stretched over five years. It brought many young Rwandans into the Ugandan army, where they received rigorous training and saw much combat while suppressing antigovernment insurgencies. They were an army within an army, ready to throw off their disguise at a moments notice."<sup>154</sup>

\* \* \*

Kagame in Rwigyema would invade a Rwanda that had not only been unraveling politically and economically and further destabilized by new massacres in neighboring Burundi.

The RPF had heard<sup>155</sup> from Rwandan visitors that "the Rwandese political system was on the verge of collapse and any strong push from outside would complete the process." The Rwandan government was trying to repatriate refugees, something that "augured ill for the RPF

militants who were now in danger of losing their support among the refugees if the latter felt that their return to Rwanda could be achieved without fighting.” Habyarimana had accepted a French government proposal for multipartyism, “which would deprive the RPF of one of its best public relations points, i.e. that it was fighting a totalitarian single-party dictatorship.” In August 1990, Habyarimana also agreed to allow the refugees to return,<sup>156</sup> removing another central public relations point for the RPF—and adding to the RPF’s fear that their military plan might be defeated politically.

In addition to a solution to his Rwandan refugee problem, the Zaire border offered Museveni economic ideas as well: “For years, he had been dreaming about fostering business between northwestern Zaire and Uganda – much of the lucrative timber, diamonds, and palm oil from that region had to pass through Uganda to get onto the international market, and the burgeoning Ugandan manufacturing sector could peddle its soap, mattresses, and plastics to the millions of Zairians living there.”<sup>157</sup>

Museveni raised Habyarimana’s hopes that Uganda would stop the RPF from invading. He went to Washington in October 1990 and “told the State Department’s Africa chief Herman Cohen that he’d court martial the Rwandan NRA/RPF deserters if they attempted to cross back into Uganda. But a few days after that, he quietly requested France and Belgium not to assist the Rwandan government in repelling the invasion. Cohen writes that he now believes Museveni must have been lying, feigning shock when he knew what was going on all along.”<sup>158</sup>

Of course Museveni was lying.

Museveni and Kagame had grand ambitions.<sup>159</sup>

## NOTES

1. Quoted in Michaela Wrong 2001, p. 206.
2. FRUS vol 23, p. 695. “Memorandum from Edward Hamilton of the NSC Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow).” Washington, July 13, 1966. Subject: Possible Explosion in the Congo.
3. FRUS vol. 23, p. 696. “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Congo.” Washington, July 14, 1966.
4. FRUS vol. 23, p. 697. “Memorandum for the White House Chief of Staff (Moyers).” Washington, July 19, 1966.

5. Kisangani, Emizet. 2012. *Civil Wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo 1960–2010*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, New York. p. 93.
6. FRUS vol. 23, p. 699. “Circular Telegram from the Department of State to All Posts.” Washington, August 2, 1966.
7. FRUS vol. 23, p. 701. “Telegram from Department of State to the Embassy in the Congo.” Washington, August 4, 1966.
8. Kisangani 2012, p. 95.
9. Kisangani 2012, p. 96.
10. FRUS vol. 23, p. 713. “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Congo.” Washington, December 15, 1966.
11. Kisangani 2012, p. 97.
12. Kisangani 2012, p. 98.
13. FRUS vol. 23, p. 743.
14. FRUS vol. 23, p. 736. “Telegram from the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, in Texas.” Washington, July 6, 1967.
15. FRUS vol 23, p. 738. “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Congo.” Washington, July 6, 1967.
16. FRUS vol 23, p. 785. “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Rwanda.” Washington, August 19, 1967.
17. Claimed by Mungul-Diaka, a former aide to Mobutu, in April 1982. Cited by Kwitny 1984, p. 90.
18. Kwitny 1984, p. 89.
19. Kwitny 1984, p. 90. These pretexts include 500 people killed in May 1970 “in reprisal for the killing of a soldier who tried to steal a chicken,” 150 people killed in eastern Kasai on October 6, 1981 “after some villagers challenged some army officers who were dealing illegally in ivory,” and “the almost unexplained killing of thousands more people in other incidents.”
20. Michael G. Schatzberg. 1988. *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. p. 32.
21. Schatzberg 1988, p. 34.
22. Schatzberg 1988, p. 45.
23. Schatzberg 1988, p. 43.
24. Schatzberg 1988, p. 44.
25. Schatzberg 1988, p. 55.
26. Schatzberg 1988, p. 56.
27. Schatzberg 1988, p. 57.
28. Schatzberg 1988, p. 60.
29. Schatzberg 1988, p. 60.
30. Stearns 2011, pp. 117–118.
31. Schatzberg 1988, p. 60.
32. Schatzberg 1988, p. 62.



33. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 174.
34. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 174.
35. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 175.
36. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 177.
37. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 177.
38. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 178.
39. Sean Kelly 1993, p. 93. Kelly states that both Mobutu and Pierre Mulele were forced to join the Belgian “army as punishment for rebellious behavior in school.”
40. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 179.
41. Stearns 2011, p. 115.
42. Kisangani 2012, pp. 102, 108.
43. Kisangani 2012, pp. 106–107.
44. Kwitny 1984, p. 13.
45. Kisangani 2012, p. 107.
46. Cited by Jonathan Kwitny (1984) in *Endless Enemies*, p. 11.
47. Kwitny 1984, p. 14.
48. Kisangani 2012, p. 108.
49. Kwitny 1984, p. 14.
50. Kwitny 1984, pp. 14–15.
51. Kisangani 2012, p. 109.
52. Kisangani 2012, p. 110.
53. Kisangani 2012, p. 110.
54. Schatzberg 1988, p. 66.
55. Quoted in Schatzberg 1988, p. 66.
56. Kisangani 2012, p. 177.
57. Kisangani 2012, p. 178.
58. At the exact moment that the RPF was recruiting them, a point I’ll return to in later chapters.
59. Kisangani 2012, p. 179.
60. Deme 2014, Location 1695.
61. Kisangani (2012, p. 124) estimates that 1200–3000 Banyamulenge who fought in the RPF returned to the Kivus in 1996. Presumably others stayed on in Rwanda.
62. Kisangani 2012, p. 124.
63. Kisangani 2012, p. 125.
64. Cooper 2013, p. 20. Also p. 28: “The Banyamulenge, recruited and trained by foreign PMCs and the RPA, were told they would fight to conquer the Kivus for Rwanda.” Kisangani 2012, p. 126, also notes that one of Rwanda’s objectives was “to make the Kivus its vassal areas in its quest for a buffer zone or annexation.”
65. This list of four countries is from Stearns 2011, p. 52.

66. Turner 2013, p. 183.
67. Turner 2013, p. 183.
68. Wrong 2001, p. 105.
69. Epstein 2017, p. 131.
70. Kisangani 2012, p. 125.
71. Epstein 2017, p. 132.
72. Lemarchand, Rene, and Martin, David. 1972. *Selective Genocide in Burundi*. Minority Rights Group. p. 3.
73. Lemarchand and Martin. 1972, p. 3. and Fontenallaz and Cooper. 2015, p. 10.
74. Fontenallaz and Cooper. 2015, p. 10. There were other massacres of communists in the 1960s that received Western blessing, most notably that in Indonesia.
75. Fontenallaz, Adrien, and Cooper, Tom. 2015. *The Rwandan Patriotic Front, 1990–1994*. Helion & Company, West Midlands, UK. p. 10.
76. See discussion in Lemarchand and Martin 1972. pp. 6–7.
77. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 11.
78. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 12.
79. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 12.
80. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 13.
81. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 13.
82. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 16.
83. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 14.
84. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 14.
85. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 15.
86. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 15.
87. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 18, citing Jeremy Greenland, “Black Racism in Burundi”, New Blackfriars (Oxford), October 1973.
88. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 16.
89. Mamdani 2001, p. 230.
90. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 16. In the spiral of genocidal politics, communities make one another’s nightmares come true. Lemarchand’s phrase, “a gigantic conspiracy aiming at the physical liquidation of all Tutsi” was obviously false in Burundi in 1972, but there was exactly such a conspiracy in Rwanda in 1994.
91. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 18.
92. FRUS 1969–1972, Volume E-5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa. Eds. Joseph Hilts and David C. Humphrey. Washington, Government Printing Office. 2005. Document 219. May 3, 1972. Memorandum from the Deputy Secretary of State (Irwin) to President Nixon, Washington, May 3, 1972.

93. FRUS 1969–1972, Volume E-5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa. Eds. Joseph Hiltz and David C. Humphrey. Washington, Government Printing Office. 2005. Document 220. Memorandum from Melvin H. Levine of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Washington, June 26, 1972.
94. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 20.
95. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 21. Citing Jeremy Greenland.
96. Lemarchand and Martin 1972, p. 18.
97. Rene Lemarchand. 1994. *Burundi: Ethnocide as Discourse and Practice*. Cambridge University Press. p. 116.
98. Lemarchand 1994, p. 117.
99. Lemarchand 1994, p. 122.
100. Lemarchand 1994, p. 123.
101. Lemarchand 1994, p. 123.
102. Lemarchand 1994, p. 124.
103. Lemarchand 1994, p. 126.
104. Lemarchand 1994, p. 126.
105. Lemarchand 1994, p. 127.
106. Lemarchand 1994, p. 127.
107. Fontenallaz and Cooper 2015, p. 10.
108. Fontenallaz and Cooper 2015, pp. 11–12, and 13–14.
109. Fontenallaz and Cooper 2015, p. 12.
110. Quoted in Epstein 2017, p. 47. Citing Ogenga Otunnu, *Crises of Legitimacy and Political Violence in Uganda 1890 to 1979*. Palgrave, 2016. p. 122.
111. Epstein 2017, p. 49.
112. Curtis, Mark. 2004. *Unpeople: Britain's Secret Human Rights Abuses*. Verso Books, London. p. 246.
113. Curtis 2004, p. 247.
114. Curtis 2004, p. 251.
115. Curtis 2004, pp. 252–253.
116. The Tanzania-Uganda War was relatively small, with perhaps 2000–3000 lives lost, and short, about 5 months from the end of 1978 to the beginning of 1979.
117. Mark Curtis. 1995. *The Ambiguities of Power: British Foreign Policy Since 1945*. Zed Books, London. p. 136.
118. Curtis 1995, p. 137. Epstein (2017, p. 64) has argued that the Luwero figures were exaggerated: “Horrible as conditions were, the total number of deaths was likely in the tens, not hundreds of thousands. As in most wars, responsibility lay on both sides.”
119. Curtis 1995, p. 137.

120. Curtis 1995, p. 138.
121. Curtis 1995, p. 139. In his 2004 book *Unpeople*, Curtis (p. 260) tells the story of how Obote approached the British in 1972 seeking support for a restoration to power and a coup against Idi Amin. If returned to power, Obote promised not to adopt nationalization. The Foreign Office didn't reply.
122. Mamdani 2001, p. 161. There were 82,000 in Uganda, 22,000 in Tanzania, 266,000 in Burundi, and 13,000 in Zaire.
123. Mamdani 2001, p. 164.
124. Cooper and Fontanellaz 2015, p. 45.
125. Stearns 2011, pp. 52–53. Stearns's source is *The Monitor* (Kampala), June 1, 1999. Article title: "Congo Rebels Were Museveni's Idea."
126. Tom Cooper and Adrien Fontenellaz. 2015. *Wars and Insurgencies in Uganda 1971–1994*. Hellion and Company, Solihull. pp. 42 and 44.
127. Mamdani 2001, p. 165.
128. Cooper and Fontanellaz 2015, p. 44.
129. Kinzer 2008, p. 50.
130. Cooper and Fontanellaz 2015, p. 45.
131. Cooper and Fontanellaz 2015, p. 44.
132. Cooper and Fontanellaz 2015, p. 47.
133. Cooper and Fontanellaz 2015, p. 58.
134. Cooper and Fontanellaz 2015, p. 59.
135. Italian priest Vittorino Colla told this to historian Ogenga Otunnu in 1988. Ogenga reported it in *Ogenga Otunnu 2000*. "An Historical Analysis of the Invasion by the RPA.", pp. 22–23 in Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrkke, eds., *The Path of a Genocide: From Rwanda to Zaire*. Transaction Publishers. It is quoted in Epstein 2017, pp. 90–91.
136. Epstein 2017, p. 67.
137. Epstein 2017, p. 62.
138. Epstein 2017, p. 114.
139. Cooper and Fontanellaz 2015, p. 44.
140. Prunier 2008, p. 14.
141. Kinzer 2008, p. 56.
142. Mamdani 2001, p. 168.
143. Mamdani 2001, p. 168.
144. Stearns 2011, p. 238.
145. Epstein 2017, p. 103.
146. Epstein 2017, p. 103.
147. Mamdani 2001, describes this squatter uprising and its consequences from pp. 176–182.
148. Mamdani 2001, p. 182.
149. Prunier 1995, pp. 71–72.

150. Epstein 2017, p. 29.
151. Epstein 2017, p. 106.
152. Stearns 2011, p. 238.
153. Stearns 2011, p. 238.
154. Kinzer 2008, pp. 51–52.
155. Prunier 1995, p. 90–93. Throughout my descriptions of the genocide, where possible (and it is not always possible) I make the conservative assumption of trying to cite pro-RPF writers on RPF crimes and pro-government sources on government crimes. Prunier is a writer I would consider to be pro-RPF, as will be discussed at length in a later chapter.
156. Epstein 2017, p. 90.
157. Stearns 2011, p. 52.
158. Epstein 2017, p. 104.
159. Prunier 1995, p. 98.



## Economic Poison: Western Economic Medicine Before the Rwanda Genocide and Congo Wars of the 1990s

Today, readers familiar with the horrors of Belgian colonialism might be surprised to learn that at independence, the Congo was characterized as the “largest *and richest* of the sixteen African states scheduled for independence in 1960.”<sup>1</sup> Stearns<sup>2</sup> describes Leopoldville as having been “sculpted around a tidy, wealthy nucleus of white businessmen surrounded by the burgeoning Congolese elite and flanked by neighborhoods of blue-collar workers in relatively neat housing settlements built by the Belgians,” a place of “functioning administration and expansive infrastructure.” To Stearns, the change to the “riotous commotion of modern-day Kinshasa,” with “no functioning postal service or public transit system,” a 95% informal economy, unpaid civil servants, half the population eating one meal a day, is attributed to natural growth and rural-to-urban migration. But in fact, the urban chaos follows from neocolonialism. As devastating as colonialism was, it was the postcolonial period that destroyed the Congo’s economic prospects.

In an important cable to CIA headquarters in November/1961,<sup>3</sup> Devlin gave an early sense of things to come. The Congolese army was “little more than an armed mob,” there had been a “breakdown of the administrative machinery,” which bore “considerable responsibility for the failure to date of all Congolese govts,” about “52 percent of the male labor force [was] unemployed” in Leopoldville (with worse figures outside the capital), due to “the departure of many white employers after the July mutiny and the gradual breakdown in govt,” and “less than 1 and one half million dollars (at parallel market rate) was allocated for

purpose of relief works program.” The station chief blamed the United Nations for the collapsing state, but the US had the determining voice in the Congo since independence.

Katanga’s secession had been devastating because Katanga was one of the two wealthy provinces, with the best infrastructure and highest investment rates under colonialism. Katanga brought in 47% of tax revenues and 45% of customs duties. The infrastructure had been built not for national integration, but for colonial efficiency—railways moved Katanga’s copper through Portuguese-controlled Angola via Benguela. The mineral company, Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK), was the major financial backer of Katanga’s secession.<sup>4</sup>

The colony covered the current account deficit with Belgium by using foreign exchange earned from the UMHK sales of minerals. World raw materials fell after 1957, reducing the central Congo bank’s reserves. When prices rose again in 1959, the Congo’s trade surplus was around 9 billion francs, but the current account deficit remained 5.6 billion “because of direct capital transfers and invisible outgoings.”<sup>5</sup> Kent (2010) reports that by the spring of 1960, just months before independence, “transfers of capital from the Congo back to Belgium reached six hundred million francs in a single week in March... at the same time of course the influx of capital from Belgium to the Congo was halted.”<sup>6</sup> The Belgian government imposed exchange controls and transfer limits, but the Congo continued to bleed capital.

Belgium also created debt “which it was happy to hand over to the new independent state.”<sup>7</sup> The debt burden was \$875 million at the end of 1959 against revenue of \$245 million, \$50 million of which went to servicing Belgium’s development debt.<sup>8</sup> The Katangan National Bank grew surpluses under secession, with 2.2 billion francs of surplus, or \$323.3 million, in 1962.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond UMHK, Belgium had created a “Portfolio” that included private companies and public corporations managed by Belgians, as well as the government managed Comité Spécial du Katanga (CSK) and the private Compagnie du Katanga (CK). A week before independence, the Belgian government dissolved the CSK, moving one-third of its holdings to the private CK and the other two-thirds to the private Portfolio. While the Portfolio was “eventually” to be transferred to the independent government, the CK’s shares “could now become a bargaining tool.” When the independent government refused to ratify the agreement, the CSK refused to transfer its holdings to the Portfolio.<sup>10</sup>

The British colonial company, Tanganyika concessions, had a 20% interest in UMHK, valued at \$50 million, with \$6 million in revenue, illustrating the interlocking economic patterns of colonialism.<sup>11</sup> This British stake, and the fact that Katangan copper was traded through the London Metal Exchange, made Britain a major opponent of the reintegration of Katanga even after the US had decided this was inevitable.<sup>12</sup>

Katangan copper was 7% of the world market.<sup>13</sup> Prior to independence, Katanga's colonial government shared revenue with the Congo's central colonial government on a 50-50 basis. With revenues at about \$100 million, \$50 million went to Congo and \$50 million to Katanga.<sup>14</sup> Once Katanga declared independence, the UMHK and the private interests ensured that all tax revenues were paid not to the Congo's government, but to Katanga's.

The Katanga budget at independence would be around 2.1 billion francs or \$42 million in receipts and expenditures, with revenues of 1.2 billion francs (\$24 million). The tax on UMHK dividends would be reduced because 1/5 of the yield was paid to the Belgian government in a "classical neocolonial arrangement."<sup>15</sup> This gave the West leverage that it could have used against the Katanga secession, but the West would wait to exert any leverage on Katanga until after the Congolese nationalists were defeated. Once Lumumba was dead, the US did begin to contemplate economic pressure against Katanga's secession, by attacking Katanga's tax revenues and foreign backers, and above all by transferring the Portfolio and the CSK assets to the Congo's government.<sup>16</sup> Belgium worked hard to ensure that control of UMHK royalties and CSK and Portfolio assets remained at Katanga's discretion, even while conceding that they belonged, by right, to the Congolese government.<sup>17</sup>

The Katangan secession meant that "economic control over foreign exchange transactions was not achieved." The result was that "Bribes to secure the issuing of import licences and provide access to foreign exchange soon became part of the corruption carnival unleashed on the Congo... By the time the UN had established the Congo Monetary Council, many imports had not been paid for and commercial arrears in the second half of 1960 amounted to \$24 million."<sup>18</sup> The US provided a "bailout" of \$12.9 million to finance imports in 1961, but attached conditionality—forcing the Monetary Council, "in classic IMF stabilisation fashion, to draw on foreign exchange reserves and restrict imports. Industry, along with Congo consumers, suffered from continued shortages."<sup>19</sup> Blockading the Stanleyville rebels in Province Orientale



“produced a loss of export earnings from coffee and palm products.” The money supply grew, exchange controls failed, and licenses and foreign exchange became the objects of bribes. Endemic corruption in the Congo was established.<sup>20</sup> So was inflation, with money supply rising by a billion francs a month by 1962, prices in Leopoldville rising by 80%, while workers’ wages remained static.<sup>21</sup>

As the West attempted to undo the Katanga secession, the central government (before Mobutu’s second coup) attempted to introduce a bill controlling the marketing of diamonds. Kent cites UN economist Albert Badre that “the diamond bill was defeated in parliament by 3 million Belgian francs provided by Forminiere and the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Bas Congo (BCK),” another subsidiary of the Belgian Societe Generale. The same source points out that in “1959 the Belgian Congo received \$30 million from diamond exports. In 1961 the GOC as an independent state got \$300,000 when production was about the same.”<sup>22</sup> “The balance of payments deficit in 1962 was six billion francs (\$80 million on current account) and even larger than Tshombe’s fortune.”<sup>23</sup>

By 1962, the unresolved secession and the ongoing low-level wars in Katanga and Kasai had begun the collapse of the formal economy. The smuggling economy, which was eventually to overtake the formal economy in the Congo, had begun. Kent writes “with the smuggling, monthly exports excluding Katanga were \$2 million less than in 1961 and \$14 million less than in 1959.”<sup>24</sup> 300 million francs went missing “and allegedly ended up in Tshombe’s hands where some of it was used to pay the gendarmerie in the bush and his band of mercenaries.”<sup>25</sup> By 1962, “government revenues had covered only 20 per cent of its expenditure and even with Katanga reintegrated there was still a shortfall of twice as much as the revenue. The United States was financing a considerable number of imports but there was rampant smuggling. What little exchange controls existed could be evaded by the barter of produce to ensure direct access to foreign currency.”<sup>26</sup> “Almost the entire 1962 crop of Arabica coffee had been allowed to slip out of the country into Uganda and Ruanda-Urundi.”<sup>27</sup>

Kent (2010) discusses agricultural collapse in Kivu: “In 1959 the province was estimated to have over a million livestock, primarily pigs, but in the following three years four-fifths had been lost, with the production of milk reduced by the same amount... before independence 12,000 tons of potatoes and 23,000 tons of other fresh vegetables

were produced which supported some 15,000 small farmers. By 1963, the collapse of organised purchasing and the failure to maintain vehicles and a viable transport system had virtually eliminated the market and reduced production to nothing more than that for local consumption... fishing on Lake Kivu also failed to bring in a small fraction of the pre-independence catch... The spare parts that were needed to get the trawlers and refrigerators of the modern sector back operating were... not easy to obtain with exchange shortages.”<sup>28</sup>

At the end of all of this economic sabotage, the US and Belgium pledged aid totals in the tens of millions, with “no chance of foreign aid offsetting the budget deficit.”<sup>29</sup>

The National Intelligence Estimate for the Congo, made on September 27/1968, described the economic situation. Due to “rebellion, civil disorder, and neglect,” “bridges were destroyed, equipment rusted, channels silted, and roads overgrown; reconstruction and repairs have been slow.” Agricultural production was “less than half the preindependence level, with cotton, rice, and corn from small farms suffering the most.” In minerals, “the output of gold and tin suffered substantial losses. Diamond production was less affected, but a third of the output was smuggled out of the country, thus depriving the government of revenue.” Exports of copper, zinc, and cobalt from Katanga had “been maintained at about preindependence levels,” but the price fell in 1968.

A measure of the damage done to economic progress by the Katanga secession and the war is provided indirectly, in a record of a National Security Council meeting of April 3/1964. There, Undersecretary of State Averell Harriman informed the NSC that “real progress had been made toward restoring economic health. Production of copper and coffee has now almost reached the *level of production prior to the departure of the Belgians.*”<sup>30</sup>

The country’s infrastructure was destroyed in the period of this intervention, never to be rebuilt. The serviceable road network was reduced from 140,000 kilometres in 1959 to 20,000 by the early 1970s.<sup>31</sup> The Congo was an exporter of food before independence and an importer by 1970.<sup>32</sup> Agriculture was 15% of total investment in 1958 and 3.7% in 1972.<sup>33</sup>

Finances, like infrastructure, collapsed. “The country has been kept going only by the infusion of over \$1 billion in economic and military assistance, 60 percent of it from the US much of it through the UN.” Aid fell off in 1968, with only \$2.4 million in military assistance and \$30

million in economic aid, including \$12 million in Food for Peace commodity aid. According to the National Intelligence Estimate, “A program designed to regain the pre-1960 level of economic activity would require massive financing over five years or so” and require \$175 million for internal transport and \$125 million for other public services, if shortages in expertise and skills could be overcome.<sup>34</sup>

Instead, Mobutu and his US patron would turn the Congo into an experimental laboratory for state and economic collapse over the next three decades—after which the entire region exploded.

Two months after Mobutu’s final coup, an internal State Department memo of January 28/1966 suggested that it was “too early to discern where Mobutu will draw the line between corruption and the ‘normal’ use of payments and patronage to facilitate governmental operations.”<sup>35</sup> By March 3/1966, the State Department was characterizing Mobutu’s as a “rudderless administration furnishing even less guidance and authority than heretofore.”<sup>36</sup> A memo of August 13/1968 from the US ambassador to the State Department talks about the “gold bed syndrome” of Mobutu, corruption is “the most serious problem facing Congo at present time,” that Mobutu has “lost touch with reality and economics,” and “risen in souffle like grandiloquence.”<sup>37</sup> Despite this, the same US ambassador (McBride) recommended providing money to Mobutu to intervene in the politics of neighboring Congo-Brazzaville, a move that helped change the regime of that country to a pro-US one.<sup>38</sup>

Once the dictator was secure, the US began to use more subtle means to control Mobutu, “a trend away from slush funds and towards genuine development aid,” as Walt Rostow wrote to President Johnson.<sup>39</sup> The suitcases of cash from Devlin to Mobutu were replaced with loans. “As the loans grow smaller,” Rostow told the president, “the self-help terms grow tougher. This loan is conditioned on a complete monetary and economic stabilization program, administered by the IMF.”<sup>40</sup> Western corporations would reap the rewards of the investments in defeating Congolese nationalism.

But Mobutu won some domestic political credit by seeking economic revenge against Belgium, passing a law called the Bakajika law in 1966 demanding that the old colonial power established its headquarters in the Congo or faced confiscation of its assets. In 1967, he made good on the threat: The famous Union Minière du Haut Katanga, the company that drove the war of secession and Lumumba’s murder, became the state-owned Gecamines. At the point of nationalization, copper output

was 400,000–470,000 tons per year. Cobalt output was between 10,000 and 18,000 tons. Gecamines became the world’s sixth largest mining company, providing 37,000 jobs, contributing 20–30% of state revenues<sup>41</sup> from its annual revenues of \$700–\$900 million, 70% of export receipts, and accounted for 90% of the copper output and 100% of the output of cobalt, zinc, and coal.<sup>42</sup>

The US tried to help Mobutu smooth things with the Belgians. A memo from the Office of Central African Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs of May 17/1966 describes the “basically pro-Belgian” Mobutu regime “undergoing a spasm of nationalist feeling tinged with xenophobia which expresses itself in outcries against foreign influence, insistence that foreign enterprises must become Congolese entities and emphasis on the ‘Congolization’ of government and business.”<sup>43</sup> The US response was to “urge [the Belgians] to continue official Belgian assistance policies and aid levels toward the Congo.”<sup>44</sup> When Mobutu moved toward nationalizing the all-encompassing Belgian mining company the Union Minière in 1967, the US again attempted to broker a deal. The collapse of the Congolese economy continued throughout this early period of Mobutu’s rule, as the US recognized in a memo written for the CIA director on January 27/1967: “Though copper production in Katanga continues, none is exported, and the Congo’s foreign exchange reserves are gone. The lack of foreign exchange to replenish low stocks of mining equipment and spare parts, as well as to meet the payroll, is likely to bring mining operations to a halt fairly soon.”<sup>45</sup> The NSC recommended that the US “promote reason on both sides and sweat it out.”<sup>46</sup>

The nationalized company faced an immediate crisis when its Belgian technicians headed home to the metropole.<sup>47</sup> American businessman Maurice Tempelman obligingly stepped in with a plan to help Mobutu get the minerals to market through an international consortium,<sup>48</sup> but Belgium stood firm and forced Mobutu to a compromise: The Congo got to own the mines but the Belgian corporation provided the management services (and took most of the profits).<sup>49</sup>

Despite the wars that followed independence, from the 1960s through to the early 1970s, the international economic environment was favorable to newly independent African countries: Demand and prices for their commodities were high. Zaire’s economy was growing at around 7% per year in the few years leading up to 1974.<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, infrastructure, agriculture, transportation, and health all stagnated.<sup>51</sup> Mobutu

went in for megaprojects: The Congo's people's historian Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja lists the biggest debacles as an international airport in Gbadolite, the Inga-Shaba power line, and the Maluku steel plant. These megaprojects, which brought no economic benefit, together with arms purchases that brought no military benefit, combined with Mobutu's plunder to see the country's external debt grow to \$5 billion in 1970.<sup>52</sup> At that time of economic growth and high commodity prices, external debt was taken on easily by Third World leaders who assumed the economic picture would continue as it had been.

One project, the famous Inga-Shaba transmission line, may have had a more strategic goal. In this scheme, Shaba (Katanga), which had tremendous hydroelectric potential and most of the copper, was going to receive its electricity from Inga Dam on the Atlantic coast, by way of an incredibly long transmission line. This would enable Mobutu to turn on or off the lights to Katanga, an infrastructural insurance policy against the threat of Katanga secession that Mobutu remembered, and of Katanga rebellions that had just occurred in Shaba I and II.<sup>53</sup> Inga-Shaba was financed by Ex-Im Bank loan guarantees, planned to be built by Manufacturers Hanover, and paid for by Zairian minerals. The transmission line would power an expansion of the mine backed by Maurice Tempelman,<sup>54</sup> Larry Devlin's post-CIA employer from 1974 on.

Kwitny on the whole system: "The major banks have actually held weekly or monthly 'country meetings', where experts at the home office figure out the maximum debt capacity of each overseas country. Loan officers around the empire are then instructed by cable to persuade the governments to borrow up to that capacity. At the height of this activity, during the 1970s, before most countries reached their capacities, bank officers were paid bonuses, and were promoted, based on how much debt they could sign up."<sup>55</sup>

The world recession of 1974 and the OPEC oil price rise of 1973 brought price rises for fuel and food and price drops in Congolese minerals. The economy began to contract at an average rate of 3.5% per year. The Western banks came looking for the money they had eagerly loaned to Mobutu throughout the boom times of the previous decade. The crisis meant good times for investors: American capitalists increased their investments, buying assets at new low prices: from \$64 million in 1974 to a peak of \$151 million in 1977.<sup>56</sup>

All the while, Mobutu was stealing 35% of all revenues for himself, which went up to 40% by the 1990s. Mobutu and his coterie developed

inventive methods of graft, stealing about \$240 million per year from the mining company.<sup>57</sup> At one point, the central bank's governor ordered Gecamines to deposit all earnings directly into the presidential account.<sup>58</sup>

Mobutu's answer to the 1970s crisis was to embark on a program called "Zairianization," a form of nationalization in which even small businesses were taken over by the state and handed over to Mobutu's friends. Under Zairianization, foreign-owned small businesses (owned by Asians and Europeans) were nationalized and turned over to Congolese clients, who eventually, under what was called radicalization, turned these businesses over to the state.<sup>59</sup>

Young and Turner (1985) summarized the results of Zairianization as "dislocation of commercial circuits, shortages, layoffs in Zairianized enterprises, pay arrearages, inflation, tax evasion... abandonment of businesses."<sup>60</sup> Radicalization extended Zairianization's disruptive effects into even more important spheres of the economy—the railway network, textiles, breweries, cement, construction, and others.<sup>61</sup> By the time the measures were reversed, in "retrocession," radicalized state corporations "had incurred debts of \$552 million (including \$100 million in tax arrearages, \$60 million in inter-enterprise debt, \$72 million in domestic bank credit, and \$68 million in debts to foreign banks and suppliers)."<sup>62</sup>

But "by 1975 the regime did not even know how much it owed or to whom; it stopped paying any interest on its commercial bank debt, which amounted to around \$700-800 million."<sup>63</sup>

The US organized a \$60 million bailout for Mobutu in 1975, through PL 480, Ex-Im Bank, and AID credit.<sup>64</sup> The Gulf kingdoms—UAE and Kuwait—loaned several million Zaires, but these were inadequate.<sup>65</sup> Mobutu next approached private banks for finance—Irving Friedman of Citibank, with whom Mobutu had a "personal relationship" and through whom Citibank had loaned Zaire \$164 million, 59% of all of Zaire's private bank borrowing between 1972 and 1974.<sup>66</sup> Friedman and Citibank insisted that the IMF be involved in rescheduling the debt Zaire owed to ninety-eight commercial banks,<sup>67</sup> \$887 million in 1975.<sup>68</sup>

The initial agreement with the IMF in 1976 provided \$47 million, conditional on a 42% devaluation of its currency and austerity measures (a 20% limit on wage increases and a curtailment of government spending).<sup>69</sup> The second agreement, in 1977, provided an additional \$52.2 million standby arrangement and a new loan worth \$32.8 million. Mobutu had held the line on wage increases, but had gone into budget and balance of payments deficits on the spending side.<sup>70</sup> Citibank was

trying to organize a new \$250 million loan when the Shaba I war broke out.<sup>71</sup>

By 1978, Zaire was not paying back its debt, and “delinquent payments amounted to at least \$800 million and were increasing by \$125 million per quarter.”<sup>72</sup> The IMF put Zaire into receivership, with a German banker named Erwin Blumenthal appointed to manage Zaire’s central bank and technical experts from France and Belgium running the Ministry of Finance and the customs agency. New austerity measures were introduced. Thousands of civil servants and teachers were sacked from Zaire’s already understaffed government and education service. The currency was further devalued and salaries were reduced.<sup>73</sup> The restructuring, for all its social and economic destruction, left Mobutu’s corruption untouched and failed to capture 50–75% of foreign exchange revenues.<sup>74</sup> This was partly because the money never got to the treasury. In Nzongola-Ntalaja’s words, it was estimated that a sum of \$40–60 million was generated each month from mining and petroleum revenues. And yet, by 24 July 1996, the government... claimed to have raised less than \$150 million from the 1996 budget exercise, two-thirds of which supposedly came from customs revenue.

Mobutu dealt with budget shortfalls by printing money, which caused hyperinflation.<sup>75</sup> He also subverted the IMF project with deficit financing, using political leverage gained by helping the US in Angola, participation in which cost Mobutu access to the important Benguela railway line through Angola for exports.<sup>76</sup> Blumenthal ended up leaving “in disgust” in 1979.<sup>77</sup> The economy (predictably) shrunk during the period of IMF restructuring—by 6.1% in 1975, by 4.3% in 1976, 1.9% in 1977, and again in 1978 and 1979.<sup>78</sup> Young and Turner cite a study that found the GDP in 1980 was the same as in 1959, with twice the population.<sup>79</sup>

Mobutu’s relations with the IMF<sup>80</sup> provide a case study in the political nature of debt in African countries. Mobutu could ignore IMF dictates, use deficit financing, subvert IMF receivership, and survive because “the warm spot which Mobutu had earned over the years, and fears of an anti-Western alternative regime, were more important than the money owed.”<sup>81</sup> All the IMF restructuring did was to ensure that Mobutu and those around him were the only beneficiaries of his financial mismanagement, and that none of the embezzled millions would go toward any real development objectives.

In 1978, the IMF had set up a headquarters inside Zaire’s central bank.<sup>82</sup> Jonathan Kwitny described the arrangement as: “The IMF team

will make sure that any money Zaire gets through sale of its resources is sent back out again to repay the Western bankers. Enough spare parts and fuel will be allowed into maintain the mining industry. And Zairian officials will be allowed to skim off enough in graft to keep them cooperative... much of the money paid for Zairian minerals never even arrives in Zaire except as a bookkeeping entry.”<sup>83</sup> Mobutu had run the debt up to \$240 per capita in a country where per capita income was \$127.<sup>84</sup> The sale of the country’s minerals didn’t even pay for interest on the debt, which kept growing as the minerals flowed out. The global effects of IMF-sponsored Third World lending by the banks have been studied and discussed: US banks made higher profits on their Third World loans than they did on domestic ones; divestment in US industry accelerated in this period as well.<sup>85</sup> The US loans, making up perhaps 10% of the debt,<sup>86</sup> were guaranteed by the US Ex-Im Bank,<sup>87</sup> and in general went to pay Western companies to set up comparatively useless infrastructure projects. One group of companies, responsible for about one-third of Zaire’s debt at the time, was connected to then-French president, Valery Giscard d’Estaing, and his family. Another third of the debt was held by Belgium and its Societe General du Belgique. The World Bank financed projects from which Western corporations like Unilever and the Belgian Compagnie Sucriere got tens of millions of dollars to improve infrastructure, leaving the people of Zaire on the hook for the loans.<sup>88</sup> The Western companies profited, African debts grew, the minerals flowed, and the country starved.<sup>89</sup> A 1980 health survey of 20,000 villagers found that 80% suffered from preventable diseases like worms, malaria, measles, whooping cough, and malnutrition.<sup>90</sup> The country’s health budget was \$6 million that year; debt payments, \$500 million.<sup>91</sup>

Kwitny reported on the daily grind of villagers trying to make a living in Mobutu’s Zaire. Making perhaps \$200–400 per year as a laborer; offered a government-guaranteed price of \$400 for an annual harvest of about 800 kg of coffee beans but forced to sell to a trader for more like \$300, and having to pay \$30–50 per child for ineffective private education at the village school.<sup>92</sup> The multinationals had exclusive rights to the diamonds: the Belgian MIBA, Tempelsman’s company, and De Beers, so artisanal mining was illegal, and enforced with incidents like the Mbuji-Mayi massacre (which actually took place outside of that town on the Sankuru River, a tributary of the Kasai River) in Kasai in July 1979, during which soldiers open fired on artisanal miners scratching in the dirt in hopes of finding a diamond to sell for a tiny fraction of its market



value.<sup>93</sup> Human rights organizations named 97 people who died in the massacre.<sup>94</sup> Kwitny also documented the smuggling economy: from British and Portuguese expatriates trading in black market cash, smuggling the little bit of US hard currency out of the country, to diamonds and coffee moving out through Congo-Brazzaville such that that country became, without any diamond deposits, one of the world's five largest diamond exporters.<sup>95</sup>

Mobutu personally sold Zaire's minerals: 200 tons of cobalt here and 10,000 tons of copper there; he imported half the country's fertilizer and about 100 jeeps one year for his own farm.<sup>96</sup> If the economic arrangements by which Mobutu arranged deals for himself and his friends seemed "untoward," Kwitny points out, "it's only fair to note that Zaire's main model in modern government was Belgium, where the king is allowed all sorts of secret control over semi-monopolistic private businesses, many of which owned the natural resources of Zaire throughout its colonial history."<sup>97</sup>

Mobutu also recycled colonial power structures—his army acted much like the Belgian Force Publique, and Mobutu even imposed a compulsory labor program, called *salongo*.<sup>98</sup> Mobutu told his soldiers, "you have guns; you don't need a salary."<sup>99</sup> And soldiers took him up on the suggestion, extorting money at roadblocks and stealing from businesses.<sup>100</sup>

The legacy of the restructuring was a shrunken economy with a weaker public sector and reduced employment. From 1972 to 1992, government social spending went from 17% of the budget to 0%. Government spending on the presidency went from 28 to 95%.<sup>101</sup> The principal (and inadequate) survival strategies for the population were a turn to the informal economy and to smuggling. Anthropologist Janet MacGaffey reported that public servants in 1983 had one-fifth of their 1975 purchasing power from their salaries, with a monthly salary for a mid-level civil servant about one-fourth a monthly food budget for a family of six. Prices were 46 times higher in 1979 than in 1969.<sup>102</sup> By the 1980s, only one million of the four-million labor force earned any wage in the formal economy.<sup>103</sup> A 1986 survey of households in Kinshasa showed that 25% of income came from wages and salaries, and 29% from unknown, primarily illicit sources.<sup>104</sup> Another survival strategy was flight, as educated people tried to find jobs abroad and keep their families afloat through remittances.<sup>105</sup> Mainly, however, people did without.

In 1983, as industrial mining collapsed, Mobutu officially liberalized the mining sector, legalizing artisanal mining. This liberalization sent 30% of young men seeking work in the mines (leaving the other collapsing sectors).<sup>106</sup>

The share of revenue brought in by the state mining company began to decline in the 1970s and did not stop for decades: From 50% of state revenue in 1970, it was estimated to bring in 19% in 1980–1987, with a short spike in the late 1980s back to 34%, and then going down to virtually zero by 1993. This tracked production: The Congo was producing 500,000 t of copper at independence. Production was down to 50,000 t in 1993 and 25,000 t in 1995.<sup>107,108</sup> A major contribution to this drop came in September 1990, when Kamoto Mine, known as “Gecamines’s star performer,” collapsed.<sup>109</sup> The mines were privatized in 1995—Canadian, Belgian, and Australian mining companies picked up Congolese mining assets.<sup>110</sup>

Artisanal production of diamonds was legalized and prices were deregulated. The smuggling economy expanded. In South Kivu’s Fizi territory, gold was smuggled out from Kigoma to Tanzania.<sup>111</sup> From the 1970s, 30–60% of the coffee crop was smuggled or fraudulently exported, costing Zaire \$350 million.<sup>112</sup> In 1979, smuggled diamonds equaled 68% of official exports, a loss of \$59 million.<sup>113</sup> By 1976, 90% of ivory was smuggled.<sup>114</sup> In 1985, an estimated 8969 kg of cobalt was smuggled out.<sup>115</sup> From state-regulated copper, Zaire’s economic base changed in the 1980s to smuggled diamonds and other goods.<sup>116</sup> But the diamond economy, which in Renton, Seddon and Zelig’s words, “was hand-dug in privately owned plots and frequently sold through criminal networks that made use of the pre-existing informal economy,”<sup>117</sup> could never lead to development.

The whole economy suffered a 40% contraction from 1990 to 1994 in GDP.<sup>118</sup> Between 1989 and 1996, the country suffered continuous economic degrowth. 60% of population (27 million) were undernourished. Inflation was 5000%.<sup>119</sup> By 1990, 80% of agricultural production was subsistence and agriculture generated just 6% of exports.<sup>120</sup> Per capita production across all sectors shrank by 65% by official estimates in the 1974–1993 period.<sup>121</sup> After decades of this, the currency became devalued beyond any reason, as inflation “came to strangle the entire Zairian economy” for the early 1990s show: 1989: 56%; 1990: 233%; 1991: 3642–4130%; 1992: 2990%; 1993: 4650%; 1994: 9800%.<sup>122,123</sup> The “dollarization” of the economy followed, since using Zaire’s currency

became untenable. Army soldiers went on famous pillages in 1991 and 1993, looting from civilians and businesses.<sup>124</sup>

What arose in the shadow of this collapse was a different kind of economy. Because of the arbitrary nature of Mobutu's economic patronage, officials in state posts had an incentive to try to loot as quickly as possible, before Mobutu changed his mind.<sup>125</sup> In Kisangani, public transport was replaced by a system of taxi-bikes. Teachers collected monthly contributions from parents. Private pharmacies sold medicine stolen from public hospitals. Exchange was done on the street by informal banking systems.<sup>126</sup> The upper echelons of the army smuggled fuel and copper and rented soldiers out as private security.<sup>127</sup>

The collapse of Zaire's economy under Mobutu was designed, negotiated, and guaranteed by American institutions, from the banks that made the loans to the corporations who picked up the assets to the spies and the diplomats who protected Mobutu through the conflicts generated by his economic destruction.<sup>128</sup>

Zaire's decay was key to the collapse of the whole region. Nzongola-Ntalaja believes that "the Congo under a capable and responsible government could have stopped the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda."<sup>129</sup> Given the Congo's size and population, and the strong connections between the countries, this is a justifiable belief. Instead, as Mobutu's rule extended into the 1990s, "the weak Congolese state provided the opportunity for any warlord to march toward Kinshasa and take power."<sup>130</sup> Mobutu's control over the army was lost as Zairian officers carved up their military equipment stockpile for private sale.<sup>131</sup>

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Western advice, loans, and markets also drove Rwanda's economy to collapse. From 1977, the price of Rwanda's principal export, coffee, began to fall, until it collapsed outright in 1986, and fell by another 50% in 1989.<sup>132</sup> Tin mining, an important secondary commodity for the economy, collapsed when the price of tin collapsed between 1984 and 1986.<sup>133</sup>

In 1987, Rwanda had a per capita income of \$300, like China at \$310.<sup>134</sup> In 1989, under Western austerity program, the government budget was cut by 40%—mostly social services.<sup>135</sup>

The 1989 budget cut could not have come at a worse time: It was imposed in a time of drought and actual famine. Hundreds of peasants starved; thousands more fled, mainly to become refugees in Tanzania.<sup>136</sup>

In a land grab by the government and funded by the World Bank, called the Gebeka project, “Gishwati forest, one of the last primary growth forests in Rwanda, was savagely logged to clear land which was then used to graze exotic cattle from Europe in order to start a dairy business.”<sup>137</sup>

The IMF approved a US\$41 million loan in 1991. Rwandan government introduced an 8% income tax (“solidarity tax”) in May 1991 to help pay the bankers. But because austerity doesn’t work, it caused a degrowth spiral impossible to get out of, such that by the middle of the year the deficit was \$188 million.<sup>138</sup> The structural adjustment program (SAP) imposed on the government<sup>139</sup> forced a 40% devaluation in 1990 of the currency, followed by another 14.9% devaluation in 1992. Privatizations in 1993 included Electrogaz with 3400 employees. The privatized company promptly “raised electricity rates, fired 2,000 workers from the politically padded payrolls and cut off power from those who did not pay, including government departments.” “It was horse medicine and it could possibly have worked if it had been used ten years before,” Prunier writes (raising the question of “working” for whom?) but “between the coffee price decline and the war economy crisis, the SAP merely contributed to weakening further an already exhausted economy.”<sup>140</sup>

After the structural adjustment, “much of Rwanda’s sovereignty was now ‘invested in the Paris club of creditor nations, in the European Community, and in the World Bank’ (Waller 1993, p. 27). Rwanda had been sold.”<sup>141</sup>

Exports fell from 9.2 billion Rw francs in 1990 to 8.9 billion in 1992. Imports increased from 23 billion to 38 billion Rw francs. Facing a balance of payments deficit, the Rwandan government spent its foreign currency reserves. Once Rwanda was invaded from Uganda by the RPF in 1990, the government spent what little hard currency it had on weapons, and borrowed to purchase more. The Ministry of Defense budget grew from 3.15 billion in 1990 to 8.88 billion to 1993.

From a reserve of \$110 million in 1991, the government was down to \$56.7 million in 1993. The foreign debt grew from \$452.2 million in 1986 to \$736.2 million in 1990, and to \$1 billion in 1993. The global public debt grew from 6.678 billion Rw francs in 1990 to 13.702 billion Rw francs in 1992. The Rwandan franc began to collapse like the Zairian currency had: 1987-79.7, 1990-82.6, 1991-125.1, 1992-133.3,

1993-144.0. By 1993, it was trading at a black market rate of 182 francs/dollar (Prunier 1995, p. 159).

James K. Gasana was briefly Agriculture Minister (1990–1992), then Minister of Defense (1992–1993), in Rwanda, but he was driven out of the country before the genocide.

Gasana prepared some analyses of the famine of the late 1980s–early 1990s in Rwanda, in which the average caloric intake dropped below the survival level of 2100 down to 1900. In an article from exile, Gasana analyzed communes where Hutu villagers committed violence against Tutsi villagers in 1991–1992 during the famine, and found a clear connection: “no violence occurred in communes where average food energy was over 1,500 calories per person, per day.”<sup>142</sup>

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136. Prunier 1995, p. 87.
137. Prunier 1995, p. 88.
138. Prunier 1995, p. 114.
139. Prunier says “the government carried out unperturbed the SAP”.
140. Prunier 1995, p. 160.



141. Pottier 2002, p. 22.
142. Gasana, J. K. 2002. "Remember Rwanda?" World Watch Magazine September/October 2002. World Watch Institute, Washington, DC. <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/524>. Retrieved February 13, 2018.



## CHAPTER 9

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# The Peacekeeper and the Warlord

The preparations were made. Paul Kagame and Fred Rwigyema had built their army within the Ugandan army. They had forged a guerrilla strategy based on a modified version of Maoist and Leninist doctrine: It featured the political education of cadres but not the progressive or redistributive content. They also had learned and practiced US-based counterinsurgency doctrine in Uganda's north, "draining the swamp," clearing villages and creating free-fire zones, assassinating enemy leaders like David Oyite-Ojok who died in a helicopter crash, and using psychological warfare and counterintelligence to deadly effect.<sup>1</sup>

In 1989, Fred Rwigyema was selected by Museveni to attend an elite one-year military officers' training course at Ft. Leavenworth in Kansas, "one of the world's most sought-after courses in the art of military command. Students come from the top ranks of the world's armies, and once at Ft. Leavenworth, they study everything from field tactics to human rights law."<sup>2</sup> Kagame went in his place, so that Rwigyema could continue to prepare the invasion of Rwanda. "Almost every day, [Kagame] spoke with Fred by telephone. From opposite sides of the globe, the two of them orchestrated the final phase of their plot."<sup>3</sup> Having decided on the date, Kagame "went to his American commander and told him he was quitting the staff college to return home... slowly the Americans came to understand that they could not dissuade him. One finally asked whether there was anything they could do for him. He replied that he would dearly like to take with him a set of textbooks he was using, which

among them covered almost every aspect of military science. No one objected. Those books, Kagame later said, ‘were very useful during our war.’”<sup>4</sup>

Kagame’s calls to Rwigyema from Kansas plotting the invasion of Rwanda were likely monitored by his US hosts. They provided assistance to Kagame well beyond a few textbooks.

And so, “beginning on September 30, trucks packed with soldiers began rolling into Ankole district in southwest Uganda. At outposts near the Rwandan border, they unloaded crates of recoilless rifles, machine guns, mortars, rocket launchers, and even several Soviet-made light automatic cannons, all of which they had taken from armories in Uganda. They packed these onto their trucks and jeeps – also appropriated from the Ugandan army – and then... ripped the Ugandan insignias off their uniforms.”<sup>5</sup>

But RPF had a logistics problem: “whereas the NRA could rely for food on Ugandan villagers... the RPF could not do the same in Rwanda. Most Hutu peasants were terrified of the Tutsi refugee warriors, and many of Rwanda’s internal Tutsis were wary of them too, fearing, correctly, that RPF aggression would provoke Hutu reprisals against all Tutsis. The RPF therefore needed to bring their provisions with them.”<sup>6</sup>

When a Ugandan government administrator arrived in the southern ranching lands on the border with Rwanda in 1990, he found “new villages, populated entirely by Tutsi refugees, had arisen almost overnight. Most of the men were occupied in slaughtering animals and smoking the meat in giant outdoor ovens.”<sup>7</sup> The RPF were packing their lunchboxes for the invasion of Rwanda, with beef provided “unknowingly, unwillingly, and at gunpoint, by innocent Ugandans.”<sup>8</sup>

After three days of advancing, the RPF learned that the Rwandan government had called for French help, and it was on the way—Kagame was still in the United States. Fred Rwigyema had a meeting with comrades and rivals Chris Bunyenyezi and Peter Bayingana, as well as Stephen Nduguta. Bunyenyezi and Bayingana “wanted power and wanted it quickly, without giving much thought to the problems they would encounter later,” while Rwigyema “was keenly aware of the deadly potential of the Hutu-Tutsi identity split and wanted to proceed slowly, politicize the Hutu peasantry, wait for the government to make mistakes, and gradually get the rural masses on his side.” According to Nduguta, “the argument became heated, and Bayingana drew out his pistol and shot Rwigyema in the head.” Nduguta reported back to Museveni, who sent his brother Salim Saleh to Rwanda to investigate. Saleh “found

Rwigyema's body in a swamp, buried it properly, arrested the two culprits, and brought them back to Uganda for interrogation and eventual execution."<sup>9</sup> "These events," Prunier wrote, "are still vividly present in the minds of most Rwandese today, and many friends of Rwigyema now living in exile believe that the hapless Bayingana and Bunyenyezi were manipulated in order to murder their leader... many are the former members of the RPF who remain persuaded that Rwigyema's murder was a carefully contrived plot to eliminate a brilliant man whose combination of royal legitimacy and revolutionary charisma made him a probably future national leader."<sup>10</sup>

Who in the RPF benefited from Rwigyema's death? Kagame quickly arrived from the US to take over Rwigyema's command.<sup>11</sup> His leadership style and battle plan were different from Rwigyema's charisma and plan to "get the masses on his side."

RPF veteran and now Rwandan exile Abdul Ruzibiza wrote that "Kagame found himself at the head of an army that did not accept him. He maintained his rule through terror: assassinations, imprisonments, executions."<sup>12</sup>

Kagame had yet another problem: The Rwandan government was neither as weak nor as unpopular as the RPF had believed. For all the decay that they had observed, the famine, the social service cuts and austerity, and the pressure for multiparty democracy, "Habyarimana would probably have won an honest democratic election without too much trouble as late as early 1991."<sup>13</sup>

If he had stayed on the northern plain and fought it out, Kagame would have lost. Kagame led his men up into the mountains of the Virunga National Park, which spans the Congo (Zaire), Rwanda, and Uganda and prepared a strategy—perhaps with his US textbooks, but also with more concrete help from his US patron.

Kagame grew his army from 5000 soldiers in 1991 to 12,000 by the end of 1992, to 25,000 by 1994.<sup>14</sup> With soldiers recruited from the diaspora and a powerful fundraising network,<sup>15</sup> he built up his organization and cadre. But "resources obtained from the Diaspora could never have been sufficient to cover the needs of an entire army in regards of arms and ammunition. This is where Ugandan support was as important – not only in regards of provision of rear bases for political and military apparatus, but in regards of provision of Entebbe IAP as a place for delivery of equipment purchased abroad... much of surplus Ugandan stocks 'mysteriously disappeared' - in RPA's depots."<sup>16</sup>

Prunier wrote about how this worked: “NRA (National Resistance Army, or the Ugandan military) target practice consumed disproportionately high quantities of ammunition, supplies vanished from military stores and later, when the World Bank was pressing for drastic reductions in NRA troop numbers, the surplus weapons left idle by demobilisation found their way south.”<sup>17</sup> Note that at this time, 60% of Uganda’s foreign currency resources came from foreign aid.<sup>18</sup> One observer wrote that “the World Bank contributed unwittingly to the RPF victory in the Rwandese civil war.”<sup>19</sup>

Uganda didn’t just provision the equipment: “All the new recruits were sent to boot camps – such like Nakivale in Uganda – for at least three weeks, but often up to three months, before being deployed to the front lines.”<sup>20</sup> An RPF organizer noted “Our most important support was our relationship with each and every soldier in the Ugandan army... we had spent years living together and fighting together. When we needed to slip out of Rwanda, we would always find an army officer who would say, ‘Cross here. Pass here.’ At the time Museveni was saying he was not helping us, they were letting us pass.”<sup>21</sup>

“I remember that UN mission on the border,” Museveni reflected later. “We manoeuvred ways to get around it.”<sup>22</sup>

When Kagame finally brought his men down from the mountains in January of 1991, he attacked Ruhengeri, which his biographer Kinzer describes as “the main provincial capital in northern Rwanda and a stronghold of Hutu militancy,” where an attack would send “shock waves across Rwanda.” Ruhengeri had a prison and was Rwanda’s breadbasket: Freeing the prisoners and taking a hungry country’s grain supply would give Kagame tremendous power. “The first targets to fall were grain warehouses, which were full of maize flour and other products the hungry RPF was eager to seize. Guerrillas also easily captured a government-owned farm and made off with several head of cattle; Kagame wanted milk and meat for his many malnourished comrades.”<sup>23</sup> Among the freed prisoners was Colonel Theoneste Lizinde, “a notorious torturer and former chief of Habyarimana’s secret police who had been in jail since attempting a coup... years earlier.”<sup>24</sup> Lizinde had attempted to overthrow Habyarimana along with Alexis Kanyarengwe in 1980. Kanyarengwe fled; Lizinde was caught. Kanyarengwe joined the RPF before the invasion; Lizinde had to wait to be rescued. Along with Seth Sendashonga, Lizinde and Kanyarengwe were put forward as Hutu faces to the RPF, to show that the RPF was a multiethnic movement and not merely an instrument of Tutsi domination.

But Kagame was planning a conquest, not a liberation: “there were in Rwanda no liberated zones where alternate modes of governance were introduced under the benevolent eye of a new administration... no effort to reach out to mobilize peasants politically... not even an effort to establish administrative structures in the areas over which the RPF had military control.”<sup>25</sup> Kagame brought back the hated custom of using villagers as porters and killed them at the end. After the battle in Ruhengeri, the RPF split into two groups, one heading to Sabyinyo and the other to Gahinga (both volcanoes). “Throughout their journey, the RPF massacred civilians, forcing people to transport their baggage before executing them. Not one porter survived.”<sup>26</sup>

Despite occasional gestures to nationalist inclusion, Kagame’s RPF were self-consciously a Tutsi force and were seen as such. This presented a problem of geography: Kagame’s Tutsi forces were invading from the north, which had a very small Tutsi minority. Most of the Tutsi population of Rwanda, though still a minority, were concentrated in the south. The north-south divide in Rwandan politics was as important as the Hutu-Tutsi divide. In the south, Hutus and Tutsis were more likely to intermarry, to live and work closely together. Habyarimana’s Rwanda, the Rwanda Kagame was invading, was run by a northern elite—southern Hutu and Tutsi both felt excluded from power in the capital. The RPF were invading the northern Rwandan elite’s home turf. The RPF found no friends there. Instead, they “drained the swamp,” killed thousands, and displaced hundreds of thousands, who fled to the south as internal refugees of their invasion.

Their methods included mass killings at meetings, in which “local residents, including entire families, were called to community meetings, invited to receive information about ‘peace’, ‘security’, or ‘food distribution’ issues. Once a crowd had assembled, it was assaulted through sudden sustained gunfire; or locked in buildings into which hand-grenades were thrown; systematically killed with manual instruments; or killed in large numbers by other means,”<sup>27</sup> house-to-house killings, pursuit of fleeing populations into swamps. The RPF would suspend operations, inviting “the hidden families to return home in peace. Shortly thereafter the villages are attacked and returnees are killed.”<sup>28</sup> Asylum seekers were “systematically intercepted, ambushed, and killed in significant numbers.”<sup>29</sup> Returnees invited to come home were killed. The RPF killed the sick and the elderly.<sup>30</sup>

An RPF unit called Alpha Mobile<sup>31</sup> slaughtered hundreds of villagers consolidating their hold in Byumba. “Most of the dead bodies were thrown in the Base river, while others were laid out on the Place du Marche of Base (village).”<sup>32</sup> Then, units from the 59th mobile arrived and questioned why the bodies had been left to decompose out in the open. So troops from Alpha assembled a group of villagers, forced them to dig graves for the dead bodies, and then killed them too.<sup>33</sup>

The RPF committed an even bigger massacre at a stadium in Byumba on April 23, 1994, ordering thousands to assemble in the center of the stadium and killing everyone assembled, around 2500 people. The RPF burned the bodies.<sup>34</sup>

Based on Gersony’s investigations, “the vast majority of men, women, and children killed in these actions were targeted through the pure chance of being caught by the RPF. No vetting process or attempt to establish the complicity of the victims in the April 1994 massacres of the Tutsis was reported.”<sup>35</sup> The estimated number killed? 10,000 per month from April/May through to July.<sup>36</sup> Smaller than what the militias were doing to Tutsi civilians, definitely—but the numbers should be added, not balanced against one another.

The territories conquered by the RPF were thus emptied of their populations, fleeing to refugee camps outside the RPF zone.<sup>37</sup>

The UN commander, Romeo Dallaire, described one such camp, which he visited in 1993 en route to meet Kagame in Mulindi: “We smelled the camp before we saw it, a toxic mixture of feces, urine, vomit and death. A forest of blue plastic tarps covered an entire hillside where 60,000 displaced persons from the demilitarized zone and the RPF sector were tightly packed into a few square kilometres... The refugees huddled around small open fires, silent, ghost-like throng that followed us listlessly with their eyes as we picked our way gingerly through the filth of the camp... Most shocking of all was the sight of an old woman lying alone, quietly waiting to die.”<sup>38</sup> He later drove past the villages “that had been deserted by the displaced persons we had seen in the camp... driven out by fighting in 1990, and their fields and farms were beginning to be reclaimed by the luxuriant native plants and wildflowers.”<sup>39</sup> Despite being so moved, Dallaire did not seem to realize that he was looking at people displaced by the RPF, and by Kagame, who he had just before praised as perhaps “the Napoleon of Africa.”<sup>40</sup>

The RPF’s strategy saddled the Rwandan government, its enemy, with a growing refugee crisis: “there were about 100,000 displaced persons

in camps directly to the south” of the RPF-occupied area in 1991, and “later, in early 1992, when the RPF pushed its advantage still further in the area around Byumba, even more peasants ran away from them, the number of displaced reaching to around 300,000.”<sup>41</sup>

By February 1993, there were 600,000 internally displaced and by March, 860,000.<sup>42</sup> While Prunier portrays this as an accident, the hapless RPF advancing to liberate Rwandans and the Hutus fleeing, the RPF told Dallaire in Mulindi in 2003 that they did not want the refugees in their zone. Dallaire wanted the zone de-mined and resettled. Bizimungu told him that “the neutral international force had to keep the area clear and closed.” Dallaire came to believe that the RPF’s reasoning “had less to do with security and more to do with the resettlement ambitions of Tutsi refugees then in Uganda.”<sup>43</sup>

Kagame was interested in land in Rwanda, where every bit of land was already spoken for. The massacres of 1994 and the post-genocide world where everyone was presumed guilty of genocide would free up land for the Ugandan and Congolese returnees. So, too, would the invasion of Congo.

Prunier “visited the RPF-held areas about three months after the ‘February war’ and found them eerily empty of life. RPF soldiers had not looted anything and houses could be seen with chairs still set around a table and mouldy food on the plates where people had fled so hurriedly as not to eat their last meal. The RPF admitted that only 1,800 Hutu peasants were left in an area which had a population of 800,000 before the war.”<sup>44</sup> The RPF liberators had no compunctions about killing and starving the people they were liberating. They occupied and depopulated some of the most agriculturally productive areas of Rwanda and had also planted landmines along key transportation routes from Tanzania, bringing about economic collapse. A potential famine was only forestalled in 1993 by an airlift by the World Food Programme.<sup>45</sup>

Ordinary Rwandans who lived through the RPF invasion of the north provided one researcher<sup>46</sup> with “a picture of daily life suddenly transformed by civil war... the overall picture that emerges from these accounts is multiple vectors of violence... RPF and FAR war crimes; RPF strikes; and violence targeted at Tutsi residents as well as a small, but not insignificant, number of Hutu.”<sup>47</sup>

After a period of negotiations (see below), the RPF renewed their military offensive on February 8, 1993, and stopped 30 km outside of Kigali. The French military had intervened in support of the



government<sup>48</sup> and the RPF did not want to confront French forces. They also had finally learned that Habyarimana's government had popular support, and did not want to battle in Kigali where "Everybody, including the most resolute opponents [of the government], was prepared to fight."<sup>49</sup>

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To understand the nature of the disorder in the Rwandan military as it faced the RPF, consider the rise and fall of Defense Minister James Gasana. Habyarimana favored officers from the northern part of Rwanda where he was from (the part that came to be controlled, by 1993, by the RPF). People from southern Rwanda were so alienated from the army that some called it a "Northerners' war." In 1992, there were mutinies and mass defections: Battalions were under strength by an average of 50%, including even elite units.<sup>50</sup> Rwanda couldn't get more heavy weapons thanks to Dallaire's one-sided enforcement of the arms embargo, but even if it could, the personnel to operate it weren't in place.<sup>51</sup> When James Gasana became defense minister in April 1992, he appointed a new chief of staff (Nsabimana), changed the recruitment and promotions policy to reduce nepotism and improve morale, and managed to stem the tide of desertions. He was rewarded with death threats and assassination attempts by the divided ruling class. He ended up having to flee the country in July of 1993.

Still, more complexity is added when considering this collapsing military next to the police force and the civilian militias. The police force (gendarmerie) faced another set of problems: unable to get nonlethal weapons or riot gear and unable by the end to pay salaries; the gendarmerie were also prevented from receiving backup from the military (again) by Dallaire's desire to ensure that Rwandan government forces in the city didn't overmatch Kagame's 600-man battalion installed in the center of Kigali.

The army and police were thus unable to fulfill the functions for which they had prepared. These were never conceived to be tough fighting forces: If a real fight ever broke out, Habyarimana expected his French patron to come to the rescue (the way the French and Americans rescued Mobutu repeatedly).

Day to day, the police played an important role in surveillance and population control, but Rwanda had a unique system of surveillance and control going back to colonial, and perhaps precolonial, times, with centralized governance and orders being passed down from Kigali to the

hills and information being passed back up to the capital. In small villages where everyone could be gathered together by the burgomaster, there was nowhere to hide and harsh consequences for dissidence. This was not a “culture of obedience” as writers have claimed,<sup>52</sup> but a system of control, the last remaining instrument of control for the elites in Kigali as the army and police collapsed. It was to this system that they turned, using it as the basis to recruit and organize militias to conduct massacres. These militias were no army: They were not equipped or trained to fight anyone who was fighting back. They were an instrument for coercing labor, which was why the organizers of the genocide constantly exhorted people to kill by calling the killing “work.”

These militias could easily have been stopped by any army: a UN or other Western force, the RPF, or the Rwandan army. But the Rwandan army and RPF were busy fighting each other, and the UN under Dallaire was mainly concerned with ensuring that the RPF could fight without having to worry about a Western force entering the picture and possibly saving the Rwandan government. The RPF negotiated away the French, the UN disarmed the army, and so the civilian network ended up with a free hand to massacre, in the collapse. The militias were, precisely, a “well-organized killing force”<sup>53</sup>—not a fighting force, but a killing force. This civilian network was also why the militarily defeated Rwandan elites could say “they have the guns, but we have the population,” as a point of negotiation.<sup>54</sup>

The massacres of Rwandan Tutsis were organized under the pretext of “civil defense,” adopting “the habits of civil war that first surfaced in 1960” and visiting “massacres and pogroms upon the Tutsi civilian population.”<sup>55</sup> The Tutsi civilian population were an easier target than the RPF for untrained civilians who were afraid of the invaders and subjected to war propaganda.<sup>56</sup> The authors of the massacres found recruits among the hundreds of thousands of Hutu peasants displaced from now RPF-held northern areas. They also recruited among Hutu refugees from Burundi who had arrived fleeing attacks by the military in that country.

The particular form of warfare that Kagame mastered is called “infiltration warfare.” Later, in 1996, Kagame would go on to use the same methods in Zaire, to overthrow Mobutu: “Exploiting the heat, humidity and dense vegetation surrounding populous centres, [Kagame’s troops] would infiltrate a town that was the target of attack – often in full daylight and disguised as civilians, carrying their weapons in rags, or

strapping them onto bicycles – while carefully reconnoitring the area. The infiltrators would then gather at an assigned point ahead of an attack and the defenders would unexpectedly find themselves surrounded, inside and out.”<sup>57</sup> Countermeasures against this strategy depended on early detection of the infiltrators or on organizing very strong defenses once the attack was triggered. As the Rwandan state collapsed and the militias took over the streets, the militias’ countermeasures involved setting up roadblocks everywhere, stopping and then killing every possible infiltrator. The main method of killing in the Rwandan genocide—killing civilians at roadblocks—was thus developed as a countermeasure to infiltration warfare. This genocidal countermeasure explains why the maximum number of deaths occurred in territories that were just about to fall to Kagame’s soldiers: Kagame was able to infiltrate despite the roadblocks, which only killed the innocent.

The massacres were coordinated in the following pattern: “Prefects and burgomasters organized Hutu militants who identified and targeted Tutsi ‘collaborators’, took over the land of those who were killed or fled, and redistributed it to militants.”<sup>58</sup>

The organizers of the genocide developed a “strategy of sending killers outside their immediate community to kill,” which “suggests that leaders were cognizant of the ties Tutsi had to the rest of their communities... it suggests, too, that despite the war and repeated exhortations by government officials and MRND party elites (on the radio, at public meetings, in recorded speeches), leaders of the violence could not take for granted that the population would automatically obey or follow orders to kill their Tutsi neighbors.”<sup>59</sup> The north-south divide is salient: The killers were coming from northern areas where the RPF was invading and where there were few Tutsis, to kill in the south where the Tutsi minority was concentrated.

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No amount of “civil defense” or civilian massacre could help a UN-disarmed Rwandan government defeat Kagame with his heavy weapons, Ugandan troops, and US backing. Only France could save Habyarimana’s government, but France needed to follow the Western trend, which had changed from the unconditional 1970s and 1980s, when only economic structural adjustments were required of recipient countries. In the 1990s, donors had added political conditionalities to the menu.

Habyarimana knew it. While hoping for France, Mobutu, or others to come to his aid, Habyarimana followed what Western donors pressured him to do and began trying to negotiate a peace agreement with the RPF. Donors increased aid to Uganda while decreasing aid to Rwanda; France actually reduced its arms sales; and in July, the US ambassador told his Rwandan counterpart that “if he wanted the RPF to stop at Byumba, he should sign – otherwise they would reach Kigali. [the Rwandan ambassador] understood this to mean that the RPF would reach Kigali with Washington’s blessing. The government signed.”<sup>60</sup>

With the cease-fire signed, negotiations for a peace settlement began at Arusha, in Tanzania, in August 1992. The Rwandan government was made to understand that the West backed the RPF and that the RPF would return to war, with Western backing, if the settlement was at all unfavorable to them. The negotiations sought to find a way to integrate the RPF into the Rwandan army, to arrange for power-sharing between the Rwandan government and the RPF, and to allow for the right of return of Rwandan refugees.<sup>61</sup> The RPF was successful at the negotiations—how could they not be, with the unconditional backing of the US?—but they were so successful that the outcome left the Habyarimana government side resentful: The RPF wanted a nominated, rather than an elected, transitional assembly; they wanted an acre and a half of land for each Ugandan returnee in land-scarce rural Rwanda; they wanted a high proportion of RPF (50% of officers and 40% of troops—for a force that had no democratic mandate or support in the country) in the new army. The old post-independence debate between “Hutu and democratic” and “nationalist but really Tutsi first” overshadowed the negotiations. So, too, did the fact that in a democratic dispensation the RPF would become a small and irrelevant party, while they knew they could seize the whole country and rule by force with American blessing. Habyarimana had hoped that a settlement would include elections that would maintain his popular party in power; the RPF thought that the settlement should reflect their superiority on the battlefield.

Let us pause here for a moment to dispel a fabrication that has made its way into the Africanist accounts of the Rwandan genocide. The main character of this little story is Theoneste Bagosora, probably the “Devil” that Romeo Dallaire refers to shaking hands with in the title of his memoir. Dallaire tells a story about Bagosora at the peace negotiations at Arusha. Kinzer tells the story too, citing Melvern, who also tells the story. The story goes like this: “For a time, Bagosora was

part of the government negotiating team at Arusha. When it became clear that the peace accords would force his regime to share power with the hated Tutsi, and that there would be no role for him or other militants, he stalked out. As he was leaving, an RPF negotiator asked where he was going. Back to Kigali, he replied – to prepare ‘the second apocalypse’.<sup>62</sup>

In every popular book on the genocide, you can read about how Bagosora got up from the negotiating table in October 1992 and said he was going home to prepare the apocalypse. The source is someone from the RPF who was at the meeting in October. The story made its way into the prosecutor’s case in the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda proceedings against Bagosora. But in the footnote of a book by French scholar Andre Guichaoua—too late to have any impact on the dramatic story—we find the following: “The prosecutor’s formulation, supported by a single witness, a former RPF leader, is that Bagosora abandoned the Rwandan government delegation to the Arusha negotiations... in October 1992 in protest over the disproportionate concessions made to the RPF, and that at the time he claimed he was returning to Kigali to ‘prepare the Apocalypse’. However, at that period, he was not yet a member of the delegation to Arusha. Moreover, when he actually did leave Arusha, on 26 December, it is because he had been recalled by President Habyarimana and over strong objections from the minister, head of the government delegation.”<sup>63</sup>

Returning to our narrative: The Arusha negotiations as of late 1992 stipulated that the United Nations would guarantee the cease-fire through a small force under the command of a Canadian general, Romeo Dallaire. French forces were excluded from the UN force at the RPF’s insistence,<sup>64</sup> another major negotiating success, since France was Habyarimana’s most powerful ally and had the military power to stop the RPF.

Dallaire was no expert on the situation. After three years of war between the RPF and the Rwandan government during which:

- the RPF had taken the most important agricultural lands, displaced hundreds of thousands of enraged peasants who went south, and threatened the rest of the country with starvation;
- the Burundi military had assassinated that country’s president and killed thousands, leading to thousands of refugees fleeing into volatile Rwanda; an international negotiation had opened up involving numerous African and Western countries;

- one of the commanders in the war (Kagame) had returned from training in the United States to pick up and rebuild his army.

The future UN commander was approached by his Canadian commanding officer to ask if he would command the UN force. Dallaire was at a parade on June 27, 1993. His commanding officer asked him if he could go to Rwanda. Dallaire “managed to stammer out, ‘Rwanda, that’s somewhere in Africa, isn’t it?’” He told his wife: “I think I’m going to Africa!”<sup>65</sup> He was “carried away by the romance of it, by the idea of adventure that Africa represented to me.”<sup>66</sup> When he arrived on August 17, 1993, he found it “full of fragrant breezes and unbelievable greenness... a kind of garden of Eden.”<sup>67</sup>

Dallaire’s initial mission was: to monitor the border between Uganda and Rwanda “to ensure that weapons and soldiers were not crossing from Uganda into Rwanda to reinforce the RPF.”<sup>68</sup> When he visited Uganda to set up the patrols, the Ugandan army chief of staff told him that patrolling could only take place with 12 hours notice—ample time to complete whatever cross-border transport of weapons and soldiers before the UN arrived. Dallaire agreed: “I could protest, but it wouldn’t do any good.”<sup>69</sup> Dallaire said he wanted to patrol the border properly, but says he “was ordered to back off.”<sup>70</sup>

US Ambassador Flaten had similar discouraging experiences. When he asked for Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) satellite photography showing the progress of the war, the DIA told him they couldn’t get it because of clouds over Rwanda. For three years.<sup>71</sup>

The final version of the peace accord, signed in August 1993, gave the RPF their desired composition of the army (50% of the officer corps and 40% of the troops), a nominated assembly, the interior ministry that would enable the RPF to charge and try individuals from the government<sup>72</sup> and a presidency devoid of real power.<sup>73</sup> It also excluded the “extremist,” Hutu Power tendency, called the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR) from the government. This made it impossible for those who believed in the Accords and wanted them to work to co-opt the CDR opposition: “Strong in both the government and the army, the extremists faced a double loss: of the government to the opposition and of the army to the RPF. Not surprisingly, when the opportunity presented itself, the extremists struck out viciously – at both.”<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, the coalition government’s Foreign Minister Anastase Gasana from the opposition MDR party believed that “the Arusha Peace Agreement marked the beginning of democracy for his country.”<sup>75</sup>

The United Nations Security Council approved a new mission, UNAMIR, for Dallaire on October 5, 1993. He was to have 1000 troops to keep the peace under the Arusha Accords. One of the UN mission's first acts was to escort an RPF battalion 600-strong into the National Assembly Building in Kigali.<sup>76</sup> Dallaire notes that "once secure, they had dismissed the UNAMIR troops and assumed total control of the interior of the complex."<sup>77</sup>

Dallaire further describes what the RPF did once they arrived: "The entire area was checked in minutes, commanders liaised and passed direction, troops were moved into defensive locations, and they immediately began to dig in... Once the RPF began digging, they never stopped for the next four months. From shell scrapes or foxholes, they dug full trenches, then roofed the trenches for protection from artillery or mortar fire. They then dug full communication trenches between the individual trenches and built bunkers that developed into caverns. By the time the war resumed in April, they had built an underground complex under the CND."<sup>78</sup> After briefly being in Kigali, Kagame returned in January 1994 to Mulindi where "he was busy rearming with Ugandan help, getting light weapons for the new soldiers he was busy recruiting."<sup>79</sup>

Dallaire admired the RPF's preparations for war and knew about their supply line of weapons from Uganda. That the Rwandan government was purchasing arms, however, angered him. When he discovered a cargo plane with artillery and ammunition from France, the UK, Belgium, Egypt, and Ghana—most of which had troops in UNAMIR—he "cursed the double standard of the supposedly ex-colonial powers," and "ordered the munitions impounded."<sup>80</sup> When the minister of defense (Augustin Bizimana) sought to add the military police battalion inside Kigali to reinforce the gendarmerie, Dallaire "categorically refused both requests," as he felt that the military situation inside the capital was already "overwhelmingly in their favour."<sup>81</sup>

Dallaire's political counterparts at the UN wanted to slow things down to give negotiations time to work, but Kagame had told Dallaire that his troops were impatient and eager for action. So Dallaire argued to speed up the installation of the provisional government.<sup>82</sup> At a meeting with the Rwandan government's General Nsabimana, and Kagame, Dallaire proposed to Nsabimana that Rwandan government forces withdraw, giving Kagame's forces nine additional kilometers of Rwandan territory in the north, "so that both armies would be beyond the range of each other's guns... and because Kagame's forces had nowhere to

go.”<sup>83</sup> With each decision, Dallaire used the UN to allow the RPF to strengthen their military preparations while weakening their enemies.

Dallaire’s military intelligence officer was a Senegalese soldier named Amadou Deme, who went on to become an investigator in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Deme remembers Dallaire fondly, sucking candies, chewing an unlighted Rwandan cigar, listening to tapes of the Blue Berets Caskets, and bouncing a yellow ball in the yard of the compound.<sup>84</sup> But Deme’s overall conclusion about Dallaire’s decision was that “preventing arms and ammunition from reaching the RGF, while permitting unlimited arms and material to flow to the RPF through Uganda, was the ultimate lethal measure imposed by UNAMIR.”<sup>85</sup> That “lethal measure” didn’t just result in the destruction of the Rwandan state. It destroyed the Rwandan government forces that could have stopped the massacres. Even during the war, Rwandan state officials appealed to the RPF, first for a “truce for humanitarian lifesaving purposes”<sup>86</sup> and eventually an outright surrender, asking the RPF to “assist in restoring order.”<sup>87</sup> The RPF refused.

Dallaire’s boss at the UN was Cameroonian diplomat Jacques-Roger Booh Booh, UNAMIR chief in 1993–1994. Booh Booh thought that Dallaire’s hand-wringing about the weapons coming in from the Ugandan border for the RPF compared to his zeal in disarming the Rwandan government forces was galling. “General Dallaire, in charge of military affairs, never seemed too curious about the military and paramilitary actions of the RPF.”<sup>88</sup> Booh Booh goes further, accusing Dallaire of allowing UNAMIR vehicles to be used to transport weapons for the RPF.<sup>89</sup> Dallaire’s bias in favor of the RPF, Booh Booh argues, led him to sabotage UN negotiations at key moments, breaking up meetings on pretenses of security.<sup>90</sup> “In reality, Dallaire never surmounted his exotic ambitions and cultural prejudices for the sake of the mission. The fact that he was working under the authority of an African must have rankled.”<sup>91</sup>

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The Africa-wide movement for multipartyism in the 1990s, during which peoples dreamed of ousting their dictators and living under democratic regimes, was mentioned in previous chapters. In the multiparty moment of 1993, Burundi had its first free election in decades. Reform-minded Hutu leader Melchior Ndadaye was elected to the prime minister’s office.



Burundi's all-Tutsi army murdered Ndadaye on October 21, 1993, and took power in a coup, which launched a new round of civil conflict in Burundi.<sup>92</sup> Dallaire had just arrived in Kigali from Rwanda when he heard the news.<sup>93</sup>

In Burundi, "the sudden eruption of anti-Tutsi violence only hours following the news of Ndadaye's death, resulting in countless atrocities and random killings of Tutsi civilians, was the triggering factor behind an equally devastating display of anti-Hutu violence by the army. How many lives were lost is anybody's guess – estimates vary between 30,000 and 100,000; what most observers agree on is that as many Tutsi were killed by enraged mobs of Hutu as Hutu by the army's blind repression."<sup>94</sup>

350,000 Hutu refugees fled to Rwanda, and the same number fled to Tanzania and to the Congo (Zaire).<sup>95</sup> Dallaire describes it as follows: "An estimated 300,000 refugees had crossed the border into Rwanda and massacres inside Burundi had left the streams and rivers full of bloated bodies. The refugees were occupying makeshift camps and ravaging the small forests that decades of labour had re-established on the mountainsides to prevent soil erosion.<sup>96</sup> The region was into a second year of drought and had suffered extensive crop failures, forcing many of the Rwandans in the area to depend on food aid. The UNHCR rapidly moved into provide the essentials to Burundian refugees, but since it is only mandated to look after refugees who cross borders, it couldn't provide for the displaced or hungry Rwandans. This meant that local people watched refugees eating while they and their children starved."<sup>97</sup>

The assassination of the Burundian president by Burundi's army stoked fears of the RPF as analogous to the Burundian Tutsi army that had killed Ndadaye. For its part, beyond a communique, the RPF "conveyed no sense of genuine indignation at the murder of a popularly elected head of state. Worse still, some sectors of the Front openly rejoiced at the death of the Hutu President."<sup>98</sup>

That November, Dallaire was faced with massacres of Rwandan civilians in the north, for which the RPF was accused. He approached the investigations with great skepticism, assuming that they were false flag operations. His dilemma: "If we investigated and found conclusive proof that the RPF had committed the murders, we'd be in tricky territory in which one of the ex-belligerents appeared to be deliberately destabilizing the country; if we investigated and were not able to point the finger at the RPF, the media... would view us as either in league with the

RPF or totally incompetent.”<sup>99</sup> Dallaire went deep in his speculations: When an RPF-issue glove was found at a crime scene, Dallaire “wondered why someone would leave such a distinctive signature.” The glove bothered Dallaire and his co-author Brent Beardsley: “Why would the RPF leave behind a telltale glove? They were not known for stupidity. Was it possible that others had committed the crime in order to blame it on the RPF?”<sup>100</sup> Thus, evidence that the RPF committed the crime becomes evidence they did not commit it. He doubted his translator and “strongly suspected that he was an RGF (Rwandan government) spy.” “After the war,” Dallaire noted, “the RPF identified six of our local staff as spies for the RGF.”<sup>101</sup> In the finger-pointing postwar context, Dallaire simply took the RPF’s word for who was and was not a spy.

Dallaire’s confusion in this investigation cost UNAMIR its credibility. Deme, his own military intelligence officer, thought that the idea that “the evidence was planted there on purpose to incriminate the RPF” was something he could “hardly believe,” since “The RPF belongings were not easy to find in Rwanda at the time. And due to the location of the crime sites, along the demilitarized zone, and at night, I could not imagine RGF forces or simple civilians conducting such actions against their own, with the risks of crashing into RPF soldiers and land mines.” The way Dallaire handled it “made the RGF, local government, and even the local population thought that UNAMIR was definitely taking sides by defending the RPF... that took away a lot of our credibility, and justly so.”<sup>102</sup>

By February 1994, Rwanda was experiencing a generalized collapse. At a town hall meeting, citizens told Dallaire “that the government was no longer really governing: a lot of salaries were not being paid, public schools were closed and government-sponsored medical care had been starved of resources. They were extremely disturbed by the increased banditry and lawlessness.”<sup>103</sup> The head of the Rwandan government police (the gendarmerie), Ndindiliyimana, asked Dallaire repeatedly for nonlethal riot gear to control demonstrations.<sup>104</sup> One of the opposition (to Habyarimana) party (the PSD) leaders, Felicien Gatabazi, was assassinated on the night of February 21. RPF Lieutenant at the time, Abdul Ruzibiza states that Gatabazi’s killers were Lt. Godfrey Ntukayajemo, with help from Mahoro Amani and Captain Hubert Kamugisha, that they hid with a taxi driver named Emerita Mukamurenzi who they killed as a loose end, and that the killing was ordered by Kagame and his Lt. Col Karenzi Karake.<sup>105</sup> Activists from Gatabazi’s party lynched Hutu

Power leader Martin Bucyana the next day in reprisal. Dallaire told the commander of the gendarmerie, Ndindiliyimana, “that his gendarmes were not doing enough to help my troops get a grip on the riots,” but Ndindiliyimana reminded him that he had neither fuel, nor riot gear, nor tear gas, nor water cannons, nor fuel or spare parts for their vehicles. Colonel Bizimana from the Rwandan army reiterated the offer to move a battalion of military police into the city. But Dallaire “countered by recommending that they go to the media and call upon the extremist parties to control their militias and stop the riots.”<sup>106</sup> What Dallaire expected them to do if their media requests were ignored, he didn’t say, but instead watched as they “fidgeted uncomfortably.”

On March 28, 1994, Booh Booh reported to UN headquarters that he had obtained a declaration by all parties of the Arusha Accords—the UN, the Papal Nuncio, the US, France, Belgium, Germany, Zaire, Uganda, and Burundi—to “solemnly appeal to the Rwandese parties to show a spirit of compromise and solve the last pending problems.”<sup>107</sup> Even the US had signed. The pressure on Kagame to accept this incredibly favorable deal, that would nonetheless leave him out of absolute power and leave him vulnerable to a future election in a democratic Rwanda, was building.

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When Kagame and Rwigyema were commanders in Museveni’s National Resistance Army (NRA), a helicopter crash of their most effective enemy (Major-General David Oyite-Ojok in 1983) had turned the tide of the war in their favor. On March 31, 1994, Kagame called a meeting with senior command: Theoneste Lizinde, freed from prison and now a military advisor; Kayumba Nyamwasa (who became a dissident and survived Kagame’s assassins in 2010); James Kabarebe (an important commander in the Congo invasions); and others were present. The decision was made to assassinate Habyarimana when the opportunity presented itself.<sup>108</sup> The RPF had numerous SA-7B anti-aircraft missiles, but these had disadvantages in trying to shoot down a fast plane like the president’s: The missile took a long time to warm up (and was noisy), was not especially fast (800 km/h), and was only good over a relatively short distance (about 5 km)—ideal for shooting down helicopters, but not great for planes.<sup>109</sup> But there were also a few SA-16 missiles in the Ugandan army stores. The RPF got their hands on four of them and brought them into Rwanda shortly after the RPF battalion arrived in Kigali—on

January 6, 1994. The SA-16 was faster—2000 km/h and worked over a longer distance.<sup>110</sup>

The RPF battalion in Kigali refused to be supplied locally, claiming fear of poisoning. UNAMIR had offered to supply the RPF with firewood, but the RPF refused that too.<sup>111</sup> They demanded to control their own supply of food from their headquarters in Mulindi and used this supply line to bring two of the SA-16s along with other weapons in a truck ostensibly transporting firewood, at the end of January 1994, and were stored right in the 3rd battalion's headquarters in Kigali.<sup>112</sup> Masaka hill was chosen as the missile launch site, based on advice from Theoneste Lizinde, who knew the capital well.<sup>113</sup> Lizinde and other RPF men quietly moved their families out of the capital, moves that were noticed and reported to UN intelligence.<sup>114</sup>

On April 2, Kagame was visited by Dallaire in Mulindi. Dallaire looked at Kagame's face "and it was as sombre as I'd ever seen it. Something cataclysmic was coming, he said, and once it started, no one would be able to control it."<sup>115</sup> On April 4, Dallaire ran into Theoneste Bagosora at the Meridien hotel and asked him "if the president had ever anointed someone as his 'dauphin'." It was an innocent question, Dallaire says: He was just "legitimately curious about the line of succession if something happened to Habyarimana."<sup>116</sup> Two days after talking to Kagame, two days before Habyarimana was assassinated, Dallaire was asking around among the Rwandan government's senior leadership about what would happen if Habyarimana died.

Knowing when Habyarimana's plane would be coming in was a problem, but an easy one for an intelligence officer to solve: On April 6, Habyarimana was meeting to discuss peace plans with the RPF in Tanzania, after all, and RPF cadres there could report on the president's departure time.<sup>117</sup>

April 6, 1994: Six months had passed since Ndadaye's murder in Burundi and the installation of the UN-escorted RPF battalion in the capital of Rwanda. The situation was explosive with ethnic tension, as Hutu refugees from Burundi blamed the all-Tutsi army, and another essentially all-Tutsi army, the RPF, had moved into the capital. Tanzania's president, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, called a one-day summit in Dar Es Salaam to discuss implementation of the Arusha Accords by local heads of state.

The Burundi presidency had been passed in February 1994 to Cyprien Ntaryamira, a Hutu politician from the assassinated Melchior Ndadaye's party. Rwanda's president, Juvénal Habyarimana, as well

as Burundi's president, Ntaryamira, attended. Mobutu was supposed to attend, but did not, and neither did his foreign minister. Nzongola-Ntalaja believes that Mobutu was tipped off by France: "Mobutu apparently tried to warn Habyarimana, but when he called Kigali, it was Madame Agathe Habyarimana who answered the phone. She never gave her husband Mobutu's message. The original plan was for Mobutu's presidential jet, a Boeing 727, to bring back to Kigali the Rwandan president and his aides, so that Habyarimana's plane could take the president of Burundi back home to Bujumbura... [because Mobutu didn't go], Habyarimana took the Burundian with him."<sup>118</sup>

The missiles were launched from Masaka hill by RPF corporal Eric Hakizimana and 2nd lieutenant Frank Nziza. They hit their target.<sup>119</sup> The wreckage landed on the lawn of the presidential palace.<sup>120</sup> Later, two SA-16 launchers were found in the valley. The Russian authorities said they had been sold to Uganda in 1987.<sup>121</sup>

Surrounded by his security detail, Kagame was in a common room at headquarters in Mulindi with 200 of his men watching the semifinals of the African Cup of Nations: Zambia was playing Mali that night at the Stade el Menzah in Tunis. A messenger came into the room and whispered in his ear. He got up with his bodyguards, walked to his quarters to use the radio, and returned to the common room.<sup>122</sup> RPF forces moved immediately to the outskirts of Kigali, deploying infiltrators who had trickled into the city during the cease-fire and activating their battalion inside the city. By April 8, US Marine helicopters were seen in Burundi's capital, Bujumbura. Deme wondered "where were they stationed before Bujumbura? What was the nearest point in Africa the helicopters could have come from, and how long had they been there? And of course, the crucial point is, were they expecting, or aware of, what was going to happen in Rwanda? Or had they been based at Bujumbura for some time before April 8, without the UN having been informed? If so, why? And perhaps more importantly, why did the US choose not to send Marines to Kigali, when their very presence would have been likely to stop much of the killing?"<sup>123</sup>

Later, Rwandans<sup>124</sup> would identify the shooting down of the plane as the moment when everything changed.

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Unlike the multitudes that became experts afterward, French scholar Andre Guichaoua was one of a few experts on the country *before* the

genocide. Guichaoua provides some of the most detailed information about the Rwandan government and the strategic calculations within it during the civil war and the genocide. He separates the assassination of Habyarimana and the genocide as follows: “Even if in refusing a negotiated political settlement RPF leaders assumed the risk of genocide, the shooting down of the plane can in no way be deemed the cause of genocide. Given the climate brought about by the power vacuum, the genocide was the culmination of a political strategy implemented by extremist Hutu groups that felt that with the downing of the aircraft and the inevitable reprise of war, the moment had come to settle the conflict with the RPF militarily and to do away with the political forces supporting the RPF inside the country.”<sup>125</sup>

Even at this point, it was still not too late. “During the first days of April, it is highly probable that with the UN forces already on the ground, deliberate interventions by the large embassies, and additional support from easily mobilized foreign military forces, political figures who had distanced themselves from the ethnic blocks would have had sufficient ascendancy to call for a halt to the massacres, neutralize the militias, and regain the upper hand over the mutinied units with support from the military high command of the FAR.”<sup>126</sup> At the end of this process, though, the Rwandan government would remain in place and the RPF would have been prevented from taking the country—Kagame, his US sponsors, and Dallaire had all decided by this point that the RPF had to come to power by force of arms.

Kagame moved his forces out of Mulindi for the final conquest of the country immediately upon the assassination of Habyarimana. Rwandan government forces managed to hold their ground in several battles and mount counterattacks, but having been disarmed by the UN and disorganized by three years of war, they were at an insurmountable disadvantage. An example of this was at the battle for Byumba on April 18. The RPF cut the road between Byumba and Kigali and intercepted the message from Rwandan government’s command telling the garrison to withdraw from the town. Government forces walked into an RPF ambush by Ndugute and Kabarebe’s troops, taking “extensive” casualties before finally retreating in order. The RPF was operating with “detailed maps of FAR positions, order of battle, all call signs, frequencies and ciphers of the radio network.”<sup>127</sup>

When the prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, was killed by Hutu militias in the UN compound the day after Habyarimana’s assassination,

the West decided to reduce the UN force's size: "The message to the government was clear: implement the Arusha Agreement or else the UN will pull out and the RPF take power. By putting in place the final squeeze, the UN had succeeded in fully polarizing the situation."<sup>128</sup>

In the reorganization of the state immediately after Habyarimana's assassination, those who sought genocide against the Tutsi were "out-manoeuvred by the moderates during the night of 6-7 April." The moderates imposed Colonel Marcel Gatsinzi as the commander of the FAR, who "tried to keep the army out for the 'final solution'," only reconciling with the militias "when news came that the RPF had decided to enter the fray."<sup>129</sup> Senior officials from the Habyarimana government sought refuge at the French Embassy<sup>130</sup> and the provisional government fled from Kigali to Gitarama, "which increased administrative confusion."<sup>131</sup>

From the assassination of Habyarimana on April 6 until its final defeat in July, the Rwandan government remained in flux, with the group of extremist leaders (Ngirumpatse, Karemera, Nzirorera, and Bagosora<sup>132</sup>) maintaining a shaky hold on power as militias killed civilians in the countryside and the RPF continued to defeat the Rwandan army on the battlefield.

The people who killed their neighbors at the behest of these leaders spoke to an interviewer of their bitterness for following orders: "The educated people were certainly the ones who drove the farmers on, out in the marshes. Today they're the ones who juggle with words or turn close-mouthed. Many sit quietly in their same places as before. Some have become ministers or bishops; they aren't so much in the public eye, but they still wear their fancy clothes and gold-framed glasses. While suffering keeps us in prison."<sup>133</sup>

For those who conducted the genocide, their "common objective... was that none of their former adversaries should savor the victory of the RPF. If defeat at the hands of the RPF could not be avoided, none of their Tutsi or southern enemies... should be left to cash in on the spoils of their victory."<sup>134</sup>

The faction organizing the genocide included a group of officers from the Rwandan army and the leaders of several of the political parties. On the ground, the militias doing the killing were ordered and induced with "ad hoc rhetoric" about "pacification" and "civil defense." Their energies would be "regularly replenished" by using "rewards of various

sorts (rackets, pillaging, rapes, direct remunerations, or redistributions of bounty).”<sup>135</sup>

Mainly in government-controlled areas, militias targeted Tutsis at roadblocks, traveled house to house, and killed people at gathering sites like churches. “Ignace” told Jean Hatzfield, who wrote oral histories of the genocide from the point of view of the killers and of the victims: “We’d gather in a crowd of about a thousand on the soccer field, head out into the bush along with one or two hundred hunters, all led by two or three gentlemen with guns, soldiers or intimidators. At the muddy edge of the first clumps of papyrus, we separated into teams of acquaintances... In the bogs, you had to hunt and kill only up till the last whistle. Sometimes a gunshot replaced the whistle – that would be the sole surprise of the day.”<sup>136</sup> “Elie” described the division of labor of the killers: “The intimidators made the plans and whipped up enthusiasm; the shopkeepers paid and provided transportation; the farmers prowled and pillaged. For the killings though, everybody had to show up blade in hand and pitch in for a decent stretch of work.”<sup>137</sup> Meanwhile, organizers operated at a higher level, bringing the orders: “The organizers arranged patrols, settled disputes over looting, and laid out the daily itineraries. If these organizers hadn’t shown up, it wouldn’t have occurred to the farmers to begin the work. They would have brandished machetes in anger over the plane crash and gone back to their fields.”<sup>138</sup>

A “junior official in charge of killing for the unit in Muyange” described his experience to Hatzfield: It was something new for me, of course. So I got up earlier than those around me to review the preparations. I would whistle for assembly, hurry along the laggards, scold the sluggabeds, count up the missing, check on reasons for absence, and pass on the instructions. If a meeting of organizers produced a reprimand or an announcement, I delivered it directly. I gave the signal to set out.”<sup>139</sup>

Hatzfield’s stories are a south Rwandan experience—his interviewees are from Nyamata, which is south of Kigali. Nyamata has a high relative proportion of Tutsis and was one of the places that fell to the RPF late. Interahamwe from the north came to Nyamata to organize the genocide in that zone. The role of northern organizers fleeing the RPF in authoring the genocide in the south is confirmed by stories told to Hatzfield by victims. Francine Niyitegeka, 25-year-old farmer and shopkeeper from Kibungo Hill, who was clubbed and left for dead but survived, told him that “A month or two before the genocide... new faces were appearing



among the houses, and we would hear the Interahamwe training in the forest, shouting encouragement to one another.”<sup>140</sup> These were Interahamwe from the north who came south after the loss of the north to the RPF, hoping wrongly that the tactic of massacring Tutsis, which had failed in the north where there were few Tutsis, could work in the south where there were more Tutsis.

The genocidal violence took a specific form: “Joiners killed in groups, not individually. These groups were large, oftentimes far larger than what was physically required to kill the victims at hand, who were usually unarmed and unable to flee. Joiners estimated their groups to include ten to fifty (or more) people. The sheer size of the groups meant that many members watched as a handful performed the physical murder.”<sup>141</sup> The killings were public, physically intimate, and theatrical. “No one reported performing any of these acts outside the context of killing... on his own or in private.” Researchers found “little evidence that perpetrators were driven by anti-Tutsi ideology, extremist propaganda, preexisting or accumulating hatreds of Tutsi, or obedience, an alleged cultural trait of Rwandans.”<sup>142</sup> I will return to Rwandan “obedience” below. Instead, it was the group context that facilitated the genocidal violence. The civil war context was absolutely central to the occurrence of the genocide.

In his book, *The Order of Genocide*, Straus is explicit about the connection. Based on his prison interviews and his reading of Rwanda’s historical episodes of violence, he concludes that “the central mechanisms driving violence are uncertainty and acute insecurity, and violence is a means to assert power when power is most threatened.”<sup>143</sup>

The biggest single massacre in the genocide took place over a period of weeks in Bisesoro mountain in Kibuye prefecture. Tens of thousands of Tutsis tried to make a last stand against repeated attacks by the militias, dying in direct attacks as well as from thirst and hunger. Human Rights Watch’s report, to which I will return, estimated that 50,000 people were killed on Bisesoro, most in mid-May.<sup>144</sup> In 2019, Journalist Judi Rever reported that RPF infiltrators killed Tutsi civilians in the Bisesoro massacre and were involved in its organization.<sup>145</sup>

Kagame’s war plan was based on enveloping Kigali by moving clockwise from the east to the southwest. He knew that most of the country’s Tutsis lived in the south, but feared RPF casualties if he raced across the southern districts trying to save them. So, instead, he took a circuitous route. “The [RPF] almost certainly could have saved many more

Tutsi, albeit at a higher military cost, if they had pursued a southwestern offensive.”<sup>146</sup> For those who insist on a narrow ethnic, Hutu-Tutsi framework for understanding the war, Kagame’s decision to abandon the Rwandan Tutsis is inexplicable. But just like the north-south division within Rwanda, the divisions between Kagame’s Anglophone Ugandan men and the francophone Tutsis who had lived in Rwanda were very real, and “by 1990, many refugees who had spent up to three decades in Uganda felt little kinship for those in Rwanda who faced retaliation. Indeed, some Tutsi in the diaspora suspected that those who had been permitted to remain in Rwanda must have collaborated with the extremist Hutu regime. From the opposite perspective, many Tutsi in Rwanda bitterly opposed the rebels on grounds the diaspora Tutsi were willing to fight to the last domestic Tutsi.”<sup>147</sup> The more the Rwandans (including Tutsi) who lost their lives, the more land there would be for the Ugandan returnees. Land was scarce, parcels were small, and the RPF had big dreams.

Kagame kept the conquest of Kibuye for the end, so it was up to the French forces of Operation Turquoise to put a stop to the massacres on Bisesoro Mountain. The second largest death toll of the genocide was at Gishyta, also in Kibuye prefecture, in which an estimated 9000 were killed, mostly in June.<sup>148</sup>

Most of the victims of the genocide, 80%, were killed in the first six weeks.<sup>149</sup>

Francine Niyitegeka described the massacre on her hill: “The interahamwe began to hunt Tutsis on our hill on April 10. Since they had never gone so far as to kill families in the churches, that same day we moved out in a long procession to seek refuge in the church in N’tarama. We waited five days. As our brethren continued to gather, we became a great crowd. When the attack began, an onslaught of noise confused the full picture of the massacre, but I did recognize many faces of neighbors who were killing nonstop. Very soon I felt a blow: I fell between two benches, with chaos all around. When I woke up, I checked to be sure I was not dying. I made my way through the bodies, then escaped into the bush. Among the trees, I came upon a band of fugitives and we ran all the way to the marshes. I was to remain there for one month... Each morning we went to hide the littlest ones beneath the swamp papyrus; then we would sit on the dry grass... when we heard the interahamwe arrive, we ran to spread ourselves out in silence, in the thickest foliage, sinking deep into the mud. In the evening, when

the killers had finished work and gone home, those who were not dead emerged from the marsh. The wounded simply lay down on the oozing bank of the bog, or in the forest. Those who still could went up to the school in Cyugaro, to doze off in a dry place.”<sup>150</sup>

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In June, France mounted Operation Turquoise, creating a zone through which refugees could escape into Zaire. As it had opposed the expansion of the UN, the RPF also opposed the French mission, using diplomacy in Burundi to prevent France from entering Rwanda through that country,<sup>151</sup> and threatening to fight French forces if they encountered them. The French intervention did save some lives<sup>152</sup> and stopped the genocide in areas that it controlled.

An event like the Rwandan genocide is always fodder for what-if questions. One of Dallaire’s post-genocide talking points, made famous in Philip Gourevitch’s book *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*, was that he could have stopped the genocide with 5000 troops, but the Western powers refused to provide them in time. Dallaire was therefore stuck in the capital with an inadequate force, unable to intervene.

The French would have provided the troops. They had conducted many such operations—two in neighboring Zaire to bail Mobutu out (with American airlift) and others in Chad and Cote d’Ivoire. Habyarimana expected a French intervention to save his government from the RPF.

Analyzing the accounts of the way in which the genocide unfolded, and looking at what occurred in the areas of Operation Turquoise, it is reasonable to conclude that the French would have stopped or prevented the genocide had they been deployed country-wide.

It was not to be. Dallaire proudly relates that he “told New York that if the French were permitted to enter [through Kigali], I would resign my command; if French planes appeared at the airport, I’d shoot them down.”<sup>153</sup> Kagame was also hostile to the French, since they were the military guarantors of his enemy, Habyarimana. Ultimately, the RPF, with UN help and ultimately with US help, outmaneuvered the French in negotiations. They presented the RPF and Kagame as a part of the “New African Leaders” of that era’s African Spring. They managed to get all of the Francophone troops in UNAMIR expelled as well. Amadou Deme, Dallaire’s military intelligence officer, describes being disarmed

and bussed out through the RPF zone. “I remember the words of the RPF civilian who was in charge, ‘only with your toothbrush and colgate.’” The RPF soldiers they encountered at roadblocks “would not miss the opportunity to taunt us.”<sup>154</sup>

When Dallaire met the French general in charge of Operation Turquoise, Jean-Claude Lafourcade, at the end of June, briefed Lafourcade and warned him that “the extremist leaders, the perpetrators and some of their [The French’s] old colleagues were all the same people.”<sup>155</sup> He found his French counterpart “much more genuine and level-headed than his officers.”<sup>156</sup>

Lafourcade didn’t come away with the same respect for Dallaire. “General Dallaire is a sensitive man, a true believer in peace,” Lafourcade wrote in his book about Operation Turquoise. “The situation would have pushed me to fight, even with so few men, to try to stop the massacres. That would have involved disobeying UN orders and that is not nothing. But that is my conception of what a military officer does: in extreme situations, to deploy force legitimately... I remain convinced that action was needed the day after the attack to try to neutralize the militias and the genocidaires.”<sup>157</sup> Dallaire chose to leave it to Kagame.

\* \* \*

At the end of April, Kagame told Dallaire that the RPF would fight any strengthened UN intervention force that would come to stop the war (and would have, as a collateral benefit, ended the genocide as well). “The UN is looking at sending an intervention force on humanitarian grounds, but for what reason? Those who were to die are already dead. If an intervention force is sent to Rwanda, we will fight it.”<sup>158</sup> Kagame was wrong: Those who were to die were not already dead, Bisesoro mountain hadn’t even happened yet, and more than a hundred thousand lives could have been saved, according to one analyst.<sup>159</sup> Also, Kagame said something that would be contradicted by the regime he set up in Rwanda, berating the international community for “presenting the Rwandan problem as an ethnic one, which is incorrect as the massacres were against Tutsis and the opposition.” Kagame’s idea was “not to divide the country but to hunt the criminals everywhere they may be.”<sup>160</sup> The US also obstructed an expanded UN force and Dallaire commented that “if I had been a suspicious soul, I could have drawn a link between the obstructive American position and the RPF’s refusal to accept a sizable UNAMIR 2. In the pre-war period, the US military

attache from the American embassy was observed going to Mulindi on a regular basis.”<sup>161</sup>

Deme, who had been a military observer in Rwanda before being a military intelligence officer for Dallaire, wondered about Kagame’s war plan: “If the RPF would have finished taking Kigali with the same speed as their progression in occupying territory through the eastern third of the country, they definitely would have helped in stopping the massacres. Instead, their military strategy appears to have benefited from making the humanitarian chaos worse.”<sup>162</sup>

On May 17, the UN Security Council voted on Resolution 918 to impose an arms embargo on the Rwandan army, guaranteeing an RPF victory. The Rwandan government strategy shifted to seeking a partition of the country. “The Interim government still sought to demonstrate that, without negotiations, its defeat could only come at great cost. At this stage of the conflict, discussion along these lines could only lead to partition of the country between zones already fully under RPF control to the east and the high plateaus of Hutu-dominated territory to the west,”<sup>163</sup> a proposal that found some receptivity in France initially. France ultimately decided not to try to save the Rwandan interim government, not at the expense of open confrontation with the RPF, which was a possibility, and certainly not after the UN Security Council voted Resolution 925 on June 8, using the term “genocide” and mentioning that genocide was punishable by international law.

Dallaire relayed surrender feelers to Kagame in May from Rusatira and Gatsinzi, but “Kagame was not impressed. As far as he was concerned, these men should have publicly resisted the extremists right from the start and now had to accept the consequences for themselves, their few living supporters and their families.”<sup>164</sup> In June, Dallaire talked to Kagame about power-sharing arrangements. At that time, Kagame “had the best of the RGF troops locked up in Kigali so they couldn’t fight him elsewhere; he could close the gap any time he wanted and wipe them out. My distinct impression was that he was toying with his enemy... why would he meet with the enemy when he held all the cards?”<sup>165</sup>

On June 20, the minister of the interior, Karemera, “ordered Lt. Col. Anatole Nsengiyumva, operational sector commander for Gisenyi, to send auxiliary support to gendarmerie units from Kibuye to help them rout the survivors. He set a timetable of three days for completion of the mopping up operation. He instructed the prefect accordingly and demanded that he provide a follow-up report on the situation.” In other

words, there was “coordination at the highest level,” and there was “joint intervention by the operational sector army commander assisted by contingents from the gendarmerie, communal police, and militiamen specifically recruited for the task.”<sup>166</sup> Turquoise put a stop to it on June 22 when they arrived, saving the last 1100 people.

“French humanitarian intervention had finally drawn a sobering response from RPF officials after a series of direct contacts with French authorities.” The French ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud went to Kigali on June 19 to “explain the objectives” of the intervention to the RPF. Dallaire visited Kagame to warn him about the French intervention, but promised that he would insist that the French stay out of Kigali and not try to save the Rwandan government. Kagame told him not to worry. “The French would not be entering Kigali. As to the reason why, his assessment was blunt: ‘Tell France that Kigali can handle more body bags than Paris.’”<sup>167</sup> This was empty bluster. Kagame was working closely with the US, who had already told him to cooperate with Turquoise.<sup>168</sup>

On June 22 in Paris, on the eve of the official launch of Turquoise, the minister of foreign affairs, Alain Juppe, “received a vigorously negotiated visit from Jacques Bihozagara,” the European spokesperson for the RPF. There was, by the end, “no doubt as to the slightest possibility of saving any Rwandan regime with links to the former *mouvance présidentielle*.”<sup>169</sup>

The interim government held out a “hope of retaining some level of representation in the future political dispensation.” This is what led it to organize the flight of millions into Zaire, where north-south tensions continued.<sup>170</sup>

The war was over by July. The RPF had won. At what cost?

As Guichaoua puts it: “the rebel movement that emerged from the Tutsi diaspora neither started nor conducted a war to ‘save the Tutsi’; it seized power in Kigali by force of arms at the cost of the lives of its compatriots.”<sup>171</sup> Even Dallaire, for all his extraordinary admiration of the RPF, figured out that “Kagame wanted all of the country, not parts of it,” and “came to believe that he didn’t want the situation to stabilize until he had won.”<sup>172</sup>

After the RPF conquest was complete, some US troops arrived to support Kagame’s government,<sup>173</sup> staying until the end of September 1994. Among the two million Hutu refugees who fled to eastern Zaire (DRC), tens of thousands died due to cholera outbreaks in their refugee camps.<sup>174</sup>

\* \* \*

Gerard Prunier wrote one of the standard accounts of the Rwandan genocide, published in 1995, and because his book came out so quickly, it became the standard estimate of the genocide's death count.

His figures are based on the 1991 Rwandan census and a growth rate of 3.2%, from which he estimated the total population of Rwanda to be around 7.8 million. The Rwandan government said Tutsis were 9% of the population, 700,000 people, but Prunier bumps this up to 12%, 930,000 people. Based on figures of 130,000 Tutsi survivors arriving in refugee camps after the genocide, Prunier estimated roughly 800,000 Tutsi deaths in the genocide.<sup>175</sup> But others have looked at each of these figures in more detail, using different methods, and come to different conclusions.

In Reyntjens's calculations, Tutsi were 10% of the population, or about 800,000 before the genocide, and 600,000 Tutsi were killed. This means, according to Reyntjens, 500,000 Hutu were killed.<sup>176</sup> While not the majority, it is still nearly half of the victims.

Kuperman reviewed Reyntjens's, Prunier's, and Des Forges's estimates and suggested a model incorporating these. The 8.27% Tutsi census figure in 1991 appears credible, he believes, "whereas Prunier's higher estimate does not." A pre-genocide population of around 650,000 Tutsi, and 150,000 post-genocide survivors, yields an estimate of 500,000 Tutsis killed in the genocide. Prunier estimated 10,000–30,000 Hutus killed by the militias; Sendashonga estimated 60,000 Hutus were killed by the RPF, while Gersony estimated the RPF killed about 40,000 over the course of the war. Several hundred thousand Hutus were "missing" after the genocide,<sup>177</sup> and I will return to these "missing" Hutus later on.

The most methodologically rigorous study of the genocide was conducted by Christian Davenport and Allan Stam, professors at the University of Michigan. They conducted an extensive review of all of the available evidence on the Rwandan genocide for a project they called *GenoDynamics*.<sup>178</sup> In the study, they encoded all of the massacres described in all of the human rights reports, including Alison Des Forges's field study for Human Rights Watch, a report from African Rights (more about this report and organization below), government and other scholarly sources. Where the records showed a range of casualties, Davenport and Stam included the range in their analysis. Using

this method, they produced a wide casualty range for the genocide and settled on a mean value of 1,063,336 deaths. This is very close to Filip Reyntjens's estimates, which are based on tallies made in refugee camps in the three years after the genocide. These estimates are between 1,069,643 and 1,143,225 deaths.<sup>179</sup>

Most of Davenport's 1,063,336 deaths (891,295) were in areas under Rwandan government control. A much smaller, but substantial number of deaths, 77,043, were in areas under RPF control. Analyzing the available figures for Tutsis who survived the genocide (between 130,000 and 300,000), the range of Hutu victims is as low as 28,573, but as high as 958,573. In Davenport's estimation, Hutus were the majority killed.

The role of rape as a weapon of war in the region, and in the Congo, where Rwanda's proxies are active, will be discussed below. The prevalence of rape in the Rwandan genocide has also been studied. One estimate is that 350,000 women, mostly Tutsi, were raped during the genocide.<sup>180</sup>

How, if the men who took over the Rwandan government after Habyarimana's assassination set out to organize people to kill Tutsis in organized massacres, could so many of their victims have been Hutus? For several reasons. The main reason cited by Davenport is that the civil war and the massacres were creating massive displacement, of nearly the entire population. Even though local organizations were responsible for the killing, and locally, the killers could identify Hutu and Tutsi, in a situation where nearly everyone was fleeing from somewhere, and in a situation where admitting to being Tutsi was certain death, killers would have faced potential victims who were claiming to be Hutu, and killed them anyway. Many of the people who were killed as Tutsi were Hutu. Davenport and Stam summarize this:

Evidence exists which suggests that there was a tremendous amount of movement within the Rwandan population and this renders the situation one that is highly unstable. In this context, it was less the case that government turned on known citizen or that neighbor turned on neighbor than the case that government turned on unknown citizen or that stranger turned on stranger. This leads to dramatically different understandings of what took place.<sup>181</sup>

Seth Sendashonga pored over data on RPF massacres of Hutus with journalist Stephen Smith, who described the process in an article: "We



move forward line by line, name by name, address by address, cross-checking dates” on two independent lists of people killed. “Assuming RPF reprisals were equally severe everywhere in Rwanda this leads to an extrapolated figure of 150,000 people killed between July 1994 and April 1995 in the entire country”; Gersony had estimated 25,000–40,000 people killed by the RPF in the 100 days before July 1994 in the areas they controlled.<sup>182</sup>

Hutus were the demographic majority, so if there was a random element as well as a systematic element, the random element would have killed many more Hutu than Tutsi. I would also add a third possibility that many Hutus were killed trying to protect Tutsis. The idea that the killers in the genocide were everyday Hutu neighbors of the Tutsi is so pervasive, but it is also likely that many of these Hutu neighbors tried to protect the Tutsi members of their community and died doing so.

The RPF rejected every option for peace including the surrender of their enemies because in their assessment, total victory was within their grasp. The RPF did not stop the genocide in Rwanda. The victims of the Rwandan genocide paid the price of the RPF’s victory.

## NOTES

1. See the previous chapter.
2. Kinzer 2008, p. 62.
3. Kinzer 2008, p. 63.
4. Kinzer 2008, p. 64.
5. Kinzer 2008, p. 65.
6. Epstein 2017, p. 102.
7. Epstein 2017, p. 104.
8. Epstein 2017, p. 102.
9. Prunier 2008, p. 14.
10. Prunier 2008, p. 14.
11. Mamdani 2001, p. 186.
12. Lt. Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza. 2005. *Rwanda: L’histoire secrete*. Editions du Panama, Paris. p. 122. Author’s translation. Ruzibiza joined the RPF from the Rwandan Tutsi exile community in Burundi. According to Prunier (2008, p. 15), “there is quite strong evidence that the ‘Ugandan’ officers did not hesitate to kill a number of young francophone Tutsi recruits, especially those coming from the refugee community in Burundi, because they felt that, as the recruits were better educated, they could threaten the officers’ future control of the movement.”

13. Prunier 1995, p. 155.
14. Prunier 1995, p. 117.
15. Prunier 1995, p. 117.
16. Adrien Fontanellaz and Tom Cooper. 2015. *The Rwandan Patriotic Front 1991–1994*. Hellion & Company Ltd., Solihull.
17. Prunier 1995, p. 119.
18. Prunier 1995, p. 118.
19. Prunier 1995, p. 118. The “unwittingly” must always be added by the Africanists, since as I will show in my analysis of the scholarship, in Prunier’s world the donor powers are always hapless, unwitting, played like an orchestra.
20. Fontanellaz and Cooper 2015, p. 35.
21. Tito Rutaremara, quoted by Kinzer 2008, p. 80.
22. Museveni told this to Dallaire in 2004 at a commemoration of the genocide. It is quoted by Helen Epstein, “America’s Secret Role in the Rwandan Genocide.” *The Guardian*, September 12, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/sep/12/americas-secret-role-in-the-rwandan-genocide>.
23. Kinzer 2008, p. 88. Neither Kinzer nor Kagame show much concern that these grain stores would have fed civilians who went hungry as a result; nor that a Tutsi army attacking a nearly homogeneous Hutu Province to seize the granaries and turn the peasants living there into refugees might have inflamed the situation.
24. Kinzer 2008, p. 89. Kanyarengwe would be fired in 1997 for protesting RPF massacres and would die by an “abrupt paralyzing ailment” in Kigali in 2006. Lizinde fled to Nairobi and was assassinated by Kagame’s hitmen in Nairobi in 1996.
25. Mamdani 2001, p. 188.
26. Ruzibiza 2005, pg. 133. Author’s translation.
27. Gersony Report. 1994, p. 4.
28. Gersony Report. 1994, p. 5.
29. Gersony Report. 1994, p. 5.
30. Gersony Report. 1994, p. 6.
31. Fontanellaz and Cooper 2015, p. 42.
32. Ruzibiza 2005, p. 190. Author’s translation.
33. Ruzibiza 2005, p. 191. Author’s translation.
34. Ruzibiza 2005, pp. 274–276.
35. Gersony Report. 1994, p. 8.
36. Gersony Report. 1994, p. 8.
37. Mamdani 2001, p. 187.
38. Dallaire 2003, p. 64.
39. Dallaire 2003, p. 65.

40. Dallaire 2003, pp. 63 and 67.
41. Again in Prunier's world, these peasants simply "ran away," for "lack of enthusiasm" for "liberation"—not because of any actions by the RPF, and certainly not because of any human rights violations.
42. Prunier 1995, p. 175.
43. Dallaire 2003, p. 67.
44. Prunier 1995, p. 175, fn 33.
45. Prunier 1995, p. 184.
46. Fujii 2009, pp. 77–79.
47. Fujii 2009, p. 81.
48. Prunier 1995, p. 178.
49. Prunier 1995, p. 178.
50. Fontanellaz and Cooper 2015, p. 41.
51. Fontanellaz and Cooper 2015, p. 41.
52. Prunier for example—see the chapters on the scholarship of the Rwandan genocide in this book.
53. Ed Herman's phrase—see the chapters on the scholarship of the Rwandan genocide in this book.
54. More on this below. In the end, these Rwandan elites had neither the guns nor the population.
55. Guichoua 2015, p. 203.
56. Mamdani 2001, p. 207.
57. Tom Cooper. 2013. *Great Lakes Holocaust*. Helion & Company Ltd., Solihull. p. 38.
58. Mamdani 2001, p. 194.
59. Fujii 2009, p. 82.
60. Collins 2014, p. 87. Based on Collins' interview with then Rwandan ambassador Kanyarushoki.
61. Mamdani 2001, p. 211.
62. Kinzer 2008, p. 111.
63. Guichaoua 2015, p. 403, fn 53. The difference in effort required to find out what happened compared to the effort required to hear an invented anecdote is tremendous.
64. Prunier 1995, p. 194.
65. Dallaire 2003, p. 42.
66. Dallaire 2003, p. 45.
67. Dallaire 2003, p. 57.
68. Dallaire 2003, p. 43.
69. Dallaire 2003, p. 95.
70. Dallaire 2003, p. 96.
71. Peter Erlinder, ICTR defence counsel, interviewed Robert Flaten in Arusha in July 2006. Cited in Barrie Collins, *Rwanda 1994*, p. 80 (Chapter 4, fn 125).

72. Dallaire 2003, p. 133.
73. Prunier 1995, pp. 192–193.
74. Mamdani 2001, p. 211.
75. Dallaire 2003, p. 57.
76. Mamdani 2001, p. 212.
77. Romeo Dallaire. 2003. *Shake Hands with the Devil*. p. 130. Cited in Barrie Collins, Chapter 4, fn 324, p. 241.
78. Dallaire 2003, p. 131.
79. Prunier 1995, p. 205.
80. Dallaire 2003, pp. 156–157.
81. Dallaire 2003, p. 165.
82. Dallaire 2003, p. 164.
83. Dallaire 2003, p. 171.
84. Amadou Deme. 2014. *When the Victors Tell the Story: The UN's Victims in Rwanda*. International Humanitarian Law Institute. Location 2558 of 4522 (Kindle Edition).
85. Deme 2014, Location 4086.
86. Deme 2014, Location 1824.
87. Deme 2014, Location 2823.
88. Jacques Roger Booh Booh. 2005. *Le patron de Dallaire parle: Revelations sur les derives d'un general de L'ONU au Rwanda*. Editions Buboiris, Paris. p. 70. Author's translation.
89. Booh Booh 2005, p. 71.
90. Booh Booh 2005, p. 174.
91. Booh Booh 2005, p. 15.
92. Mamdani 2001, p. 215.
93. Dallaire's memoir says that he heard about the coup on October 8, but most records of the coup state that it occurred on October 21.
94. Rene Lemarchand. 2009. *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*. University of Pennsylvania Press. p. 146. Prunier (1995, p. 199) estimates 50,000 deaths, 60% Tutsi and 40% Hutu, 150,000 internally displaced Tutsis, and 300,000 Hutu refugees fleeing mostly to Rwanda.
95. Lemarchand 2009, p. 146.
96. One Africanist author actually called these public works "Preparing for genocide." To the Africanist, any group of Hutus doing anything together pre-1994 was "preparing for genocide."
97. Dallaire 2003, p. 114.
98. Prunier 1995, p. 202.
99. Dallaire 2003, p. 111.
100. Dallaire 2003, p. 117.
101. Dallaire 2003, p. 112.
102. Deme 2014, Location 1880.

103. Dallaire 2003, p. 172.
104. Dallaire 2003, p. 173. These are not exactly the requests of a government planning to exterminate everyone, and these events suggest again that the genocide was organized in the context of war and collapse, without which it would not have happened.
105. Ruzibiza 2005, p. 224. Author's translation. Dallaire answered Gatabazi's last phone call and notes that at the time "Kigali was alive with rumours that ran the gamut from the reasonable to the exotic," but "the case was never solved." Dallaire 2003, pp. 188–189.
106. Dallaire 2003, p. 191.
107. The UN memo and the declaration are on pp. 122–125 of Erlinder, *The Accidental Genocide*.
108. Ruzibiza 2005, p. 232. Author's translation.
109. Ruzibiza 2005, p. 242. Author's translation.
110. Ruzibiza 2005, pp. 243–244. Author's translation.
111. Deme 2014, Location 1964.
112. Ruzibiza 2005, pp. 244 and 249.
113. Ruzibiza 2005, p. 248. Also Aloys Ruyenzi. 2004. "Major General Paul Kagame Behind the Shooting Down of late Habyarimana's Plane: An Eyewitness Testimony." Retrieved from 3rd world traveler: [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/East\\_Africa/Kagame\\_Killed\\_Habyarimana.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/East_Africa/Kagame_Killed_Habyarimana.html). An investigation by Marc Trevidic suggested that the missiles could not have been launched from Masaka hill, but there were flaws in the research methods. See Chapter 9.
114. Deme 2014, Location 2218.
115. Dallaire 2003, p. 214.
116. Dallaire 2003, p. 219.
117. Ruzibiza 2005, p. 250. Specifically, it was Patrick Karegeya in Tanzania who told James Kabarebe of the departure time, who then told Kagame by satellite phone of Habyarimana's estimated arrival time in Kigali. Obviously, the hapless US would not have monitored any of these satellite phone calls and would have had no idea what was going to occur.
118. Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 223.
119. Ruzibiza 2005, p. 251.
120. Most accounts state that there is no consensus about who shot down Habyarimana's plane; some suggest that Hutu extremists killed Habyarimana to start the genocide, arguing that the genocide began very quickly after the assassination—but so, too, did the RPF offensive, so I don't find that theory convincing. I present Ruzibiza's version, which contains great detail that also fits with motive and other sources of evidence. In Des Forges's account of the genocide, all of the possible suspects for the assassination are named: politicians opposed to

- Habyarimana and the Arusha Accords; the RPF; Hutu moderates who wanted to pre-empt the genocide; or, of course, the Hutu Power politicians who organized the genocide. Alison Des Forges. 1995. *Leave None to Tell The Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. Human Rights Watch. pp. 182–183.
121. Helen Epstein. 2017. “America’s Secret Role in the Rwandan Genocide.” *The Guardian*, September 12. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/sep/12/americas-secret-role-in-the-rwandan-genocide>.
  122. Deme 2014, Location 4178, Kinzer 2008, p. 139.
  123. Deme 2014, Location 2597.
  124. Fujii 2009, pp. 80, 81, 84.
  125. Guichaoua 2015, p. 238.
  126. Guichaoua 2015, p. 402, fn 48.
  127. Fontanellaz and Cooper 2015, p. 53.
  128. Mamdani 2001, p. 213.
  129. Prunier 1995, p. 229.
  130. Prunier 1995, p. 235.
  131. Prunier 1995, p. 237.
  132. Guichaoua 2015, p. 287; p. 290 has good discussion of Nzirorera and the whole strategy of the interim government.
  133. Hatzfield 2005, p. 182, Adalbert.
  134. Guichaoua 2015, pp. 210 and 233 discusses the “scaling up” concept.
  135. Guichaoua 2015, p. 265.
  136. Hatzfield 2005, p. 13.
  137. Hatzfield 2005, p. 13.
  138. Hatzfield 2005, p. 182. Leopard.
  139. Hatzfield 2005, p. 14. Leopord.
  140. Hatzfield 2006, p. 35.
  141. Fujii 2009, pp. 171–174.
  142. Fujii 2009, pp. 186–187.
  143. Straus 2006, p. 176.
  144. Des Forges 1999, pp. 662–663. As a testament to the difficulty of verifying accurate numbers for deaths in the massacres, Des Forges notes that a list of names of people killed on the mountain had 5100 names, and that the massacre at Nyamata Church, which had a capacity of 3000, was claimed to have taken 35,000 lives.
  145. Judi Rever. 2019. “Rwanda: revelations sur les massacres de Bisesero.” Marianne.net., December 21. <https://www.marianne.net/monde/rwanda-revelations-sur-les-massacres-de-bisesero>. Retrieved January 22, 2019.
  146. Kuperman. 2004. “Provoking Genocide.” *Journal of Genocide Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 79.

147. Kuperman 2004, p. 82.
148. Des Forges 1999, p. 668.
149. Prunier 1995, p. 261. Kuperman 2004 has the most detailed reconstruction of the pace of the genocide.
150. Hatzfield 2006, pp. 35–37.
151. Prunier 1995, p. 285.
152. Prunier 1995, p. 297, fn 37 estimates 13–14,000 Tutsi lives were saved by Turquoise, because the French controlled only 20% of the country and arrived after most of the killing had already taken place. Prunier’s estimate doesn’t include Hutu lives saved from the RPF. These Hutus were ultimately not saved from the RPF in any case, but were killed in Zaire/DRC two years later.
153. Dallaire 2003, p. 438. Dallaire finds his defiant forcefulness threatening to shoot down the French, but laments his impotence stopping the massacres for lack of orders or help from the UN.
154. Deme 2014, Location 3717.
155. Dallaire 2003, p. 451.
156. Dallaire 2003, p. 450. Lafourcade has a “low voice, a generous handshake, and an engaging demeanour.” No animal metaphors or detailed physical descriptions here: this is one European to another.
157. Jean-Claude Lafourcade. 2010. *Operation Turquoise: Rwanda 1994*. Perrin, Paris. p. 126. Author’s translation.
158. Dallaire 2003, p. 342.
159. Kuperman 2004 estimates that about 150,000 lives could have been saved by a well-organized intervention force. This is the option that Dallaire allowed Kagame to veto.
160. Dallaire 2003, p. 342. Remember that Kagame announced that this was his idea in April. It will be important later.
161. Dallaire 2003, p. 364. Note the contrast between this coy tone of winks and nods and the gory descriptions of violence by Rwandan militias.
162. Deme 2014, p. 2833.
163. Guichaoua 2015, p. 278.
164. Dallaire 2003, p. 396.
165. Dallaire 2003, pp. 410–411. Remember Kagame’s winner-take-all attitude. It, too, will be important later.
166. Guichaoua, p. 282.
167. Dallaire 2003, p. 432.
168. Dallaire 2003, pg. 432.
169. Guichaoua, p. 285.
170. Guichaoua 2015, p. 286 writes that the northern zone around Goma was controlled by Nzirorera, while the southern zone around Bukavu was controlled by Sindikubwabo and Kambanda. Sindikubwabo went missing and Nzirorera is suspected in his death.

171. Guichaoua 2015, p. 230.
172. Dallaire 2003, p. 438.
173. Prunier 1995, p. 307, fn 57.
174. Prunier (1995, p. 302) describes the cholera epidemic that broke out on July 20. "The human mass which had crashed on the shores of Lake Kivu lacked everything: food, medicines, proper latrines (it was extremely hard to dig into the volcanic lava ground) shelter and even clean water. The last item, combined with the sanitation problem, caused an enormous cholera epidemic... After a week there were 600 deaths a day and after two weeks 3,000." In *Africa's World War*, though, Prunier describes the refugee camps two years later at the time of the Rwandan invasion as if they were luxury resorts.
175. Gerard Prunier. 1995. *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*. C. Hurst & Co. pp. 264–265.
176. Reyntjens, Estimation du Nombre des Personnes Tuees au Rwanda en 1994.
177. Kuperman 2001, pp. 20–21.
178. See the website: [http://www.genodynamics.com/Site\\_7/GenoDynamics.html](http://www.genodynamics.com/Site_7/GenoDynamics.html) for papers, data sources, and other material.
179. Phillip Reyntjens, Estimation du Nombre des Personnes Tuees au Rwanda en 1994.
180. Bijleveld, Morssinkhof, and Smeulders 2014.
181. Davenport and Stam. 2009. Rwandan Violence in Space and Time.
182. Stephen Smith. 2011. "Rwanda in Six Scenes." *LRB*, Vol. 33, No. 6 (March 17). <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n06/stephen-w-smith/rwanda-in-six-scenes>.





## CHAPTER 10

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# Good and Evil: How Africanists Present Hutus as Deserving of Death

In the early 1990s, Zaire's dictator Mobutu was an erratic and failing vehicle for US control of Central Africa. Zaire's neighbor, Rwanda, was a tiny client state of France's, with a small-scale civil war and a refugee crisis. Both Zaire and Rwanda were, like the rest of Africa, facing mass popular movements for multiparty democracy. Without Western intervention, these movements would have turned both countries into multiparty democracies. In Zaire a greater degree of sovereignty over the country's natural resources and integration with other countries in the region would have followed.

But a decade later, Rwanda was an absolute dictatorship, a reliable vehicle for US regional power, exporting its own military power in African Union missions. Zaire had collapsed as a state, occupied by neighboring armies, its economy based on warlords, smuggling, and donors' whims. This crushing of hope was accompanied by the most successful propaganda operation in history: one that turned entire populations into evildoers deserving of death, and an organization responsible for mass murder into a band of plucky heroes.

To accomplish this propaganda feat, the first thing that must be set aside is the United Nations framework for the negotiated settlement of wars. From Palestine to Suez, from Cyprus to Nicaragua, from Sierra Leone to Haiti, to Burundi and the DRC—the United Nations deploys a similar set of assumptions for trying to bring armed conflicts to a close.

The basis for negotiations—set out over the past seven or so decades—is as follows: There are two sides to a civil war. To end it, both sides

agree to stop fighting and to a power-sharing agreement, integrating rebel leaders into politics and integrating rebel soldiers into the army, while conducting a demobilization program that reintegrates disarmed soldiers into the mainstream economy. There is also often an accompanying framework for justice, whereby people found guilty of the most severe crimes will be punished, while others can be accepted back into the community if they tell the truth about what they did and if there are resources for the compensation of victims (truth and reconciliation processes). Donors support these processes with money and supply soldiers for UN forces to keep the rebels and government forces separated on the ground.

This framework has often been twisted beyond recognition to try to make it fit where it doesn't: It equated the Congo's sovereign government under Lumumba with the Belgian white supremacists trying to maintain their colony, and the Rwandan government with the RPF invaders, putting up a front of even-handedness while helping the aggressors. But even when it is honored in the breach, it is based on the idea that the international community values peace and reconstruction, the idea that labeling one side good and the other evil is probably not going to help the prospects for a power-sharing agreement or a reconciliation process.

To support Kagame and his system for governing central Africa, this framework is discarded. In its place, we have what is sometimes called the law of the jungle<sup>1</sup>: the idea that opposing sides should fight, destroying their society, until one side emerges to dominate the other as it sees fit. Having established domination, Kagame went on, establishing a prison state, mass surveillance, massacres of hundreds of thousands, aggressive war, occupation, a constant campaign of assassination, turning international justice into a sham, and destabilizing the region. Justifying all this through a simple appeal to the law of the jungle is unconvincing. Only a story based on good and evil will work, and for the post-1990s system for governing Africa centered on Kagame to be good all of his enemies—and they include entire populations—must be evil.

Dividing the world into good and evil has benefits for the propagandist. When dealing with evil, the idea of a negotiated peace becomes hopelessly naive. Attempts to resolve a civil war through diplomacy are complicity with an impending genocide (as NATO argued, evoking Rwanda, as it prepared to destroy the Libyan state and kill Gaddafi). In a story of good and evil, we evoke other moments of great evil, especially

the Nazi Holocaust. By evoking the Holocaust, those who dispute Kagame's good or his enemies' evil can be called Holocaust deniers, with all the associations so implied.

The imposition of this story is the most successful demonization campaign perhaps in all of history.<sup>2</sup> To accomplish it, Africanists have had to deploy a wide range of techniques. Many of them are the techniques of fiction writers; others are standard rhetorical tricks. An innocent reader looking to inform themselves about an African conflict, subjected to all these techniques, will emerge with a fundamentally racist view of the world, in which the populations that stand in the way of Kagame's system not only can be slaughtered, but *deserve to be*.

For the theatre of (Kagame) good and (Hutu) evil to proceed, the first step is the suppression of these facts:

- The genocide was a part of the dynamic of the civil war and would not have happened without the RPF's invasions. Even though pro-Kagame writers treat the war and genocide as separate, unconnected events,<sup>3</sup> researcher Lee Ann Fujii found that Rwandans did not see it that way: "The most common word that people used to refer to the period of 1990-94 is *intambara*, which means 'war.' People seemed to use this word most often despite there being multiple ways to refer to 'genocide' in Kinyarwanda, indicating perhaps a shared understanding of how closely linked the two forms of violence were."<sup>4</sup>
- At the absolute maximum, 10% of the Hutu refugees who fled Rwanda for Zaire in 1994 (200,000 out of 2 million) were genocidaires—it was more likely 5% (80–100,000) or still less than that, since many had probably already been killed by the RPF on the battlefield, in massacres within Rwanda, or in jails;
- Kagame's forces killed, in organized massacres, 40,000 people from April to July 1994 and another 150,000 people from July 1995 to April 1995, according to reports commissioned by the UN. Those who asked about these reports were told they did not exist.
- Even before Kagame's men shot down Habyarimana's plane, Kagame's forces had, through such massacres, displaced nearly one million people from the areas they controlled—people who were living in miserable conditions in camps described by Dallaire.
- All evidence shows that hundreds of thousands of Hutus were massacred by militias alongside Tutsis during the genocide.

- Upon coming to power Kagame created a hellish prison system for over 130,000, in which thousands died of starvation and preventable disease, while also using the accusation of genocide as a way of getting land or property for his Ugandan RPF returnees.

Kagame's prison system was built in secret; his massacres were covered up; his network of assassins was shrugged off.

How did writers go about suppressing these facts? Gerard Prunier offers a model for both dismissing counter-evidence and then embracing it 15 years later when it no longer matters. In his 1995 book, Prunier writes: "the 'Gersony report', produced by a UNHCR consultant in unclear circumstances tended to obscure rather than clarify the problem. This report apparently stated that the RPF murdered 30,000 Hutu in revenge killings between July and September 1994 and it was rumoured to present those killings as the RPF's deliberate policy."<sup>5</sup> In his footnote, he calls it a "mysterious document" and notes that it "had been embargoed (if it existed)." Once out of favor with the RPF in 2009, Prunier wrote very differently about the publicly available report, suddenly effusive about its methodology and credibility: "What finally brought these massacres to light was the Gersony Report episode. Robert Gersony, an experienced American freelance consultant who had done extensive work in combat zones in Africa... was hired by UNHCR to do a refugee survey in hope of facilitating refugee return. He and his assistants started their work with broad sympathy for the RPF... Gersony conducted about two hundred interviews inside Rwanda in ninety-one different sites located in 41 of the country's 145 communes... He ended up having to face a terrible reality: The RPF was carrying out a massive campaign of killings, which could not be considered simply as uncontrolled revenge killings... Gersony's conclusion was that between early April and mid-September 1994 the RPF had killed between 25,000 and 45,000 people, *including Tutsi*."<sup>6</sup> The "including Tutsi" is a nice touch, as if to say, "including some who didn't even deserve it!" In an endnote, Prunier notes that he had been "personally hoodwinked into disbelieving the very existence of his report."

In another endnote,<sup>7</sup> this time about the killing by Kagame's men of Kagame's main pre-1994 rival Fred Rwigyema, Prunier "must offer my apologies to readers of *The Rwanda Crisis*, where on pp.94-96 I give a totally false account of Rwigyema's death. My only excuse is that, in a book written in the immediate aftermath of the genocide, I still wanted

to believe in the relative innocence of the RPF and therefore accepted the cooked version of the facts it provided me with, in spite of several warnings that I was wrong.”

These aren't minor points, but monumental factual errors, stemming from an admitted bias. Prunier 2009's ability to admit Prunier 1995's failings is commendable. But it does not correct the damage done to the historical record by Prunier 1995, nor do they correct the framework of collective guilt of the Hutu and the partisanship for the RPF that Prunier's 1995 book helped to build in the West. How do we value a book by a scholar who “accepts cooked versions of the facts”, because of “what he wants to believe”, and “in spite of several warnings”?

The depth of pro-Kagame feeling by scholars, even decades into his dictatorship, is difficult to explain. But current scholarship builds on past scholarship, including its unexamined partisan assumptions. As for how the early scholars developed their biases, Prunier tries to explain the process in his usual, psychological terms: “The evils of colonialism versus the dark recesses of the African soul, economic versus political determinants, killer victims versus victim killers, contradictory interpretations of ancient oral traditions – the stuff of conflicting visions abounds. And somewhere in the dark recesses of our own culture, the obsessive duality of the Hutu/Tutsi dichotomy probably has to do with Manichean fascination with good and evil – with our compulsive need to take sides which Zoroastrian deviants infiltrated centuries ago into medieval Christianity.”<sup>8</sup> Kagame and his RPF were Prunier's “White Knights.” As he admits his bias, he claims that everyone has one: “This does apply to me. Getting to know the Tutsi exiles in Uganda during 1986-1989 was my ‘formative experience,’ later reinforced by visiting the RPF front in Byumba in June 1992. My friend Lieve Joris, a person of impeccable honesty, admitted that at first she did not like the Tutsi ‘because I first came to the Kivus in 1998.’ Later, when she was writing *L'heure des rebelles*, which can loosely be described as the biography of a Muyamulenge RCD commander, a new empathy emerged. I could easily extend that chronological explanation to several of my colleagues.”<sup>9</sup> Prunier interestingly uses the word *contamination* to describe the biases of which he admits himself and of which he accuses others: “most genuine foreign specialists of these countries have either been contaminated or at least accuse each other of having been contaminated by Hutu-demonising or Tutsi-hating,” admitting that he too “has probably by now also been contaminated, or in any case will be accused of having

been as soon as this book appears.”<sup>10</sup> Having chosen sides, Africanist scholars attack the opposition, he writes, and “the most vicious ad hominem attacks on colleagues, researchers, and assorted writers are perhaps motivated less by a desire to crush the adversary than by a preoccupation with keeping or regaining our own internal balance.”<sup>11</sup> Africanist scholars like Prunier depend for their “internal balance” on the maintenance of their biases. When that “internal balance” is threatened, they go out for “vicious ad hominem attacks.”

To write about events like war and genocide in terms of good and evil, writers must hold in their minds a definition of the good. In this case, the good is defined by the dictator himself: Kagame sees Rwanda aristocratically in terms of his rights. He told the BBC:

I am a Rwandese, I had a right, I had the basis for getting involved in the armed struggle to liberate my country from Habyarimana, from the government he was leading; I have been a refugee in... outside Rwanda for 30 years... Well I had the right to fight for my rights!<sup>12</sup>

Kagame’s rights include the right to rule free of any challenges. For those steeped in this worldview, like his biographer Stephen Kinzer, those who challenge Kagame’s right to rule can rightfully be killed.

Kinzer describes the assassination of his rival, politician Seth Sendashonga: Kagame, he writes, “denied having ordered the killing, but there was every reason he might have. Sendashonga posed a political and military threat to Kagame’s regime. It was not in his nature to abide such threats.”<sup>13</sup> In a book based on weeks of intimate interviews, Kinzer writes about the assassination as a distant event, as if he never got a moment to ask Kagame about it himself. Kinzer elaborates on why Kagame’s rival had to die when he describes Sendashonga’s investigations into RPF massacres: “His work as interior minister took him to every part of the country, and during his trips he made a point of showing solidarity with local Hutu, asking about abuses committed by soldiers, and building a network of supporters. All understood that he was tacitly challenging Kagame’s authority. Kagame never took kindly to such challenges.”<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere in the book, Kinzer approvingly describes how Kagame has banned all reference to “Hutu” and “Tutsi,” but here, as he is justifying an assassination, he insinuates that Sendashonga was “showing solidarity with local *Hutu*,” providing another reason that Sendashonga had to die, for if Sendashonga had merely been *showing*

*solidarity with local victims of RPF massacres*, it would be a crass political murder and not the righteous killing of someone potentially complicit in (Hutu) evildoing.

On the arrest of another potential rival, President Pasteur Bizimungu, Kinzer sets up the situation by noting that Bizimungu “had an erratic personality.”<sup>15</sup> The arrest itself is relegated to a footnote and the classic indirect attribution: “Few were surprised when Bizimungu was arrested.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition to having a birthright to rule, Kagame has a sectarian reading of Rwanda’s history (one that has now been imposed on a generation of children through Rwanda’s education system). One observer watching Kagame lecture wrote that he “refers to ‘the genocide in the 1960s, the 1970s and 1980s’, as if ‘the one in 1994’ were merely one in a series – a hair-raising denial of the singularity of events between April and July 1994.”<sup>17</sup> To elaborate: “The current Rwandan authorities and President Paul Kagame himself take the position that a fascist, racist dictatorship was installed after Rwanda became politically independent, with the handover of power to newly elected authorities. This thesis was extended by a second claim, which flows logically from the first: the genocidal project was a constituent element in building up a Hutu opposition and in the founding of the republic. Hence, the interethnic clashes and massacres of the 1960s and 1973 would have anticipated the ‘Final Solution’ of 1994. From this perspective, the question of ‘planning genocide’ would have been pointless, since the history of the republic could only be a series of episodes of Tutsi martyrdom.”<sup>18</sup>

A right to rule, a right to kill those who stand in his way, a reading of history based on his own group as victim and those he rules as guilty: These beliefs are standard for dictators and mass murderers. But justifying them to audiences who have some belief in universal human rights, negotiated solutions to military conflicts, and the idea of equality across ethnicities, is not easy. Nonetheless, the Africanists are willing to take up the challenge.

Defining Kagame and his RPF as good, Kagame-oriented writers act as defense lawyers on his behalf. When the evidence points to the RPF committing an atrocity, these defenders cast doubt. When the RPF kills masses of people, the defenders minimize the numbers. When the evidence is definitive, the defenders suggest the murders were in retaliation for worse crimes. When finally admitting to crimes, Kagame’s defenders

suggest that they were mere excesses committed in moments of passion. In this way, Kagame can kill hundreds of thousands and still be a hero.

Prunier is an exemplar of this defense method, discrediting sources that implicate the RPF, and only admitting to what can be definitively proven (as discussed above with the Gersony report). Having invaded first Rwanda in October 1990, it is only in February 1993, Prunier writes, that “for the first time, the RPF was clearly guilty of a number of atrocities.” Prunier justifies each killing, however: “It seems that the victims were shot simply in reprisal for the recent massacres... Whether these killings were carried out deliberately or whether they resulted from the anger felt by some of the fighters after the recent massacres is not clear.”<sup>19</sup> He sarcastically discredits Rwandan government reports of mass graves in RPF areas: “How government troops could have found mass graves in the growing area of enemy territory while they themselves were retreating was not explained.”<sup>20</sup> The point of this “disinformation,” Prunier writes, “was to present the renewed fighting (in 1993) as something completely new... and as a straight foreign invasion... the *disinformation* played its role in preparing the ground for increased French involvement in the war.”<sup>21</sup> When the RPF retreated from one of the areas it had won during the February offensive, the government found a mass grave in Ngarama with 134 bodies, which obviously pointed to a massacre by the RPF. Prunier presents this discovery as “the *pretext* for a war of communiques and counter-communicues between the RPF and the government,” and emphasizes that the government had held Ngarama before the offensive and presents the RPF version that this was “an old government mass-grave.”<sup>22</sup>

Prunier is not at all even-handed in these discussions. The report of government atrocities Prunier relies upon in his account, the FIDH, was similarly attacked, by Barry Collins and other writers, as having only visited government-controlled areas and having a heavily pro-RPF bias: Prunier accepts its claims without question. About the assassination of Habyarimana, Prunier argues on the RPF’s behalf that they were happy with the Arusha Accords and “could not hope for anything better,” that they were “not at all” prepared to take advantage of the assassination militarily—evidenced, Prunier argues, by the fact that they took five days to reach Kigali and relieve their battalion.<sup>23</sup> Five days is not a very long time to advance against opposition: The previous phase of the war took three months. But these arguments are sufficient for Prunier to dispense with the possibility that the RPF killed Habyarimana.



Prunier is also a master of the use of the passive voice, when it suits: "In the north-west," he writes about the months leading up to the genocide, "a series of murders which *took place* during mid-November *were attributed* to the RPF."<sup>24</sup> And when Habyarimana's plane is shot down, "two missiles *were fired* from just outside the airport perimeter. The aircraft *received* a direct hit."<sup>25</sup> These murders "took place" and "were attributed," the missiles "were fired," the aircraft "received" the hit. Contrast this with Prunier's active-voice description of January 1993 massacres by the militias, during which "groups of extremist militiamen, acting either on their own or more often with the support of the local people and the collaboration of FAR elements, went on a murder rampage, torturing prisoners and burning houses."<sup>26</sup>

Prunier presents terrorist attacks in the government-controlled zone of Rwanda during the civil war as false-flag operations, from which the government benefited, but from which "what benefits the RPF could have derived from such attacks is difficult to figure out."<sup>27</sup> Difficult for him, perhaps, though not to anyone who understands terrorism as part of a military strategy and isn't trying to exonerate the terrorists. Assassinations of Rwandan politicians are attributed to the Rwandan government and not to the RPF, ridiculing the victims all the while. The assassination of Hutu politician Emmanuel Gapyisi is presented comically ("Emmanuel Gapyisi was driving home on 18 May 1993 when *he was shot* by five bullets *accurately pumped into his chest* as he opened his gate"), "it was obvious that the contract on Gapyisi's head came either from CDR circles or from among the President's friends," and obviously not from the RPF.<sup>28</sup> Another politician, Stanislas Mbonampeka, "was the target of a grenade attack, and not being particularly heroic by nature, he decided to take a back seat in the tumultuous politics of the day."<sup>29</sup> One obvious possibility, not "difficult to figure out," is the use of such terrorist attacks to "soften up" the opponent ahead of the conventional RPF attacks that eventually succeeded. Terrorism was and is a weapon in the RPF arsenal, which hardly makes the RPF unique. But since good guys don't do terrorism and the RPF are good guys, Prunier must insist on attributing such attacks to the government, who apparently did all these crimes in an attempt to reap the propaganda value of blaming them on the RPF.

One might be tempted to describe Prunier's bias in these colorful terms: "Violence is described as 'happening' but the perpetrators are never identified. One has the surrealistic impression of reading about

murders being committed by armies of ghosts whose faces are forever blurred.”<sup>30</sup> These are Prunier’s words, describing the writings of pro-government priests (“White Fathers”) during the genocide. But Prunier’s own writing on the violence is a perfect mirror image of those he criticizes.

In Chapter 8, I discussed estimates of deaths in the Rwanda genocide and how we know what we know. Africanist writers who are easily able to repeat the 800,000–1,000,000 figure for the Rwandan genocide discover impossible methodological difficulties when trying to estimate the numbers killed, within Rwanda and then in the Congo, by Kagame’s RPF. Consider the bland and factual way that scholar Emet Kisangani writes about the 1996–1997 massacres of Hutus in the eastern DRC: “People killed from direct fighting numbered some 3,000 to 5,000. In addition, as the RPA and AFDL crossed the DRC, they tracked down former Rwandan soldiers and Interahamwe militias who had committed genocide in Rwanda. In the process, the RPA killed some 233,000 Hutu refugees.”<sup>31</sup> This number, 233,000,<sup>32</sup> is surprisingly precise and astonishingly high to be so blandly reported.<sup>33</sup> But Kisangani isn’t alone in the casual reporting of hundreds of thousands of deaths or in the denial of their impact.

Career Congo expert Thomas Turner describes the military operations and the kill teams Rwanda organized to massacre the Hutu refugees in 1996–1997: “While the mixed troops of the AFDL continued their progress... another war was waged by the Congolese Tutsi trained in Rwanda and the Rwandan special units. The mission of these teams of killers, who operated autonomously within the rebel troops, was to liquidate the genocidaires and their allies, according to Braeckman. These men had been given advanced communications equipment and had infiltrated ‘facilitators’ into the teams of the UNHCR and the humanitarian organizations. While the latter tried to find the refugees in order to provide them with aid, the ‘facilitators’ communicated to the soldiers the exact location of the refugees... When the AFDL soldiers arrived, the civilians were the first victims. Many Congolese who had fled with the Rwandan Hutu were also massacred. The operation *verged on genocide* since in North and South Kivu, many Hutu with Congolese nationality... were likewise massacred; summoned to meetings in open air, they were killed without distinction and thrown into mass graves.”<sup>34</sup> From the description, it seems that the only reason the operation “verged” on genocide but wasn’t genocide is because it was done by Kagame’s

troops. Such massacres were the building blocks of the *Rwandan genocide* and are called as such, not the *Rwandan verging on genocide*. But, in all things, Kagame must be protected, even by his critics. Turner rounds the discussion out with a thoughtful discussion of the RPF's security concerns, and the balanced statement that "There was no reason to assume that those who returned to Rwanda were innocent of participation in the genocide of 1994; nor was there any reason to assume that all the Hutu who fled westward were *genocidaires*... The RPF/RPA apparently did not *intend* to kill as many Hutu as possible but to destroy Hutu communities under the control of the former Rwandan authorities."<sup>35</sup> As always, *intent* is brought in in order to distinguish between the real (Hutu) *genocidaires* who had bad intent while killing, and the non-*genocidaires* under Kagame's command, who only intended to "destroy Hutu communities" who were, after all, under *genocidaire* control and therefore, open season.

Congo expert Jason Stearns writes that "No one really knew exactly how many refugees remained in Zaire," citing a UN figure of 439,500, a US military figure of 202,000 and a Canadian estimate of 165,000.<sup>36</sup> The precise and repeated figure for the Rwandan genocide of 800,000 can be contrasted with this murky, highly varying and disputed number for massacred Hutu refugees.

Stearns describes the complexities of counting the refugees with the question, "How many of the Rwandan Hutu refugees who fled Rwanda during the genocide *died* in the Congo?"<sup>37</sup> Even the way of asking the question denies the Hutu refugees victim status. They *fled*, and *died*. No one killed them, unlike the victims of the genocide that they (all, apparently) committed. And they are uncountable. "Anywhere between zero and 380,000 refugees could... have been missing. *Also, just because refugees were missing, they weren't necessarily dead.*"<sup>38</sup> Stearns writes in the defense lawyer mode. Beginning with a lower bound of zero missing refugees is a particularly gentle touch, given what follows.

Stearns cites an informal MSF survey suggesting "at least 60,000 refugees had been killed, while the whereabouts of another 180,000 were unknown."<sup>39</sup> The AFDL denied access to human rights investigators, "making it difficult to confirm many reports issued by churches and civil society groups" (is such a note ever made about the Rwandan genocide figures?), but "there is no doubt that massacres took place." Citing Roberto Garreton, Stearns gives a figure of 8000–12,000 people massacred, "including Congolese Hutu who were accused of complicity with

the ex-FAR.”<sup>40</sup> Specific massacres Stearns mentions include one of 500 refugees in Chimanga and another of 100 people nearby; several north of Goma, Mbandaka, between 200 and 2000.<sup>41</sup> Such vast disparities in estimates are common when discussing the Hutu refugee killings. “The inescapable truth is that tens of thousands of refugees *were killed*, while *more probably died from disease and starvation*,”<sup>42</sup> which, Stearns does not note, is the case in most genocides. He quotes one of the killers, Papy Kamanzi, seemingly approvingly, on motive: “They needed to fear the AFDL. They had committed genocide. It was revenge, he said. But it was also a warning: Don’t try to mess with us.”<sup>43</sup>

Pro-Kagame writers create a bind for themselves. For if genocide is in the very DNA of the Hutus, if their obedience and bloodlust renders them an eternal danger to Tutsis, then Kagame knew this and invaded anyway, knowing that a genocide would be a predictable outcome of the invasion. How can this seeming paradox, of an intelligent and good invader’s actions triggering a predictable genocide, be dealt with? Through the concept of the naive killer: Kagame is a righteous killer, but a hopelessly naive one.

Telling a story of a Tutsi man approaching an RPF fighter in Ruhengeri in 1991, accusing the RPF of callousness toward the Tutsi who would die because of the RPF’s seeking power, Prunier writes that “the question” (of whether power for the RPF was worth the deaths of the Tutsi in Rwanda) “was worth asking, but it is improbable that in late 1990 when Paul Kagame was working day and night to turn the RPF from an alienated band of exiles into an efficient fighting machine, he ever stopped to ask himself what was really going to happen.”<sup>44</sup> At worst, to Prunier, the “battle-hardened but naive” RPF could be accused of a situation in which they allowed a situation in which their “‘Ugandan’ political rationality and their rock hard conviction of being right both morally and politically seem to have caused them to underestimate the depth of the irrational myths, fears, and hatreds they were about to confront – including probably those lurking on their own side.”<sup>45</sup> RPF crimes are always contextualized and have good reasons: “soldiers’ indiscipline, revenge killings based on denunciations, witch-hunts of real or imaginary Interahamwe. In some areas where militiamen managed to use the civilian population as a shield, RPF reaction could be murderously brutal.”<sup>46</sup> But, presumably, only then—RPF brutality is, to Prunier, also the responsibility of the RPF’s enemies. *Look what you made them do.*

If Kagame, to these writers, is the definition of all that is good, it is the entire Hutu population that is the definition of evil. Decades later, the evil of the Hutu is not debated. No case is made, it is simply assumed. Jason Stearns tells his readers that the Congo wars were complex, unlike Rwanda's war where "one could cast the *genocidal Hutu* as the villains."<sup>47</sup>

The most popular book on the Rwandan genocide was written by Philip Gourevitch, was published in 1998—after Kagame had assassinated several prominent former RPF and massacred hundreds of thousands of Rwandans, and was in the middle of what would become the occupation and plunder of the Congo—and was called *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*.

Take a look at this astounding statement by a reporter, quoted approvingly by Gourevitch. To set the scene: It's 1995 and all of Rwanda is under Kagame's control. Two million Rwandan refugees have fled from the Kagame's forces, through the French-controlled Turquoise zone, and into Zaire. They are living in miserable camps. Tens of thousands have died in a cholera epidemic. Kagame's most fervent wish, for which he will soon receive the green light, is to take his army into Zaire, force-march the refugees back into Rwanda, and kill another several hundred thousand people, especially anyone associated with the former government, the former army, or any potential opposition member, intellectual, or leader.

So here's the reporter in Goma, Zaire, hanging out among the dead and dying refugees, from northern and southern Rwanda, survivors of massacres, women, children, elites and peasants, former soldiers and former militia killers. "A reporter who was sent into Goma directly from Bosnia told me [Gourevitch] that he knew what Hutu Power was and that he looked up at the volcano and prayed, 'God, if that thing erupts right now, and buries the killers, I will believe that you are just and I will go to church again every day of my life.'"<sup>48</sup>

This is the world that writers on Africa have created, a world for themselves, where they read one another and then arrive in a refugee camp and wish that a volcano erupts and kills all of the refugees.

How did it come to this? What methods could be used to convince a reporter to make such a disgusting prayer, and for another writer to approvingly quote it, and for a public to approvingly read it?

Watch the theatre of good and evil under the direction of Kagame's biographer Stephen Kinzer as he describes the refugee camps in Zaire.

Watch the orchestration of the virtuous heroes of the RPF with the guilty, evil Hutu millions: “In mid-July a great mass of Hutu, organized by their mayors and convinced that the new regime was bent on killing or enslaving them, surged out of Rwanda. Many were genocidaires, but because they were now suffering refugees—and because television cameras recorded their suffering—the world saw them as victims. It was an easy mistake for uninformed outsiders to make. Their reasoning was simple: There had been a tragedy in Rwanda, and in its wake, huge numbers of refugees had poured out of the country. It seemed logical to presume that the refugees were survivors of the genocide.”

Kinzer continues: “The truth was exactly opposite.”<sup>49</sup>

*Many* were genocidaires. The world saw them as victims, but the truth was *exactly the opposite*. *Many* were genocidaires—which basically comes to mean *all*, by the time we get to the end of the paragraph, where the refugees are *exactly the opposite* of survivors—perpetrators. They are also *a great mass*, they *poured* out of the country.

Through an appeal to *complexity*, Kinzer invites readers to be more sophisticated than “the world,” which was fooled into thinking that these people were *victims* when they were, in truth, *exactly the opposite*.

Writing in 1995, while hundreds of thousands of these refugees were yet to be killed by the RPF, Prunier helped set the stage for their massacre, presenting them as evil and their very presence as an unsolvable problem: “The refugees’ return is a desirable goal... but the question is how. The control of the genocidal authorities over the population is almost total. Their lack of remorse is almost absolute. Where does one start from there? In fact there could be no start at all except a re-start of hostilities.”<sup>50</sup> It is a gruesome spectacle to see a scholar advocating a return to war.<sup>51</sup>

Writing about the cholera epidemic that killed tens of thousands in the same camps, Stearns writes simply that “after one month, 50,000 people had died.” Prunier gets more colorful, writing that “the terrible sufferings of the Hutu refugees in Goma” had a “‘divine retribution’ aspect,” which unfortunately “diffused the intensity of feeling linked with the previous genocide.”<sup>52</sup> In simpler words, Prunier is basically saying God himself killed the refugees, and in doing so, he unfortunately brought sympathy upon them, even though they were guilty and evil.

Both men describe the camps as horrible places, Stearns writing that “everywhere the smell of shit and death clogged the air.”<sup>53</sup> But both

men also simultaneously scold the donors for spending money trying to keep the refugees alive: “Over the next two years,” Stearns writes, “donors spent over \$2 billion on the refugee crisis in eastern Zaire, more than twice as much as they spent on helping the new Rwandan government.”<sup>54</sup> “The RPF,” he adds, “was furious.”<sup>55</sup> Then, the inevitable quote from Kagame: “We no longer talk about orphans, widows, victims. We’re only talking about refugees, refugees, refugees.”<sup>56</sup>

“The abject suffering inverted the moral standing of the refugees and even soldiers – they became victims, not killers.”<sup>57</sup> Stearns wants his readers to understand that the refugees were not victims, but killers. He approvingly quotes Alain Destexhe from MSF writing that “How can physicians continue to assist Rwandan refugees when by doing so they are also supporting *killers*?”<sup>58</sup> This question was never asked about Kagame or the RPF. Another MSF official, Fiona Terry, is quoted approvingly—Stearns says she “put it eloquently” when she mocks Western governments for “transforming the genocide into a ‘complex emergency’ in which there was no *good and bad side*, only victims.”<sup>59</sup> The *bad side* is the Hutus—all of them. The *good side* is Kagame and his RPF. Each quote, each repetition, helps set the Hutus up to be killed—noble work for humanitarian organizations and scholars. Stearns disapprovingly quotes a catholic charity saying soldiers “have to eat, they are not all murderers”: One can only assume Stearns thinks that they *were* all murderers, and that they *should* starve. He notes, with anger, that a Congolese human rights group included “statements and reports by the government in exile.”<sup>60</sup> “For the survivors of the genocide, many of whom had lost members of their families, the genocidaire’s presence in the camps was a living insult.”<sup>61</sup> How do you address a *living insult*, if not by killing?

All of your go-to books have a passage about how the “Hutu” refugees were *not who you think they were*. Ultimately, they produce journalists and aid workers who travel among refugees and harbor genocidal wishes that make them feel, not disgusted with themselves, but secretly self-righteous, for who doesn’t wish genocide on a genocidaire?<sup>62</sup>

Consider another example, this one softer, more subtle, and more thoughtful: Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani, who taught RPF cadres in his classes, can write that “Rwanda’s key dilemma is how to build a democracy that can incorporate a *guilty majority* alongside an aggrieved and fearful minority in a single political community.” The majority is guilty. The minority is aggrieved and fearful. In addition to not being true—remember

that maximalist estimates of the number of killers are in the hundreds of thousands, not anything like a majority<sup>63</sup>—this is also a view at odds with any framework for political solution of problems discussed above. South Africa did not call the whites a guilty minority and black citizens a fearful and aggrieved majority—which would have been much more true. Canada, the US, Australia, and New Zealand, based on genocide against First Nations, are never called countries based on a guilty (white) majority and a fearful and aggrieved minority. Israel is never called a *guilty* majority, despite constant incitement and all signs of majority support for genocide.<sup>64</sup>

Mamdani is hinting that there is no prospect of power-sharing between the good and the evil. Prunier is more explicit. After several pages of detailed descriptions of atrocities committed against Tutsis during the genocide, Prunier qualifies that the “catalogue of horrors should definitely not be seen as an attempt at sensationalism.” Prunier has written these things because “the gruesome physical and psychological reality of the genocide has to be present to the mind when the political situation is being assessed.” Specifically, it must be assessed when “one considers the possibilities of a coalition government in post genocide Rwanda.” He says “the comparison with the Jews is rather strong – it will be difficult to treat the Rwandese case as just another piece of real-politisch business as usual.”<sup>65</sup>

The comparison to the Holocaust is made. But what is advocated for the Hutus is much worse than what happened to the Germans after World War II. Germany was indeed occupied and divided after World War II, but the Nuremberg process sought to bring individual justice down on the highest levels of the Nazi organization; post-genocide justice (and scholarship) in Rwanda was based on collective punishment and collective guilt of all Hutus.

There are other comparisons that could be made as well, and Prunier makes them: “Who remembers the half-million Chinese killed on the orders of President Suharto of Indonesia in 1965? Or the hundreds of thousands of natives the same President has massacred in Timor over the years? ...the Rangoon military dictatorship is still in power after slaughtering thousands of its own unarmed citizens who dared to ask for a free society.”<sup>66</sup> He need not have used examples from Asia. Prunier could have mentioned Burundi 1972 or the massacres of Congolese by Belgian mercenaries in the DRC in the 1960s—both populations were expected to forget and live under the regimes that massacred them. Or the



genocidal war against the Guatemalan indigenous people in the 1980s. Or the atrocities committed in the long Colombian civil war. Or the horrors of South African apartheid. In every one of these cases, all accompanied by “catalogues of horrors” of their own, *including the German one*, justice processes were advocated that did not involve the assumption of collective guilt. But throughout the mainstream scholarly work on the genocide, the Hutu population is treated as *more guilty* for the genocide than the Germans were for the Holocaust, more guilty for atrocities than any other population through history.

The “catalogue of horrors” is to be remembered specifically “when the political situation is being assessed.” The families of Indonesia’s communists, parents murdered in front of their children, babies split open on bayonets—they are to forget and live under the rule of the killers. The Timorese are to find their way past it. The South Africans can have a non-punitive process—tell the truth and move on. The German leaders are punished, while the people are pitied for having suffered the Nazi dictatorship. Guatemalans are to accept a peace process that leaves the structures of dictatorship in place, having lost hundreds of thousands of people to it. Colombian peasants who remember massacres where paramilitaries played soccer with people’s heads—they are to accept a pardon of the same paramilitaries in the name of peace. But Hutus, after the Rwandan genocide, are so uniquely guilty, so unreformable, so eager to kill again, that they must constantly be suppressed—that thread runs throughout Prunier’s work and through Western consciousness about the Rwandan genocide. He writes that the RPF should not have to work with “contaminated politicians.”<sup>67</sup> The South Africans had to work with “contaminated politicians”; the Indonesians had to live under them. But for the RPF to negotiate with the people it defeated militarily was presented as some kind of racism.<sup>68</sup> In any case, Prunier adds colorfully, “there was really nothing to negotiate and nobody to negotiate it with, apart from a group of *unrepentant mass murderers*, trying to parley their strong-arm control over a *primitive peasant mass* into a number of cabinet seats and a share in the army.”<sup>69</sup> Imagine Prunier writing this way about the RPF, and the racism is clear.

In the refugee camps of Zaire, following the genocide, the aid agencies came to accept the idea of the collective guilt of the Hutus. Pottier quotes MSF-France aid worker Yann Jondeau in an interview with *Le Figaro*, saying “by the end of the second week we understood that we had come to the rescue of the militias who had carried out the massacres,

we all got a good smack in the face. The perpetrators of the genocide controlled everything in the camps. And worst of all, because we were French they actually liked us!”<sup>70</sup> Even though Pottier’s own research suggested that “the political reality of the camps had not been one of uniform or constant terror. The extremists’ grip on camp residents had had its ups and downs... the notion of an unwavering hostage crisis is misleading,”<sup>71</sup> when the aid agencies adopted the idea of collective Hutu guilt, they reduced the Hutu refugees to a passive, collectively guilty “mass of humanity” that had “poured” (refugees are always a liquid that “pours,” “floods,” etc.) over the border. The aid agencies systematically disempowered refugees, ignoring their organization, professional skills, independent analytical capacity, and food culture.<sup>72</sup> He quotes a camp staff member saying that the “UNHCR knows how to turn intellectuals into beggars.”<sup>73</sup>

A peculiar set of numbers that were presented by Prunier and repeated by Stearns illustrates the difference between the miserable life Hutus had in the camps and the worse circumstances the Africanists believe they deserved. Citing Prunier, Stearns catalogues the numbers of “amenities available in five camps around Goma: 2324 bars, 450 restaurants, 589 different shops, 62 hairdressers, 51 pharmacies, 30 tailors, 25 butchers, 5 blacksmiths and mechanics, 4 photographic studios, 3 cinemas, 2 hotels, and 1 slaughterhouse.”<sup>74</sup> Are these absolute numbers really so impressive, considering a refugee population of around two million, the size of a major Western city? Are readers supposed to know the number of bars or restaurants in their own city? My own, a city of 3 million, has over 10,000 bars. The point of this tally can only be to suggest that refugee life was cushy—a bizarre conclusion incompatible with the previous discussion by the same authors of the smell of shit in the air and the 50,000 deaths. The point seems to be to create a sense of confusion about what was happening in the refugee camps and about who was responsible, ultimately to present the refugees as a guilty mass of people who deserved the massacre that was coming.

Once the Hutus were deemed collectively guilty, being “turned into beggars” was a good deal less than the death sentence that the Africanists believed they deserved. They are lucky to be alive, through Kagame’s generosity, readers are told to think.

The evil of the Hutu also justifies the dictatorship, surveillance, and terror inflicted by Kagame on the population. Kinzer has a “Rwandan

friend” who he talks to about the country. After describing the police and government, Kinzer says that his Rwandan friend “finds this level of social control reassuring. Like many Rwandans, he fears what people would do if the regime were less *strict*.”<sup>75</sup>

Here’s the point: The good do not do politics with the evil.

For Hutus to deserve everything they get, they must all be guilty. For that reason, it is a particular preoccupation of the Africanists that the number of perpetrators of the genocide be maximized.

The 2014 BBC Documentary, *Rwanda: The Untold Story*, draws on former members of Kagame’s RPF to reveal several facts that are normally excluded: that many Hutu were killed during the genocide, and that Kagame has set up a ruthless dictatorship that thinks nothing of assassinating its political opponents.

The reaction to the BBC documentary was revealing. An open letter was sent to the BBC by prominent Kagame supporters outside of the country, self-styled “scholars, scientists, researchers, journalists, and historians.” Their most passionate objection to the documentary was allowing a Hutu survivor of the genocide to say that only a small number of Hutus, only ten percent of the Interahamwe organization, were killers. The Western experts insisted that “eyewitness testimony” shows that “the majority of Hutu Power forces... were trained specifically to kill Tutsi at speed.” This is a massive, remarkable, and bizarre claim<sup>76</sup> with a commensurate massive burden of proof—more than a mention of “eyewitness testimony” is needed.

Rebutting the open letter, RPF dissident Theogene Rudasingwa wrote a letter<sup>77</sup> to the BBC praising *Untold Story*. In his rebuttal letter, Rudasingwa dismissed as pedantic the disputes between scholars over numbers involved in the genocide:

... on the question of the numbers of the Interahamwe militia who participated in the killings, I wonder how this can be relevant. For Rwandans who went through the horrors of 1994, both Hutu and Tutsi, the agonizing remembrance of the unimaginable violence unleashed by hordes of militia is substantive proof that this was lethal power. The BBC documentary, in its opening moments, captures the agony of the victims, as they are hacked to death by this militia. So what if they were 5,000, 10, 1000, 30,000? For the American Professors, and the authors of the letter trading polemics on this matter, I would say this is not time well spent. The militia

had to be defeated militarily. I am glad they did. Unfortunately, the military victors of 1994 went on a killing spree in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo that is yet to be accounted for. That should be a subject of urgent interest rather than counting the number of militia that were involved in the genocidal madness.

Rudasingwa's rhetorical question about the number of Hutus involved in the targeted killing of Tutsis during the genocide, "So what if they were 5,000, 10, 1000, 30,000?" is actually of critical importance to the frame in which Kagame is good and Hutus are collectively evil. The higher the number, the greater the collective guilt of all Hutus, the greater the need to support Kagame's dictatorship, lest the guilty and evil Hutus return to power through a democratic opening.

Once the Hutus are successfully made into the very symbol of evil, violence against them is always presented as: Defensive, retaliatory, justified, and minor compared to the violence they have done and the violence they deserve.

A believer in universal human rights might think of the 190,000 killed by the RPF from April 1994 to April 1995 and the 800,000–1,000,000 killed by the militias from April 1994 to July 1994 to be all part of a single, horrific event that needs to be understood and prevented.<sup>78</sup> But to make "the Hutu" disposable, the ledger method is used instead. In the ledger method, there are 800,000–1,000,000 deaths on one side of the ledger, and before Kagame can answer for any crimes, he would have to kill at least that number of people. Deaths up to that number are free. And since Kagame admits nothing, the official numbers would never balance anyway. Guichaoua calls this the "macabre accounting exercise designed to take an inventory of how many victims each camp has suffered, as if to keep a scorecard of the crimes committed by each side."<sup>79</sup>

Prunier on RPF massacres: "These crimes," he goes on, "deserved to be condemned... but they were in a way the unavoidable dirty byproduct of civil war, and on the government side the FAR had done and was still doing exactly the same thing." Not that RPF advocates would accept this argument about the other side. In any case, Prunier argues, "such killings represented 1-2% of the casualties in Rwanda," and "a cease-fire... would have led to more and not fewer deaths."<sup>80</sup> Prunier's percentage estimate would be proven low (It was probably closer to 10% at this point—though it makes more moral sense to think of these figures additively instead of balancing one another out.), and his idea about a cease-fire is also disputable since the war and the genocide were

inextricably linked—the most intense massacres occurred just before areas were lost to the RPF. When describing RPF crimes after their victory in July 1994, Prunier predictably describes them in terms of their propaganda value to the RPF’s enemies. “Tales of violence coming out of Rwanda were a boon to the killer bourgmestres.”<sup>81</sup> Prunier’s minimizing of the suffering of one side goes on when he discusses the cholera epidemic in Goma, Zaire (DRC) among the Hutu refugees: “Although suffering certainly cannot be measured by numbers alone, *one should nevertheless not forget* that the victims of the Goma epidemic numbered around 30,000 while the genocide figure came into the 800,000 range. The horror and the compassion directed at the refugees dying in Goma tended to obscure such facts.”<sup>82</sup> Again, to Prunier, the first 800,000 Hutu deaths are free.

Jason Stearns follows Prunier’s account closely in discussing the RPF killings in Zaire. Stearns, too, has mastered the ledger method: “If 80,000 refugees *died* in the Congo, that may be terrible *but nonetheless minor* compared with the 800,000 in Rwanda. The Rwandan government may have *overstepped*, but isn’t that *understandable* given the tragedy that people suffered?”<sup>83</sup> The first 800,000 are free.

## NOTES

1. An ancient label highly unfair to these invaluable, biodiverse climax forest ecosystems.
2. So far.
3. The writers of the letter to the BBC put the words “civil war” in scare quotes. Prunier, too, presents them as completely separate.
4. Fujii 2009, pp. 14–15.
5. Prunier 1995, pp. 323–324, fn 25. The Gersony report is now publicly available and can be found on the web.
6. Prunier 2009, pp. 15–16.
7. Prunier 2009, n51 to Chapter 1, p. 372.
8. Prunier 2009, p. 157, fn 48.
9. Prunier 2009, p. 357.
10. Prunier 1995, p. 157, fn 48.
11. Prunier 1995, p. 157, fn 48.
12. BBC Hard Talk, December 7, 2006. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/n5ctrl/progs/06/hardtalk/kagame07dec.ram>. Cited in Olivier Nyirubugara. 2013. *Complexities and Dangers of Remembering and Forgetting in Rwanda*. p. 50, endnote 34.

13. Kinzer 2008, p. 214.
14. Kinzer 2008, p. 192.
15. Kinzer 2008, p. 222.
16. Kinzer 2008, p. 225. Bizimungu and Sendashonga were Hutu members of the RPF, who signed up to an organization they believed was not sectarian.
17. Stephen Smith. 2011. "Rwanda in Six Scenes." *London Review of Books*, Vol. 33, No. 6 (17 March), pp. 3–8. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n06/stephen-w-smith/rwanda-in-six-scenes>.
18. Guichaoua 2015, p. 403, fn 59.
19. Prunier 1995, p. 175.
20. Prunier 1995, p. 176.
21. Prunier 1995, p. 176. Emphasis mine, since what Prunier called disinformation turned out to be, simply, information.
22. Prunier 1995, pp. 183–184. These detailed defenses of RPF crimes are not among matters Prunier apologized for in his 2009 book.
23. Prunier 1995, pp. 220–221.
24. Prunier, p. 196.
25. Prunier 1995, p. 212.
26. Prunier 1995, p. 174. Though note that even here, at his maximally active voice, Prunier is unable to name any names or provide any clear lines of command for the murders committed by these militias.
27. Prunier 1995, p. 144.
28. Prunier 1995, p. 185.
29. Prunier 1995, p. 188.
30. Prunier 1995, p. 251.
31. Kisangani 2012, p. 118.
32. Citing Kisangani 2000a, p. 179.
33. It is, after all, more than 1/4 of the standard estimate of those killed in the genocide. We return again to the notion that the first 800,000 murders are "free."
34. Turner 2013, p. 56.
35. Turner 2013, p. 57.
36. Stearns 2011, p. 128, fn 348.
37. Stearns 2011, p. 135.
38. Stearns 2011, p. 136.
39. Stearns 2011, p. 136.
40. Stearns 2011, p. 137. Note that Stearns deems it important to note these were Congolese Hutu and that they were accused of something—massacred, yes, but perhaps for some good reasons.
41. Stearns 2011, pp. 137–138.
42. Stearns 2011, p. 138. My emphasis, on Stearns's use of the passive voice for these cases.

43. Stearns 2011, p. 139. Note how no opportunity is missed to remind the reader that those killed were guilty Hutu genocidaires.
44. Prunier 1995, p. 157.
45. Prunier 1995, p. 157. I didn't bother to note it in the text but note here the casual attribution of "rationality" to Ugandans, apparently another ethnic trait assigned by Prunier.
46. Prunier 1995, p. 266.
47. Stearns 2011, p. 5.
48. Gourevitch 1998, pp. 166–167.
49. Kinzer 2008, p. 182.
50. Prunier 1995, p. 315.
51. Later in his book Prunier prints a list of people he thinks should be killed, the details of which I'll return to.
52. Prunier 1995, p. 303.
53. Stearns 2011, p. 34.
54. Stearns 2011, p. 34.
55. Kagame is also furious on p. 274, in October 2000, when Rwandan invaders experience a setback in the Congolese town of Pweto.
56. Stearns 2011, p. 34.
57. Stearns 2011, p. 38.
58. Stearns 2011, p. 38.
59. Stearns 2011, p. 41. Emphasis mine.
60. Stearns 2011, p. 39.
61. Stearns 2011, p. 47.
62. That's obviously a rhetorical question. The worst monster wouldn't wish for a genocide of Germans because of what the Nazis did, or a genocide of Americans for what the KKK did, or a genocide of South African whites for what was done under apartheid. "The Hutu" are in an entirely different category of humanity than any of these genocidal groups.
63. Estimates of those who killed others in the genocide are 80,000–100,000 (Prunier) and, at the high end, 200,000 (Straus).
64. See, for examples, Max Blumenthal. 2013. *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel*. Nation Books.
65. Prunier 1995, p. 257.
66. Prunier 1995, p. 229.
67. Prunier 1995, p. 334.
68. Prunier 1995, p. 334.
69. Prunier 1995, p. 335.
70. Quoted in Pottier 2002, p. 142.
71. Pottier 2002, p. 148.
72. Pottier 2002, pp. 134–144.
73. Pottier 2002, p. 143.

74. Stearns 2011, p. 35.
75. Kinzer 2008, p. 240. Emphasis mine, because strict is certainly an odd way to characterize a regime that tortures, kills, and incarcerates by the tens of thousands.
76. Is there some special way to kill someone of Tutsi ethnicity that requires training?
77. <http://www.fdu-rwanda.com/en/english-dr-theogene-rudasingwas-letter-to-the-bbc/>.
78. This says nothing about Kagame's Congo wars, which killed even more people, as will be discussed in later chapters.
79. Guichaoua 2015, p. 293.
80. Prunier 1995, p. 267.
81. Prunier 1995, p. 301.
82. Prunier 1995, pp. 303–304. Emphasis mine.
83. Stearns 2011, p. 140. Emphasis mine.





## CHAPTER 11

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# The Infrastructure of Judgment and Denial

The postwar race to consolidate control over the region was also a race to consolidate control over how Rwanda and the Congo would be talked about and written about. Africanists did good service for Kagame and his patrons in establishing a pattern in which all things Kagame were good and all of the dictator's victims (mainly Hutu Rwandans and, once Kagame invaded Zaire, the Congolese as well) were evil. The forum for these representations was not limited to the major books about Africa that came out after the genocide. It also included the human rights organizations, who in turn set the story down for the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the region, and newly created judicial forums. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) relied on the same set of assumptions about Kagame and RPF goodness and Rwandan Hutu evil set out by the writers and by the human rights organizations—namely African Rights Watch and Human Rights Watch. As the guilt, and evil, of Kagame's enemies was adjudicated, Rwanda's former patron, France, was smeared with the accusation of complicity in genocide. France's activities in propping up the government eventually overthrown by Kagame, and its activities in helping the refugees flee, came to be written about as complicity in genocide. This despite the fact that the genocide occurred when the government collapsed. The real animus directed toward France by Kagame was for France's real crime: nearly preventing Kagame's absolute victory and dominion over Rwanda and the region. France was driven out of sponsoring its client state by these accusations; it was scarcely able to protect its reputation in their

face, and certainly unable to level any accusations of massacres or war crimes against Kagame and his RPF.

In Kigali, immediately after the genocide, memories were fresh and the country was unfree under the consolidating hand of Kagame and the RPF. Speaking freely about the crimes of the militias was encouraged; speaking freely about the crimes of the RPF was not a good idea, then or since. It was in this moment that the evidence for the two canonical reports, *Leave None to Tell the Story* by Alison Des Forges of Human Rights Watch, and African Rights Watch's report *Death, Despair, and Defiance*, was gathered. Both organizations have relevant histories.

Human Rights Watch was founded as Helsinki Watch in the 1970s, sponsored by the United States to monitor rights violations in the Soviet Union. At the time, the US was looking for an ideology and an independent organization to serve as an alternative to the egalitarian and universalist message of communism. Human rights, and Human Rights Watch, provided what was necessary, and continues to demonstrate a bias aligning with US foreign policy interests.<sup>1</sup> When the genocide occurred, Des Forges was an academic specializing in Rwanda<sup>2</sup> and became a full-time Human Rights Watch employee, leaving her academic job.

Her report is replete with the same ethnic bias and the same techniques that present Kagame's forces as good and the entire Hutu population as evil that characterize the other main Africanist works. The Burundi genocide of 1972 is discussed in a historical footnote as follows: "Hutu had tried to win control several times, only to be put down by the Tutsi-dominated army, most savagely in 1972 when some 100,000 Hutu were slaughtered."<sup>3</sup> Presumably because the number is lower than 800,000, a small genocide can be chalked up to a failed "attempt to win control," which would seem to make the genocide the victims' fault. Another series of massacres in Burundi 1988 are discussed like this: "In 1988, Hutu attacks on Tutsi had provoked excessive and unjustified military repression in parts of northern Burundi."<sup>4</sup> While victims might find solace in their deaths being considered excessive and unjustified, they might equally be saddened to hear that they were also provoked and retaliatory—brought upon themselves. A summary of the Rwanda genocide of 1994 as "Tutsi attacks on Hutu had provoked excessive and unjustified military repression in parts of Rwanda" would be disgusting and unacceptable. So would a description of the 1994 genocide as "Tutsi had tried to win control several times, only to be put down by the Hutus, most savagely in 1994 when some 500,000 Tutsi were

slaughtered”—insisting on the low estimate rather than giving a range. This is no more acceptable for Burundi than it should be for Rwanda.

The assassination of a pathbreaking Burundian Hutu politician, Melchior Ndadaye, in 1993, is discussed in terms of how it helped “anti-Tutsi propagandists,” offering “just the kind of tragedy most helpful to their cause.”<sup>5</sup> HRW discusses the claims that Ndadaye was tortured, and exonerates his assassins of torture: “an autopsy by a forensic physician... found that Ndadaye had been killed by several blows of a sharp instrument, probably a bayonet. The body had not been mutilated and showed no signs of torture.”<sup>6</sup> No doubt an important task for a human rights organization: Ensuring the assassins of a democratically elected president are not accused of torturing the man they murdered.

It is difficult to come away from this report without the impression that Tutsi lives matter more than Hutu lives, and that massacres of Hutus matter less than massacres of Tutsis.

The massacres by the RPF in conquered areas are re-framed in somewhat admiring terms: “The RPF soldiers saved tens of thousands from annihilation and *relentlessly pursued those whom they thought guilty of genocide.*”<sup>7</sup> “In their drive for military victory and a halt to the genocide,” the report continues even though those two goals were contradictory and the RPF pursued military victory over the halt to the genocide, “the RPF killed thousands, including noncombatants as well as government troops and members of the militia. As RPF soldiers sought to establish their control over the local population, they also killed civilians in numerous summary executions and in massacres. They may have slaughtered tens of thousands during the four months of combat from April to July....” Even the RPF’s information control operations are described with a form of admiration: “...the RPF slaughter of civilians has been poorly documented. Even during the months when the RPF was just establishing its control, it was *remarkably successful* in restricting access by foreigners to certain parts of the country.”<sup>8</sup>

Des Forges explains that “because this report focused on the genocide itself, we collected only limited data on crimes committed by the RPF.”<sup>9</sup> Upon a second read, this seems to say, in perfect question-begging fashion: *Because we only looked at crimes by one side, we don’t have much about crimes by the other side.* After this damning summary, the report discusses the ideology of the RPF in laudatory terms, including the notion that all were Rwandans and that Hutu-Tutsi division was sown by the colonizers.<sup>10</sup> The report praises the RPF for recruiting Hutu supporters:

- Alexis Kanyarengwe is mentioned.<sup>11</sup> Kagame told a Westerner he was “only our front man.”<sup>12</sup>
- Seth Sendashonga, “a bright young politician,” is another RPF Hutu mentioned.<sup>13</sup> Sendashonga was killed in Nairobi by the RPF in May of 1998 after complaining about RPF massacres and being driven into exile (this minor detail didn’t make it into the 1999 report).

The Byumba massacre of April 20 is mentioned<sup>14</sup> and a number of “300 or more” is given. The pattern of killings at “reconciliation meetings” is described,<sup>15</sup> as is the pattern of assassination of community leaders and educated people.<sup>16</sup> The famous “reprisal massacres,”<sup>17</sup> as well as hindering humanitarian assistance and preventing free information<sup>18</sup> are also described. Unfortunately, the HRW report says, reports of RPF “misconduct” were “clouded by blatantly exaggerated propaganda put out by the interim government.”<sup>19</sup> Not even the RPF’s tricks to lure groups of civilians into massacres are described by HRW as “propaganda,” but the Rwandan government’s warnings of RPF massacres in its areas are “blatantly exaggerated propaganda.” The Gersony affair is described<sup>20</sup> and dropped.

Even as it mocks France’s support for the Rwandan government as unprincipled (on which more below), HRW offers an explanation for the US’s support of the RPF despite evidence of these massacres. “Leading authorities at the U.N. and in national governments were troubled by this information. They wanted the slaughter to end but they were reluctant to make any criticisms that might weaken the new Rwandan government. As one U.S. policymaker described the situation: ‘We have three choices. Support the former genocidal government. That is impossible. Support the RPF. That is possible. Support neither. That is unacceptable because it might result in those responsible for the genocide coming back to win.’”<sup>21</sup> So, the US supported the RPF “with its eyes open.”<sup>22</sup> The great achievement of the US, reported approvingly by HRW, is that “partly in response to international pressure, partly in response to changes within Rwanda itself, RPF authorities ordered soldiers to stop killing civilians. The number of civilians slain diminished markedly after late September.”<sup>23</sup> This wasn’t true. One of the biggest massacres—Kibeho—was yet to come, in April 1995. The major massacres by the RPF in the DRC were also to come.

The HRW's report is truly confusing. After estimating "a minimum death toll of 25,000 to 30,000 people," from whom "it is impossible to say how many of those were active participants in the genocide or were engaged in any military action against the RPF,"<sup>24</sup> the HRW describes patterns of "wide-spread, systematic" killings that "involved large numbers of participants and civilians," "outside of combat situations."<sup>25</sup> Thus again the production of very low estimates of deaths, the sly implication of these victims as possible genocidaires, is followed by a brief description of the RPF's policy of indiscriminate massacres. The conclusion of this section of the report also contradicts its pro-RPF tone: "the international community, like the RPA high command, has been satisfied with a mere pretense of justice for the 1994 abuses... Thus it has signaled that the killing of civilians, if perpetrated in the aftermath of a genocide, was understandable and would be tolerated, so opening the way to the further slaughter which took place in the months and years after."<sup>26</sup> In its conclusion, the HRW report states that "establishing the responsibility of individual *Hutu*<sup>27</sup> is.. the only way to diminish the ascription of collective guilt to all Hutu."<sup>28</sup> The HRW report played no small role in precisely that ascription of collective guilt to all Hutu.

In the end, the HRW report devotes 43 pages to RPF human rights abuses. As Barrie Collins notes: "... after 691 pages of description of the horror of genocide committed by the forces of the former government, the reader is numb to the coverage of RPF abuses and massacres over the following 43 pages. But in any case, HRW has by this stage already justified the RPF's return to war and seizure of power. More importantly, by attributing genocide to the government side and crediting the RPF with ending the genocide, HRW made a crucial moral distinction between the massacres committed by forces partisan to the former ruling party and those committed by the RPF. The former were acts of genocide – evil pure and simple – the latter were atrocities that could be placed in a more forgiving light if understood within the context of the Hutu-extremist orchestrated genocide."<sup>29</sup>

African Rights has an even more disturbing pedigree for anyone who believes in the idea of a universal human rights NGO. A London-based start-up, the organization had no public profile until it published *Death, Despair, and Defiance* months after the war ended, in September 1994. The others—Des Forges, Prunier, and Gourevitch—did not follow until years later. African Rights understood its mission as "to document the genocide, expose the perpetrators and encourage the work of national

tribunals and the UN ICTR.”<sup>30</sup> The prosecution of the guilty was part of African Rights’s self-image from the start, and in the ICTR’s office of the prosecutor, the report was called “The Bible.”<sup>31</sup> Its co-directors, Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal, were ex-HRW employees. *Death, Despair, and Defiance* is full of information only the RPF could have provided and takes political positions identical to the RPF about the inefficacy of a UN intervention, the inefficacy of democracy for post-war Rwanda, and the particular individuals who should be prosecuted.<sup>32</sup> From a two-person start-up in London, African Rights made a series of agreements with RPF officials, becoming, as Luc Reydamas calls it, a single issue, single country “pseudo-prosecutor,” fed information by the RPF and eventually fully funded by it.<sup>33</sup> Theogene Rudasingwa, now an RPF dissident, was a key spokesman for Kagame when he met Rakiya Omaar in April 1994 in Nairobi. He was impressed by her, so he made sure she “got a blank check and unrestricted access to RPF leaders. The return on investment for the RPF has been enormous.”<sup>34</sup>

The ICTR was established by the stroke of a pen in November 1994, the Office of the Prosecutor set up in Kigali in January. African Rights Director Rakiya Omaar dropped in early.<sup>35</sup> But by 1996, investigators found Omaar and her facts unreliable—unlike Des Forges, who became a key prosecution witness in the ICTR trials. On the other hand, the story of the grand conspiracy to commit genocide, with Theoneste Bagosora as the ringleader (the devil, to Dallaire), helped orient the ICTR<sup>36</sup> and develop the prosecutorial theory for the trials. The prosecutor was unable to convince the judges, though: When the ICTR closed up shop, neither Bagosora nor anyone else had been convicted of conspiracy to commit genocide.<sup>37</sup>

In the important job of setting out the correct pro-Kagame line and defending it against all enemies, prior expertise about Rwanda was detrimental: that sort of knowledge could contaminate the purity of what Kagame and his RPF were doing and the purity of the story. One such scholar, Johann Pottier, with pre-1994 knowledge of Rwanda lamented the state of the post-genocide scholarship: “The ‘new generation’ of international post-genocide commentators on Rwanda – a transnational body of experts whose ‘area expertise’ is mostly non-existent – operates predominantly in ways that mimic the relationship of mutual advantage which had developed in colonial times... The insider offers enlightenment to the outsider; the outsider returns the gift by offering the prospect of international recognition and legitimacy. Moreover, just as the

colonial experts synchronised their discursive understandings of colonial situations, so contemporary experts tune into the discourses of their ‘disaster colleagues’ who may, just may, know that little bit more. The result is a chain of ‘interanimated’ adjustments of the utterances and viewpoints of other professionals; positions rarely grounded in sustained empirical research.”<sup>38</sup> Andre Guichaoua, a French scholar who studied Rwanda before 1994, points the same thing out when he writes that “more often than not,” “analytical and commemorative works” were written by people “with little or no familiarity with the country prior to the genocide.”<sup>39</sup>

The worst example was probably Prunier—writing a book that set the tone for future works immediately, publishing in 1995 and making claims so far beyond his knowledge it was head-spinning. In the *Rwanda Crisis*, published in 1995, he wrote that he “has not been a ‘Rwanda specialist’ for long,” that Rwanda and Burundi specialists “are a breed apart in the already specialized Africanist world.” Instead, “As a ‘Uganda specialist’ he got to know several of the men who later created and led the RPF.” He “did not believe that they were capable” of returning to Rwanda, was “violently proved wrong on 1 October 1990,” and in the process of trying to understand why he had been proved wrong, “he succumbed to a fascination which even the horrors of the early summer of 1994 could not destroy.”<sup>40</sup>

Readers of the 1995 book had reason to worry even then, as Prunier describes how flattered he was by the RPF at every turn. Their educational level<sup>41</sup>: “This author met inside Rwanda in June 1992 several young fighters who matter-of-factly asked him about the health of some of his university colleagues with whose writings they seemed perfectly familiar. This high level of education is one of the reasons for the RPF’s efficiency as a fighting force, the other being the long military experience gained on Ugandan battlefields by the ex-NRA officers in its top leadership.” Although, presumably, the high level of education held in the first few years of the war when the RPF showed little efficiency, the RPF were able to dazzle the scholar with their knowledge of him and his colleagues. They also impressed him with their financial acumen: “there were never any rumours of financial misappropriation in the RPF.”<sup>42</sup>

When Kagame’s forces invaded Rwanda, they were taking the first step on a path that would see them and their American patrons in absolute control of Central Africa, displacing the now unreliable client Mobutu in Zaire, the French-supported Habyarimana government

then in Rwanda, and pre-empting the democratic movements in both countries. With Mobutu at the helm of a crumbling Zaire, the only force with the power to stop Kagame was France, and they could have done it at any step—early enough, potentially, to save hundreds of thousands of lives and imposing a diplomatic solution on both Kagame and the Habyarimana government. Because of France’s influence over the situation and its potential ability to check Kagame’s ambitions, propaganda about France’s role has become a particularly important plank in Africanist writing about the genocide. Kagame and his Western fans ramp up the campaign about France’s complicity in the genocide whenever that country’s diplomats or patriots criticize his regime, and settle down when France’s governments are more closely aligned with US foreign policy in Africa. During war and genocide and immediately afterward when Kagame was consolidating his power, the propaganda campaign against France was at its most important. The Africanists were ready for duty—Prunier, African Rights, Gourevitch, and Des Forges’s Human Rights Watch report, all did good service here.

Ex-RPF dissident Theogene Rudasingwa was at the meeting in France in June 1994 where the RPF demanded that the French stay out of Rwanda. In a letter to the French president, Rudasingwa writes about that meeting: “To Mr. Alain Juppe, and later to the French senior military officials of the time, including General Le Mercier, I reiterated RPF’s position that we considered France as pro-government in the Rwandan conflict, and that any military operation would be interpreted as an attempt to prop-up the beleaguered regime (Provisional Government established after the assassination of President Juvenal Habyarimana under the orders of General Paul Kagame) whose members were the masterminds of the genocide. I remember, now with shame, that I repeated General Paul Kagame’s specific words ‘all Tutsi who had to die have been killed; who are you coming to save?’” Rudasingwa continues “At this point in time, RPF not only opposed France’s intervention. It was strongly against any foreign intervention, including UN’s, that would snatch away outright military victory which was in sight. Saving Tutsi lives was not on RPF’s immediate agenda. Capturing power was.”

But HRW’s report treats the French intervention and France’s suspicions of the RPF as completely invalid. Using the term “posturing and self-congratulation” for the French,<sup>43</sup> terms not applied to the US or RPF, the report says that “Operation Turquoise did have another



purpose besides saving lives: preventing a victory by the RPF.”<sup>44</sup> In HRW’s view the test of France’s good and anti-genocidal intentions is its willingness to cooperate with the RPF. “Some French policymakers... were determined to block an RPF victory, even if it meant continuing to collaborate with genocidal killers until they could locate better representatives of the ‘great majority’” (i.e., the Hutu, and note the mocking scare quotes around “great majority”).<sup>45</sup>

The critique throughout the section on “Acknowledging genocide” is that the US, UN, France, and others continued to seek a negotiated end to the war: “the U.S. and other governments remained stuck in the familiar track of trying to bring the belligerents together,” “viewing the genocidal government as a valid interlocutor.”<sup>46</sup> The implicit idea is that these powers should have sought quicker regime change, perhaps aiding the RPF. Prunier, arguing against the delays in categorizing the Rwandan genocide as such by the US State Department, writes that “If one goes by the State Department surrealistic reasoning, no intervention should have been made against the Nazi death camps since the German authorities were at the time also killing large numbers of non-Jews.”<sup>47</sup> While the statement is, typically for Prunier, crafted to sound absurd, it inadvertently reveals the limits of such interventions. There was actually no intervention that could have been made against the Nazi death camps—as argued by William Rubenstein in the book *The Myth of Rescue*, bombing the railway tracks or the camps themselves would have been completely ineffective. The only way to stop the Nazis, the book argues, was to win the war—something that was ultimately done by the Soviet Union, not the United States. Returning to Rwanda, the US was very much intervening, through sponsorship of the RPF, which was going for a military victory regardless of the costs. The US sponsorship began well before the genocide and, although HRW argues the war and genocide were completely separate issues, they were not. To the degree that they were intertwined, the US sponsorship of the RPF’s military option and of the war contributed to the genocide.

There are several problems with this implicit argument that the HRW report takes. The first is that, as Kuperman argues in the *Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, even if everything had gone completely perfectly for the US in terms of information, understanding, and logistics, the majority of the massacres would still have taken place—though hundreds of thousands of lives would have been saved. Scholars like Guichaoua believe that French troops could have done the job, but

as related in Chapter 8, Dallaire declared that he would shoot down France's planes if they were arriving to help the Rwandan government.<sup>48</sup>

The second, more important problem, was that the RPF's battle plan (which was supported by the US) was indifferent to the victims of the Rwandan government massacres, as the HRW report itself admits:

By April 12... early successes caused RPF leaders to believe that they could win a total victory over the Rwandan army and they set out to do that. The military strategy involved sending a substantial force down the eastern frontier while simultaneously engaging the Rwandan forces in the capital and further to the northwest in Ruhengeri... the RPF advanced rapidly through weaker regions in the east and south, then headed west and northwest again, building pressure on the capital and the northwest. The RPF strategy, praised by other military experts, may have offered the best chance for military victory but did not present the best possible plan for rescuing Tutsi.<sup>49</sup>

The RPF also rejected a second UNAMIR force, "concerned that the French might use the force to protect the interim government."<sup>50</sup> "RPF opposition to UNAMIR II contributed to the reluctance of the U.S. and other powers to support such a force, a reluctance which in turn accounts at least in part for the slowness with which the operation was mounted. It is impossible to judge how many lives would have been saved had the RPF welcomed the new force and had the U.S. and other U.N. member states been in turn galvanized to send military aid rapidly."<sup>51</sup>

Dallaire reveals in his book that the RPF's veto of UNAMIR II was shared by the US. He writes that "the Americans put obstacle after obstacle in our way," even when "it was not too late." "If I had been a suspicious soul," he continues, "I could have drawn a link between the obstructive American position and the RPF's refusal to accept a sizable UNAMIR-2. In the pre-war period, the US military attache from the American embassy was observed going to Mulindi (RPF's Uganda HQ) on a regular basis."<sup>52</sup>

For Guichaoua, a hypothetical international force "would have been able to stop the coming tragedy and impose effective solutions."<sup>53</sup> If UNAMIR, "with its twenty-five hundred poorly equipped soldiers, who were limited by a restrictive mandate... was not able to intervene to stop the massacres, then the foreign troops in Kigali (a thousand French

and Belgian paracommandos) or based in the region (between fifteen hundred and two thousand soldiers) could do it, with the high command of the FAR, along with the majority of moderate units, ready to support them....”

Guichaoua continues: “Recall that, during those first few days, the killings in Kigali were the work of some two thousand militiamen and about as many members of the elite military units that were loyal to the presidential clan. If an intervention was not risk-free, there is little question that protection of those spaces where the opposition figures and Tutsi had taken refuge and stopping the large-scale massacres were well within the capability of UNAMIR and the troops that had arrived. But from the very beginning, the massacres were viewed as a spinoff of the war, which was neither within UNAMIR’s mandate to halt nor a fortiori the responsibility of the international community, in charge of political solutions for which there was no consensus... It had nothing to do with military reasons and everything to do with the incapacity of Western powers to agree on a common approach.” The Rwandan government disapproved of Belgian troops; the RPF opposed French troops; UNAMIR opposed France’s evacuation of French nationals. So, non-intervention it would be. “Non intervention meant allowing RPF troops to capture power but also leaving hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children at the mercy of their ethnic enemies.”<sup>54</sup>

Another criticism made by HRW as well as by Prunier<sup>55</sup> and others is that the French forces should have arrested members of the foreign government in the Turquoise zone. This seems to be an argument based on hindsight. The French had brought troops for a humanitarian, not a police mission. The idea that these soldiers should have stopped and vetted each of two million refugees to determine whether they should be arrested and turned over to the RPF falls apart fairly quickly. How could they have known who was who? On what basis would they make these arrests? How could they responsibly hand them over to the RPF, given the reports of massacres in the RPF-controlled areas?

Kisangani follows Prunier identifies France’s Operation Turquoise as being “far from neutral,” because it (like the US troops allowed the Pakistani ISI to escape Afghanistan in 2001) “allowed the former Rwandan Hutu soldiers and their political leaders to escape across the border with their weapons, money, and munitions along with masses of Rwandan-Hutu civilians.”<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile Rudasingwa, who argued against the operation as Kagame’s spokesman, wrote in 2017 that

“In retrospect, though controversial, Operation Turquoise did take place and saved some Rwandan lives.” Jean-Claude Lafourcade, the French general who ran Turquoise, wrote a defense of his operation in 2010.<sup>57</sup>

Africanists writing about Kagame’s invasion of Zaire and the massacre of the refugees there excoriate France for trying to find another way. Stearns ridicules France for trying “to create ‘humanitarian corridors’ to allow refugees to return home and to protect aid workers,” a plan which “got bogged down in a new diplomatic, *Franco-Anglo spat*.” A UK official is quoted saying France was “daft.” Stearns continues in a passage that echoes the master of pro-Kagame ridicule, Gerard Prunier: “among French government officials, the rumor mill was in full gear, with senior policy advisors suspecting there was an Anglo-Saxon plot to delay intervention to allow the Rwandan-backed invasion to make headway.”<sup>58</sup>

Those silly French, with their rumor mills of Anglo-Saxon plots. How dare the ridiculous French worry that Kagame’s RPF would invade the Congo, kill hundreds of thousands of people, and face no consequences because of diplomatic protection by the US and UK? That is exactly what happened, but analysis of it is already discredited by the ridicule of it as a French “rumor mill” about an “Anglo-Saxon plot.”

Johann Pottier lamented that “outsiders have lost the right to judge what goes on in Rwanda. Today, reality is what Rwanda’s political leaders, as moral guardians, tell the world what it is. And what the world needs to know is an old story, a 1950s story, a highly simplified story. It is the story of a Rwanda imagined by diaspora-scholars who have finally made the long trek home. It is also a story that suits beginners, one which many outsiders have come to own, reproduce, and spread.”<sup>59</sup>

Those who presume to criticize Kagame’s invasions and massacres are smeared with the ugliest of labels: called genocide deniers. Invoking the Holocaust deniers who claim that Germany never massacred the Jews of Europe, Africanists silence critics of the RPF.<sup>60</sup>

Prunier takes time out to criticize France’s President Mitterrand, who endorsed what Prunier (and the RPF) calls the “double genocide” theory: the idea that the RPF and their enemies are equally culpable for what happened. This Prunier equates to Holocaust denial. In the Rwandan context, “double genocide” theory “tries to make the four years of civil war, the Goma cholera epidemic and the confused revenge killings since July 1994 cohere into an intellectual and moral pattern meant to catch simple minds.”<sup>61</sup> Why would Mitterrand adopt

such a theory? With his typical analytical depth, Prunier answers that it's because Mitterand was old and "getting old is a form of human shipwreck."<sup>62</sup>

Stearns, too, strikes out at "the revisionist concept of a double genocide – that the Habyarimana government and the RPF had both killed in equal proportions."<sup>63</sup> Since Habyarimana was dead when the genocide started, the "Habyarimana government" didn't kill anyone—but assuming Stearns means the militias who committed the genocide, he is implying the Africanist assumption—that the RPF can kill the first 800,000 for free, that accountability only starts after that.

The "double genocide" is a straw man. By creating a fictional "double genocide" and then denouncing it, the RPF (and Prunier, Stearns, and others) insinuate not only that the RPF and those who committed the genocide are not equally culpable, but also that the RPF is not culpable at all, and that its wars and invasions and the massacres in its areas are completely independent of the genocide. Perhaps this is less "a pattern meant to catch simple minds" and more of a pattern meant to catch people already partisan to Kagame and his wars? Near the conclusion of the book, Prunier quotes Belgian journalist Colette Braeckman decrying the problem that "the war launched by the RPF in 1990 has been described as the root cause of all the violence."<sup>64</sup> But of course the invasion was at the root of all the violence! The genocide would not have taken place without the war; the subsequent invasions of the Congo depended on the RPF being in power in Kigali. None of it would have happened without the initial invasion—but this simple truth is stated by Prunier as a self-evident absurdity. Again, by identifying for ridicule the notion of the war being the single root cause of all violence, both Braeckman and Prunier are asserting a far more absurd claim: that the RPF's war had nothing to do with the genocide. But for all of their protests, the genocide does not happen without the war, and the war doesn't happen without the invasion. Beyond that the RPF has its own "catalogue of horrors" for which it is as directly responsible as the militias who conducted the genocide.

Susan Thomson was sent for "reeducation" by the RPF government while doing the research that led to her 2013 book *Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday resistance to reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda*. Pro-Kagame writers would characterize her work as "denialist," because she refers to a "continuum of violence" experienced by "Rwandans of all ethnicities," "before, during, and after the genocide."<sup>65</sup> Her criticism of

the RPF's policy of "national unity and reconciliation" is summarized as follows. It "represents the genocide as something that happened only to Tutsi victims whom the RPF eventually saved by taking military control of Rwanda in July 1994," a representation that has "two main effects: first, it negates the everyday lived experiences of violence that Rwandans of all ethnicities experienced before and after the genocide; second, it privileges the genocide as the only source of violence in the lives of ordinary Rwandans."<sup>66</sup>

Another scholar gently highlights what she calls "signs of an internal contradiction between RPF reconciliation policy and practice: As the RPF calls for Rwandan emancipation, education and critical thinking on the one hand, it attempts to 'institutionalize' and control people's behaviour on the other, as is seen in the example of 'state-bestowed' forgiveness."<sup>67</sup>

Thomson also writes that Kagame's government "approaches ethnic unity through the maximal prosecution of adult Hutu as the sole perpetrators of acts of genocide," when in fact "the RPF also killed ordinary Rwandans during and after the genocide."<sup>68</sup>

The Africanists have a morbid obsession with killing those they deem responsible for the genocide, demanding punishment for those that happen to match lists of Kagame's enemies. It can get quite unseemly, with NGOs like African Rights or scholars like Prunier drawing up lists of people who needed to be executed. Addressing himself to the problem of transitional justice, Prunier's proposed that "some people needed to hang, and quickly."<sup>69</sup> He continues: "Because the real Hutu killers had not been sacrificially executed, all Hutu were now regarded as potential killers. And all Tutsi had become licensed avengers. Many Tutsi and many Hutu did not want to be either."<sup>70</sup> In 1995 he had argued the same thing, that "all of the various segments of the population need the ritual cleansing of a mass public trial."<sup>71</sup> The Hutus, "to understand their guilt and its limits, to understand the monstrous nature of what they were led to do, they need to see their once respected leaders in the dock."<sup>72</sup> "Forgiveness," Prunier says, inventing his own philosophical and legal framework for international dispute resolution, "can come *after* retribution and justice and not before, unless one is dealing with angels and not human beings."<sup>73</sup> He never specified when "retribution and justice" ends (it has gone on for over 25 years), or whether the RPF had done anything that required "forgiveness," much less "retribution and justice," as opposed to the impunity they have enjoyed.

Prunier envisioned a trial and execution of “maybe 100 men who have committed not only a crime against humanity but a sin against the Spirit by locking up a whole nation into the airless sadomasochistic inferno. *They have to die*. This is the only ritual through which the killers can be cleansed of their guilt and the survivors brought back to the community of the living.<sup>74</sup>”

Prunier’s language may be particularly colorful, but he was part of a group of writers and organizations who collectively made a major contribution to Kagame’s successful demonization of the Hutu population as real or potential genocidaires. Once collective guilt was assumed, collective punishment could only follow.

The first act of the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda was to construct a detention center at Arusha. What better symbol could there be of the international community’s intentions toward Rwanda’s population? The city that had hosted the negotiations that were supposed to end the Rwandan war but that instead set the stage for the nightmare would now become the city that housed those accused and denounced by the victors in the aftermath.

Amadou Deme, who had worked for Dallaire as UNAMIR’s intelligence officer during the genocide (and before that as a military observer for the African Union), got himself a job as an investigator for the ICTR’s prosecution. He awaited the first indicted defendants at the shiny new UN detention facility, built as an annex to the Tanzanian national detention facility. The UN Chief of Detention was chosen for his “long experience with IRA detainees in Northern Ireland,” no doubt a useful credential.<sup>75</sup> Deme describes his heartbreak as he saw a man (a Tutsi named Georges Rutaganda, Vice President of the Interahamwe) he had watched save lives, including his own, brought in in handcuffs. He sets the scene as follows: “As the arrival of the first group of detainees became imminent, one could measure the growing excitement of people within the Tribunal. It was like people would soon see with their own eyes creatures that came from a far planet outside our world. As the day was approaching, the atmosphere became more and more strange. It seemed that we were definitely not expecting suspects who would attend trials to establish their guilt or innocence, but it was like the verdict had already been pronounced. These people were labeled as the worst culprits of the world – killers, slaughterers, masterminds of genocide, etc.”<sup>76</sup>

Deme watched Rutaganda disembark, “handcuffed, and firmly guided by security officers toward the detention facility.” Rutaganda “was

wearing blue sports pants and a T-shirt... [not] even properly shaved; the clothes were stained with dirt. And of course they were very scared; one could read that on their faces.”

“...Rutaganda spotted me. Despite him being tightly handcuffed with his hands at his back, and firmly held by security at both his sides, while being at a reasonably fast walking space, he suddenly stopped, with all the signs of immense surprise... His mouth was open as he tried to utter something that could not come out. I greeted him with a shaking of my head; and when he reached my place, he stopped again, but was immediately pushed to continue his way. Our eyes met, and I told him, ‘Bonjour, Georges.’ I hardly can remember his answer, but I am sure it was almost impossible to be heard.”<sup>77</sup> Deme “felt low and disgusted, as I was in the position I was in, instead of being able to meet him and give him an accolade for the sake of what he had done.”<sup>78</sup> Rutaganda tried to get Deme heard to contribute to his case, but “at no time did any staff member of the ICTR, neither his defense lawyer nor the prosecution, approach me for that purpose.”<sup>79</sup>

Rutaganda died in prison in 2010.

Deme understood his mandate as being to investigate both sides—the former Rwandan government and the RPF. He found two people on the RPF side helpful—the president, Pasteur Bizimungu, and the Secret Service, led by Patrick Karageya. Bizimungu was later driven out of office and driven mad under house arrest, as a visitor told him in 2002, and suddenly and inexplicably pardoned by Kagame in 2007. Karageya was strangled by Kagame’s assassins in a hotel in South Africa in 2014. But in the meantime, both men helped Deme.

In January 1997, Deme traveled to Gisenyi, on the border with North Kivu in Congo (Gisenyi is the “sister city” to Goma, the invasion point for the RPF in the 1996 war), to interview some military men from the former Rwandan government, a colonel and a lieutenant from the presidential guard—now prisoners of the RPF. He describes the experience: “When Colonel Innocent Nzabanita came into the room, I hardly could imagine he was the famous officer that we heard about so often. You could read on his appearance all the suffering he had gone through; he walked back all the way [from Congo] with his kids and wife, and he was separated from the rest of his family, and was put under custody.” Deme interviewed him and several others over the course of the day, before leaving the detention facility. “Only a few days later, the RPF government announced that Colonel Innocent Nzabanita and the former



Presidential Guard lieutenant were both found dead, after having committed suicide by hanging in the toilets.”<sup>80</sup>

The ICTR mandate was to try to bring justice for the crimes that occurred in Rwanda and to understand what happened. The first prosecutor was a symbolically powerful choice, Richard Goldstone of South Africa, a country that had shown that truth and reconciliation were possible even after horrible crimes.

Belgian scholar Filip Reyntjens approached Goldstone in mid-1996 to talk about RPF crimes.

“During a conversation with the first Prosecutor, Richard Goldstone, in July 1996, I asked him whether he intended to prosecute RPF suspects. Irritated, he replied he saw no reason for doing so. When I told him that there was compelling *prima facie* evidence of these crimes, he got even more irritated and stated emphatically that there was no such *prima facie* evidence. That was the end of our brief conversation.”<sup>81</sup> Goldstone, prosecutor from 1994 to 1996, set the tone for the first few years of the ICTR: “it made few arrests; held few, if any, trials; and hardly rendered any final judgements.”<sup>82</sup> He set up the tribunal “for the long run... conducting investigations yet hardly arresting anyone: of fourteen suspects, none were sentenced. What’s more, instead of targeting major figures, the first series of arrests essentially targeted regional or local figures.”<sup>83</sup> In 1996, Goldstone arrested Bagosora and a few other “big fish.”

Goldstone would later become famous again for writing a report on Israel’s 2008/9 Gaza massacres, which he then retracted.

The next ICTR prosecutor was the Canadian judge Louise Arbour, who was in office from October 1996–September 1999. Described by a Canadian journalist as “the Eagle” in a biographical book shared by Arbour and Dallaire, Arbour’s strategy was to prioritize “political leaders, ministers of the Interim Government, military officers, and media figures.” She sought government and media figures who had sought refuge in countries like Kenya, Mali, Benin, and Togo. “Arbour’s global prosecution strategy explicitly responded to the objectives of the Rwandan authorities. Prioritizing the notion of criminal conspiracy, that is, conspiracy to commit genocide, in March 1998 she presented a joint indictment inspired by the trials undertaken at Nuremberg.”<sup>84</sup> The idea was a “megatrial” to present Bagosora as the mastermind, and Arbour organized thematic trials on media, government, and military themes.<sup>85</sup>

But having decided on a conspiracy-based megatrial, Arbour placed herself in an unbreakable legal bind. Her head of investigations, an Australian lawyer and former detective named Michael Hourigan, had, working with Deme, obtained solid evidence in 1997 that Kagame was responsible for Habyarimana's assassination. When he "informed Judge Arbour in considerable detail about the information implicating President Kagame," he found her "excited by the break through and advised me that the information corroborated some other information she had just learnt from Alison Des Forges the week before." He made the call from the US embassy, because it was the only encrypted phone available and he feared leaking sensitive information that could be intercepted. It does not seem to have occurred to Hourigan that the US, who loaned him the use of the phone, would be the one intercepting the call.

Days later, Hourigan met with Arbour at The Hague. He "briefed Judge Arbour on the informants and their information regarding the involvement of President Kagame and members of the RPF in the downing of President Habyarimana's aircraft." He presented her with a memo detailing the information.

He was surprised by her response.

Arbour became aggressive. She asked about the sources and informants. Hourigan stood up for Deme and his other investigator.

Arbour then "advised me that the... investigation was at an end because in her view it was not in our mandate. She suggested that the ICTR's mandate only extended to events within the genocide, which in her view began 'after' the plane crash." Hourigan was astounded—the temporal mandate of the ICTR was clearly January 1–December 31, 1994. He worried about the safety of the informants, considering that UN informants had been killed in the past. Arbour then "became hostile and asked me if I was challenging her authority to direct to end our investigations into the plane crash." Hourigan told her no, made a placating gesture, "returned to Kigali and a short time later resigned from the ICTR."<sup>86</sup> In 1999, Arbour moved on to a Supreme Court seat in Canada. She told Canadian journalist Carol Off that "the Rwandan government was reading my mail. They knew what I was doing. Consequently, if I send someone to investigate the RPF he could be killed. I didn't do it."<sup>87</sup>

She was replaced by Carla Del Ponte, a Swiss prosecutor who brought new hope into the proceedings because of her background prosecuting the mafia. She was supposed to speed up the pace of trials, but she, too,

“fizzled.” She made 29 arrests and had a total of eight accused by the time she was done in 2003.

Del Ponte also wrote in her memoirs that she agreed with Arbour that “even if the prosecution could show that Tutsis<sup>88</sup> shot down the plane... assassinating a president, while a crime, is not necessarily a war crime, and the tribunal’s jurisdiction, roughly put, was limited to war crimes.”<sup>89</sup> When she was given evidence of RPF massacres, she was told to be cautious about her inquiries because Kagame had the power to stymie the ICTR by controlling access to witnesses. Del Ponte noted that “the Rwandan authorities, however, were already monitoring our investigators’ every move... We knew the Rwandan intelligence service had received monitoring devices from the United States and was using them to compromise our telephone, fax, and internet traffic. We suspected that the Rwandan authorities had also infiltrated our computer system and placed agents among our Rwandan translators and other staff members in Kigali... in other words, the Rwandans already knew, hour by hour, what the tribunal’s investigators were doing.”<sup>90</sup> The only way to mount a case about RPF massacres, Del Ponte concluded, was with help from the Rwandan government!

She met with Kagame about it on December 9, 2000. Del Ponte and Kagame sat on a pair of couches in a sitting room adjoining his office. “We spoke in English. I told him that the tribunal’s investigators had collected evidence on thirteen incidents in which members of the RPF had allegedly massacred civilians during its advance across Rwanda in 1994. Kagame made no attempt to deny that these incidents had occurred. He told me that Rwanda’s military prosecutors were conducting some investigations, but he clearly knew that I knew that the Rwandan authorities had already had almost seven years to investigate these incidents and bring charges... Whether he feared being indicted, I cannot say. In the end, I asked Kagame for the files of the investigation the Rwandan military had supposedly conducted... he said I had to obtain the files from Rwanda’s chief military prosecutor.”<sup>91</sup>

In 2002, as Del Ponte was trying to get her prosecution of Bagosora underway, she was made to feel what Kagame could do to the ICTR, when “despite repeated requests, the Rwandan government refused to authorize the temporary transfer of a number of detained witnesses whose testimony was crucial to prosecuting genocide cases.” Trials were adjourned for lack of prosecution witnesses. Kagame “was effectively blackmailing the tribunal, sabotaging its trials of accused Hutu

genocidaires in order to halt the Office of the Prosecutor's Special Investigation of crimes allegedly committed by the Tutsi-dominated RPF in 1994."<sup>92</sup>

Del Ponte went to Kagame to try to resolve the conflict. On June 28, 2002, she was ushered into a "spacious salon decorated in a rococo kitsch worthy of Louis XV. At one end of the room, Kagame had placed himself on a golden chair, like a throne, with a Rwandan flag draped behind."<sup>93</sup> Del Ponte asked for the military prosecutor's files.

"'No', he declared. 'Absolutely not.'

'You are destroying Rwanda,' Kagame charged. 'You must investigate and prosecute the genocide. You haven't gotten Kabuga, go and get him. Don't look into the military. We have done this, and we will do this.'

'You will disrupt the reconstruction of the nation... I'm rebuilding this country... I have to maintain internal order... If you investigate, people will believe there were two genocides... All we did was liberate Rwanda.'<sup>94</sup>

Kagame talked to Del Ponte as if he was "dispatching orders." He told her that "it's possible that soldiers have committed crimes. But we have punished these soldiers. And we will do it." He then mounted a counter-accusation that "France was involved in the genocide," and that Del Ponte should "go and investigate the French participation in the genocide." Del Ponte said she was "incensed."

But later in 2002, Del Ponte—like Goldstone and Arbour before her—was approached by someone (this time French scholar Andre Guichaoua) with definitive information about the downing of Habyarimana's plane on April 6, 1994. "This concerned documents drafted by high-level Rwandan officers still in active service who, after a three-year inquiry, were able to provide several accounts of how the attack was launched, mentioning names of witnesses and participants who had agreed to divulge what they knew... on 8 October 2002, in the Hague, when I offered to personally deliver these notes directly to [Del Ponte], she refused, indicating that, aside from protestations of innocence sworn to her by Vice President Kagame, he had also presented her with documents of American origin clearly establishing the responsibility of France, and she was satisfied with that."<sup>95</sup>

[When the Rwandan ambassador to France launched a defamation lawsuit against author Charles Onana, who wrote *Les secrets du genocide rwandais* (Paris: Duboiris Nov 2001), he withdrew the complaint

in December 2002 “just before a hearing that was to examine ‘evidence’ from the journalist concerning Paul Kagame’s implication in the shooting down of the plane on 6 April. The withdrawal generated a great deal of publicity and was interpreted as an implicit admission of the facts.”<sup>96</sup>]

When Hassan Bubacar Jallow of the Gambia finally took over from Del Ponte in 2003 (at the urging of the US whose ambassador for war crimes Pierre Prosper, told her she was done),<sup>97</sup> the ICTR was finally and fully subordinated to Kagame.

The legal bind introduced by Arbour, limiting the court’s mandate to after the plane crash, also destroyed Arbour’s idea for a conspiracy conviction. For if the genocide had been planned before its implementation, and it only started the day after the plane crash, planning was made impossible to prove. In any case, the genocide was the outcome of war and state collapse rather than of a state plan. But the ICTR’s final count of 60 primary and 30 secondary judgments over 15 years of work did not satisfy Kagame, who had a list of 220 planners, 10,000 *genocidaires*, 3000 leaders, and cadres in 145 communes adding up to hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Rwandans needing to be punished. Kagame’s lists kept expanding based on his desires and whims, such that the number of *genocidaires*, by 2009, “wound up including almost the entire male Hutu population over fourteen years of age in 1994.”<sup>98</sup> Publishing lists of “big *genocidaires*” became a political event in Kagame’s Rwanda. “The publicity and the very existence of the list stigmatised those whose names were mentioned, with no indication of the origins of the denunciation or the nature of the crime... deceased persons, including those who died before the genocide, like President Habyarimana, had been listed so their property could be seized.”<sup>99</sup> The significance of this was that “Tutsi returnees... linked to the new government... simply grabbed vacant plots at war’s end,” which means that “the listing exercise institutionalized a sort of political extortion directed against members of the Hutu diaspora. It rested upon an expansive definition of crimes linked to the genocide and could concern all manifestations of opposition to the new regime, particularly when ‘sectarianism’, ‘divisionism’, and ‘genocide ideology’ entered the Rwandan penal arsenal.”<sup>100</sup>

And while Kagame demonizes the family of the former dictator, “it is one thing to demonize the former presidential family... and quite another to insist loud and clear on a real trial. Indeed, if that were the case, it would be difficult to avoid authentic contradictory debate on

the shooting down of Habyarimana's plane on 6 April, possible international involvement or complicity, and the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the RPF in capturing power by force."<sup>101</sup>

From reports ghostwritten by Kagame's intelligence men and presented by international NGOs, to heavy duty books by newly expert post-genocide scholars to arrests, international trials, and deaths in prison, the Empire's propaganda machine has performed extraordinary feats in Central Africa. It laid a pipeline that would be used in future humanitarian interventions and future international tribunals. The consequences were severe for ordinary Rwandans living under Kagame's new regime.

## NOTES

1. This story is told in James Peck's 2010 book *Ideal Illusions*.
2. And, according to footnote 13 in Robin Philpot's 2013 book *Rwanda and the New Scramble for Africa*, a consultant for the State Department between 1990 and 1992, while the civil war was ongoing. Philpot cites Des Forges CV, "submitted to Citizenship and Immigration Canada in the case against Leon Mugesera, 1995."
3. des Forges 1999, p. 134.
4. des Forges 1999, p. 134.
5. In a similarly dehumanizing and scare-quote rich passage, Prunier called Ndadaye's murder a "godsend for the 'Power' fractions of the 'opposition' parties" (Prunier 1995, p. 200).
6. des Forges, p. 136, fn 118.
7. des Forges 1999, p. 692.
8. des Forges 1999, p. 692.
9. des Forges 1999, p. 692.
10. des Forges 1999, p. 693.
11. des Forges 1999, p. 694.
12. Stephen Smith, Rwanda in Six Scenes, *LRB*, 17 March 2011, vol. 33 no. 6. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n06/stephen-w-smith/rwanda-in-six-scenes>).
13. des Forges 1999, p. 695.
14. Des Forges 1999, p. 705.
15. Des forges 1999, pp. 706–707.
16. Des Forges 1999, pp. 710–714.
17. Des Forges 1999, pp. 715–722.
18. Des Forges 1999, pp. 723–724.
19. Des Forges 1999, p. 724.
20. Des Forges 1999, pp. 726–731.

21. Des Forges 1999, pp. 731–732.
22. Des Forges 1999, p. 732, quoting Assistant Secretary of State Moose.
23. Des Forges 1999, p. 732.
24. Des Forges 1999, p. 734. Which means, “how many deserved to die.”
25. Des Forges 1999, p. 734.
26. Des Forges 1999, p. 735.
27. The ethnic obsession is never far—as HRW writes about individuals, but still needs to qualify that it is interested in catching individual Hutu.
28. Des Forges 1999, p. 736.
29. Collins 2014, pp. 18–19.
30. Cited in Reydams, Luc. 2016. NGO Justice: African Rights as Pseudo-Prosecutor of the Rwandan Genocide. *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 547–588. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2016.0041>.
31. Reydams 2016, p. 548.
32. Reydams 2016, pp. 551–561.
33. Reydams 2016.
34. Reydams 2016, p. 564.
35. Reydams 2016, p. 579.
36. Reydams 2016, p. 580.
37. Reydams 2016, p. 582.
38. Pottier 2002, p. 207.
39. Guichaoua 2015, p. 294.
40. Prunier 1995, p. xiii.
41. Prunier 1995, p. 117, fn 47.
42. Prunier 1995, p. 118.
43. des Forges 1999, p. 668.
44. des Forges 1999, p. 668.
45. des Forges 1999, p. 635.
46. des Forges 1999, p. 640. The irony is that this formula, separating the belligerents and negotiating a power-sharing agreement (as some were trying to do through the Arusha Accords), mocked by des Forges here, could have actually saved lives—the RPF invasion and the UN-sponsored state collapse enabled the militias to kill civilians without any check on their violence.
47. Prunier 1995, p. 275. Of course Prunier engages in his own surrealistic logic all over his book, arguing more or less that tens or even hundreds of thousands of Hutus killed don’t really count since in the genocide, members of the Hutu ethnic group committed massacres that killed far more...
48. Prunier 1995, p. 287, fn 14.
49. des Forges 1999, p. 698.
50. des Forges 1999, p. 699.

51. des Forges 1999, p. 701.
52. Dallaire 2003, p. 364. Cited in Barrie Collins, Chapter 5, fn 92, p. 245.
53. Guichaoua 2015, p. 207.
54. Guichaoua 2015, p. 208.
55. Prunier 1995, p. 308.
56. Kisangani 2012, p. 118.
57. Lafourcade, Jean-Claude, and Guillaume Riffaud. 2010. Operation Turquoise: Rwanda 1994. Perrin.
58. Stearns 2011, p. 44.
59. Pottier 2002, p. 207.
60. Barrie Collins. "Why the myth of the Akazu genocide conspiracy lies at the heart of the official narrative of the Rwandan genocide – a reply to Keith Somerville." *African Arguments*, December 18, 2014. <https://africanarguments.org/2014/12/18/why-the-myth-of-the-akazu-genocide-conspiracy-lies-at-the-heart-of-the-official-narrative-of-the-rwandan-genocide-a-reply-to-keith-somerville/>.
61. Prunier 1995, p. 340.
62. Prunier 1995, p. 340. He was quoting De Gaulle.
63. Stearns 2011, p. 38.
64. Braeckman 1994, quoted in Prunier 1995, p. 345.
65. Thomson 2013, p. 79.
66. Thomson 2013, p. 79.
67. Zorbas, E. (2009). What does reconciliation after genocide mean? Public transcripts and hidden transcripts in post-genocide Rwanda. *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 127–147.
68. Thomson 2013, p. 106.
69. Prunier 2009, p. 35.
70. Prunier 2009, p. 35.
71. Prunier 1995, p. 341.
72. Prunier 1995, p. 342.
73. Prunier 1995, p. 343, his emphasis.
74. Prunier 1995, p. 355, my emphasis.
75. Deme 2014, Location 3755.
76. Deme 2014, Location 3787.
77. Deme 2014, Location 3808.
78. Deme 2014, Location 3825.
79. Deme 2014, Location 3847.
80. Deme 2014, Location 3954.
81. Filip Reyntjens. 2004. Rwanda Ten Years On: From Genocide to Dictatorship. *African Affairs*, p. 177.
82. Guichaoua 2015, p. 295.
83. Guichaoua 2015, p. 297.



84. Guichaoua 2015, p. 298.
85. Guichaoua 2015, p. 299.
86. Hourigan, M. A. 2006. Affidavit in the ICTR, Prosecutor vs. Major Aloys Ntabakuze, Case No. 98-41-T. Reproduced in Erlinder, Peter. 2014. *The Accidental Genocide*. pp. 44–48.
87. Quoted by Guichaoua 2015, p. 401, fn. 39; Carol Off. 2000. *The Lion the Fox and the Eagle*. Toronto: Random House.
88. That Del Ponte uses ethnicities instead of organizations and individuals to describe criminal acts does not speak well of the ICTR or its work.
89. Del Ponte 2009, p. 180.
90. Del Ponte 2009, p. 183.
91. Del Ponte 2009, p. 184. She noted that Kagame was “so thin”.
92. Del Ponte 2009, p. 224.
93. Del Ponte 2009, p. 225.
94. Del Ponte 2009, p. 225.
95. Guichaoua 2015, p. 145.
96. Guichaoua 2015, p. 382, fn 47.
97. Del Ponte 2009, p. 234.
98. Guichaoua 2015, p. 300.
99. Guichaoua 2015, p. 301.
100. Guichaoua 2015, p. 301.
101. Guichaoua 2015, p. 305.



## CHAPTER 12

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# The State Kagame Built

What was Rwanda before Kagame? A dictatorship, to be sure, but one under pressure for multiparty democratic reform, under pressure to transcend the mistreatment of the Tutsi minority and resolve the long-standing refugee problem. Instead of generously funding the democratic transition, the donor countries undermined Rwanda's (and Zaire's) finances, while bolstering Uganda's in the early 1990s. But nonetheless, had a multiparty election been held prior to the invasion, most agree that the dictator, Habyarimana, would have won and Kagame's RPF would have been reduced to a minor party.

Is it the case, as Robin Philpot argues, that "Rwandans... had worked for thirty-five years to build a state apparatus that worked relatively well and met the needs and aspirations of the people of Rwanda."<sup>1</sup> Even French scholar Gerard Prunier, who despised the government and favored Kagame's RPF, writes that by the late 1980s, "the mortality rate was down, hygiene and medical care indicators were improving, and education... was improving."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, "reliance on foreign aid, small at first, had become... enormous by the late 1980s," from 5% of GNP in 1973, to 11% in 1986, and 22% by 1991.<sup>3</sup>

But because of this dependence, change was inevitable when, in Philpot's words, "the so-called donor institutions had decided that the economic model had to be changed. A strong state with an interventionist bent was to become a tiny administrative unit, even if it meant social upheaval and loss of power for the Hutu majority. Next came the political model imposed by Western powers even though the country had

been invaded under their noses and with their support and was still occupied by a hostile foreign country.”

The picture of a possibly reforming dictatorship is disputed by those who argue that Rwanda had a long-term oppressive state system, springing from its geography and its precolonial history. The idea that the pre-1990 Rwandan state “worked relatively well and met the needs and aspirations of the people of Rwanda” is undermined by arguments based on some of the “structural” features of the pre-1990 state that Kagame inherited. Journalist Anjan Sundaram<sup>4</sup> argues that Kagame took over the highly authoritarian system used by his predecessor. Prunier argues that the high population density and geography of hills led to “centralised forms of political authority and... an almost monstrous degree of social control.”<sup>5</sup> Susan Thomson also presents Rwandan interviewees who talk about the continuity of authoritarianism and propaganda before Kagame’s takeover and afterward in her 2013 book. Prunier cites an Amnesty International report from 1985, itself based on the trial of a security chief (discussed in Chapter 8) named Theoneste Lizinde who fell out of favor, describing disappearances, torture, and murder under Habyarimana. In 1989, “member of Parliament, Felecula Nyiramutarambirwa, was deliberately run over by a lorry after criticising the government for corruption... Father Silvio Sindambiwe, a vocal and outspoken journalist... was also killed in a stage-managed ‘traffic accident’.”<sup>6</sup>

Prunier described Habyarimana’s dictatorship in the late 1970s as follows: “The party was everywhere; every hill had its cell, and party faithfuls, hoping for promotion and a professional boost, willingly spied on anybody they were told to spy on and on a few others as well... Administrative control was probably the tightest in the world among non-communist countries.”<sup>7</sup> Habyarimana, as the sole candidate, was re-elected in 1983 and 1988 “with 99.98% of the vote.”<sup>8</sup> One scholar, Scott Straus, who interviewed participants in the Rwandan genocide discussed the methods of control over the population under Habyarimana’s government:

Many perpetrators equated killing Tutsis with the ‘law’... many said that they chose to participate not because they were blindly obedient. Rather... they complied... because they felt they would be punished if they refused... By their accounts, the state coercively pressured them to participate, and the threat of coercion was credible.<sup>9</sup>

The reason? “Rwanda... has a high degree of national and institutional continuity from the precolonial to the postcolonial periods, and the country has a long institutional history of mandatory labor mobilization. The patterns of mobilization during the genocide strongly resonated with the preexisting practices of labor conscription.”<sup>10</sup>

The geography of Rwanda helped dictators and colonialists forge this system: “Rwanda is also densely settled, and the country’s topography is cultivated rolling hills with little uninhabited open space. The effect is to make the citizenry visible with few options to hide or exit, which in turn increases the effectiveness of the Rwandan state’s ability to garner large-scale civilian compliance rapidly.”<sup>11</sup>

When another scholar found that genocidal violence was more intense in areas with higher population density, he suggested that this state system based on close-quarters surveillance was a possible alternative to the “neo-Malthusian” explanations preferred by others: “in densely populated areas, it may have been relatively easier for the elite to mobilize the population, because of dependency relations through the land and labor market.”<sup>12</sup>

French scholar, Andre Guichaoua, suggests the word “dictatorship” was inadequate for Habyarimana’s Rwanda: “Centralized authoritarian patronage seems much more appropriate in the sense that, for the average citizen, there was simply no alternative to complete submission to authority nor any recourse in the event of some arbitrary turn of fate. Overwhelming obligation to comply was the name of the game in the web of relations between the peasant populations and the various yokes they had to bear... the discipline imposed by this carefully elaborated administrative and moral order exerted a powerful attraction for the aid agencies and the international donor community. They could implement their development projects practically in direct contact with their ‘intended beneficiaries’ and with attentive support from a decentralized administration, which progressively extended central directives through each commune and hill.”<sup>13</sup>

The same civilian network was adapted by Kagame for his purposes as he rebuilt Rwanda into his own prison state. Universal surveillance was organized through the bureaucracy and also through “dense networks of spies.” Civil society organizations are controlled directly by the state: “Access to subsidized health care and the waiver of school fees for children are available only to Tutsi women in their recognized status as ‘real survivors’. Tutsi and Hutu women who remarry sometimes lose access

to these privileges, not on the basis of their ethnicity but rather because they have been able to reconstitute their families.”<sup>14</sup>

About the experience of living in this system, one Rwandan reported to scholar Susan Thomson:

There is no one level of bureaucracy that is more important than the other... But at the lowest levels, it can really feel heavy. If you are having an affair, they know. If you are drunk or if your house is in disrepair, they know. If you fail to attend sensitization meetings, they know. If you want to join a cooperative, you must get a signature from the coordinator who might ask for the signature of your village coordinator who might also ask for the signature of your nyumbakumi. So there are a lot of people watching you, checking on your actions and the people you were with. Without signatures, nothing happens. If you are not a good citizen... you will rot.<sup>15</sup>

Inside Rwanda by July 1994 the economy was in a state of “quasi disappearance.” The central bank had been looted. Buildings destroyed. All vehicles were driven to Zaire. There was no tax revenue. “Ripe crops were rotting for want of people to gather them. Transport was nonexistent. Banks were closed after being looted of all their cash. Countryside stores were empty and the few manufacturing industries had all ground to a halt.”<sup>16</sup>

But Kagame gradually turned it all around, turning the country into an example fawned over all over the world. How, they all ask, did this miracle occur? In 2009, an economist named Dambisa Moyo proclaimed to great fanfare that aid was dead. Her solution was not the infant industries model that economist Ha-Joon Chang argued was used by every economy in the developed world today. Instead, it was for the poor countries to seek private investment instead of aid. Her model for success, and a major endorser of her work, was Paul Kagame, who is quoted in her book.

Ironies abound. Just before Moyo’s book was released, a UN panel of experts had produced voluminous evidence of Rwanda’s illegal exploitation of the DR Congo’s mineral resources, the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars a year. But beyond that, Rwanda’s economy was itself utterly dependent on aid from the Western donor countries and continues to be.

Unlike many countries, however, Kagame’s Rwanda has negotiated a very special deal with the West. One observer<sup>17</sup> called it the paradox of

“aid dependence and policy independence.” Unlike the tied aid given to most other countries, the aid given to Rwanda came in the form of direct budget support.<sup>18</sup> In a centralized dictatorship like Rwanda’s, that meant the hundreds of millions were essentially going into Kagame’s bank account. This was not the only aspect of the special relationship with the donors—data, too, was handled differently:

The president was declaring to the world that he was creating progress: he was growing the country’s economy, reducing hunger. But he suppressed verification of these claims. For instance, when the World Food Program announced a famine outbreak in Rwanda in 2006, affecting hundreds of thousands of people, the government denied it. To this day, there was officially no famine. When the United Nations released a study in 2007, signed off on by Rwanda’s finance minister, saying the number of impoverished people in the country had risen, and that hunger would remain above levels in 1990 – the year the president had invaded Rwanda to ‘liberate’ the people from the previous regime – the government forced the United Nations to discredit its findings and blacklist the researchers. A World Bank research team studying the country’s progress, directly testing the president’s claim that he had improved life in Rwanda since 1990, was forced to destroy the data it had collected when it became clear that the study was willing to contradict the official narrative. Subsequent research teams, at the government’s invitation, have found that the economy is growing, poverty is declining, and that people are better nourished. Researchers investigating police corruption were expelled from the country; the nation was declared among the least corrupt. A magical nation was thus created.<sup>19</sup>

Susan Thomson was in southern Rwanda in 2006, the year of the famine/non-famine, interviewing destitute Rwandans (both Hutu and Tutsi). She describes how foreign visitors are fooled: “Rwanda’s national tourist agency encourages international visitors to ‘experience’ Rwanda by day tripping from Kigali. Kigali boasts a modern airport, several international hotels, a modern information and communications technology infrastructure.. and countless new residential and commercial properties.”<sup>20</sup> But “behind this pristine image is the daily reality of crushing poverty.” Her interviewees had an average income of \$40 USD per year. Only three of her 37 respondents “had actually seen paper money.” “With rare exception,” she writes, the “ordinary Rwandans I met were thin, barefoot, and dressed in ragged clothes, which in many cases was

the extent of their full wardrobe.”<sup>21</sup> They shared shoes. The FAO estimated per capita consumption of calories by Rwandans to be well below the daily caloric requirement for manual labor.<sup>22</sup> All of her participants found “the lack of food, clean water, and affordable and proximate health services was a constant lament.”<sup>23</sup> The hierarchy is fixed: “social mobility... is rare and is not something that the ordinary Rwandans... expect to happen.”<sup>24</sup>

A national land policy introduced in 2000<sup>25</sup> “has increased the vulnerability of peasant families.”<sup>26</sup> Suddenly, the subsistence farming that was the livelihood of 87% of the population, with an average landholding of 0.65 ha, was declared “irrational.” It became “illegal for peasants to work together to tend their fields as local growing and climatic conditions allow. The RPF ordered local officials to appropriate irrationally used land and gave large plots to ‘senior government and military officials and important businessmen’ who now use the land for commercial purposes.”<sup>27</sup> She describes peasants working in secret to repair washed-out bridges in order to avoid the local authorities, who could accuse them of violating the land law and put them in jail.<sup>28</sup> Careful analysis of the “reduction of poverty” in recent years shows that it is an accounting trick, and that when consistent standards are used, poverty increased from 2010 to 2014.<sup>29</sup>

Maintaining the image of Rwanda as a development model, whatever the reality, is very important to Kagame, and is accomplished with a dictator’s methods.

To use the term “destitute” in Rwanda is perceived as a criticism of the government.<sup>30</sup> Poverty is thus eliminated—no one is allowed to talk about it.<sup>31</sup> Since 2006 it has been illegal to wear open-toed shoes in any of Rwanda’s cities, which “makes it difficult for the urban and rural poor – almost 68 percent of the population that earns less than US \$1 per day – to acquire the covered shoes they need to take their goods to market, bring the children to school, or access health facilities.”<sup>32</sup> Kagame also outlawed kiosks, where people sell goods, forcing people to go to regulated stores, which was “devastating not only to the economic lives of the owners of these kiosks but also for people who because of it had to travel further to market centers for their sugar, oil, and other basics, paying higher prices and losing the opportunity to socialize over a beer or tea.”<sup>33</sup>

The development model also precludes the sharing of traditional drinks, whether beer or milk, in traditional ways: “In villages men would

sit in a circle and pass around a flask of banana beer – a practice the government had outlawed.”<sup>34</sup> The countryside is also now dotted with “milk bars,” whereas “previously, people had asked their neighbours for milk. It was an important part of the country’s culture. ‘Milk for us is life. Sharing milk is sharing life.’”<sup>35</sup>

Unightly shoeless Rwandans, unsightly street selling Rwandans, unsightly milk and beer-sharing Rwandans are by fiat out of sight and out of mind of the legions of foreigners who admire Rwanda’s development model.

Not that they don’t know. A Western ambassador in Rwanda from a European country that donates a substantial amount of Rwanda’s budget was asked by journalist Anjan Sundaram, “Aren’t you worried about giving money to a dictator?” The diplomat answered, “I have no problem with giving money to a dictator... he runs one of the most effective governments in Africa. I’m proud to be giving him money... by giving money we influence their policies. We are for freedom of speech. We will influence the government in the right direction.”<sup>36</sup>

The unusual arrangement Kagame has been able to negotiate with donors—in which he controls aid funds—is mirrored in his mentor Museveni’s country, Uganda. They came to this arrangement in the same way. Before Kagame and Museveni came along, their countries sold commodities—mainly coffee—subject to the whims and fluctuations of global markets. Under these New African Leaders, the economic model has changed: Uganda and Rwanda are exporters of military might. Their soldiers provide the backbone of African Union missions and are seen in countries all around the region, earning foreign exchange through multilateral arrangements and, in the Congo, by organized looting. Researchers tried to suggest that overpopulation was a factor in the Rwandan genocide, in 1994 when the population of Rwanda was 8 million. It is now 50% higher than it was then, around 12 million. Uganda’s population has doubled under Museveni’s 30-year reign, from around 20 million to around 40 million. Museveni has “forbidden the [health] ministry from carrying out family planning programs, even if paid for by donors.” Why? A health ministry official told public health consultant Helen Epstein that “the truth is, it’s the army. The president wants a big army.” Commenting on this, Epstein wrote: “Museveni had turned his beautiful country into a poorly maintained breeding colony for soldiers, whom he deployed in monstrous and unnecessary wars, often at the behest of American generals and politicians who rattled their sabers



at Afro-Islamic terrorists, but wouldn't dream of sending Americans – let alone their own children – to fight them.”<sup>37</sup> The same can be said of Kagame, who is following the same model, and is consequently admired by Western warmakers and donors alike.

Another model aspect of Kagame's government, beloved by the West, is that Kagame “has outlawed public discussion of or even reference to one's ethnicity – speaking of being Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa.” But this is no simple erasure of the past categories. Instead, it is a highly strategic management of the memory of the genocide that demands that Rwandans participate enthusiastically in commemorations of a false history: Official policy is that “only Tutsi were victims of violence during the genocide and only Hutu killed.”<sup>38</sup> The government creates “essentialist categories of survivors (read Tutsi) and perpetrators (read Hutu)” through “near constant surveillance, by local authorities and neighbours alike.”<sup>39</sup> So the categories are maintained by writing lies onto the past that cover up the RPF's crimes. Transgressions are not allowed: “stepping outside the prescribed roles of national unity and reconciliation brings a reaction from the government and its agents that is quick and relentless: imprisonment without charge, disappearance, intimidation, even death.”<sup>40</sup> Failing to attend the government's public enactments or trials or reeducation rituals results in arrests and prison terms.<sup>41</sup>

In February 1995, as his forces were gathering and slaughtering peasants in the countryside with promises of food aid and reconciliation meetings, Kagame gave a speech in a commune called Ntongwe. The occasion was a ceremony to bury the remains of the victims of massacres—even as Kagame's men were committing more massacres. Kagame said: “I believe there is a recent sickness that is called ‘reconciliation’... and another called ‘dialogue’. To this moment I don't understand this reconciliation. Between who and whom? This dialogue, is between who and whom? Is it between the Rwandans who stopped the massacres and those who killed? Is that the sense of this ‘dialogue’? When I speak of reconciliation, with whom should I reconcile? Should the killers of babies reconcile with the families of those babies? What is that?”<sup>42</sup>

Kagame's US patrons soon convinced him to change this language: “some of the training provided by the US Army to the RPA in 1996 included such courses as mass refugee repatriation and the establishment of a public information capability at both national and local levels, to promulgate a message of national reconciliation. In essence, the Americans taught the Rwandans how to manipulate public opinion and

the media in regards to their military activities related to repatriation and other operations inside Zaire.”<sup>43</sup> Kagame was a quick study: Messages were adapted to the audience, and for Western countries cagey about donating money to a dictator on a campaign of ethnic or racial revenge, the appropriate messages of “reconciliation” were prepared and used. Indeed, “reconciliation” became a key slogan in village Rwanda, a tune everyone was expected to sing.

Scholar Susan Thomson spoke to (former) Tutsi survivors in a way that got some of them to open up. One told her “We need to have the right to bury [our loved ones] where they belong, not in public memorials. We need to know how they died and who killed them.” Instead, they are treated to a “political game.”<sup>44</sup> Another told a story of how his “son showed sympathy for a former Hutu who is our pastor and neighbor. This is illegal so he went to prison until I could raise enough money to get him released.”<sup>45</sup>

A Hutu prisoner described how he “got reeducated in 1999,” told his “truth,” got a reduced sentence, and then in 2005, “my truth was denounced as a lie and I got another twenty-five years!” He concluded “National unity and reconciliation is just a way for this government to eliminate Hutu. It’s like the new authorities are trying to kill former Hutu through excessive punishment.”<sup>46</sup>

Thomson<sup>47</sup> writes that when Western scholars write of these open-air, dictatorship-surveilled, mandatory denunciation trials that have led hundreds of thousands to jail, the writings are based on “the assumption that ordinary Rwandans are willing participants,” an assumption made “without any reference to... methodology or sources.”

\* \* \*

Studies of the question of the numbers of perpetrators are, if anything, more politically fraught than studies of the numbers of victims. How many people were involved in committing the genocide? In 1995 Prunier made a series of estimates about the killers, including that the Hutu militias were 50,000 in number and the presidential guard 1,500.<sup>48</sup> At that time, Prunier estimated that 80,000 to 100,000 were involved in killing others.<sup>49</sup> Straus estimated 200,000 perpetrators.<sup>50</sup> But this estimate is questionable, given that it came from prisoners who had pled guilty and were under the complete control of the RPF, in a dictatorship that allowed them to confess their crimes to a Western researcher. Given what went on in the prison system (see below), Straus’s data is highly suspect

and represent a very high estimate—even if that estimate has the virtue of limiting the guilt to some number of individuals, as opposed to the normal practice of assigning guilt to the entire Hutu population.

Lee Ann Fujii's (2009) study, *Killing Neighbors*, has the same problem: Fujii spent nine months doing fieldwork in Ruhengeri and Gitarama interviewing prisoners, "former prisoners, survivors, resisters, witnesses, and rescuers." The fieldwork was conducted in a totalitarian state under total surveillance and through an interpreter. The opportunities for the insertion of regime-friendly data in this scenario are immense. She describes discrepancies between her interview findings, in which prisoners sometimes denied or downplayed their participation in crimes, and their letters of confession, in which they took responsibility: "Prisoners wrote letters of confession with the express purpose of garnering favorable consideration from the prosecutor, who has the power to reduce the prisoner's sentence. Some prisoners even confessed falsely in an effort to get out of prison."<sup>51</sup> Fujii describes another prisoner whose "attitude toward confession appeared to be purely strategic. Olivier was the only prisoner we interviewed who admitted he would still have confessed even if he had not done anything because he found a definite sentence of three years preferable to languishing in prison indefinitely."<sup>52</sup> But questions do arise about how secure these prisoners—or indeed any Rwandans—could feel that they could remain anonymous in talking to Western social scientists, an activity that would certainly be carefully monitored in Kagame's Rwanda.

Fujii shows some awareness of these problems with her surveys, which were conducted in 2004, before the gacaca courts came into force but when Rwandans were (correctly, it turned out) afraid of what they would bring. Fujii noticed a "palpable fear of what her neighbors would find out and what the impending gacaca trials would reveal. Everyone was afraid, she told us, of being falsely accused and sent to prison."<sup>53</sup> She admits reasons to be skeptical of the accounts she was given: "With prisoners, especially, I expected prison culture to give rise to a stock account of events, particularly since most of the prisoners with whom we spoke had been in prison at least ten years... What is more, at the time of my fieldwork, the government had begun cracking down on people who it believed were espousing a genocidal ideology, or divisionism."<sup>54</sup> Fujii interviewed 82 people—28 prisoners and 54 villagers<sup>55</sup> and made arguments for why she has some confidence in her data in spite of these limitations, discussing the question of whether the Hutus collectively hated Tutsis:

People did indeed make references to specific people who hated Tutsi and evinced little surprise when these Tutsi-haters participated in the genocide. The data on Joiners,<sup>56</sup> however, does not reveal a preponderance of these types of individuals. In fact, there is little evidence that Joiners hated Tutsi as a group before the genocide.

Fujii continues: “The political conditions in Rwanda in 2004 do raise serious questions,” but “while political conditions were repressive,” Fujii found that “people did bring up RPF abuses and war crimes... a very sensitive subject for the government.” Others “refused to acknowledge that any violence against Tutsi had even occurred, as if to wrest attention back to their own experiences of victimization.” But “tellingly... people also made references to the divisions that currently existed between Hutu and Tutsi as a result of the war and genocide.” People “did not always give self-serving or self-aggrandizing statements,” nor did they “always take the opportunity to point the finger at others,” nor did they “refrain from saying negative things about others.” Taken together, “these metadata convinced me that people were being honest and forthcoming in their interviews – within differing bounds.”<sup>57</sup>

One scholar<sup>58</sup> reminded readers that even a small number of perpetrators (25,000) could kill 1 million people over 100 days if each criminal killed just one person every few days. The prime minister after the RPF takeover, Faustin Twagiramungu, suggested there were 30,000 perpetrators. But these figures were far too low for Kagame’s purposes.

So, the Rwandan Ministry of Local Government gave an estimate of three million perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide.<sup>59</sup> Three million out of a population of eight million—the Rwandan government may as well have said everyone, or every Hutu, was guilty. And they did: “virtually every able-bodied Hutu male who survived the war and the massacres in the refugee camps and returned to Rwanda was thrown into prison as a genocide suspect.”<sup>60</sup>

A 2002 documentary by Aghion called *Gacaca* has a scene in which a general prosecutor is instructing prisoners on their collective guilt:

“Even if you neither denounced nor macheted anyone, in prison there are many women who massacred people. They wore militia uniform, like the men.” A woman prisoner asks: “Women who bore children?” The prosecutor: “Yes. Young girls and toddlers also killed. You are old enough; you saw it with your eyes. Whether you approved or not, you saw it.” Another

woman prisoner asks: “I have a question... we did nothing.” The prosecutor replies: “If you are innocent we ask you to say: ‘This is what I saw, here are the guilty ones’. Even your own husbands.”<sup>61</sup>

Scholar Olivier Nyirubugara reads the message in this as being that “innocence had a price: denouncing the guilty... An innocent who had seen nothing was not innocent.” He continues: “There is a palpable long-term goal to strongly push the almost 100 percent Hutu accused into a memory-rooted self-flagellation exercise, meant to keep them quiet about the other side of the traumatic memories of the 1990s.”<sup>62</sup> Examples abound: Take Christian Scherrer’s 2002 book *Genocide and Crisis in Central Africa* saying “anyone looking for evidence of collective guilt will have no trouble finding it in Rwanda... every fourth person in Rwanda’s Hutu population – *this includes men, women, and children* – was *probably directly involved* in the genocide, and millions rendered themselves indirectly responsible.”<sup>63</sup> An anthropologist Darryl Li asserted that “Even Rwandans who did not kill arranged their activities and took advantage of the rhythm of ‘work’.”<sup>64</sup> Gerard Prunier recommended that “almost the entire local civil service should be charged with crimes against humanity.”<sup>65</sup> “The main agents of the genocide,” Prunier continues, “were the ordinary peasants themselves.”<sup>66</sup> Scholar Alex de Waal told one press source “Once begun the slaughter has to be justified. So *everyone must take part*, because that is an essential aspect of the ideology, of Hutu-ness.”

In other words, to these scholars, “Guilt accrued to the Hutu identity.”<sup>67</sup> This collective guilt justified the mass slaughter of Hutus in the refugee camps of Zaire and beyond, as well as their dispossession and persecution in Rwanda. One critic of this approach summarized it as follows: “Collectively guilty, collectively disposable.”<sup>68</sup>

Nyirubugara again: “Although exaggerated, this dilemma of a genocide committing majority and a no-crime committing minority that has no other way to survive genocide but through taking and controlling power, is serious. This constant fear of a new genocide has created a risk of a permanent state of exception that will last as long as that fear. Keeping that fear alive is keeping that state of exception and keeping power.”<sup>69</sup>

Another key tenet of this system is the assertion that “the genocide happened not because the state was weak, but on the contrary because it was so totalitarian and strong that it had the capacity to make its

subjects obey absolutely any order, including one of mass slaughter.”<sup>70</sup> This incredibly strong state was, in fact, collapsing at the very time of the genocide. But allowing a role for state collapse or anarchy in the genocide deprives the RPF of the idea that the Hutus were transcendental evil incarnate – another crucial piece in maintaining the “state of exception.”

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Every April, Rwandans must participate in a spectacle: “the government requires that Rwandans of all ethnicities attend mourning events throughout the month of April, notably the exhumation of mass graves and the reburial of bodies, and listen to the speeches of government officials.”<sup>71</sup> “Most of the Tutsi survivors that I spoke with,” Thomson continues, “found mourning week ‘offensive’, ‘upsetting’, and ‘humiliating’”. This was particularly so for Tutsi widows who had lost their Hutu fathers, husbands, sons, or brothers during the genocide, as there is no official outlet for their grief.”<sup>72</sup>

Journalist Anjan Sundaram describes a mourning week event that he attended:

Coffins began to be carried below the staircase, into a white crypt. The coffins had glass tops, so one could see inside. In the first were skulls, neatly arranged, one beside the other, clean and perfectly shaped... In the next coffin were femurs, set along its length. A dozen boxes passed by. ‘Repent!’

This was strange, for the culture of Rwanda would value preserving the dead body as a whole... the victims had here been dismantled, and their bones regrouped by part; it had the effect of emphasizing the number.

The children were now crying so hard they had to stop to gasp for breaths. Their voices were strained, grating. They coughed, and liquid spilled outside of their mouths. Why had they begun to howl, and bray? ‘Jenoside! Jenoside!’ These children were too young to have been alive during the genocide. But they behaved as if they possessed its memory.

And one realized that the memorials also served the purpose of transmission. And that transmission was meant to cause distress. It was as in Rwandan schools, where teachers complained that during the memorial season the videos on national television made the children uncontrollable. But despite the teachers’ complaints, the gruesome films continued... The government of Rwanda had created these events, which instead of healing society, increased its trauma... The trauma of genocide was, in the children, running like roughs through society.<sup>73</sup>

Tutsi survivors reacted to these events with horror. One told Thomson: “Mourning week is a joke... This government says they saved us and saved Rwanda. This is just not true. So when they make speeches on the radio, I just turn it off, which can get me in trouble if a neighbour who is an enemy passes by and learns that I am not listening. Of course, I am a former Tutsi, so maybe that wouldn’t happen, but anything is possible these days.”<sup>74</sup>

The snitch culture of the dictatorship has so poisoned society that those who do not sufficiently denounce their neighbors fear being denounced themselves—a dynamic no doubt similar to that experienced by villagers during the genocide. Thomson quotes one of the judges in the process:

Last year, we acquitted a Hutu who was accused. We didn’t have enough evidence or information to do anything but let him go. So we did... The survivor accepted, and we all felt happy about the power of gacaca at that moment. I was proud to be a judge... then, the day after, the IBUKA lady requested to see all of us judges.... she raged against me... I said I was sorry but I don’t think it [the evidence against the accused] was enough. I fear now that I am going to be denounced... what if something happens to me?<sup>75</sup>

Tutsi women are forced to testify. One woman told Thomson how she was told to denounce a friend of her brother’s, because he “had a house and a good job.” “He wasn’t even here during the war! I denounced him. He got life. I never saw him before, but I denounced him. I am an unmarried widow, so I have to do what I am told. What would happen to my children?”<sup>76</sup> An imprisoned Hutu man told Thomson that after confessing and serving his sentence, he found his wife and children living with a survivor. “He wouldn’t let me talk to her, but I was her husband! I didn’t know what to do... I had nowhere to go... Then his relative denounced me! She said I didn’t tell my truth. But I did. I know I did. I did what I said. But I ended up back in prison for life.”<sup>77</sup>

When, on August 2, 1994, Rwanda’s Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu<sup>78</sup> said it would be necessary ‘to try 30,000 people’ to punish the genocide, Prunier, who quoted the Rwandan PM, wrote the following reaction: “The figure was of course absurd since there was not enough jail space in all of Rwanda to hold so many prisoners and the idea of having to carry out the massive death sentences hinted at was simply unthinkable,”<sup>79</sup> and that it would take a “second genocide” to

“kill all the killers,” which in Prunier’s estimation was 80–100,000 people.<sup>80</sup>

They had underestimated Kagame.

The RPF viewed the Hutu as a “permanent danger” to be kept at bay with “random mass killings to instill fear and defanged by neutralizing real or potential leaders.” Leonidas Rusatira, FAR who joined RPA, says they want Hutus to be “a voiceless mass of peasants only good enough to toil the earth for their masters.” The killings were systematically organized. There were crematoria and mass body-burials. They followed an original tactical pattern established by the RPF in the Byumba massacre of April 1994 and others: “A ‘bad’ family would be blown up with grenades or burned alive in their house, a civil servant would be ambushed on the highway and shot, a man would be kidnapped and his body would later be found in a banana grove.” The deaths would be attributed to cross-border raids. RPF never boasted about violence and always denied until caught red-handed, “an adaptation of free market economics to political assassination... the RPF calculated that guilt, ineptitude, and the hope that things would work out would cause the West to literally let them get away with murder. The calculation was correct.” *National reconciliation*, a policy adopted by Kagame immediately after the genocide, had a coded meaning: “the passive acceptance of undivided Tutsi power over an obedient Hutu mass.”<sup>81</sup>

Kagame’s state targeted educated Hutu in particular, just like Burundi’s regime had in the 1970s and the Belgians had before them. An imprisoned Hutu doctor told a scholar<sup>82</sup> about how he engages in passive resistance by not speaking. “It is clear that locked up in prison is where this government wants educated Hutu like me. False allegations of committing genocide are just a form of genocide that this government practices against Hutu like me... I just play stupid. I look at my feet, I look at the sky... I act completely ignorant and say nothing... It is a risky strategy as I will never fulfill the [work] requirements of my sentence. But I also know from being outside in the community that someone like me will never get out of prison.”

In summary: “From early 1995, Hutu elites became the victims of harassment, imprisonment, and even physical elimination. Provincial governors, local mayors, head teachers, clerics and judges were killed in increasing numbers. In most cases, the responsibility of the RPA, was well documented.”<sup>83</sup>



Kagame destroyed anyone who might have the potential to lead, or participate in, opposition—including members of his own RPF. Women within the RPF complained of being treated as “war equipment such as 120 mm mortar, 107 mm Katyusha,” expected to “cave in on the sexual advances of RPF big men who own power in Rwanda.”<sup>84</sup> The sexual entitlement of RPF soldiers would reach harrowing levels in campaigns of mass rape in Zaire, the story of which will be told in later chapters.

In July of 1994, Kagame had finally achieved his ambition and was in power in the capital. At least 75% of the Tutsis living in Rwanda had been massacred, along with hundreds of thousands of Hutus—mostly by the militias as the state collapsed, but a significant portion killed by Kagame’s own disciplined RPF in organized massacres. Millions of Rwandans were terrified of Kagame and his RPF and had fled into the Turquoise zone or beyond, into Zaire. 350,000 of these people were living in camps in the Turquoise zone. As the RPF settled into power and conducted more village massacres, more and more people fled to what they hoped was safety in the western part of the country. Kagame’s first order of business was to get them out of the camps and back to their hills and villages, under his control.

April 6, 1995, was the anniversary of the beginning of the genocide, which the RPF commemorated as they have done since, by exhuming and reburying thousands of bodies.<sup>85</sup> Less than two weeks later, the prefect of Butare announced that the camps in his jurisdiction would be closed. On April 18, at 3 a.m., RPF troops surrounded the camp and opened fire (this time, into the air). Twenty people were killed in stampedes.<sup>86</sup>

Seth Sendashonga was then the minister of the interior. He traveled to Kibeho, then back to Kigali to try to arrange transportation to evacuate the camp. Kagame, then Minister of Defence, promised Sendashonga that he would ensure things remained under control.<sup>87</sup> The following day, the RPF soldiers surrounded the camp and opened fire. Over the course of the day, they turned the camp into a free fire zone, “first with their rifles and later with 60 mm mortars as well. They slowed down for a while after lunch, then resumed firing until about 6 p.m.”<sup>88</sup> The wounded were bayoneted or shot at close range. Foreign NGO workers counted 4200 bodies before the RPF stopped them.<sup>89</sup>

When Sendashonga returned to Kibeho, the army told him to go away. The president of the Republic, Pasteur Bizimungu, visited, was told the casualty count was 300, and went back to Kigali. The minister

of rehabilitation told the international press the 300 figure and blamed genocidaires in the camp for using human shields.

Even more displaced people died being force-marched back to their villages. On April 24, the IOC reported that 145,228 had returned to their homes; two days later, they reported 60,177. “Even if we take the lowest estimate of the precrisis Kibeho population, that is, around 80,000, this means that at least 20,000 people ‘vanished’ *after* the massacre.”<sup>90</sup>

Kagame rebuffed Sendashonga’s request for an inquiry. President Bizimungu held a press conference at Kibeho and “publicly dug up 338 bodies, that figure became ‘official.’” An international panel was put together, “made up of nine handpicked lawyers and diplomats from France, Canada, Belgium, Pakistan, the United States, and Holland... they met and talked in Kigali between May 3 and 8, never doing any field inquiry. Their conclusions followed the government line absolutely.”<sup>91</sup>

Later, the US embassy would choose their own figure, commenting that “The 2000 deaths were tragic; on the Rwandan scene the killings were hardly a major roadblock to further progress. Compared to the 800,000 dead in the genocide, the 2000 dead was but a speed bump.”<sup>92</sup>

As the RPF elite, mostly from Uganda, took over the state in the first year, they used organized massacres like Kibeho, and the accusation of participating in the genocide, to dispossess and take whatever property or power they desired, Sendashonga sent hundreds of memos to Kagame and never received a reply in writing. He realized that the “RPF ‘Ugandan’ Tutsi hard core wanted full power, would tolerate only patsies, and was ready to use any tactics, including mass killings, to achieve this purpose.”<sup>93</sup> Sendashonga used his power as Ministry of the Interior to stop the arrests and went on the radio. He also stifled an RPF effort to issue residency permits for Kigali, “only to blameless persons.” He disbanded the RPF-organized local defense forces, “the RPF’s eyes and arms in the hills.” In a three-day cabinet meeting, Sendashonga and Kagame faced off, as Sendashonga tried to preserve the ideal of a multiethnic, democratic Rwanda that he joined the RPF for. On the last day, “Kagame said ironically to Sendashonga that since he seemed to know more than he about security, perhaps he could take over the Ministry of Defense, or even the whole government. He then got up and left the room, bringing the meeting to an end.”<sup>94</sup> Prime Minister Twagiramungu was sacked, as was Sendashonga and a group of ministers

that sided with him. They were placed under house arrest, but both managed to escape.<sup>95</sup> The president, Pasteur Bizimungu, held on a while longer.

Decades later, asked about Kibeho at a public lecture, Kagame replied simply that “The RPF does praiseworthy things only.”<sup>96</sup> Discussing RPF massacres is a crime in Rwanda. It is quickly called the “double genocide theory,” which is punishable as “denialism.”

Building on his success with political assassinations during the campaign for power, Kagame built an international infrastructure of assassination that targeted witnesses, dissidents, and political enemies wherever they were in the world. A prefect who protested RPF massacres, a sub-prefect who did the same, a leader from the liberal party, a presidential adviser, the vice president of the supreme court; RPF soldiers like Col. Charles Ngoga (poisoned), Lt. Col. Wilson Rutayisire, Major Rachid Mugisha (lethal injection), Captain Serwanda, Major Alex Ruzindana, Major Ndahiro and Dr. Jean Gahungu (ambushed), Major John Birasa and Captain Eddy (ambushed), Captain Hubert Kamugisha (an assassin, killed as a loose end, claimed as a suicide), Captain S. Kavuma, Captain David Sabuni (tortured to death), Lt. Aloys Rupari (killed for protesting mass arrests and imprisonments), 2nd. Lt. Dan Ndaruhutse, Lt. Rwagasana (one of Kagame’s French-speaking interpreters, a Hutu, claimed as an accidental death), Lt. Dan Twahirwa, Lt. Fred Gatumbura (Kagame’s driver, killed as a loose end with possible Hutu family ties and relationships, poisoned), 2nd. Lt. Peter Sempa (former bodyguard of Kagame’s, killed as a loose end), 2nd. Lt. Jean-Claude Ruraza (opposed RPF massacres), Sgt. Nyirumuringa (participated in massacres, killed as a loose end), and numerous former Rwandan government officers.<sup>97</sup> Emile Gafrita was set to testify in the French investigation of the downing of Habyarimana’s plane and kidnapped from Uganda (Kagame has a virtual kidnapping pipeline to get exiles from Uganda).

Most of these ex-RPF were murdered in Rwanda in relative obscurity. High-ranking RPF assassinations in other parts of the world, though, were high profile and perhaps intentionally so. Theoneste Lizinde, who had been broken out of prison by Kagame when he invaded Rwanda, was disappeared and murdered in Kenya in 1996. Sendashonga was organizing opposition in Nairobi, having fled house arrest, when men from the Rwandan embassy in Nairobi machine-gunned him in 1996 (he survived) and again in 1998, when he died. Sendashonga’s “wife claimed

that the acting Rwandan ambassador in Kenya at the time, Alphonse Mbayire, had organised Sendashonga's assassination. Mbayire was recalled by his government, only to be shot dead by unidentified gunmen in a bar in Kigali a month later."<sup>98</sup>

Patrick Karegeya had been the intelligence chief in the government, had fought alongside Kagame and Rwigyema in Uganda, and was an organizer of the anti-Kagame movement in exile. He was strangled by Kagame's assassins at a hotel in South Africa in 2014.

One of Kagame's most loyal fighters, James Kabarebe, Minister of Defence spoke to the press after Karageya's assassination: "Do not waste your time on reports that so and so was strangled with a rope on flat 7 in whatever country...When you choose to be a dog, you die like a dog, and the cleaners will wipe away the trash so that it does not stink for them. Actually, such consequences are faced by those who have chosen such a path. There is nothing we can do about it, and we should not be interrogated over it."<sup>99</sup> Kagame himself alluded to the assassination at a public address: "Whoever betrays the country will pay the price. I assure you. Letting down a country, wishing harm on people, you end up suffering the negative consequences. Any person still alive who may be plotting against Rwanda, whoever they are, will pay the price...Whoever it is, it is a matter of time." He added: "I hear some of our people saying: we are not the ones who did it. It's true they were not the ones who did it, but that is not my concern, because you should be doing it... What is surprising is that you are not doing it. People who dare to betray, betray the country!"<sup>100</sup>

Lt. Ruzibiza, also ex-RPF, who provided detailed evidence of RPF crimes from an insider's view, including about the shooting down of Habyarimana's plane on April 6, 1994, died of cancer in Oslo in 2010 at 40 years old.

Not all of Kagame's enemies meet the same fate. Former President Pasteur Bizimungu fell out of favor and was pardoned after years of house arrest. Stephen Smith visited Bizimungu at his house in 2002, describing being ushered into a private room at which point Bizimungu "locks the door and leans against it, breathing heavily. A volley of accusations about Kagame follow; I remember the expression 'the dark side of power'. When it is clear that no one will order me out, Bizimungu leads me into his library. We talk until we are both exhausted. 'You know, they were right,' he says finally. 'The explorers, the missionaries, the colonisers, about the Tutsis being liars. They *are* liars.' I am thrown clean off

balance. Bizimungu climbs a stepladder to reach down a book from a high shelf. In no time, he finds the passage he's looking for, about the 'Tutsi culture of duplicity', which he reads out, stressing key words. I make my excuses and leave. Bizimungu has been driven mad."<sup>101</sup> Bizimungu was pardoned by Kagame in 2007.

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In addition to massacres, denunciations, and assassinations, Kagame borrowed another concept from his American patrons: creating a simply unimaginable prison system in the first few postwar years.

In the period after the RPF takeover in July 1994, there were 100–150 arrests a day, with 44,000 arrested in June 1995, 55,000 in November 1995, 70,000 in February 1996, 80,000 by August 1996. The accused included “cuckolded husbands” and others. When a judge tried to free forty prisoners with no files, he was kidnapped and murdered. 26 of 270 magistrates were arrested as genocidaires when they tried to free the innocent.<sup>102</sup>

Ethnographer Carina Tertsakian conducted fieldwork in the prison system and talked about what she saw. “Within a few months, the prisons filled up to several times their capacity, until people were literally stacked on top of each other... More prisoners arrived every day. Between 1994 and 1996, the prison population quadrupled, rising from around 20,000 to more than 80,000. It reached its peak in 1998 – around 130,000 – but the worst year, at least in some prisons, was 1995, before prison annexes were built, before additional buildings such as warehouses were converted into prisons, and before international humanitarian organizations could provide assistance in a systematic way.”

Tertsakian continued: “...Thousands of prisoners died during this period as a direct result of the conditions: severe overcrowding, lack of food, lack of medical treatment for illnesses and injuries sustained from torture. Diseases such as tuberculosis and dysentery spread rapidly: There were stories which sounded as if they were taken from a medieval depiction of hell, but which were all true: prisoners whose feet and legs had to be amputated because they had rotted from standing for hours on end in the filth and stagnant water; prisoners who were too weak or too sick to move and who ended up dying where they lay, trampled on by other prisoners; prisoners who were taken to be buried before they had died; and others who were taken out by soldiers and shot dead.”<sup>103</sup> Between September 1994 and May 1995, 13% of the prison population died in

these conditions.<sup>104</sup> Prunier states that “pointing the finger” became a “national sport” and gives similar numbers for prisoners who died in cargo containers—1000 prisoners in August 1994, 6000 by December 23,000 by March 1995.<sup>105</sup>

“In some prisons, prisoners took turns to sleep on alternate days... Some people found nowhere to sleep at all, so they just walked around the prison all day and all night. If they paused for a few seconds, they would be shouted at to carry on walking because they were stepping on someone or standing in someone’s space... This army of walkers was called *komezza*, the Kinyarwanda word for ‘continue’. If one of them was asked in what part of the prison they lived, they would answer ‘I’m in *komezza*’, as if it was a name or number of a particular block.” Some got there by selling their space “because they preferred to have money to buy food.”<sup>106</sup>

One Rwandan priest visited Gitarama prison and wrote a book, telling a harrowing story: “Whether innocent or guilty, these prisoners are gradually rotting away. When I say ‘rotting away’, I mean it literally. At least one UNAMIR officer can testify to that. When he visited Gitarama prison and gave a nice speech to the detainees, one of them ripped his toe off and threw it in his face. After weeks of standing upright, day and night, in the mud, the prisoners’ feet had started decomposing.”<sup>107</sup> The UN eventually provided rubber sandals as standard footwear, which saved lives.<sup>108</sup>

Each prisoner has 40 cm of individual space “where he sleeps, where he eats, where he sits, where he lives. He calls it his chateau, his castle. It consists of one or two planks of wood on a metal frame. The planks are lined up next to each other, with no space in between.” There are bunks of three levels with a ladder. There are no cells, “just row after row of these bunk-bed structures, erected in basic buildings. Each building is a block. Several hundred prisoners are crammed into each block. Several thousand prisoners are crammed into each prison.” The ones with the 40 cm chateaus “are the lucky ones. Others have to sleep on the ground in a tiny space underneath the lowest row of planks, on the concrete, it is so low you would not think an adult could enter it. But they do, tall men with supple bodies crawling in there like cats... Once in, they can barely move. They lie there with the top of their head grazing the planks of the bunk-bed above them. They can’t turn over and they can barely breathe... They are called mines. One prisoner told of spending six

years sleeping in a mine.” Others sleep on the ground in the corridors, gangways, “where they are often trampled on or accidentally kicked.” The prisoners don’t complain about being trampled. They know that the people trampling them have no choice. A prisoner “who had been sleeping in a corridor for more than three years explained how he had to fold up his legs all the time so that people could pass without walking on him.”<sup>109</sup>

“In Gitarama prison, the first interior courtyard, after going through the gate, is crammed full of people. It is as if they have gathered there for a purpose, awaiting a meeting or an important announcement. In fact, they are just standing there because that is where they live.” Same for a former chapel inside: “It is a huge room, full of people, some sitting, some standing, some lying down, again looking as if they are waiting for something. The chapel is home to 320 prisoners and, as in Butare, they sleep on benches.”<sup>110</sup>

People were packed in so densely, both inside and outside, that the prisoners who showed us round had to force a path by tapping prisoners with a stick to make way for us to step through. The mass of people then closed up again behind us... We had to tread carefully, tiptoeing through the crowd, watching where we put our feet to make sure we didn’t trample on people or step in the filth on the ground. There was an overwhelming smell of sweat, excrement, urine, food and dirty water; you could smell it outside, long before entering the prison gate. Inside, we shared an absurd intimacy with these prisoners: it was impossible to talk to any of them or even walk past them without touching them. We were almost pressed up against each other, feeling each other’s breath on our faces. Groups of prisoners swayed slowly, as if in a trance, because they couldn’t move. Others stood or sat still, staring at nothing, waiting, they didn’t know what for.<sup>111</sup>

In Butare central prison, there are no metal structures and no bunk beds, just “rows of narrow wooden benches on the ground. Each bench is about 30 cm wide. One layer of prisoners sleeps on top of these benches and another underneath, in a grid-like formation.” It’s called the chapel; 400 people live there. Another area was called Kuwait because it’s a gulf. “It is dark, damp, and airless, and there is an overpowering smell from the adjacent toilets and showers... When we walk through, some of the prisoners who live there are sitting crouched up against the walls, with dirty, soapy water swilling around their feet and dripping down the walls, while others are having their shower opposite

them. They have to clean the area each night before going to sleep there.” The less fortunate have to sleep outside, “in the yard, in the open air, exposed to the hot sun and frequent downpours of heavy rain.”<sup>112</sup>

In the annex to Butare prison called Rwandex, “there are prisoners who sleep on top of the septic tanks located under the main path in two of the blocks, in the open air.” Once a month the tanks are emptied. The job takes 24 hours. “When the tanks are being emptied, the prisoners who live there have to move and find somewhere else to sleep.” One of the prisoners told Tertsakian: “On the nights when they empty it, we just walk around all night. We call it abari ku izami [nightwatchmen].”<sup>113</sup>

Trying to understand the crisis in the prisons, Tertsakian met with officials: “When we met the Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior – the ministry responsible for running the prisons – in late 2004, he seemed unconcerned about the continuing crisis in the prisons. He told us that prisoners were very well-fed, implying that we were worrying about nothing. He acknowledged in general terms that the prisons were still overcrowded, but claimed the government had done everything it could to ease the problem and that there was a limit to what it could do. ‘The number of perpetrators outside is six times the prison population’, he told us. ‘Had we had more space and means, we could have put one million people in prison.’”<sup>114</sup>

Tertsakian concluded: “The suffering in the prisons was suffering of a different kind from the violence which had engulfed Rwanda in 1994: here, there was no blood, no guns, no machetes, but an insidious, slow and suffocating death.”<sup>115</sup>

The new order installed in Central Africa was nested with symbols: the Kibeho massacre of hapless refugees surrounded and machine gunned; the Gitarama prison with its “nightwatchmen” prisoners walking all night long; the gacaca “courts in the grass” where people could be denounced or denounce others for whatever expedient; the roving hit squads killing political enemies all over Africa; the banishment of the shoeless from the shiny capital.

The US covert files on their role in all this will not be available for years, perhaps never. We are left to speculate on the moving force behind the scenes that enabled Kagame to build his strength, outmaneuver his enemies at the negotiating table, anticipate their moves on the battlefield, and remove obstacles to his total power.

What we do know is that Western institutions sent Kagame the message loud and clear at every level—developmental, political, media, and



juridical—that he could do whatever he wanted. Looking over the border to the Congo, with its Rwandese-speaking diaspora, its teetering dictator, its lands and resources, his enemies and refugees he wanted back all in one place, Kagame would take this as license to start a whole new set of wars, with the blessing of his patrons in the US.

## NOTES

1. Philpot 2015, p. 84.
2. Prunier 1995, p. 78.
3. Prunier 1995, p. 79, citing OECD.
4. Sundaram 2016. *Bad News: Last Journalists in a Dictatorship*.
5. Prunier 1995, p. 3.
6. Prunier 1995, p. 89, citing an Amnesty International Report from 1990.
7. Prunier 1995, p. 76.
8. Prunier 1995, p. 78.
9. Straus 2006, p. 201.
10. Straus 2006, p. 20. It is these practices of labor conscription that economists from Uppsala and Stockholm universities refer to, after the fact, as “preparing for genocide” (Bonnie et al. 2015).
11. Straus 2006, p. 202.
12. Verpoorten, M. (2011). “The Intensity of the Rwandan Genocide: Measures from the Gacaca Records.” *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, 18(1).
13. Guichaoua 2015, pp. 16–17.
14. Thomson 2013, pp. 124–125. Timothy Longman (2017) also did fieldwork in Rwanda and his findings agree with those of Thomson.
15. Thomson 2013, p. 123.
16. Prunier 1995, p. 306.
17. Zorbas 2011, in Straus and Waldorf 2011.
18. see for example Sundaram 2016, pp. 52–53.
19. Anjan Sundaram 2016, p. 31.
20. Thomson 2013, p. 134.
21. Thomson 2013, p. 136.
22. Thomson 2013, p. 136.
23. Thomson 2013, p. 137.
24. Thomson 2013, p. 139.
25. See the chapter “the tyrant subcontractors” on Mobutu’s 1972 land law and note the similarities.
26. Thomson 2013, p. 143.
27. Thomson 2013, p. 143.

28. Thomson 2013, p. 150.
29. Review of African Political Economy Blog, May 31, 2017. “Rwandan Poverty Statistics: Exposing the ‘Donor Darling.’” <https://roape.net/2017/05/31/rwandan-poverty-statistics-exposing-donor-darling/>.
30. Thomson 2013, p. 10, citing Sommers 2012a, pp. 51–52.
31. “How,” Thomson asks, can poor people “ask for what they need if they are unable to use words that best describe their poverty with those charged to alleviate it?” (Thomson 2013, p. 10).
32. Thomson 2013, p. 10.
33. Thomson 2013, p. 4.
34. Anjan Sundaram. 2016. *Bad News: Last Journalists in a Dictatorship*. pp. 32–33.
35. Sundaram 2016, p. 148.
36. Sundaram 2016, pp. 54–55.
37. Epstein 2017, p. 143.
38. Thomson 2013, p. 108.
39. Thomson 2013, p. 111.
40. Thomson 2013, p. 111.
41. Thomson 2013, p. 112.
42. Quoted in Gasana, J. K. 2002. *Rwanda: du Parti-Etat a l’Etat Garnison*. Paris: L’Harmattan. p. 331. My translation.
43. Cooper, Tom. 2013. *Great Lakes Holocaust: The First Congo War, 1996–1997*. Helion & Company, West Midlands UK. p. 31.
44. Thomson 2013, pp. 114–115.
45. Thomson 2013, p. 116.
46. Thomson 2013, p. 115.
47. Susan Thompson 2013, p. 166.
48. Prunier 1995, p. 143.
49. Prunier 1995, p. 342, fn 60.
50. Straus 2006.
51. Fujii 2009, p. 142.
52. Fujii 2009, p. 148.
53. Fujii 2009, pp. 43–44.
54. Fujii 2009, p. 39.
55. Fujii 2009, pp. 28–29.
56. Fujii calls people who joined in the violence at others’ behest and organization “Joiners,” a term used throughout her book.
57. Fujii 2009, pp. 181–183.
58. Jones 2001, cited by Straus 2004.
59. MINALOC 2002, cited in Thomson, p. 115.
60. Collins 2014, p. 210.
61. Quoted in Nyirubugara 2013, p. 63.

62. Nyirubugara 2013, p. 64.
63. Scherrer, p. 126, cited by Nyirubugara 2013.
64. Li 2007, p. 101, cited in Nyirubugara 2013, p. 64.
65. Prunier 1995, p. 245.
66. Prunier 1995, p. 245.
67. Pottier 2002, p. 149.
68. Pottier 2002, p. 149.
69. Nyirubugara 2013, p. 66.
70. Prunier 1995, p. 354.
71. Thomson 2013, p. 117.
72. Thomson 2013, p. 117.
73. Sundaram 2016, pp. 22–23.
74. Thomson 2013, p. 152. See the previous chapter, the peacekeeper and the warlord, about how Kagame’s war did not save the Tutsis or Rwanda.
75. Thomson 2013, p. 170.
76. Thomson 2013, p. 171.
77. Thomson 2013, p. 171.
78. Twagiramungu was forced out of office in 1995, complaining that “the international community accepts the RPF’s position that all its followers are innocent victims while all refugees are to be regarded as murderers.” (quoted in Pottier 2002, p. 147).
79. Prunier 1995, p. 305.
80. Prunier 1995, p. 340.
81. Prunier 2009, pp. 20–21. Prunier’s ethnic typology, “Tutsi power” over a “Hutu mass” is not correct. More correct would be “Kagame’s power” over an obedient “Rwandan mass”—since ordinary Tutsis in their villages were expected to obey or be punished just the same as Hutus.
82. Thomson 2013, p. 157.
83. Filip Reyntjens, “Rwanda Ten Years On: From Genocide to Dictatorship.” *African Affairs*, Vol. 103, p. 180. Cited in Barrie Collins, Chapter 1, fn 4, p. 219.
84. Jeanne Umulisa, “How President Kagame Sacrificed women during the 1990–1994 war.” March 19, 2016. Great Lakes Post. <http://glpost.com/how-president-kagame-sacrificed-women-during-the-1990-1994-war/>.
85. Prunier 2009, p. 39.
86. Prunier 2009, p. 39. Citing Australian Army Col. P. G. Warfe 199 (fn 13).
87. Prunier 2009, p. 40. Based on Prunier’s interview with Sendashonga in Nairobi in 1997.
88. Prunier 2009, p. 41.
89. Prunier 2009, p. 41.
90. Prunier 2009, p. 42.

91. Prunier 2009, p. 42.
92. quoted by Stearns 2011, p. 140.
93. Prunier 2009, p. 43.
94. Prunier 2009, p. 45.
95. Prunier 2009, p. 46.
96. cited in Nyirubugara 2013, p. 49.
97. Ruzibiza 2005, pp. 418–428.
98. Stephen Smith, 2011. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n06/stephen-w-smith/rwanda-in-six-scenes>.
99. Quoted by HRW. 2014. *Rwanda: Repression Across Borders*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/28/rwanda-repression-across-borders>.
100. Quoted by HRW. 2014. *Rwanda: Repression Across Borders*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/28/rwanda-repression-across-borders>.
101. Stephen Smith, 2011. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n06/stephen-w-smith/rwanda-in-six-scenes>.
102. Prunier 2009, p. 11.
103. Tertsakian, p. 36.
104. Tertsakian, pp. 19–38. Cited by Collins 2014.
105. Prunier 2009, p. 8.
106. Tertsakian, p. 41.
107. Tertsakian, p. 38—Quoting Andre Sibomana, Rwandan priest who visited Gitarama prison and wrote a book (Pluto Press 1999, *Hope for Rwanda*).
108. Tertsakian, p. 39.
109. Tertsakian, p. 30.
110. Tertsakian, p. 33.
111. Tertsakian, p. 34.
112. Tertsakian, p. 31.
113. Tertsakian, p. 32.
114. Tertsakian 2008, p. 50.
115. Tertsakian, p. 35.



## Stories From the African Mind

A pernicious form of analysis characteristic of Africanist (and Orientalist) writing is to understand conflicts in terms of what is going on in the African (or Oriental) mind. The Africanist presumes to understand these mental goings on, raising other explanations only to dismiss them. How can political or economic analyses compare to narration from inside the African mind? I've discussed this method in earlier chapters—Michaela Wrong's assessment of Congolese complicity in Mobutu's dictatorship based on the trauma of colonialism; Thomas Turner's assessment of Congolese believing in a "myth of the yoke" and blaming their problems on others—but the master of this genre is Gerard Prunier, with honorable mention to HRW's Alison des Forges. These scholars possess the ability to probe the deepest, darkest recesses of the African mind: that of the Rwandan Hutu.

The African mind is never strategic, always irrational. "The Hutu peasants fled massively before the arrival of their Tutsi 'liberators'," Prunier writes, because of "the ethnic contradiction." It was not the RPF massacring and depopulating the zone where the Hutu peasants lived that saw 600,000 displaced by February 1993 and 860,000 displaced by March 1993—around 10% of the country's population at the time.<sup>1</sup> It was just an "ethnic contradiction." Prunier knows what was in these peasants' heads: "killings in and around Ruhengeri which were not immediately known were *not* the motive for this exodus." But even if the killings were not immediately known to Prunier, they were probably known to the people who lived in the RPF zone. But no, the Hutus

fled from a “*deep fear* which Hutu peasants felt (and were encouraged to feel) for the RPF ‘feudalist devils’.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Prunier writes, the RPF in 1993 “was trying to get the refugees to move back north to their own rugos, but the FAR [the Rwandan army] were intercepting the refugee groups who were walking out of their camps towards the guerrilla-held zone.” Prunier would have readers believe that these refugees were only stopped from returning to live under the heel of the RPF who had displaced and massacred them by interception from the Rwandan army. Perhaps special Rwandan obedience culture, discussed above, could explain this? On cue: The authorities sought “to benefit from the instinctive Rwandese cultural bent towards obeying authority,” and to “instill a powerful, all-encompassing fear of the dreadful change evil strangers were about to inflict on us into the minds of a credulous and naive peasantry already shaken by two years of conflict and political confusion.”<sup>3</sup> The RPF had massacred thousands of people by this time, and Prunier summarizes this as “conflict and political confusion.”

Another uniquely Rwandan irrationality is attributed to the planners of the genocide. The HRW report: “...faced with RPF success on the battlefield and at the negotiating table, these few powerholders transformed the strategy of ethnic division into genocide. *They believed* that the extermination campaign would restore the solidarity of the Hutu under their leadership and help them win the war, or at least improve their chances of negotiating a favourable peace. They seized control of the state and used its machinery and its authority to carry out the slaughter.”<sup>4</sup> But there was no strategic reason to believe that a genocide against Tutsi civilians would “help them win the war” against an invading army, absolutely no reason to think that such a genocide would “improve their chances of negotiating a favourable peace.” Which is why the Rwandan government spent all its time and energy trying to fight the RPF and losing, trying to get help from the French and being rebuffed. The collapse of the government is what left the way open for militias to commit genocide against Tutsi civilians.

Using information downloaded directly from the African mind, Prunier can argue that only the Rwandan government sabotaged the peace agreement—the RPF, despite having invaded, terrorized, and massacred their way across the north before finally taking the whole country, must have wanted peace. The renewal of hostilities in February 1993, to Prunier, was entirely caused “by the regime systematically sabotaging” the peace agreement.<sup>5</sup> The RPF’s military strategy had nothing to

do with it, though he concedes that “if one did not hold such a positive view” of “the [RPF]’s good faith,” then “one could think that the extent of the [RPF]’s exasperation,” “in the face of constant and repeated sabotage of the Arusha negotiations by the regime,” “had resulted in an attempt to seize power.”<sup>6</sup> Luckily readers have been well-schooled in the importance of holding a positive view of RPF good faith.

When slinging the accusation of genocide denial at Kagame’s critics, Prunier invokes the “double genocide” straw man. Those who believed that the RPF were committing atrocities had the usual psychological reasons: “There was of course no ‘second genocide’ as some circles later tried to pretend. The killings occurring in Rwanda were scattered, irregular, and limited in numbers. They had all the signs of a mixture of private revenge killings and ordinary banditry.” He notes that this “slippage” (his word) sometimes “reached momentous proportions, as when they massacred several hundred people on 9 July 1994 after taking Butare in a massive bout of revenge killings.” It is easy to imagine how one could slip and massacre several hundred people.

But suddenly Prunier’s discussion of these slip-massacres doesn’t sound so much like slippage at all. The RPF’s attitude was one of “calculated tolerance of crime designed to keep the Hutu refugee mass<sup>7</sup> scared and out.” But Prunier wants you to know he thinks “it is doubtful whether General Paul Kagame really agreed with this policy.”<sup>8</sup>

Then again, Prunier finally concedes, maybe there was “a policy of systematic persecution” against the Hutu in RPF-conquered Rwanda. But not by the RPF! Even though the RPF exerted total control, somehow it was possible for “some Tutsi”—not the RPF—to pursue “a policy of systematic persecution” against the Hutu, “especially the thousands of former refugees now streaming in from Burundi.”<sup>9</sup> Prunier’s Ugandan friends are above reproach,<sup>10</sup> but these Burundian Tutsi are up for psychological analysis: “They were now coming to Rwanda with their experience of hatred and counter-hatred, of symmetrical massacres and *minds poisoned by a political culture gone mad* in ways perhaps more subtle than in Rwanda, but definitely just as lethal.”<sup>11</sup>

The assassination of Rwanda’s President Juvenal Habyarimana was the triggering event for the genocide. Kagame ended up in absolute power because of this assassination, and there are reams of evidence (reviewed already) that he ordered it. But why contend with the evidence when psychology can explain that Habyarimana was assassinated by his own side, which for some reason wanted to be leaderless in the face of a

well-organized invasion by Kagame? Prunier understands: “Their anger at the President went hand in hand with their growing dreams of a ‘final solution’.”<sup>12</sup>

Aid workers who listened to Hutu refugees would have heard about the organized RPF massacres in the areas they controlled. They may have concluded that this was an important thing to discuss, the presence of an army in the region that was committed to hunting down and methodically killing a group of millions of men, women, and children. But then again, maybe not. Maybe they discussed and publicized RPF atrocities for psychological reasons: “knowing that they were dealing with murderers or their passive accomplices was not an easy psychological position for refugee camp personnel to be in, which could even have been a reason why some of them tried at first to attribute a form of symmetrical genocide to the RPF.”<sup>13</sup>

Knowledge of the African mind transcends mere surface thoughts. Prunier writes that European scientific racism of the nineteenth century, which held Tutsi to be racially superior and natural rulers of Rwanda and Burundi, “ended by inflating the Tutsi cultural ego inordinately and crushing Hutu feelings until they coalesced into an aggressively resentful inferiority complex.”<sup>14</sup> The Belgian church, he writes, “imparted to the African way of life a strong moralistic streak... Rwandese society under the influence of the church became if not truly virtuous, at least conventionally hypocritical.”<sup>15</sup> The Hutus, under the colonial regime, “were told by everyone that they were inferiors who deserved their fate and also came to believe it. As a consequence they began to hate all Tutsi, even those who were just as poor as they.”<sup>16</sup> The next passage is a model of efficiency, combining psychologizing with color commentary about race and sex<sup>17</sup>:

Knowing how to deal with foreigners was important given the numerous foreign aid projects with their large expatriate staff. Tutsi men knew how to deal with white employers, and *their women* knew even better. *Inter-racial* affairs and even marriages between Rwandese women and expatriate men were frequent, and *in over 95% of cases* these women were Tutsi, a fact which caused not only *jealousy* (given the social and financial advantages involved), but also a sort of *humiliation*: the *whites' preference for Tutsi beauty and elegance* harked back to the colonial days when they scornfully looked down on the ‘ugly primitive’ Hutu.

He analyzes Rwanda and Burundi’s historical relationship as follows: “It was *largely the fear* aroused in the Tutsi community of Burundi by



the Rwanda massacres of 1959-1963 which led to the construction of a Tutsi dominated political system in Bujumbura. It was *the renewed fear* caused by *Rwanda-inspired Hutu restlessness* in the late 1960s which drove Tutsi extremists to start the 1972 mass killings of Hutu intellectuals." In addition to the murders of Hutu always being retaliatory and provoked, they are driven by feelings—fears—only the Africanist can unlock.

The RPF invasion, he writes, "had rekindled strong irrational, partly self-induced fears in the Hutu MRND (ruling party) elite."<sup>18</sup> Those who opposed the RPF invasion fell into two camps: Some who, by February 1993, "began to fear that they had been naive," and others who were "basically unreconciled Tutsi-haters."<sup>19</sup> Hutus listened to the RTMLMC radio station "with a kind of *stupefied* fascination."<sup>20</sup>

The reaction in Rwanda to the assassination of Burundi's President Melchior Ndadaye in October 1993 is described in terms of its propaganda value to the "CDR and its allies": "To the fear of losing one's privileges (rational level) they added the fear of losing one's life (visceral level) and the fear of losing control of one's world (mythical level)," a "paranoid vision" that had changed from a "minority syndrome" to a "general feeling shared by large segments of the population."<sup>21</sup> Later, he says that the genocide succeeded because of "the capacity to recruit fairly large numbers of people as actual killers and the moral support and approbation of a large segment – possibly a majority of the population."<sup>22</sup> I've already discussed the importance to Kagame of inflating the number of killers to imply that all Hutus are guilty; the point here is that the Africanist knows not only who participated, but that those who didn't—"possibly a majority"—gave "moral support and approbation."

Prunier reflects the RPF's disdain for democracy in pro-RPF terms. One of the reasons the negotiations left the Habyarimana's government dissatisfied was that that government sought an elected transitional assembly, while the RPF wanted a nominated one "because it felt that the MRND(D) [i.e., the ruling party] still retained enough influence to win a large share of the vote...<sup>23</sup> and that the rest of the seats would be largely swept by the civilian Hutu opposition parties, leaving the RPF with a miserably small share of the seats."<sup>24</sup> This is a roundabout way of saying the RPF wanted to prevent an electoral (democratic) contest, which they feared they would lose.

Later in the book, when discussing Habyarimana's repeated challenges to the opposition that they hold elections, Prunier says this was

“a proposal the opposition parties declined for obvious reasons.”<sup>25</sup> Readers are supposed to understand that democracy is “obviously” bad when it might bring bad people to power, but also that the West brought Africans the great gift of democracy for which Africans should be grateful.

Another issue was the composition of the army and the proportion of it that would be taken by the RPF: “The original government offer was to include 20% RPF soldiers into the future new national army, but everyone knew the RPF would not accept such a low figure and that the FAR leadership was very nervous about having more.”<sup>26</sup> The idea that the government side would be nervous about accepting an even more disproportionate share of soldiers from an invading army is, to Prunier, a sign of their racism. But the RPF’s disdain for democracy is not. Prunier describes the logic of the RPF “Tutsi military cadres” as having “lost a million voters in the genocide,” “So if nearly 2 million Hutu had written themselves out of the country’s future political process by leaving why not let them stay out?”<sup>27</sup> After the RPF took power, they suspended elections for five years (the peace accords sought a twenty-two-month transitional period). How does Prunier describe the political opposition’s dislike of this RPF policy? “Given the state of the country, twenty-two months were a very short time to organise any sort of an election. But for the MDR, which was almost sure to win any election and dreamed of power acquired in this fashion, with all the necessary trappings of democracy opening a royal road to the World Bank vaults, five years was a very frustrating delay.”<sup>28</sup> To Prunier, the RPF’s desire for absolute power is perfectly obvious and acceptable. Their opponents not wanting to wait five years for an election they would win, though, must be because of a sleazy desire to access the World Bank vaults.

Prunier uses a standard method of setting up two sides of a debate, ridiculing both, and then, having prepared the debate, presenting his own claims (which would have been transparently ridiculous had he presented them straightaway) as the reasonable and right-thinking ones. Discussing the racialist theories of Tutsi and Hutu, for example, he writes in a footnote<sup>29</sup>: “Just as the ‘different race hypothesis’ has caused much crankish writing during the past hundred years, some modern authors have gone to great lengths in the other direction to try to refute this theory and to prove that Tutsi and Hutu belonged to the same basic racial stock.” *Racial stock* is not a term that belongs in any post-1940s book,<sup>30</sup> and the whole idea of *racial stock* has been thoroughly

refuted scientifically. Science is unequivocal that all human beings come from “the same racial stock.”<sup>31</sup> More than twenty years after the genocide, now that mention of Hutu and Tutsi is outlawed in Rwanda, it is unlikely that Prunier would have written this—the point here is that one of the standard texts on Rwanda, by one of the most important writers on the war and genocide, which challenges racial theories in several ways in the text, still contains, unchallenged, the idea of racial stock. Other racial imagery appears in Prunier’s works on the topic: “France has seen itself as a large hen followed by a docile brood of little black chicks.”<sup>32</sup> In all of these cases, Prunier’s style of ridiculing those he is writing about provides a kind of *Charlie Hebdo*-type cover, in that perhaps he is *making fun of racism* in the presentation of these images. But it isn’t that funny.

Leftists are another one of Prunier’s targets for ridicule. He puts the term “the exploitation of the black continent” in scare quotes, as a phrase that “surviving Third World Marxists are fond of saying,” and again contrasts this with his presumably more reasonable view that France uses Africa “as a money-laundering machine. Overpriced government contracts are given to good trusted friends and dull public money becomes vibrantly alive in private hands... political friends are rewarded and loyal Africans get their share.”<sup>33</sup> His analysis of the economic relationship between Africa and the West is perfunctory and demonstrative: “The Third World in general, and Africa in particular, might have been in the past victims of what Pierre Jalee and Samir Amin called ‘looting’. But this is definitely no longer the case. In Africa today it is infinitely more profitable for Europeans to loot the UN or bilateral aid than an African peasantry that owns little that can be looted anyway.” This means that African economies “have been left to stagnate in a kind of post-colonial aftermath, producing increasingly useless products which compete savagely on the world markets with the same commodities turned out more efficiently in Asia.”<sup>34</sup> This is so idiotic that it is hard to take it seriously enough to refute. But here’s a brief one: Tremendous effort goes into ensuring Africa’s place in the global economy, of which “looting” is an ongoing, and indispensable part—as are war, structural adjustment, dumping, poaching, smuggling, and peacekeeping.<sup>35</sup>

One passage demonstrates Prunier’s efficient ability to ridicule both France and leftists: “The Sudan and its evil fundamentalists seemed to be the key to everything, either for the former leftists who were always ready to suspect the Americans of undue interference, or for the paladins

of la francophonie who were shocked after the August 1993 Arusha agreement at hearing too much English spoken at diplomatic cocktail parties in Kigali.”<sup>36</sup>

There is ample ridicule for Habyarimana as well, who, having been reduced by the Arusha Accords to a symbolic role (“the presidential function had been shorn of almost all its power”<sup>37</sup>), is accused by Prunier of settling down “again to his usual round of postponements, manipulations, denials and jerry-built pseudo solutions in the hope of surviving, Mobutu-like, through a state of stagnating turmoil.”<sup>38</sup>

One of the key elements of Prunier’s book on Rwanda is the ridicule of France, its decision making, and its intervention. Prunier writes, “the cement” of the relationship between France and Francophone African countries “is language and culture. Paris’s African backyard remains... because all the chicks cackle in French.”<sup>39</sup> Since Prunier has already dismissed the notion that France might have had economic and political interests in its former colonies, French cackling chicks is the only explanation left.

Prunier follows this with several pages ridiculing the French for a caricatured position on the “Anglo-Saxon menace” which he ascribes to the French, in characteristically ridiculing fashion, starting by calling the Anglo-Saxons “the hissing snake in the Garden of Eden”<sup>40</sup> and going from there. Having psychologized the French in this way, Prunier attributes these French beliefs, which he calls a “syndrome,” as “the main reason – and practically the only one – why Paris intervened so quickly and so deeply in the growing Rwandese crisis.”<sup>41</sup> Prunier continues: “Once France had intervened, they stayed on because they felt Rwanda’s 1959 revolution was like France’s revolution.”<sup>42</sup> Prunier presents a ridiculous claim attributed to the other side in as ridiculous terms as possible: “So in Rwanda the French army was in the position of those revolutionary soldiers of 1792 who fought Prussians and emigres alike. A bit outdated perhaps, but after all this was Africa, where history runs behind schedule.”<sup>43</sup> The reader could even forget that nobody in France said any of this, that these are just things Prunier believes French people believe.

Prunier uses this psychological explanation (along with the usual Prunier ridicule) to argue that France gave Habyarimana’s government the impression that it would back Rwanda “no matter what it did,” even though Rwanda was “an ailing dictatorship in a tiny distant country producing only bananas and a declining coffee crop without even asking for political reform as a price for its support.”<sup>44</sup> But if France

unconditionally backed all of its African “chicks” because of this “syn-drome,” and if France’s backing of these “chicks” was the root cause, why didn’t genocides like these occur throughout Francophone Africa?

He also mocks French officials for saying things that are basically true, like “Peace cannot return to Rwanda if these two ethnic groups (Hutu and Tutsi) refuse to work and govern together”<sup>45</sup> and “The Kigali government is an anglophone Tutsi government coming from Uganda.”<sup>46</sup> Through mockery, Prunier can imply things that are too undemocratic to say directly (like that the RPF should dominate Rwanda) or that are untrue (since Kagame’s RPF was predominantly Ugandan-raised and anglophone, unlike the Rwandan francophones they wished to rule).

Having thoroughly ridiculed France, Prunier admits that France’s intervention in 1993 “had one beneficial effect: to safeguard Kigali itself which, despite its denials, the RPF might have been tempted to take by storm. And a storming of Kigali *could only have led to a major bloodbath* and removed any chance of a negotiated political solution.”<sup>47</sup> Prunier’s analysis is thoroughly confused—the RPF “White Knights” needed the ridiculous French armed intervention to help them resist the “temptation” to take an action which “could only have led to a major blood-bath,” but it was only the RPF’s enemy, the government, that was responsible for “systematically sabotaging” the peace, which anyway was ridiculous because such a peace would have included the evil Hutus?

On the other side, Prunier ridicules the suggestion that the US exercised extensive influence over the RPF and its invasion. Kagame’s studies in US military school are dismissed in a footnote<sup>48</sup> as “another old rumour, namely that ‘the RPF has been trained by the Americans’.” Major Kagame stayed in the United States for a total of three and a half months and he was already an experienced soldier when he went to Fort Leavenworth. There were about nine or ten Banyarwanda NRA officers who at some time went to the United States, together with a much larger number of their fellow-officers from various Ugandan tribal origins, within the framework of a US military training program.” The length of the stay, Kagame’s prior experience, and the presence of other Ugandan troops—are all important. Officer training in the US, even for short courses, is a big deal. Kagame’s training in the US and the networks he developed there as an “already experienced” soldier were of central importance in his military campaigns and his rise to power. In any case, Prunier’s source for this footnote is an interview with an unidentified “former US State Department Official, Washington DC, 9

September 1994.” That such an anonymous official might have reasons to be less than completely honest about the US-Kagame relationship in September of 1994 is not raised as a possibility. The Africanist is skeptical of all African sources, but wide-eyed and credulous when reporting claims by Western officials.

Prunier’s book set the biased tone for much of the Western understanding of the genocide and its advocacy for Kagame, for collective punishment of Kagame’s chosen enemies in Rwanda and the DRC, for the demonization of the Hutu population that rendered them without protection from being massacred. The most amazing thing in the entire book is that Prunier says he wrote it as “an antidote to the idea that Africa is a place of darkness, where furious savages clobber each other on the head to assuage their dark ancestral bloodlusts.”<sup>49</sup>

Prunier’s psychological analysis and RPF advocacy was no antidote at all, but the poison itself.

## NOTES

1. Prunier 1995, p. 175.
2. Prunier 1995, p. 175, fn 33, emphasis added.
3. Prunier 1995, p. 170.
4. des Forges 1999, pp. 1–2.
5. Prunier 1995, p. 177.
6. Prunier 1995, p. 180.
7. There’s that Hutu mass again.
8. Prunier 1995, p. 306.
9. Prunier 1995, p. 306.
10. Prunier 1995, p. 310.
11. Prunier 1995, p. 322.
12. Prunier 1995, p. 222.
13. Prunier 1995, p. 267.
14. Prunier 1995, p. 9.
15. Prunier 1995, p. 33.
16. Prunier 1995, p. 39.
17. Prunier 1995, p. 76, fn 61.
18. Prunier 1995, p. 113.
19. Prunier 1995, p. 180.
20. Prunier 1995, p. 189.
21. Prunier 1995, p. 200.
22. Prunier 1995, p. 242.

23. Prunier adds the words “by legal or illegal means” here, as commentary.
24. Prunier 1995, p. 163, fn 7.
25. Prunier 1995, p. 170.
26. Prunier 1995, pp. 166–167
27. Prunier 1995, pp. 301–302. Or, as Prunier all but advocated elsewhere in the book, kill them?
28. Prunier 1995, p. 331.
29. Prunier 1995, p. 16, fn 39.
30. The simplest word for “a belief in different racial stocks” is... racism.
31. See Steinberg’s *The Ethnic Myth* (1971) or Gould’s *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981) for standard, scientific arguments—to which Prunier should have had access in 1994.
32. Prunier 1995, p. 103.
33. Prunier 1995, p. 103. One wonders—where do Africanist scholars fit into this political economy?
34. Prunier 1995, p. 350.
35. See, for example, the rest of this book.
36. Prunier 1995, p. 280. Marvel at the sophistication of the passage, in which Prunier assumes the voice of the very people he’s ridiculing.
37. Prunier 1995, p. 192.
38. Prunier 1995, p. 208. A passage by Africanists and for Africanists, since who else would understand “Mobutu-like”?
39. Prunier 1995, p. 103, see above for the reference to the “French hen” and “African chicks”.
40. Prunier 1995, p. 104.
41. Prunier 1995, p. 105.
42. Prunier 1995, p. 111.
43. Prunier 1995, p. 112.
44. Prunier 1995, p. 107.
45. Prunier 1995, p. 339.
46. Prunier 1995, p. 340.
47. Prunier 1995, p. 177, emphasis added. Strange because throughout his book Prunier ridicules the possibility of a political solution.
48. Prunier 1995, p. 92, fn 93.
49. Prunier 1995, p. xii.



## The Front Men and the Refugees: The Congo War 1996–1997

In 1975, three American students, Carrie Hunter, Barbara Smuts, and Kenneth Smith were studying the behavior of the great apes of Central Africa—chimpanzees, specifically—at Jane Goodall’s Tanzania camp. Emilie Bergmann was also at the camp, working as Goodall’s administrative assistant.

One midnight that year, Laurent Kabila’s guerrillas raided the camp. “After seizing all the white people they could find at Goodall’s camp and stealing the money, cooking pots and chickens of the African staff, Kabila’s guerrillas loaded hostages and booty into a leaky boat for the long trip back across the lake. All the while, they brandished weapons in the faces of their bound captives and pointed rifles at their heads.”<sup>1</sup>

The rebel commander took them to the muddy camp on the other side of Lake Tanganyika and told them that they were the captives of Kabila’s Parti de la Revolution Populaire. Kabila’s men subjected their captives to “reeducation,” including mandatory reading of “political and economic position papers issued by Kabila.”<sup>2</sup> The captives were made to write letters to the Tanzanian president and US and Dutch embassies “demanding money, weapons, the right to move freely through Tanzania on their way to China for training and the release of PRP prisoners from Tanzanian jails.”<sup>3</sup> Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere “refused most of the demands.” The families ransomed their kids for “nearly a half-million dollars,” and the captives were released after six months.



Kabila was never at the camp. Like ten years before when Che Guevara was in the Congo, Kabila was always busy somewhere else, letting others do the work.

By 1996, Kagame had cleared the Turquoise Zone through massacres like the one at Kibeho. The terrorized peasants hiding in western Rwanda, the ones that hadn't fled further into Zaire, had been force-marched back to their villages. He had removed rivals like Seth Sendashonga, Faustin Twagiramungu, and Theoneste Lizinde, and his assassination networks were spreading around the world to take care of any other exiles or threats. He had created a prison system where 100,000 people rotted. Kagame's forces had killed another 150,000 people in massacres during the war and its aftermath; militias had killed at least 500,000 during the war and the genocide. He had taken power in a country that had just lost nearly 10% of its population; perhaps another 20% had successfully fled from his forces over the border in Zaire. What would he do about them?

Other dangers lingered. He might face war crimes prosecution—though Kagame's American friends were taking care of that diplomatically (see Chapter 8). A military threat existed too: If the Rwandan army he had just defeated, the FAR, could re-organize itself with the help of Zaire's faltering dictator, Mobutu, Kagame could be facing an armed return of refugees like the one he had just ridden to power. Men in the camps had boasted that while Kagame “had the guns, we have the population.” An even worse prospect would be a negotiated return that kept the multiparty arrangements negotiated in Arusha intact. After his forces campaigns of terror and their displacement of the people of Ruhengeri and Byumba during the war, Kagame had even less of a chance of winning an election than would have had under the Arusha Accords.

But the situation was favorable in other ways. As he had when he looked at Rwanda from Uganda in 1990, Kagame looked at Zaire from Rwanda in 1996 and saw a society and state in the midst of collapse.

There was a large community of Rwandaphone speakers in the eastern Congo, called the Banyarwanda, from among whom Kagame had recruited for his 1990 invasion of Rwanda. This community had been manipulated and abused by Mobutu, granted privileged access to land and then stripped of it, granted citizenship status and then threatened with its loss.<sup>4</sup> Conflict between Rwandaphones and other ethnic groups (Nyanga, Nande, Hunde, Shi) had become deadly, killing tens of

thousands and displacing hundreds of thousands in Walikale and Masisi from 1993 to 1996.<sup>5</sup> The conflict gave Kagame the opportunity to step in as the protector of the Banyarwanda.

A powerful mobilization for multiparty democracy, culminating in the 1992 Sovereign National Congress, had been reduced to a shambles by Mobutu's manipulation, then destabilized by Operation Turquoise and the arrival of the Rwandan refugees. The Zairean army had just tried to intervene against Kagame in the Rwandan Civil War, but its troops focused mainly on looting and pillaging and running away. In the Kivus, where Rwandan refugees were living in misery, Mobutu's troops were focused on preying on the refugees through petty crime and doing business with them. Mobutu was old, tired, and no longer the favorite of the US. By contrast, Kagame and his mentor, Uganda's Museveni, had been identified and praised as "New African Leaders," who "share an energy, a self-reliance and a determination to shape their own destinies."<sup>6</sup>

So, Kagame visited his mentor at a safari lodge in southern Uganda to ask him what to do. Both men worried especially about what France might do if Rwanda invaded Zaire: Would they try to back Mobutu as they had backed Habyarimana, or would they let him fall as they had after the genocide?

The older man warned Kagame: You need to have the backing of the world powers – the United States, South Africa, the United Kingdom – to succeed in dramatically changing the constellation of power in Africa. As both Museveni and Kagame had learned in their own insurgencies, the international community was inherently hostile to foreign invasions but turned a blind eye to domestic rebellions that called themselves liberation struggles.

Museveni told Kagame: "Go look for Congolese rebels who could act as a fig leaf for Rwandan involvement." And he introduced Kagame to Laurent Kabila.<sup>7</sup>

Patrick Karegeya, one of Kagame's generals—Kagame would in 2014 have him strangled in a South African hotel—said about Kabila that "we weren't looking for a rebel leader. We just needed someone to make the whole operation look Congolese."<sup>8</sup>

Kagame was no stranger to this method: Kabila was not his first front man. Kagame took over the RPF when the original front man, Fred Rwigyema, died at the front in the 1990 invasion. He wasted no time

in putting another man in front: Alexis Kanyarengwe, an exile who had tried to overthrow Habyarimana. When journalist Stephen Smith met Kagame in Belgium in 1992, he asked him: “‘Why is it always you, the vice-president, whom I meet when I have dealings with the Rwandan Patriotic Front, and not Alexis Kanyarengwe?’ Kanyarengwe was the movement’s president. ‘Don’t worry,’ he chuckles. ‘You’re seeing the boss. Kanyarengwe is only our front man. You’d be wasting your time.’”<sup>9</sup>

Kagame found three other front men to join Kabila: Deogratias Bugara, who had helped him recruit fighters from North Kivu; Anselme Masasu, an RPF sergeant from South Kivu who brought with him to Kagame thousands of child soldiers<sup>10</sup> (kadogo); and Andre Kisase Ngandu, an old fighter from the Ruwenzori mountains on the Congo-Uganda border who had a few hundred men under arms against Mobutu. Ngandu was appointed military commander. Kagame put the four men in a house together to create a founding document for their rebellion. For editing, they gave it to Colonel James Kabarebe, Kagame’s most loyal man and the man who would actually lead the Rwandan military campaigns in the Congo. It was called the Lemera Agreement. Kagame met his front men personally several times, “exhorting the Congolese to understand their responsibilities in the struggle.”<sup>11</sup>

For advice and equipment, Kagame went back to the Americans. Rick Orth from the American Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Robert Gribbin, US Ambassador to Rwanda, deputy ambassador Peter Whaley, and military attache Thomas Odom “spent their leisure hours socializing on the tennis court and drinking beer with Paul Kagame and other RPF leaders.”<sup>12</sup> In July 1994, “200 U.S. Special Forces troops began training the RPA in marksmanship, navigation, small unit management, and other techniques that would later be used to track down and kill the genocidaires, as well as thousands of innocent, frightened refugees in Zaire and elsewhere.”<sup>13</sup>

Top embassy officials attended planning meetings, while Vice-President Kagame’s Pentagon friends provided necessary equipment: six rapid patrol boats on Lake Kivu and radio and satellite decryption technology. Later the Americans would provide their allies with satellite photos indicating where the groups of fleeing civilian and military Hutu were located. A composite army was set up, including RPF soldiers (to whom the Americans provided special training), some Ugandans, some Burundians, some Eritreans and Somalis recruited by the Americans, and some Congolese opposition figures summoned by Laurent Kabila.<sup>14</sup>

US involvement included “psychological operations and tactical Special Forces exercises that occurred a few weeks before” the 1996 invasion, and had been ongoing since the RPF took Kigali, and included “combat, military management, disaster relief, soldier team development, land-mine removal, and military and civilian justice.”<sup>15</sup> Kagame began to set the propaganda tone with help from the media: The donors had failed him, and he was going to take action. “In early 1995, Kagame, usually known for his cool, deliberate style, began to lose his temper,”<sup>16</sup> one account said, summarizing Kagame’s own line at the time. “Rwandan frustrations with international donors stewed. Not only had they failed to intervene during the genocide, but they were now feeding the *genocidaires* and allowing them to re-arm.”<sup>17</sup> Never mind that Kagame blocked the UNAMIR II intervention because of his own war plan, and that “*feeding the genocidaires*” could be rephrased as “*not allowing a million refugees to starve.*” Not only had donors not starved the refugees, but Kagame’s coming attack would be a preemptive one: “Based on the intelligence they were gleaning through their network of spies and moles, the RPF realized the ex-FAR were preparing a major attack.”<sup>18</sup> If war was coming anyway, let it be on Kagame’s terms, his supporters argued.

The US defense attache couldn’t quite remember the details when he told one Africanist: “*I don’t think* we ever gave the Rwandan government the thumbs-up.”<sup>19</sup> He had forgotten that the US provided “aerial reconnaissance and radio intelligence.” Beginning in 1995, the Clinton administration transferred military vehicles and weapons to Uganda, that were then donated to the Rwandan army: “weapons given to Uganda to fight the LRA would have been useless in northern Uganda – where the LRA was – and were almost certainly diverted to Congo, with U.S. approval.”<sup>20</sup> The military attache, Peter Whaley, was in such close contact with Laurent Kabila that “the conflict became known as ‘Whaley’s War’ in some diplomatic circles.”<sup>21</sup>

Marie Beatrice Umutesi was part of Rwanda’s NGO movement. Born to an elite family, educated in Europe, Umutesi returned to Rwanda to work in a women’s organization and take part in the multiparty opening of the 1990s. When the RPF invaded from Uganda in 1990, Umutesi put her faith in the peace process and the Arusha Accords. Her background was Hutu, but she was often mistaken for Tutsi. The government feared infiltration and collaborators, and suspected the whole NGO

movement including Umutesi. Many of her colleagues fled under the pressure of arrests and threats. She stayed on.

Umutesi watched the early massacres of Tutsi civilians with terror. Local government officers helped save lives: "For many days they organized patrols, day and night, on the banks of the Nyabarongo River. They fished out the victims and prevented the leaders [of the massacres] from... entering."<sup>22</sup> At the same time, she saw the consequences of the RPF's strategy of systematic massacres to depopulate Byumba: "People began to move en masse to the areas as yet unaffected by the fighting. They told of atrocities committed by the rebels. Women were disemboweled, men impaled. Other forms of torture, each one more barbaric than the other, were perpetrated. These macabre stories created terror in the towns on the frontiers with Uganda." At first, Umutesi believed "that these were fictions, products of the minds of people traumatized by two years of wandering." She came to believe them when people she knew began to be killed.<sup>23</sup>

She worked in Rwanda's camps for the internally displaced during the war. But when Habyarimana was assassinated in April 1994, she and her family eventually joined the millions that fled the RPF. Because of her status and connections, she was able to set herself up in the city of Bukavu, in South Kivu. But her work with women in the refugee camps made her conclude that she would do better for her people if she lived among them, rather than commuting to the camp each day. She set up first in 1995 at the INERA camp, about 30 km from Bukavu,<sup>24</sup> but moved back to Bukavu when the first involuntary repatriation and closing of the camps took place in August of that year.<sup>25</sup> "At INERA and Kashusha camps it was a total rout. The refugees, carrying some provisions on their heads, left without knowing where to go. Some came back to camp, chased off by locals who feared reprisals from the soldiers and didn't dare hide them... All these people stayed on the road, seated on their belongings waiting to see what would happen."<sup>26</sup> Umutesi's NGO collective worked on writing a newsletter. They prepared a position on the nonviolent return to Rwanda and reconciliation.<sup>27</sup> The Zairean government along with the UNHCR cut the food ration and forbade normal activities like group activities and schools.<sup>28</sup> When Bukavu fell on October 29, 1996, Umutesi's flight across Zaire began. "I left Bukavu with nothing but the clothes on my back and my identity card," Umutesi wrote. "I even forgot to take some sugar to snack on the road. I covered the eight kilometers that separate Bukavu from Bagira at a dead run...

Shells whistled overhead and at every step we expected to have one land on us. For several kilometers the paved road, which linked Bukavu and Kavumu Airport, ran along Lake Kivu, and the flood of refugees made a nice target for the Rwandan artillery.”<sup>29</sup>

James Kabarebe was Kagame’s most trusted aide. Kagame had given him overall command of the invasion of Zaire. Kabarebe’s plan was to start the attack on the refugees in South Kivu and sweep them north. One group of Rwandan troops dipped south within Rwanda, passed through allied Burundi, crossed the Ruzizi River into Uvira, and marched back north to Bukavu; another group crossed directly from Rwanda to Bukavu and shelled the city from over the border. They attacked the camps as they went with shells and machine guns, putting the refugees to flight and funneling them into a select few camps in North Kivu, the largest camp being Mugunga.

From Kabarebe’s, and Kagame’s, perspectives, the refugees were being given a generous choice. They could return to Rwanda and RPF control or they could die in Zaire. The RPF marched into Mugunga on November 15. “Thus began what Kigali maintains was a spontaneous repatriation. An estimated 600,000 refugees should have returned to Rwanda. However, many observers estimated that only between 350,000 and 500,000 refugees actually crossed the border... Even taking into account the very uncertain counting methods of refugees and returnees at the borders, this leaves a gap of between 350,000 and 450,000 Rwandan... refugees who had disappeared from eastern Zaire by mid-November 1996. What happened to them can only be described as another genocide. During their ever-deepening advance into Zaire between mid-November 1996 and mid-March 1997, the RPA and Banyamulenge militias systematically hunted them down, corralled and killed tens of thousands in cold blood.”<sup>30</sup>

When US military officials and Africanist writers state their breathless praise of the military abilities of the RPF and of Kagame’s abilities as a commander, they are talking about the RPF’s mastery of a particular strategy—infiltration warfare: “RPA offensive operations usually followed a relatively simple formula, along which every attack was to aim for the heart of the defender and quickly bring it down. At operational level, the preferable target was the seat of the enemy government... This formula did not require the deployed force to be especially capable, numerically superior or in possession of superior firepower, as it was not seeking to breach enemy front lines or defeat units in a classic, complex, set-piece

battle in which enemy units are physically destroyed. Instead, the attacking force looked to infiltrate enemy positions and collapse resistance by attacking their commanders.”<sup>31</sup> The greatest example of this method was of course the assassination of Habyarimana, but Museveni had used it during the Ugandan Bush War and Kagame had used it in the conquest of Rwanda. Now Kabarebe would use it to overthrow Mobutu.

The keys to making this method work were for the attackers to “hit the actual target well before the defenders recognize their presence or can reinforce the protection of their centre of power... whenever the attacking force... failed to destroy its target with the first blow, or when it was recognized too early or faced a well-trained opponent who had established a strong defensive position, it usually rapidly ran out of ammunition and supplies, succumbing to the defender’s firepower.”<sup>32</sup>

In other words, the RPF had developed a method of warfare that worked best on collapsing states with no powerful allies. It was lucky enough to face two collapsing enemies in succession in Habyarimana’s Rwanda and Mobutu’s Zaire. These states were stripped of their allies by US diplomacy and US media warfare, with Africanist writers playing an obliging role in the total dehumanization of Kagame’s chosen enemies.

Kabarebe’s men branched off into several groups, pursuing the different streams of Rwandan refugees deeper into Zaire as the country collapsed ahead of them. One group went northwest toward the strategic city of Kisangani in Province Orientale, the site of the 1960s rebellion by followers of Lumumba. Another group went west, to Shabunda, then Kindu, then Mbuji Mayi, toward Katanga and the diamond mines. A third group marched north from Goma in North Kivu into Ituri in Province Orientale, where they were joined by Museveni’s troops, who crossed from Uganda. The Ugandan army had just joined the war. On November 26, the Ugandans helped the Rwandans defeat Zairean army force in Beni, where the Zaireans may have put up more resistance had they not been recognized and counterambushed.<sup>33</sup>

As Kabarebe’s troops marched from one town to another and the Zairean army fled from them as fast as they could advance, it became clear to all sides that Mobutu’s military was no match for the coalition Kagame had put together.

Kagame had one fear, though, the same thing that had almost undone him in the conquest of Rwanda: a multinational force of Western troops under UN leadership. Unlike the Rwandan refugees, Western soldiers’ lives mattered to people Kagame needed to keep happy. And unlike the

collapsing armies of Mobutu and Habyarimana, a French expeditionary force would easily outclass Kagame's vaunted military. After the clearing of the camps of South Kivu and the concentration of starving and cholera-stricken refugees in North Kivu, the donor countries began to organize a multinational force to protect the refugees. Canada offered to command again. The UNHCR was supportive.<sup>34</sup>

The propaganda response by Kagame to this proposed force was successful and continues to this day. It was based on the idea that the refugees in Zaire were (a) few in number and (b) guilty of genocide. The international community, Kagame accused, was feeding the genocidaires. All anyone hears about is the refugees, Kagame said, the killers, while Rwanda struggles to get back on its feet. Kagame was sick of hearing about them: "We no longer talk about orphans, widows, victims. We're only talking about refugees, refugees, refugees."<sup>35</sup> And US press efforts obliged him.

Kagame attacked the camps of North Kivu while he demonized the refugees. He had Kabarebe's men attack Goma, with artillery support from across the border in Gisenyi, on November 1, and move on the major camp of Mugunga and Lac Vert on November 8. Thousands of refugees kept fleeing west, toward Walikale, under fire. After a week of shelling and machine gun fire, on November 15, Kabarebe's troops entered Mugunga "and ordered the mass of shocked and completely confused refugees still present to return to Rwanda."<sup>36</sup>

Umutesi wrote that "A few days before the destruction of the camp at Mugunga, a mission of American soldiers came by. With the help of megaphones, they asked the refugees to take advantage of their presence in order to go back to Rwanda, because afterwards it would be too late. It was after this that there was a massive return. The only exit that wasn't blocked by the rebels was the one that led back to Rwanda... At all the other camp exits, they shot anyone who moved on sight... Everyone knew that they ran a very real danger by returning, but they thought that it was their last chance at survival."

The people who kept running, Umutesi noted, were the ones who knew they would be special targets—not because they were guilty, but because they were educated. "According to eyewitnesses, on the road back to Rwanda many men were taken by the rebels to Lac Vert camp where they were killed and their bodies dumped in the lake. Several weeks after the destruction of Mugunga, the NGOs said that they buried 6,700 bodies."<sup>37</sup>



This was called, by the donor community and Kagame, “spontaneous repatriation.”

As the RPF moved into the camps, the US helpfully provided estimates of how many refugees were under attack. US ambassador to Rwanda, Robert Gribbin, said that those “still with the ex-FAR and Interahamwe... were family or sympathizers who had no intention of returning to Rwanda,” and offered a number “in the tens to twenties of thousands rather than in vast numbers.”<sup>38</sup>

US aerial photos on November 20, 1996, showed 500,000 refugees in “three major and numerous minor agglomerations.”

But on November 23, the US military in Kigali “claimed they had located only one significant cluster of people which “by the nature of their movement and other clues can be assumed to be the ex-FAR and militias.” Oxfam wrote that they felt “bound to conclude that as many as 400,000 refugees and unknown numbers of Zairian displaced persons have, in effect, been *air-brushed from history*.”<sup>39</sup>

Though the international community were the main audience for the demonization of the Rwandan refugees, Kagame gave Kabila’s troops, the AFDL, the job of hunting down smaller groups of refugees in areas that were already controlled by the Rwandan army. Kabila’s men would “hunt down the refugees and hold public meetings for the attention of the Zairean people, during which they accused Hutu refugees of being collectively responsible for the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda, and were running away because they were all guilty. The insurgents also claimed that the pigs – as they called the Hutu refugees – were planning to commit genocide against Zairian civilians in the region.”<sup>40</sup>

One day around this time in late 1996, Beatrice Umutesi “happened to walk a while with a man who was with a little three-year old boy.” The boy told Umutesi how he watched his mother and sister shot in the road as he and his father hid in the forest. “The father tried to help his son forget this horrific scene, but the little boy brought it up often... In Walikale they were attacked again.”<sup>41</sup>

“With every rebel attack,” Umutesi wrote, “large numbers of refugees were killed and the survivors returned to the forest. The great majority of them did not survive the sickness, hunger, cold, and exhaustion... They tried many times to get out of the forest, but every time they did, when they got to the road they found the decomposing bodies of people who had been killed by the rebels and retraced their steps.”<sup>42</sup>

Among the only food available on the road between Walikale and Kisangani was bitter cassava, which needs to be boiled for a long time to be edible and if eaten raw, makes you sick. The vomiting and dehydration cost Umutesi and her party, including children, a sleepless night. "In the morning they drank a little hot water and we continued down the road."<sup>43</sup> Many more refugees died of hunger and exhaustion.

Umutesi's party ran out of money after Walikale. "Everything... of value that we still had, like shoes, cooking pots, and blankets, was... sold. When we had nothing left to sell, we began a business selling cassava leaves in the camp and looked for work among the villages. We ground rice, helped with the harvest, carried the cassava to be sold to the refugees, cleaned and weeded plots of land, helped lay bricks, and so forth. Nothing was too difficult or too dirty for us."<sup>44</sup> When they stayed too long in a village, villagers started looking at the girls as marriage prospects—so they kept moving.

They arrived at Tingi-Tingi in December 1996. She describes what it was like there:

The camp was built on an unstable swamp, 'tingi-tingi' in the Kumu language. When it rained, the ground swelled and let off a stifling heat. The climate was perfect for the proliferation of mosquitoes and every kind of microbe. The water was a dirty yellowish color. The first weeks at the camp, before humanitarian aid arrived, were Hell. People arrived exhausted and famished, with swollen feet, hoping to find food and care. They were welcomed by a blazing sun and disease... In this filthy swamp, epidemics of malaria, dysentery, and cholera ravaged them. They died like flies. Every day we buried a good fifty people, mostly children and pregnant women.<sup>45</sup>

In Tingi-Tingi, Umutesi heard that the Americans had airbrushed her from history: "I had heard that some countries and international organizations had even declared that there were no more Rwandan refugees in the eastern part of Zaire, apart from some Interahamwe and their families who deserved, it seems, their fate. Nevertheless, there were more than a hundred thousand people at Tingi-Tingi."<sup>46</sup>

She also heard about Mobutu's big plan for a counteroffensive, the famous mercenary-led battle that never came: "In fact, this 'counteroffensive' consisted of two fighter planes we saw fly by doing aerobatics

over the camp. In addition there were two combat helicopters piloted by whites, who were said to be mercenaries, two old tanks, and a few soldiers.”<sup>47</sup>

Mobutu hoped to repeat what he and Tshombe did in the 1960s, and with the same personnel: The old white supremacist mercenaries that had crushed the Stanleyville (now Kisangani) rebellion in 1965 were brought into save Mobutu’s regime from Kagame’s coalition. Bob Denard was rung up, and Christian Tavernier, now in his sixties. The White Legion was born. But Mobutu kept the purse strings tight: “Concerned about a possible collapse of the government, they preferred to pocket as much as possible and quarrelled over the distribution of funds, instead of paying foreigners to keep them in power.”<sup>48</sup>

The force consisted of 30 western mercenaries and a few hundred others. The bulk of the White Legion was made up of Serbian veterans of the Balkan wars that had dismembered Yugoslavia a few years before. They spoke no English, no French, no Swahili. They had no useful maps. They immediately contracted dysentery and malaria, and fled when fired upon.<sup>49</sup> The westerners were paid around \$5000 per month on renewable three-month contracts, while the Serbians were paid around \$1000 per month, half in advance, and the other half—rarely paid out at all.<sup>50</sup>

The White Legion was supposed to stiffen the backbone of the Zairean Armed Forces under the most capable man Mobutu could find—General Donat Lieko Mahele. The General had fought against the RPF in Rwanda in 1990 and had been punished and demoted for stopping the Army from looting during the pillage of Kinshasa in 1991.<sup>51</sup> He was only returned to command of the Zairean forces when the situation was already dire, in December 1996. Mahele had established his competence and his integrity, but he was unpopular with Mobutu’s coterie, including officers below him on the chain of command: “Many of his subordinates refused outright to listen to him and he never managed to establish a unified command over this force.”<sup>52</sup>

Tavernier arrived in Kisangani, old Stanleyville, to take command on January 3, 1997. They set up their air wing at Kindu and flew some bombing raids against Bukavu, Walikale, and Shabunda, claiming great victories through bombing.<sup>53</sup> By February 2, the whites had already lost the town of Watsa to Kabarebe’s men. The Bukavu bombing on February 17 was another debacle. “Flown under direct order from the Zairian minister of defense, General Likulia Bolongo – bypassing Mahele – the attack on Bukavu occurred around 16h00, bombing

the marketplace and densely populated areas in the centre of the town, where 19 civilians were killed and between 37 and 50 wounded. Bolongo maintained that the strike hit only military targets ‘in surgical fashion.’”<sup>54</sup>

When Umutesi heard the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, was coming to visit the refugees at the camp in Tingi-Tingi, she “replied jokingly that it was time for us to pack our bags, because her visit would be followed by Kabila and the rebels.”<sup>55</sup> The gallows humor was the only appropriate way to see the situation. Ogata had already suppressed Gersony’s report about the RPF killing 40,000 people in Rwanda during April–July 1994. The UNHCR had thanked the rebels for repatriating the refugees, despite the fact that hundreds of thousands disappeared and died during this “spontaneous repatriation.” When the High Commissioner did arrive, Umutesi “watched Sadako Ogata and her retinue walking around the camp, and everyone of us worried about what lay ahead once the camp was destroyed.”<sup>56</sup> The humanitarians left Tingi-Tingi shortly after.

Kabila, Masasu, and Bugara were happy enough to be the front men for Kagame and Kabarebe’s campaign of massacres against the Rwandan refugees. For Kisase Ngandu, however, the massacres—and especially the Rwandan plunder of the Congolese patrimony—were growing too much. In November 1996, he stopped Rwandan troops, who were looting with abandon, from removing an electric generator from Goma. “The looting of national possessions should be for Zaire’s account, not Kigali’s.”<sup>57</sup> In December, Ngandu was sent by Kagame to crush a local uprising (of the Mai-Mai militias who were beginning to form in resistance to Rwanda’s occupation of the east). “While underway to Butembo, Ngandu’s bodyguards were removed and replaced by Rwandans who usually protected Kabila... Ngandu was, after early January 1997, never seen again.”<sup>58</sup>

At that time in January 1997, the Angolan national security adviser and the secretary-general of the ruling party were doing reconnaissance in Bukavu, trying to determine the extent of the involvement of their old Angolan enemy, UNITA, in the war. UNITA’s leader, Jonas Savimbi, had brought his forces into the fight on Mobutu’s side. When they found this out, Angola, with a more powerful military than anyone else in the field—Rwanda and Uganda included—decided to join the battle to liberate Zaire from Mobutu, airlifting a mechanized regiment and two battalions of infantry into Bukavu.<sup>59</sup>

Between Tingi-Tingi and Lubutu in January 19–20, 1997, occurred “some of the most bitter battles of the war” as “the RPA troops, reinforced by a contingent of US mercenaries, and advancing from Walikale to Lubutu, clashed with a FAZ column that had reached the easternmost bridge on the Oso River, near Nia Nia and in the village of Mungele... both sides suffered casualties and what was left of the Zairian battalion subsequently fled the battlefield in the direction of Lubutu.”<sup>60</sup>

The Rwandan refugee armed forces, the AliR, “struggled to buy time” for the population of Tingi-Tingi to escape, “but this was of little significance because, once unleashed, Kabarebe would not stop his dash for the refugee camps, no matter how deep into Zaire the Hutus were withdrawing.” And so on February 9, the RPA were 18 km from Tingi-Tingi and defeated AliR, “such a defeat that their resistance completely collapsed. Scattering in all directions, most of their leaders fled to Nairobi in Kenya on board an Antonov transport chartered from Viktor Bout.”<sup>61</sup> After the collapse of the resistance by the refugees, Kabarebe took his time: “On the morning of 1 March, the RPA entered the Tingi-Tingi camp and indiscriminately killed all its remaining occupants, mostly the sick and wounded being treated in the dispensary, and unaccompanied minors.”<sup>62</sup>

Umutesi fled Tingi-Tingi for Lubutu at the end of February 1997. Camp residents tried to flee at night, fearing that “the presence of a hundred thousand refugees on the road in broad daylight would present an easy target for the rebel mortar shells.”<sup>63</sup> But it turned out the rebels were just as capable of attacking at night. The AFDL attacked the refugees as they attempted to cross a bridge into Lubutu. Umutesi’s party lost two boys in the river—the kids were separated from the group and not found after. “In light of the vast numbers of people who perished at Lubutu bridge, I don’t have much hope that they survived.”<sup>64</sup>

On March 1, the Rwandans took the Kindu airstrip, putting an end to Zairean offensive air maneuvers and “massacring hundreds of refugees who had managed to escape from the Shabunda area.”<sup>65</sup> The town had been deserted by the Zairian army, which had withdrawn, like the mercenaries, to Kisangani. The mercenaries, “not keen to fight for the Zairians on their own, let down by lack of supplies and complaining about not being paid,” were sent home from there.<sup>66</sup>

The Zairian army tried to make a last stand at Kisangani, with some of the refugee armed units from the former Rwandan army. One group of 470 Rwandan refugee-soldiers was infiltrated, surrounded by Kabarebe’s

men, captured, and summarily executed.<sup>67</sup> General Numbi Kaleme of the Zairean armed forces' 48th Battalion put up some resistance for several days, ambushing an RPA column before falling apart due to mutinies and defection. "Completely demoralized, the rest of the FAZ collapsed and ran toward Isangi, looting, killing and raping as they went. Those Serbian mercenaries still in the city fled aboard their helicopters after blowing up their HQ. Evacuated to Gbadolite, they were subsequently all flown back to Belgrade. Tavernier, after being denied overall command of the FAZ and mercenary troops in the Kisangani area, reportedly found himself detained by Zairian authorities for 'failing to defend the eastern cities' and for 'betrayal'."<sup>68</sup>

Kisangani fell on March 15, 1997. "Much of the local population greeted the RPA and AFDL troops as liberators, leaving them free to stage search operations in and around the city and massacre additional refugees. Some 80,000 Hutu civilians were still in the area and most of them gathered in three makeshift camps between Kisangani and the town of Ubundu. The Rwandans and insurgents barred any aid from reaching them and encouraged the local population to attack not only the refugees, but also anyone who attempted to help them... On 22 April, the RPA troops... were redeployed to two of these camps, and theatrically murdered more than 200 civilians in the presence of several senior Rwandan officers."<sup>69</sup>

After Kisangani fell and the mercenaries went home, everyone understood that the fall of Kinshasa and Mobutu was only a matter of time. When the "international community recognized Kabila's movement as a 'belligerent community'" in April 1997, the recognition "gave Kabila rights over the state mining company and allowed him to conclude several deals with potential foreign investors." "Goldman Sachs, First Bank of Boston, and the Anglo American Mining Corporation all met with Laurent Kabila," followed by a congressional delegation.<sup>70</sup> Deals with businessmen Jean-Raymond Boule (from Mauritius), for the diamond trade in Kisangani, and with Swedish businessman Alfred Lundin for the \$26 billion copper mine Tenke Fungurume, struck in March 1997, involved cash down payments of \$70 million which "came at a crucial time for the rebellion, two months before it reached the capital, covering the cost of the final push."<sup>71</sup> The granting of belligerent status to Kabila enabled Kagame to use Congolese collateral to finance the country's own conquest—a leveraged buyout, with several hundred thousand deaths as an externality. The declaration by the West that they had

chosen Kabila's side instead of trying to negotiate a democratic transition also severely "weakened Congolese democratic forces that had challenged Mobutu."<sup>72</sup>

A special envoy of Clinton's, Bill Richardson, handed Mobutu "a letter from Clinton asking that he step down with honor and dignity... 'He was being told: You'll be dragged through the streets. These things could happen to you and we are not going to stop them'."<sup>73</sup> Richardson didn't add the words *this time*, unlike in the 1960s and 1970s, when the US guaranteed Mobutu in power against his rivals.

The US Ambassador Daniel Simpson had been meeting with Kabila and arranged for a phone call on May 14 between Mahele and Kabila. "They arranged for Mahele to read a speech on the radio, telling the troops to stand down when the rebels walked into town."<sup>74</sup> Mahele told Mobutu the next day that he could not guarantee the old dictator's safety. When Mobutu fled on May 16, Mahele went to the headquarters of the presidential guard at Camp Tshatshi to try to get them to stand down—and was shot dead for his trouble.<sup>75</sup>

The Rwandans walked into Kinshasa, Zaire's capital, on the morning of May 17, 1997, accepting the surrender of the Zairean forces and rounding them up to the PoW camp at N'Dolo. "The RPA/AFDL troops then began searching for former dignitaries and members of the DSP, arresting and summarily executing suspects. Between 228 and 318 bodies were collected in Kinshasa and its surrounds over the following days. Through the rest of May and during June, large numbers of public executions of former FAZ soldiers and political opponents of the AFDL – often aided by the civilian population – were carried out... arrested persons were taken out of their prison cells or local hospitals, led to the riverside, executed and their bodies dumped into the water... This practice only stopped after fierce protests from various human rights organizations."<sup>76</sup>

In June 1997, with the Rwandans in power in the Congo and Kabila as their front man, the massacres of refugees slowed down, as the refugees were no longer concentrated in camps but dispersed all over Zaire and trying to leave as individuals or small groups. "Starting in June 1997," Umutesi wrote, "another type of hunt for Rwandan refugees unfolded. At the origin of this manhunt was the repatriation program of the UNHCR."<sup>77</sup> Umutesi found herself in a Zairean village negotiating with UNHCR officials who were rounding refugees up and repatriating them. One young mother who had found a new family in the village

of Batsina refused to return to Rwanda and told the UNHCR delegation she would not. One of the men in the delegation “picked her up and threw her into the vehicle like a common sack of corn.”<sup>78</sup> Umutesi talked her way out of it that day; others were not so lucky. “Not being able to get to all the places where refugees had hidden, the UNHCR initiated a system of paid compensation for any Zairian who brought them in. The bounty was ten American dollars for each refugee. Hunting Rwandan refugees became one of the most lucrative activities in the area. Bands of bounty hunters sprang up. They arrived in villages with flyers from the UNHCR and demanded that the local authorities help them in their work.”<sup>79</sup> Umutesi saw 15 refugees caught in the dragnet and taken by the bounty hunters. She was finally found by Belgian friends in another village, in October 1997, and escaped to Belgium to tell the tale. This woman, who had walked across the African continent fleeing genocide and war, watching family and friends die before her eyes, was one of the lucky ones.

How do we count the dead in this phase of the tragedy? Statistician Patrick Ball told *Foreign Policy* in 2012 that “we’re not ever going to figure out Congo.”<sup>80</sup> But the same could be said of the Rwandan genocide. In both cases, we have to try.

In attempting to count the dead in the 1996–1997 Congo war, we have the same methods and the same basic situation as we do in trying to count those killed in the Rwandan genocide. For the 1998–2003 Congo war, there are household cluster sample surveys, which are the most scientifically accepted way of arriving at casualty estimates, as I will return to in a later chapter. There are no such cluster surveys for the 1996–1997 war or the Rwandan genocide, however, so we are left to use other methods.

Recall (from Chapter 8) that the standard estimate for those killed in the genocide uses “missing people.” The total number of Rwandans was 7.8 million, Tutsis were 9% of the population by the 1991 census, or 700,000 people, and 130,000 Tutsi survivors arrived in refugee camps after the genocide. So, 570,000 Tutsis were killed in the genocide. But Prunier and Reyntjens assume the 1991 census undercounted Tutsis, and come to figures of 800,000 Tutsis killed (Prunier) and 600,000 Tutsis killed and 500,000 Hutus killed (Reyntjens). Prunier also estimated that 10,000–30,000 Hutus were killed by the militias as Tutsis or sympathizers. Gersony and Sendashonga estimated that 40,000–60,000 (mostly Hutus) were killed by the RPF during the war, and Stephen Smith and



Seth Sendashonga estimated that 150,000 more people were killed by the RPF in the year following the war (between July 1994 and April 1995).

In addition to estimating using the missing, sociologists studying the death counts coded reports like the Human Rights Watch and African Rights reports, as well as data from the Rwandan government, as samples, and extrapolated from those samples to the whole country. Estimating with those methods, Davenport and Stam estimated a million deaths during the civil war and genocide.

With help from a summer student in 2016,<sup>81</sup> I did my own coding of the HRW report, *Leave None to Tell the Story*. The report attempts to be exhaustive. By coding every massacre described in the book (there were 193 individual massacres described and 5 summary descriptions of multiple events at individual locations) and using the lowest estimate of deaths in each massacre yielded a death count of 4365. Viewed as a sample, the HRW report captured 0.4 to 0.7% of the total death toll. Including the summary descriptions, including 50,000 killed on Bisesoro hill in Kibuye, yielded a death count of 64,263, meaning the HRW report captured around 10% of the estimated total death toll.

Let's repeat the same analysis with the definitive document on the death toll in the 1996–1997 war, the UN Mapping Report, *Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993–2003*. The same summer student helped me code that report, which records 213 individual massacres and 12 summary descriptions for the period January 1996–December 1997. Using the lowest estimate of deaths in each massacre yielded a death count of 26,734. Assuming the UN Mapping Report was much more comprehensive than the HRW report on the Rwandan genocide and captured 5–10% of the total death toll (as opposed to the 0.4–0.7% captured by the HRW report), we get an estimate of 250,000–500,000 refugees killed in the 1996–1997 war. But the ranges of error are immense.

Instead of extrapolation from a coded text, we can use the “missing people” method of estimation, at least for Hutu refugees. Using that method, if between 1.2 million and 2 million refugees crossed the border into Zaire and 350,000–500,000 were repatriated one way or another, then between 700,000–1.65 million refugees died in Zaire. The United Nations admits to “losing” 233,000 Hutu refugees.<sup>82</sup> In between US press briefings, 400,000 refugees went missing (“air-brushed from history”). The Rwandan government and the US pressed to keep the estimates of Rwandan refugees in Zaire as low as possible, and to argue

that those refugees that were there were all genocidaires, to ensure their disposability.

It worked. Witness Jason Stearns performs the calculation of refugee deaths using those Rwandan/US government estimates. He starts from a Rwandan government estimate of 950,000 refugees who crossed into Zaire, with 400,000–600,000 returning to Rwanda in 1996 and another 320,000 repatriated over the course of 1997, which meant, according to his estimates, that “*Anywhere between zero and 380,000 refugees could still have been missing. Also, just because refugees were missing, they weren’t necessarily dead.*”<sup>83</sup> If you are having trouble imagining someone writing about the Rwandan genocide that “between zero and 1 million people could have gone missing. Also, just because Tutsis were missing, they weren’t necessarily dead,” that’s because no one would dare write such a harrowing thing. Stearns continues, using a study of a sample of 266 refugees by Doctors Without Borders, extrapolating that “at least 60,000 refugees had been killed, while the whereabouts of another 180,000 were unknown.”<sup>84</sup> At least he moved the lower limit above zero. Just a few pages later, Stearns interviews one of the RPF men who killed refugees. “We could do over a hundred a day,” the killer, Papy Kamanzi, told Stearns. “We used ropes, it was the fastest way and we didn’t spill blood.”<sup>85</sup> Perhaps Stearns should have specified that Papy could kill *between zero and a hundred a day*.

The point here is that there are no better methods for counting the dead refugees in the 1996–1997 war than there are for counting the victims of the Rwandan genocide. All are extremely rough estimates, and all are politicized. According to the US version, Kagame’s forces killed *between zero and a few thousand guilty genocidaires*, and those genocidaires killed a million Tutsis. But if we use the same methods, the same kinds of data, and the same assumptions to study all of the massacres, the Hutu militias killed between 500,000 and 1 million people between April–July 1994, and Kagame’s forces killed 40–60,000 in the same period. Kagame then went on to kill 150,000 people in Rwanda from July 1994–April 1995 and another 300–400,000 in Zaire from 1996 to 1997.

If we think of the 1996–1997 Congo war as an extension of the Rwandan Civil War that began in 1990, then the entire event can be understood to have taken 1.5–2 million lives, mostly Rwandan. Thinking about it this way, as a single event, with multiple perpetrators and multiple victims, is illegal in Kagame’s Rwanda and will get you smeared as a

genocide denier, a proponent of double genocide theory, or divisionism. If, on the other hand, you think about it as an ethnic balance sheet, in which the event is to be understood without politics or economics or interests but only ethnicity, and in which the deaths of Hutus are cancelled out by the deaths of Tutsis, you can prosper as an analyst. And many have.

But should you understand it in terms of the ambitions of Kagame and Museveni and their US patron, you will see that these 1.5 million deaths made land in Rwanda available for Kagame's Ugandan returnees, that they crushed movements for multiparty democracy in Rwanda and Zaire, and that they installed a new mode of governance in Central Africa. Rwanda changed its economic model from one based on coffee to one based on mercenary might; Zaire was changed from a dictatorship to a peacekept donor colony with an illegal economy. 1.5 million deaths were the price Africa paid for its unsuccessful struggle for democracy in the 1990s.

The US had managed the transition in Africa. But it had installed an unreliable dictator in Laurent Kabila, and an overambitious one in Paul Kagame. The clash between these two men would force the US to bail Kagame out as he plunged the Congo into another, even bigger war.

## NOTES

1. Thomas W. Lippman. "Ex-Captives Criticize Recognition of Kabila." *Washington Post*, October 25, 1997. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1997/10/25/ex-captives-criticize-recognition-of-kabila/b955d52b-cf7b-49aa-812e-d2e2bf5cff5f/>.
2. Lippman. "Ex-Captives Criticize Recognition of Kabila." *Washington Post*, October 25, 1997.
3. Lippman. "Ex-Captives Criticize Recognition of Kabila." *Washington Post*, October 25, 1997.
4. See Chapter 6 of this volume for a discussion.
5. Kisangani 2012, p. 168.
6. That's Madeleine Albright, then Secretary of State. Quoted in Stearns 2011, p. 52. He's quoting Peter Rosenblum. "Irrational Exuberance: The Clinton Administration in Africa." *Current History*, May 2002, p. 197.
7. Stearns 2011, pp. 52–53. Stearns is quoting The Monitor (Kampala), June 1, 1999. "Congo Rebels Were Museveni's Idea".
8. Stearns 2011, p. 87.

9. Stephen Smith. 2011. "Rwanda in Six Scenes." LRB. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n06/stephen-w-smith/rwanda-in-six-scenes>.
10. Stearns 2011, p. 152, writes: "No one has conducted a survey of battle-field casualties during the war, but it is safe to assume that thousands of child soldiers died during the Congo wars." The collapse of the economy was a factor in the war, with 53% of child soldiers joining the fight for economic opportunity (Kisangani p. 132, citing Van Acker and Vlassenroot 2001, p. 107).
11. Stearns 2011, pp. 88–89.
12. Epstein 2017, p. 130, citing Roessler and Verhoeven 2015, p. 159.
13. Epstein 2017, p. 130, citing Roessler and Verhoeven 2015, p. 159.
14. Turner 2013, p. 38, citing Collette Brackman.
15. Turner 2013, pp. 38–39, citing Lynne Duke in *The Washington Post*, 1997.
16. Stearns 2011, p. 50.
17. Stearns 2011, p. 50.
18. Stearns 2011, p. 78.
19. Stearns 2011, p. 43
20. Epstein 2017, p. 131.
21. Epstein 2017, p. 131.
22. Umutesi 2004, p. 23.
23. Umutesi 2004, p. 23.
24. Umutesi 2004, p. 74.
25. Umutesi 2004, p. 92.
26. Umutesi 2004, p. 91.
27. Umutesi 2004, p. 96.
28. Umutesi 2004, p. 98.
29. Umutesi 2004, p. 108.
30. Cooper 2013, p. 40.
31. Cooper 2013, pp. 59–60.
32. Cooper 2013, p. 61.
33. Cooper 2013, p. 42.
34. Cooper 2013, p. 39.
35. Stearns 2011, p. 34.
36. Cooper 2013, p. 40.
37. Umutesi 2004, p. 121.
38. quoted by Stearns 2011, p. 128.
39. Pottier 2002, p. 175, quoting Nicholas Stockton, the Emergencies Director at Oxfam UK and Ireland 1996, p. 2.
40. Cooper 2013, p. 43.
41. Umutesi 2004, p. 131.
42. Umutesi 2004, p. 131.

43. Umutesi 2004, p. 133.
44. Umutesi 2004, p. 137.
45. Umutesi 2004, pp. 143–144.
46. Umutesi 2004, p. 145.
47. Umutesi 2004, p. 153.
48. Cooper 2013, p. 46.
49. Cooper 2013, p. 48.
50. Cooper 2013, p. 46.
51. Stearns 2011, p. 160.
52. Cooper 2013, p. 47.
53. Sean Boyne. 1997, June 1. “The White Legion: Mercenaries in Zaire.” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, p. 278.
54. Cooper 2013, p. 48.
55. Umutesi 2004, p. 154.
56. Umutesi 2004, p. 157.
57. Cooper 2013, pp. 41–42.
58. Cooper 2013, p. 44.
59. Cooper 2013, p. 51.
60. Cooper 2013, p. 49.
61. Victor Bout was a mercenary and businessman from Tajikistan. Cooper 2013, p. 49.
62. Cooper 2013, p. 49.
63. Umutesi 2004, p. 160.
64. Umutesi 2004, p. 163.
65. Cooper 2013, p. 49.
66. Cooper 2013, p. 50.
67. Cooper 2013, p. 50.
68. Cooper 2013, p. 51.
69. Cooper 2013, p. 51.
70. Stearns 2011, p. 126.
71. Stearns 2011, p. 288.
72. Kisangani 2012, p. 132.
73. Stearns 2011, p. 159, citing Michaela Wrong, p. 272.
74. Stearns 2011, p. 160, citing Michaela Wrong, pp. 274–277.
75. Stearns 2011, p. 162.
76. Cooper 2013, p. 54.
77. Umutesi 2004, p. 208.
78. Umutesi 2004, p. 209.
79. Umutesi 2004, p. 211.

80. Tina Rosenberg. "The Body Counter." *Foreign Policy*, February 27, 2012. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/27/the-body-counter/>.
81. Aditi Gupta did the data entry and preliminary analysis.
82. Kisangani 2012, p. 118. Umutesi 2004 also cites this figure.
83. Stearns 2011, p. 136.
84. Stearns 2011, p. 136.
85. Stearns 2011, p. 139.



## CHAPTER 15

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# The Nuance to Protect an Empire

America has been Kagame's patron since he was a rebel soldier in Uganda. Protecting him and his armies from the military consequences of his invasions, from diplomatic trouble, and from international law, has been a pillar of American foreign policy in Africa for decades. When Kagame's victims were the Rwandan population, from 1990 to 1996, the Africanists helped the American effort by lionizing the dictator and by demonizing Rwandans, especially Hutus, as inherently genocidal, evil, an obedient mass. But after 1996, Kagame's ambitions expanded. He sought regime change in Zaire and the subjugation of the entire Congolese nation—a country many times larger than his own. These two wars—1996–1997 and 1998 on—were a new propaganda challenge. The old methods—of portraying Kagame as “good” and the Hutus as “evil”—were dusted off: Congolese victims could be demonized by association with Hutus, while warlords under Kagame's employ (or the employ of Kagame's Ugandan mentor, Yoweri Museveni) could be praised by association with the “new African leaders.” Where counter-evidence was overwhelming, Africanists could switch into legal defense mode, insisting that ill intent could not be proven. Africanists could delve deep into the Congolese mind, finding defects like paranoia and exaggeration that justified their victimization. America and Europe would be portrayed as well-intentioned but bumbling, incapable of understanding the irrationalities of these Africans. Complexity itself was a useful propaganda tool: Evidence of Western sponsorship of aggression and atrocity would be dismissed as oversimplification, a denial

of African agency and of the helplessness of the well-intentioned in the face of impossible situations. At the bottom of these deep and complex Africanist dives, the most banal, conventional conclusions await. But readers are in such a fog by then that the banality is lost on them.

The lionization of Kagame and those associated with them continues in Africanist writing about the Congo wars. After mocking Madeline Albright for “swooning” about the “new african leaders” like Kagame and Museveni,<sup>1</sup> Jason Stearns describes them in nearly exactly the same words: “The war that started in Zaire in September 1996 was not, above all, a civil war. It was a regional conflict, pitting a new generation of *young, visionary* African leaders against Mobutu Sese Seko, the *continent’s dinosaur*.”<sup>2</sup> Never mind that this “dinosaur” had been helped into power and then kept in power for three decades by the US, and was described in more or less the same terms (young, visionary) in his time. But three decades later Mobutu is a dinosaur and Kagame’s men, the “new, younger, cosmopolitan generation of rebels” who “worked with laptop computers and satellite phones.”<sup>3</sup>

“It is easy to forget,” Stearns writes, that the Congo war’s “beginnings were steeped in ideology. The Rwandan-backed invasion was perhaps the heyday of the *African Renaissance*, riding on the groundswell of the liberation of South Africa from apartheid, and of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Rwanda from dictatorships.”<sup>4</sup>

But the Rwandan invasion of the Congo (Zaire) destroyed the anti-Mobutu democratic movement, just as Kagame’s earlier invasion of Rwanda from Uganda had destroyed the movement for multipartyism in that country. Sponsoring these wars was America’s way of steering the African democratic movement for multipartyism in a direction that the empire could control. Those who destroyed democracy in Africa are cast as its heroes.

Africanists see no contradiction in praising Kagame’s African Renaissance democratic credentials and simultaneously praising the military abilities he used to establish his dictatorship. Stearns describes the heroism of the RPF’s 1990 Rwanda invasion: “The guerrilla struggle in Rwanda was marked by self-sacrifice and harsh conditions,” he writes. And “Kagame enforced draconian discipline, executing soldiers suspected of treason or trying to desert. He perfected his hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, harrying the enemy, attacking convoys, but never engaging in large, conventional battles.” Stearns isn’t unique in his breathless fandom, he reminds readers: “People who met Kagame and his RPF colleagues



during this time were impressed by the rebels' dedication."<sup>5</sup> Kagame's "exploits and discipline earned him praise around the world," Stearns writes, quoting US military figures' equally breathless endorsements: "one of the best guerrilla leaders in decades," says one. "A first-rate operational fighter," says another.<sup>6</sup> Contrast his physical description as a "gaunt, bony man with wire-rimmed spectacles and a methodical style of speaking,"<sup>7</sup> with Stearns' description of Laurent Kabila as a "talkative and corpulent man."<sup>8</sup> Describing the RPF's Western-backed machine at war with Zaire's collapsing state, Stearns writes that the RPF "had played David to Goliath several times before and would do so again later."<sup>9</sup> As always, the foresight is attributed to Kagame: "When Kagame told his officers that they would go all the way to Kinshasa, they nodded politely but in private shook their heads."<sup>10</sup> When Kagame tells his assembled Congolese proxies (the RCD) a parable in which he is a King and they are advisors, all accept it—including Stearns.<sup>11</sup> More breathless amazement occurs in discussing "The RPF's daredevil efficiency," in "stark contrast with the decay of the Zairian state."<sup>12</sup> Not one to miss a chance to add to apartheid Israel's mystique, he quotes a Congolese RPF recruit saying "The RPF could tell you with topographical precision where all of their enemy's troops were located... It was like Mossad... these guys were good."<sup>13</sup>

The RPF commander of the 1996 invasion, James Kabarebe, also has his leadership qualities praised at length: "he led by example, often eating with his officers and going to the front line to lead offensives." Kabarebe was so young, and so accomplished, his "reputation is legendary in the region," he was "just a second lieutenant when the RPF invaded the north of Rwanda in 1990, he had risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel by the time they captured Kigali in 1994."<sup>14</sup> Later on, as Kabarebe starts the 1998 war, Stearns describes his plan to attack Kinshasa—a failed plan that started a war of aggression that killed millions—as "one of the most *daring* operations in the region's military history."<sup>15</sup> When things go awry in the operation, Stearns writes that "Sometimes even the Rwandans foul things up."<sup>16</sup>

When Rwanda and Uganda fight the battle of Kisangani in 1999—a sordid, callous rampage between two invaders over the spoils of war in a civilian area—Stearns quotes a reporter who embedded with the RPF on their wondrous qualities. The reporter, Hrvoje Hrijanski, "flew in on one of their flights... was friends with some of the Rwandan officers and spent the evenings drinking *waragi* gin, smoking, and talking with

them.” When Hrjanski got hit by a Ugandan sniper, Rwandan soldiers “staunched the bleeding and waited until the fighting had died down before rushing him to a plane for Kigali. “They saved my life, those guys,” Hrjanski said. To him, the RPF were wonderful. “They were motivated and followed orders... The Rwandans won the battle with guts.”<sup>17</sup>

The worst Stearns can manage for an RPF member, in this case Jack Nziza, an intelligence chief and organizer of massacres of Hutu refugees in the Congo, is to call him a “discreet, sinister character.”<sup>18</sup> Unlike the “bad” Congolese and Rwandans, neither Kabarebe nor Nziza are physically described in detail. Stearns describes the battle of Pweto, which Congolese and Zimbabwean soldiers lost to Rwandan (RPF) and Burundian troops in October 2000, as a heroic battle from the RPF perspective. “The Rwandans had the tactical advantage: They were highly mobile, carried only the essentials, and ambushed the Congolese at every turn in the road.”<sup>19</sup>

A standard technique of Western propaganda is to present an atrocity by Western allies, forces, or proxies in terms of the propaganda value to the victims. From NATO’s bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999, to Israel’s targeting of Palestinian children, Western writers focus first on the bad behavior of the community that suffered the atrocity, then, once suitably contextualized, they mention the crime itself. Above I described how the assassination of Burundi’s President Melchior Ndadaye in 1993, and the military coup that followed, are discussed in HRW’s analysis of the Rwandan genocide in terms of the propaganda value to the organizers of the Rwandan genocide—not as an atrocity on its own terms.

In the Kasika massacre, Rwandan proxies killed hundreds of people in August 1998. Look at Stearns’s characterization of the RCD, the Rwandan proxy forces who committed the Kasika massacre in August 1998, marching into town “led by Commander Moise, a legendary fighter.” The “legendary fighter”’s forces are pitted against “a young upstart chief called Nyakiliba,” who was “a small time thug but could stir up trouble nonetheless.”<sup>20</sup> Nyakiliba does stir up trouble, and in Stearns’s account, more or less forces the RCD to massacre the villagers. *Look what you made Rwanda do, again.*

Stearns expresses upset about the Kasika massacre—in terms of its political effect on the killers: “Kasika has attained mythical status in the Congo. Politicians have invoked its name in countless speeches *when*

*they want to drum up populist support against Rwanda.*”<sup>21</sup> Note also now that the context is set, the last clause of the first sentence about the massacre: “It was here that the RCD took its first plunge into mass violence just days after its creation in August 1998, massacring over a thousand villagers *in reprisal for an attack by a local militia.*”<sup>22</sup> Always in response, always in reprisal. After the massacre ends, it becomes an opportunity to show the hypocrisy of Congolese politicians—“not a single national politician came to visit them... while Kasika was featured in thousands of speeches that lambasted Rwanda and the RCD, no investigation was ever launched, and no compensation was ever offered for any of the victims.”<sup>23</sup> Did Rwandan politicians, or their Western donors visit Kasika, compensate victims, or apologize?

After a long and detailed description of the machine built by Kagame to plunder the eastern Congo, with profits of \$250 million per year during a time when Rwanda’s budget was \$380 million, Stearns goes through a tortured reflection to try to justify it. “Were the vampires sucking blood just to quench their grisly thirst, or was there a more nuanced explanation?” It turns out, Stearns writes, “the regime was facing its own political challenges. Its first two prime ministers had defected, along with dozens of high court judges, ministers, diplomats, army officers, and even soccer players.” Stearns doesn’t mention that many of these people were later hunted down and murdered by Kagame’s forces in exile—including (after Stearns’s book was published) one of his interviewees, Patrick Karegeya. Instead, he goes on: “Like many one-party regimes that faced stiff opposition, the RPF increasingly resorted to patronage and repression to deal with dissent... civil servants in Rwanda were asked to give up to one month’s salary per annum as contributions to the war effort. For many Rwandans... the war in the Congo was an ideological project, not *just* an opportunity to plunder.”<sup>24</sup> No doubt the Congolese victims of the war find it reassuring that Kagame’s men were killing them *not just for plunder.*

To the Kagame-oriented, the invaded are hateful and the invaders are always provoked, retaliating, responding—even while invading another country and firing on residential areas. Describing the Congolese border city of Bukavu on October 8, 1996, before the invasion, Stearns says “From the main street, one could see the Rwandan army positions in the hills to the east... A few weeks before, the Zairian army had exchanged artillery fire with these positions, *provoking* mortar and machine gun fire into *Bukavu’s residential areas.*”<sup>25</sup> During the invasion:

“Anti-Tutsi demagogues whipped up mobs to kill innocent civilians; the Banyamulenge rebels *retaliated, blaming entire communities for their victimization*. Thousands were killed.”<sup>26</sup> Note the return to the passive voice (“Thousands were killed”), once it is established that the Zairian local forces (labeled unsympathetically “Anti-Tutsi”) started it, and the RPF soldiers (labeled ethnically “Banyamulenge rebels”) retaliated.

Meanwhile, the Congolese in Bukavu begin to be cast as collectively guilty like the Hutus. The vice-governor of South Kivu promises to crush Rwanda’s invasion, “bolstered by the *anti-Rwandan sentiment simmering in Bukavu’s streets*.” These alliterative *simmering street sentiments* cast yet another population as collectively guilty, deserving of invasion and punishment, for the same crime: being in Kagame’s war path. The vice-governor soon resorts to “anti-Tutsi hyperbole typical of many Congolese politicians.”<sup>27</sup> And the vice-governor “was not alone in singling out the Banyamulenge community. *Ask a random Congolese* what the root of the war was, and he or she will usually answer, ‘Rwanda’, or ‘the Banyamulenge’.” Stearns carefully ensures that no one is exempt from the broad accusation of “anti-Tutsi hyperbole.” The Banyamulenge “became arguably the country’s most hated group, *attracting venom* from church leaders, human rights activists, and politicians alike.”<sup>28</sup> Stearns adds layer upon layer to this textured smear against the invaded. “His morphology is suspicious’, *one sometimes heard people saying* when they suspected someone of being Tutsi. As if you could tell someone’s subversion by his bone structure or the slant of his nose.”<sup>29</sup> But it’s Stearns that has introduced this whole idea.

By focusing on the *venom, the anti-Rwandan sentiment*, and the grassroots nature of it, coming from *random Congolese* and including *church leaders and human rights activists*, Stearns avoids the strategic interests and choices of the communities involved. “The Banyamulenge” is the word locals used for all of the forces of Rwanda’s invasion, an alliance of forces led by Rwandans and including some local Congolese, who organized explicitly as Tutsis at that time and wore the ethnic label proudly.

The locals are, apparently, supposed to like their invaders. If they are less than grateful for the invasion, it must be because they are filled with *venom*, with *simmering anti-Tutsi sentiment*. How easy it is for a writer to present entire populations as guilty of racism. How convenient to present them as maximally racist at the moment that they are being invaded. And if they use a word like “Banyamulenge,” it cannot be

because this is the word that the people they are talking about use to describe themselves. It must instead be because they are simmering with venom.

Stearns then discusses the Banyamulenge, providing an account of a “persecuted minority”<sup>30</sup> which, while true, is not the complete story, since the Banyamulenge were also at times a privileged minority. The RPF recruited among the Banyamulenge in the 1996 war. Meanwhile, the discriminatory policies of Mobutu’s dictatorship, constantly revoking and then regularizing the citizenship status of the Banyamulenge community, get less space in Stearns’s treatment than the “anti-Tutsi sentiment” theme repeated over and over. Rather than a top-down campaign of Mobutu’s dictatorship, to Stearns, “anti-Tutsi sentiment” is a grassroots feeling that the dictatorship’s politicians were apparently pandering to. Rather than a strategic choice by Banyamulenge leaders and fighters to join Rwanda’s invasion, the Banyamulenge armed forces were forced into whatever they did alongside the RPF in the 1996 invasion. The ever-defensive attack. When he writes about these fighters joining the RPF, he emphasizes that these were “a small group of Banyamulenge youths,” “seeking adventure and responding to the call of their kin,” before immediately moving to the Congolese reaction: “*To many Congolese* the Banyamulenge’s participation in the RPF war smacked of treason and reinforced their belief that, in their heart of hearts, the Banyamulenge were Rwandan.”<sup>31</sup> In North Kivu too, the defensive component of the Tutsi struggle is emphasized at the expense of the locals. The 1993 violence is described as follows: “In March 1993, goaded on by local politicians who reminded their communities of the land expropriation by the Rwandan immigrants, *Hunde and Nyanga mobs launched attacks* against *Hutu and Tutsi, who fought back* with their own militia and by buying protection from the national army. Somewhere between 3,000 and 7,000 people *had been killed* by the end of the year.”<sup>32</sup> Stearns’s refusal to engage in ethnic accounting here is laudable, but inconsistent. The estimates are very rough, and the documented massacres (in the UN Mapping Report of 2010) provide scant data with which to estimate whether the deaths were disproportionately borne by the Rwandaphones or the Hunde and Nyanga, nor which armed groups killed more people.

In another passage, Stearns writes about the purported racism of the Congolese. “It is amazing to what extent the ethnic stereotypes and conflicts that were born in Rwanda have contaminated the rest of the region.

*No other image plagues the Congolese imagination* as much as that of the Tutsi aggressor. *No other sentiment has justified as much violence in the Congo as anti-Tutsi ideology...* Its expressions crop up *everywhere*, from pillow talk to bar banter to televised debates.” Stearns has access to “the Congolese imagination” and has measures not only of violence, but of which “sentiments” have justified violence. Such assertions, because of their unprovability, play an important propaganda purpose—to paint the Congolese, like Rwandan Hutus, with *contamination, plagued imagination, anti-Tutsi ideology*.

Telling of a family in Bukavu that offered him hospitality, he describes the “mother of the family” as being “bitterly opposed to what she called the ‘Tutsi occupation of the eastern Congo’” (note the scare quotes). Stearns takes it upon himself to argue “that you had to understand Tutsi paranoia, as it had its roots in the massacre of up to 800,000 Tutsi in Rwanda during the genocide.” He quotes his host replying “Eight hundred thousand? Obviously it wasn’t enough. There are still some left.”<sup>33</sup> This slam dunk living room conversation flows to “anonymous tracts... intended to rally the population against the Tutsi occupiers,” from which Stearns quotes, and concludes with the psychologizing we have come to expect:

*The Congolese imagination*, flailing around for clarity... has latched onto the most basic building block of society: ethnicity.<sup>34</sup>

Repeated appeals to “complexity” have already culminated, and quite early in the book, in a simple and essentialist tale: *The Congolese imagination is contaminated with anti-Tutsi ideology*.

As he covers the 1996 war, Stearns proceeds in several steps. First, the ethnicity of the invading troops from the RPF is emphasized: describing how they frightened a woman who raised the alarm, the woman was frightened not by a group of soldiers, but by “the sight of Tutsi soldiers armed to the teeth” These soldiers are “paraded in front of television screens across the country.”<sup>35</sup> Then, when the Zairians who are being invaded say nasty things about their invaders, it is proof of their racism, since the invaders are Tutsis. So Stearns quotes an editorial from a local Zaire newspaper in Bukavu that says “a Tutsi will forever remain a Tutsi, with his or her perfidy, craftiness, and dishonesty.”<sup>36</sup> In September 1996, with Rwanda’s invasion underway and Zaire’s armed forces disorganized, people in the border town of Bukavu protested and demanded that

their government repels the invasion. Stearns describes this international invasion in *ethnic* terms, and as “firebrand rhetoric.” “On September 18, the Catholic Church and civil society groups rallied tens of thousands of people in the streets of Bukavu in protest of the ‘aggression by the Tutsi invaders’.”<sup>37</sup> And again, having situated the responsibility among the Congolese protestors, he identifies the invaders as *responding* to this “firebrand rhetoric,” which was “of course, not well received on the other side of the border.”<sup>38</sup>

As examples of what the Rwandan troops were made to do by this “firebrand rhetoric,” Stearns describes a massacre in which these Rwandan troops killed injured people, priests, and nurses at a Lemera hospital, and how “similar attacks took place across the Rusizi plain.”<sup>39</sup>

People writing or talking about invading armies rarely describe them in glowing terms. Why would Congolese say good things about their invaders? The internal states of Zairians/Congolese are reported in detail, along with every nasty thing they say about their invaders. But Stearns doesn’t say what RPF soldiers or the local fighters (Banyamulenge) they were backing, were saying among themselves about the Congolese or Hutu refugees they were killing. Perhaps they were “shooting and crying,” like warrior poets?

After talking about mob violence in detail (and RPF attacks in summary form), Stearns asks “how can we explain this kind of brutality?” And his answer: “the impact of abuse and dysfunctional government on the *psyche* of people in war-torn areas.”<sup>40</sup> Stearns had promised us that he would talk about interests and politics, but here we are with a moving entreaty on the *Congolese psyche*. In an image-filled paragraph, he suggests that punishing more Congolese might help: “the criminals of yesterday become the recidivists of tomorrow.”<sup>41</sup>

Africanists portray Congolese as paranoid, liars, exaggerators, racists. Stearns, who seems to encounter such Congolese around every corner, says that the Congolese “weave rumors and myths together over drinks or while waiting for taxis to help give meaning to their lives. It may, for example, be easier to believe... that the conflict in the Congo was all an American corporate conspiracy to extract minerals from the country,” which might “be easier to swallow than the complex, tangled reality. Doesn’t it give more meaning to the Congolese’s grim everyday existence?”<sup>42</sup> What does Stearns do to “give meaning” to his existence? Presumably, write ridiculous things about Congolese people. In fact ridiculing the notion of Western interests in the Congo by presenting and

discrediting an exaggerated *conspiracy* believed by the Congolese has a very important function: It means that *the Congolese* are not credible, and that only by listening to the *Congo expert* can the reader hope to understand what is happening there, and why (hint: It's the locals that are doing it, not foreigners and certainly not Westerners).

In another colorful scene, Stearns takes another moment to show, in dialogue, how Congolese are hateful and liars. He asks a young Bembe person at a soccer game if he believes stories of Banyamulenge (Tutsi) rapes and murders—the young person says yes. He asks the youth if he believes that such crimes were committed against Banyamulenge, and he says no.<sup>43</sup> Some amazing reporting.

Stearns's Congolese conspiracy theorists are often encountered and are identified helpfully for the reader each time. He repeatedly reminds the Congolese he meets about the severity of the Rwandan genocide and reports their dismissive comments with appropriate solemnity.<sup>44</sup> These cold-hearted Congolese celebrate when the RPF massacres refugees in Tingi-Tingi and tell Stearns so with a shrug: "That was a Rwandan affair. It didn't concern us." The RPF killers told the Congolese "Show me the Congolese we killed. There are none." Stearns is told by a Congolese that "it was true. They didn't kill any Congolese."<sup>45</sup>

Stearns believes that Congolese focus too much on the foreign invaders occupying their country and not enough on their own government. Discussing Laurent Kabila's assassination, Stearns cites an opinion poll. "When asked about the reasons for the war, a full half of Kinshasa answered that they thought it was 'a conspiracy of western powers', while 19 per cent thought it was due to 'Tutsi hegemony in central Africa.' Few cared about the incompetence of their own government."<sup>46</sup> Again and again, Stearns hammers the point that the Congolese are hypocrites for their opposition to Rwanda and their support for Kabila: "Rwandans and their RCD allies funded their military operations in the Congo largely by trading in Congo's gold, coltan, tin, and diamonds. The key difference is that a racket run largely by Rwandans and their allies, not by Kinshasa, *was perceived as* foreign exploitation, *a strange distinction* given that Laurent Kabila had been brought to power by the Rwandans and had not been confirmed by elections."<sup>47</sup> Foolish Congolese, with their "perceptions" of foreign exploitation.

He continues: "Kabila's supporters blame all of his regime's woes on the war. In reality, however, Mzee helped bring his problems on himself through a slew of incoherent and poorly executed



initiatives.”<sup>48</sup> Discussing the growth of diamond smuggling and the loss of government revenue during the war, Stearns blames “Kabila’s whimsical policies.”<sup>49</sup> How could Stearns have such confidence in what would have happened without the 1998 war? Was it just a minor blip in politics-as-usual, this war that killed hundreds of thousands of people and carved the east into blocs ruled by rival warlords and proxy forces?

It is also important that Stearns’s readers understand the causes of the war had nothing to do with economic exploitation: “It was Mobutu’s support of Angolan, Ugandan, and Rwandan rebels that *provoked the incursion*, not his neighbours’ greed for the Congo’s minerals.”<sup>50</sup> As always, the Congo provokes. The invasion is also renamed as an incursion. What’s next, a visit?

One of the greatest crimes the Congolese committed, to the Africanists, was associating with the Hutus. By the time of the 1998 war, after hundreds of thousands of Hutus have been killed in the Congo and hundreds of thousands of others have become part of Rwanda’s horrific prison system, Stearns says the refugees constitute “serious security problems”—having “streamed back” into Rwanda, the authorities knew the “influx would create trouble,” as Kagame’s “enemies would seize the opportunity to infiltrate.”<sup>51</sup> These ex-FAR (Rwandan army), Stearns writes, were recalled to the Congo by Laurent Kabila. Kabila feared the Rwandans would remove him from power, so he allied with the ex-FAR. “It was a deal with the devil, one that precipitated Rwanda’s new invasion.”<sup>52</sup> Again, Kabila’s move is cast as aggressive, while Kagame’s is defensive. Stearns introduces a slight doubt as to whether the invader or the invaded started the war: “it is not clear whether Kabila began recruiting ex-FAR before Kabarebe began deploying his boys to the east,” but “the relationship was going sour, driven by Kabila’s paranoia and Rwanda’s obsession with control.”<sup>53</sup>

Next, Stearns provides a several page long, gory story of massacres of Banyamulenge civilians by Zairian armed forces<sup>54</sup> and a two-paragraph-long story of a massacre of Bembe civilians by RPF and allied forces,<sup>55</sup> accompanied by local color in the form of a polygamous priest in a Stetson hat. But then, once again, he makes a point of asking a survivor of a massacre (this appropriately exoticized Stetson-wearing priest) if he knows of massacres against the Banyamulenge. The priest says no, he hasn’t heard of them. The subtle message comes through again and again: *Congolese are anti-Tutsi*. They are racist. And they are liars. At the end of the chapter, RPF massacres are summarized as follows

(as always, these killings are retaliatory): “In North Kivu, the invading Rwandan troops systematically rounded up and killed thousands of Hutu villagers, *accusing them of supporting the genocidaires*. Many prominent Hutu businessmen and traditional chiefs were also killed.”<sup>56</sup>

Describing the beginning of the 1998 war, Stearns returns to the theme of “anti-Tutsi sentiment,” which “was quickly spreading through Kinshasa, whipped up by Kabila’s politicians,” but also “fed by the beatings and humiliations that residents of the capital had endured at the hands of the Rwandans.”<sup>57</sup> Soon, “Kinshasa was quickly succumbing to the throes of anti-Tutsi frenzy,” “whipped up” by Kabila himself this time in a speech “full of histrionics.”<sup>58</sup> Stearns describes the formation of a Tutsi battalion at Camp Tshatshi in Kinshasa under the command of Malik Kijenge. Again, Stearns presents this as a defensive move, uncoordinated with any international Rwandan action.<sup>59</sup>

Stearns criticizes an anonymous western diplomat for “lumping all of the invading troops – Rwandans, Ugandans, Congolese – into one generic term.”<sup>60</sup> But Stearns is no different: When Kabarebe’s troops captured the Inga Dam, which supplies electricity to Kinshasa, and cut the supply to the capital of five million people, Stearns thinks about this in terms of how it exacerbates “Anti-Tutsi sentiment.” “Rwanda’s decision to cut electricity to the capital sticks in the memory of Kinshasa to this day. That the rebels would jeopardize the lives of sick hospital patients and hamstringing water and fuel supply was the last straw for many and *only further justified their violent hatred of the Tutsi*.”<sup>61</sup> Notice how many different words are used for the Rwandan invasion. “Rwanda’s decision to cut electricity,” “the rebels” jeopardize lives, and the Congolese, as a result, have “further justified their violent hatred of the Tutsi.” So, who cut the power, again?

“The line between the Rwandan government and the Tutsi people as a whole was quickly blurring,”<sup>62</sup> Stearns writes, as he blurs the same line throughout his book.

The blurring of the line was partly a consequence of Rwanda’s methods of warfare: A massacre at Uvira refugee camp by “Banyamulenge” on October 18–20 was much more likely committed by “regular troops from Burundi and Rwanda, passing themselves off as Banyamulenge.”<sup>63</sup> After Angola and Zimbabwe intervened to reinforce Kinshasa, “rebel [i.e., Rwandan] troops in civilian dress began infiltrating the densely populated Masina and Njili neighborhoods on the northwestern outskirts of town”<sup>64</sup>—Kabila called for mob violence against infiltrators, and “the population heeded the call.”<sup>65</sup>

Hundreds of Congolese Tutsi civilians were killed by Congolese civilians at the beginning and at the end of the 1998 war. Stearns is correct to condemn ethnic violence and mob violence—people of conscience condemn all violence against civilians. Unfortunately, the blurring of the line between the Rwandan government and the Tutsi people as a whole has been done both by the “anti-Tutsi” people Stearns condemns and those writers biased toward Kagame’s dictatorship, including Stearns himself.

Discussing the 1998 war, Stearns says that the RDC was a political and social disaster: “Outside of the Hutu and Tutsi population of North Kivu, the movement *was never able to convince the population that it wasn’t a Rwandan proxy.*”<sup>66</sup> Silly population. When local militias “focused on *ethnic* self-defense” began to attack RDC troops, “*claiming to be* protecting Congolese against foreign aggression,” the RCD “*responded* with a brutal counterinsurgency, targeting civilians *in response to attacks.*”<sup>67</sup> As always, the Congolese “claims” are treated with appropriate skepticism. The line of causality is maintained as well. The invaders are always *responding*, the local people are making dubious *claims* about foreign aggression.

A former child soldier tells Stearns the harsh tale of his training for the AFDL in 1996: poor food, brutal beatings, and sleep deprivation. Stearns then summarizes it as follows: “The harsh basic training was intended to instill discipline and weed out those physically too weak for the upcoming war. It was as though the Rwandan officers wanted to beat out the corruption, idleness, and selfishness that had become, in Mobutu’s own words, *le mal zairois.*”<sup>68</sup> The Rwandan officers are a class above. Not for them “corruption, idleness, and selfishness.” These are Zairian diseases.

At times, Africanists will speak directly and clearly about the empire and what it has done. Turner affirms that “rape has been a weapon in eastern DRC since the Rwandan-Ugandan invasions of 1996 and 1998. All sides in the wars that have raged since then have used it to humiliate and intimidate their victims, and their families and communities.”<sup>69</sup> “Mass rapes in DRC,” he continues later, “often aim at collective punishment or ethnic cleansing: the driving out of unwanted people.”<sup>70</sup> Discussing the UN expert reports on the illegal exploitation of Congolese resources, Turner points out that the reports “provided the basis for action against governments, firms, and individuals involved in such illegal activities. Such actions perhaps could have protected

Congolese civilians by reducing the level of violence. No such actions were taken, however, in large part because the American, British, and other governments protected themselves and their companies, accused of violations.”<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Turner writes, “The American contribution to the... conflict in the Great Lakes region consists of a long series of efforts to avoid accountability for the human rights abuses committed by the US itself and by its Rwandan and Ugandan allies over the years. From the Gersony report of 1994, blocked before it took final form, to the Garretton report of 1999, to the appendices of the UN experts reports and the UN mapping report of 2010, the US (under several different presidents) has rather consistently attempted to suppress evidence of human rights violations.”<sup>72</sup> Turner also chastizes Hillary Clinton for telling Congolese in Goma in 2009 not to be “dragged down by the past.” Turner writes that Clinton’s “suggestion that Congolese should forget the past, a suggestion that she would never think to make to the Israelis or the Rwandans, became emblematic of the US double standard in Central Africa.”<sup>73</sup> Turner talks about the US-Rwanda relationship as “an extensive alliance between unequal partners,” and reminds readers that “Kagame... was undergoing military training in the US when the RPF crossed the Uganda-Rwanda border in 1990.”<sup>74</sup> He approvingly quotes former Assistant Secretary of State Cohen, who says that no international body has done anything to hold Rwanda and Uganda “accountable for the death and destruction that their surrogates have perpetrated,” and even takes Cohen to task for failing to “mention American and British aid to the Rwandan and Ugandan governments, which made it possible for these governments to launch invasions, which later became self-financing and even highly profitable.”<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere he writes that “The US government cannot have failed to know about the abuses committed in eastern Congo by its Rwandan and Ugandan proteges,”<sup>76</sup> and discusses the suppression of the UN report on the illegal exploitation of Congolese resources.

Finally, readers have strong, clear statements that direct them to what America is doing, how and why. How to minimize their impact? Turner has several methods, most of which can take the form of “*Of course, but...*”.

The first evokes the supposed Congolese penchant for exaggeration. “Many Congolese,” he writes—there they are again, those Many Congolese—“are convinced that the very high incidence of AIDS in their country is directly attributable to Ugandan and Rwandan policy.

A rumor circulated that Uganda and/or Rwanda had recruited 2000 HIV-positive rebels and sent them into DRC for the specific purpose of spreading AIDS among the Congolese.<sup>77</sup> Turner gets to have it both ways—to report the rumor, which might be the conspiratorial Congolese, and also to suggest it might be true, before finally dismissing it a few pages later as “implausible.” Having raised political and militarized rape and its role as a weapon, Turner then proceeds to discuss other kinds of rape that “do not conveniently fit into the ‘rape as a weapon’ framework” (convenient for whom, exactly?).

Having reported the way the US and Britain covered for Rwanda and Uganda, by the end of Turner’s chapter on the “Responsibility to Protect,” we’re back to the “myth of the yoke, according to which the country’s ills were due to outsiders. This worldview is complementary with the Rwandan Hutu version of history. This ideological convergence helps to explain the perpetuation of the conflict in eastern DRC.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, Congolese believe in the “myth of the yoke,” and Rwandan Hutus have a “version of history” that coincides with this myth, and their “ideological convergence” is what, presumably, brought the armies of Kagame’s Rwanda and Museveni’s Uganda and their US and UK backers down on them. The ideas in their ethnic Congolese and Hutu heads explain what has been done to them.

Before discussing Rwanda’s and Uganda’s (and Western corporate) theft of Congo’s mining resources, Turner presents an exaggerated version and then attacks it, leaving the reader with a confused frame in which to try to fit the fact of plunder. “Of course the US and France were involved in overthrowing the dying Mobutu and in propping him up, respectively. However, their involvement was not primarily aimed at defending stakes in mining.”<sup>79</sup>

Turner writes that “of course the Rwandans, Ugandans, and others pillaged DRC, but that does not mean that one can dismiss the Rwandan Tutsi grievance against Hutu *genocidaires* on Congo soil as merely an excuse.”<sup>80</sup> Turner has in one sentence emphasized the ethnic, de-emphasized the economic and political, and validated the pretext used by the aggressor (Kagame) for the war in the DRC. That he does this by saying “of course” they plundered is brazen. He continues that “only after the war had dragged on for a decade and millions of Congolese had died did Rwanda refocus on its main motive in 1996: that is, to defeat or destroy the Hutu *genocidaires* of 1994, by now reorganized as the FDLR.”<sup>81</sup> This confusing sentence suggests that Kagame

first invaded the Congo for a main reason (security), then spent ten years doing something else (plundering), then refocused again on his *main motive* ten years later. Is this how main motives really work? No. This is a scholar adopting the aggressor's propaganda.

When discussing the plunder of Congolese resources, Turner returns us to the exaggerating Congolese:

“Congolese have reacted to the pillage of their country by blaming it all on Rwanda, Uganda, and their backers. Many claim that Rwanda has no gold, cassiterite, or coltan of its own and that the large quantities exported after 1996 therefore derived entirely from eastern DRC. As in so much of the rhetorical combat surrounding the Congo wars, this is overstated. Rwanda possesses gold, cassiterite, wolframite, and coltan. However, as of 1993 these resources remained largely undeveloped and contributed little to the Rwandan economy... shortly after the invasions of eastern Congo, Kagame and his associates began importing gold, cassiterite, and other valuable minerals from eastern DRC, and then re-exporting them as Rwandan products.”<sup>82</sup> The only facts in these paragraphs are of Kagame's plunder of the DRC. But by starting with an exaggerated claim about “Congolese” who “blame it all” on Rwanda, Turner covers these facts with doubt. *Of course Kagame plundered the Congo, but remember, the Congolese lie.*

In an Africanist dance of alternately conceding the important point and minimizing it, German sociologist Alex Veit continues the theme of the exaggerating Congolese: “Few opinions on Ituri's conflict were shared by as many diverse participants and observers as their agreement regarding the wickedness of Uganda's motives in Ituri. Iturian middlemen, international peacekeepers, Western, Congolese, and Ugandan academics and journalists, human rights observers, and civilians all agreed on this issue.”<sup>83</sup> Veit puts more outlandish arguments together with plausible ones: “Some suspected the Ugandan government of geo-strategic plans, i.e. to annex Ituri into Uganda. More prominent have been accusations of equally illegitimate appropriation of Iturian economic riches.”<sup>84</sup> The latter “accusation” is amply documented, while the former one is totally speculative—by putting fact and fiction together, Veit effectively discredits the fact. Next, Veit emphasizes that these “accusations” depend on Uganda's “willfulness” in inciting the violence: “To achieve these aims, it is often concluded that the Ugandan army willfully incited the civil war in the district by instigating violence and providing weapons.”<sup>85</sup> Uganda's *willfulness* and whether Uganda

*incited* the war are very difficult to prove, unlike the obvious facts that Uganda *conducted* the war through proxies and *benefited* from it. Veit continues, focusing on Uganda's unprovable motivations and bad intentions, which feature in the reasoning about Uganda's role in the Congo: "The civil war weakened Congolese defenses, *the reasoning goes*, and the political instability provided a cover for geographic and economic appropriation. *Even more perfidious*, the civil war then served as justification for a continued policing presence of Ugandan troops."<sup>86</sup> Those who argue that the Ugandan invasion of Ituri determined what happened there are presented in effect as conspiracy theorists.

Having set up the critique of Uganda's role in the Congo as being based on Uganda's (impossible to know) *motivations* and *planning*, Veit then makes some concessions to Uganda's critics: "Ugandan claims [that they were in the Congo for security reasons] have always been doubted, as UPDF troops were partly stationed far beyond the relevant regions and generally did not combat these rebels in a sustained manner. Thus many of the criticisms against Uganda seem apt, especially as Ugandan actors indeed contributed significantly to the escalation of violence and made material gains."<sup>87</sup> Having conceded that Uganda "contributed significantly" and "made material gains," though, Veit reminds readers that "it is not conceivable that the Ugandan government had planned to create a lawless 'Far West' at its borders."<sup>88</sup> Its conceivability aside, the question of *planning*, the focus on so many scholars, diverts from the question of *responsibility*, the understanding of which could make a difference in the possibilities for ending the conflict. But why does he think Ugandan planning is inconceivable? Because "the presence of the UPDF in the Congo resulted in high political costs, including a narrowly avoided war with Rwanda, international criticism by the UN and donor countries, and condemnation by the International Court of Justice... the occupation accelerated a process of disintegration of the army and the ruling party."<sup>89</sup> In fact, the Ugandan government made peace with Rwanda, rode out the international criticism through support from its Western allies, and its army and ruling party remains in power more than a decade after its initial intervention. The costs have not been so high after all.

Veit concludes with another frequent recourse by Africanists, the idea that power is not "monolithic": "whether the government actually possessed the political strength to pursue a consistent strategy can be plausibly doubted. Indeed, the Ugandan army and its supporters

in the government did not seem to form a *centralized hierarchy*. This claim is made most apparent by the contradictory actions Ugandan officers pursued in parallel. While the occupation has been extremely injurious to Ituri's society, neither its actions appear to have been *centrally planned* nor its effect - the local civil war - *anticipated*.<sup>90</sup> Again, all of these issues—Uganda's centralization, the possibility of planning, and the possibility of anticipation—are irrelevant to the question of Uganda's responsibility in the conflict in Ituri. Veit concedes that Uganda is responsible, but attempts to refute the notion that Uganda was capable of, or did, any planning of a proxy war in its neighboring country (from which it benefited through plunder of resources), or was able to anticipate that its operations would contribute to a civil war among the population living under its military proxies. In fact, governments, armies, and business, including illicit ones, do plan their operations, anticipate contingencies, and act in their interests. It is impossible to believe they would do otherwise, except for the most sophisticated scholars. Africanists focus on the agency of the victims, the divisions and differences of opinion among the powerful, the impossibility of knowing actors' motivations, and the impossibility of predicting the future. In doing so, their scholarship de-emphasizes the responsibility of the invaders, the overwhelming power of military forces, the continuities of Western policies, and the remarkable consistency of how the world looks from the perspective of those who live in terror and deprivation.

Africanists often assume the best intentions by the Americans and Europeans who go to Africa to help. When their efforts fail, then, it is the fault of those helped. McGill Professor Severine Autesserre wrote an influential book called *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*.<sup>91</sup> Autesserre conducted hundreds of hours of interviews encompassing most of the international agencies that work in the Congo's conflict, and developed an analysis not only of the Congo, but also of the culture and dysfunctions of the international community, the United Nations, and the so-called peacebuilding community. Autesserre writes that "International peacebuilders have their own world, with its own rituals, its own customs, its own beliefs, its own roles, its own stars, its own villains, its own rules, its own taboos, its own meeting places – in brief, its own culture."<sup>92</sup> Autesserre rightly criticizes this "culture" for its picture of the Congo as "an inherently turbulent country where violence was expected even in times of peace."<sup>93</sup> She elaborates: "In the early twenty-first century, many policy makers, journalists,



and most Western and African individuals perpetuated the image of the Congolese as brutal, barbarous, and savage ‘by nature’... When discussing the Congolese conflict, they usually emphasized the unending, puzzling, and gruesome character of the violence; the state of quasi-anarchy and chaos; the polarization of the society according to ethnic issues; and the ‘folkloric’ aspects of the Mai Mai militias, such as reliance on supernatural powers and a tendency to fight naked.”<sup>94</sup> So far, so good: This kind of exoticization of the Congolese and the setting of them outside of “normal” humanity has been tolerated in scholarship and the aid community for too long. Autessere’s addressing it is important. To Autessere, “the very idea that extreme violence is inherent to various parts of the world, such as the Congo or the former Yugoslavia, should be questioned.”<sup>95</sup> Autessere’s ideas for local peacebuilding are also unobjectionable. She points out the relatively low investment in the Congo. Per capita reconstruction spending in the Congo was \$39 in 2004, compared to \$79 for El Salvador, \$129 for Afghanistan, and \$278 for East Timor. MONUC deployed 33 peacekeepers per 100,000 inhabitants in 2006, compared to 112 in Burundi in 2004 and 672 in Iraq in 2008. She argues that fixating on elections should be deprioritized, and instead, peacebuilders should focus on settling land disputes and even enacting land reform—new small-scale courts for dispute resolution, town hall-type forums and workshops, and the creation of social links between communities in conflict, all good ideas.<sup>96</sup>

But there are overwhelming problems with Autessere’s analysis. Land reform would definitely help matters in the Kivus. But land reform usually requires a revolution, or at least a highly organized mass movement and a supportive government. The idea that international peacebuilders would be able to enact land reform instead of elections is difficult to believe. One of the success stories for Autessere’s local peacebuilding? Afghanistan. “Operation Khyber (2007) successfully fought off hundreds of Taliban insurgents and significantly reduced suicide attacks on U.S. troops and their allies in Paktia Province, in part thanks to bottom-up peacebuilding efforts.”<sup>97</sup> Twelve years after Operation Khyber, the Taliban continue to own parts of southern Afghanistan and to attack all around the country at will, with no end in sight.

The reason Afghanistan is *not* an example of successful local peacebuilding also explains why Autessere’s prescriptions for the Congo *will not solve* the Congo’s conflicts. Autessere’s fundamental thesis is that the international peacebuilding community, led by the UN, emphasizes

national and international conflict at the expense of local conflict. This mis-emphasis, Autessere argues, can be repaired by a cultural change and a re-allocation of resources. In other words, peace in the Congo or Afghanistan is a technical problem of peacebuilding with a technical solution. It is a problem of misunderstanding of the *scale* of the problem (national instead of local, macro instead of micro). Autessere's emphasis on *scale* and the *local* confuses the relationship between local, national, and international scales. Of course, conflicts occur at the local level. This is an outcome of how insurgencies and counterinsurgencies are fought. Small groups of armed men enter an isolated village or town. Its armed defenders are chased off, killed, or have already fled. The insurgents, the new power in town, act as predators—they kill, rape, and steal from the civilian population. They destroy the symbols of their enemies (schools, hospitals) and kill local leaders who may have affiliated with the other side. Sometime later the other side returns and attacks those civilians who collaborated. Often the entire village will flee. This all happens at the *local level*. These aren't national armies meeting on the battlefield, nor are their air forces launching ballistic missiles at one another's capitals. But that does not mean that local-level diplomacy or peacebuilding can resolve it in the absence of a political understanding of what is occurring at all scales. Autessere argues that it is the local-scale political analysis, local-scale agendas, and land conflicts that dominate and need resolution. But Autessere's prescriptions for a new national land law and systematic education of people in their rights<sup>98</sup> undermine her own argument, for these are national-scale interventions that she believes should be implemented by internationals.

Afghanistan's war is going to keep going because of Pakistan's support for the Taliban and other proxies in pursuit of "strategic depth"—international factors that will undermine any local peacebuilding efforts. The Congo's war is going to keep going because of Rwanda and Uganda and their interests in Congolese resources—international factors that will undermine any local peacebuilding efforts. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are strong allies of the US, which is supposed to be helping the Afghan government fight the Taliban. Rwanda and Uganda are strong allies of the US, which is supposed to be helping the Congolese government establish peace in the east. The problem is not one of *scale*, and it is not a *technical* problem. It is a political problem, and as long as the international community of peacebuilders, whose culture Autessere astutely criticizes, continues to have this blind spot, which Autessere shares, we will have

to keep reading about *The Trouble with the Congo* as if the trouble is the Congo.

The political problem, in other words, is that the international community is a dishonest broker. The international peacebuilders don't just see the Congo as inherently violent. They have chosen good and bad sides in the conflict. They have designated some criminal actors as the problem, while others are protected from criticism. This occurs even in the vagaries of language used for some violent groups and the precision of language used for others. Autessere, like Turner and Stearns, is no exception to this dishonest brokering, this bias.

In her introduction, Autessere talks about how the international community eventually worked to ensure that "troops from neighboring countries officially remained out of Congolese territory",<sup>99</sup> pressuring "neighboring countries" to "significantly decrease both assistance to, and manipulation of, Congolese fighters."<sup>100</sup> These unnamed neighbors are Rwanda and Uganda. Their protection continues throughout the text. The Rwandan dictatorship of Paul Kagame's pretext for invading the Congo, that he was protecting "Congolese of Rwandan descent," is accepted fully by Autessere, who writes that threats against these Congolese of Rwandan descent "partly motivated the two Rwandan invasions in the late 1990s." Kagame's Rwanda "intervened in Congo to preserve its national security."<sup>101</sup> When the Rwanda-supported Laurent Nkunda sacked Bukavu in 2004, his troops killing and raping civilians, Autessere reports this as follows: "large-scale fighting broke out in Bukavu and quickly spread to the entire province, almost causing a collapse of the national and regional peace settlements."<sup>102</sup> Kagame, like Nkunda, belongs to the Tutsi ethnic group. Neither are identified by their ethnicity, and this is good. Why should a writer like Autessere identify people or groups by ethnicity, when doing so would veer toward racism? The trouble is, this rule is not evenly applied by Autessere. Hutus are systematically identified by ethnicity and are always the cause of conflict. Hutus don't react or retaliate—they are the attackers, the spoilers, the problem. This paragraph sets the tone: "The 1994 Rwandan genocide and the subsequent arrival of 2 million Rwandan Hutu refugees in the Kivus added a regional dimension to the crisis. The Congolese of Rwandan descent allied with the new Rwandan government, which intervened in Congo to preserve its national security. Indigenous groups organized themselves into militias called Mai Mai, eventually allying with the defeated Hutu rebels and the Congolese government."<sup>103</sup>

The “Congolese of Rwandan descent” are nearly all Tutsis. The “new Rwandan government” is the dictatorship of Paul Kagame, whose generals and ruling group are all Tutsis and whose mission upon coming to power was the collective punishment of all Hutus. I do not believe in these ethnic typologies, but it would be much better to not have them at all than to identify only the Hutus and leave the others without ethnicity.

It gets worse. For the hearts and minds of the Hutus, like the Congolese (and unlike Kagame) are directly accessible by Autessere just like they are to other Congo experts. And what is in these Hutu and Congolese hearts is hatred, and anti-Tutsi hatred. “The Rwandan army,” Autessere writes gently, “removed, often by violent means, most traditional chiefs from the areas they controlled and installed people with Rwandan ancestry (often Tutsi) in their stead.” This euphemistic “removal” and “installation” like software was done without any sort of ethnic bias or hatred. But “in response, national, provincial, and local indigenous elites *mobilized ethnic hatred* to save whatever power they retained.”<sup>104</sup> Those who “remove” people of one ethnicity and “install” people of another are not *mobilizing ethnic hatred*. But the ones who fight them are. Autessere uses scare quotes around the words “aggressors” and “Rwandan invaders” to make it clear that she does not believe Kagame’s armies were “aggressors” or “invaders.” And Autessere also blandly reports that “Virtually all Congolese blamed people with Rwandan ancestry, especially the Tutsis, for all of the Congo’s problems, including the regional conflict and the civil war. Many people even referred to the 1998 war as ‘the war of the Banyamulenge’. Violence against communities of Rwandan descent was especially heavy wherever they lived unprotected by... Rwandan soldiers.”<sup>105</sup> Autessere may have done hundreds of interviews, but she did not do enough interviews to speak for “virtually all Congolese.” In a single, remarkable passage, Autessere reveals the bias shared by the international peacebuilding community. The “Rwandan soldiers” are ever *protecting* people from *ethnic hatred*, never engaging in any ethnic hatred of their own. Their murders and massacres are mere *removals* and *installations*, while their enemies rape and kill. The image of the Congo’s instability “spilling over its borders” to “contaminate its neighbors”<sup>106</sup> is used—never mind that it’s the neighbors that were invading the Congo. This despite passages where Autessere notes that “All armed groups repeatedly subjected the population to massive human rights violations, including forced displacement, gang rape, killings, massacres, torture, and burning of villages.”<sup>107</sup>

My examples are not cherry-picked: These linguistic slips pervade *the Trouble with the Congo*. It is yet another example of how the Africanist, by choosing a side, lowers a fog on a conflict and prevents a clear understanding. Without such a clear understanding, Westerners are left to grasp for why war persists despite *our best efforts*. Autessere is right to reject explanations that depend on Congolese as “inherently violent,” but the biases throughout the book leave the reader with no real alternative. The subtle steering of the reader to the inherent violence of the Hutus and Congolese and the righteousness of the (invisible dictatorship of Kagame’s) Rwandan army can only leave the reader with exactly that impression: that Hutus and Congolese are the problem.

So, if not “the local,” what is going on? Why such extreme violence at the local level? Why do conflicts persist? Bertrand Russell identified the rule of law as the greatest advance in human history. Autessere’s entire argument about “the local” hinges on a paragraph refuting the idea that *state collapse* is responsible for the violence. Another European scholar, Timothy Raeymaekers, also made a case that state collapse is not so bad (Africanists usually aren’t so sanguine about the collapse of the state they live in—but never mind). He argues that while “in the literature,” “protracted armed conflicts such as the war in the DRC” are “commonly associated with high levels of state collapse and criminal violence,” Raeymakers argues that “state collapse does not necessarily have to be associated with the collapse of society writ large: despite high levels of insecurity and uncertainty, people continue to seek answers to their daily problems and reorganize things there where others fail or are absent.”<sup>108</sup> Autessere writes that “a lack of authority does not mean people will immediately begin killing and raping each other.”<sup>109</sup>

Perhaps not immediately. But the Congolese state collapsed between 1961 and 1965, and the Rwandan one was knocked over in the 1990s. A vast literature discusses the consequences of this sort of collapse. Contemporary examples abound: Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, are all states that collapsed under imperial intervention at varying times (Afghanistan decades before the others) and are all places of shocking violence and atrocity. It does not require any belief in the inherent violence of the Congolese to see it.

*The Trouble with the Congo* is right to identify a rot at the center of international peacebuilding efforts in the Congo. But the rot is not one of scale or technique. It is one of politics and bias. The Africanists’ need to protect the Rwandan dictatorship, including in *the Trouble with the*

*Congo* itself, blocks understanding and prompts the creation of collectively guilty groups—Hutus or Congolese.

It is amazing that Africanists from so many different academic fields, generations, Western countries, and specific study regions can produce scholarship that so consistently protects Kagame and America. The range of propaganda methods, from subtle lionization to crude demonization and appeals to complexity and nuance, is impressively wide. At the end, it feels like there's no way to escape the propaganda. Any time you sit down to read something about Africa, you have to know you'll be reading something that accepts the demonization of whole populations and the lionization of war criminals, the presentation of deceitful victims and an innocent empire.

## NOTES

1. Stearns 2011, p. 52.
2. Stearns 2011, p. 54.
3. Stearns 2011, p. 89.
4. Stearns 2011, p. 55.
5. Stearns 2011, p. 49.
6. Stearns 2011, p. 49.
7. Stearns 2011, p. 47.
8. Stearns 2011, p. 53.
9. Stearns 2011, p. 55.
10. Stearns 2011, p. 55.
11. Stearns 2011, p. 209.
12. Stearns 2011, p. 76.
13. Stearns 2011, p. 76.
14. Stearns 2011, p. 121.
15. Stearns 2011, p. 188.
16. Stearns 2011, p. 190.
17. Stearns 2011, p. 245.
18. Stearns 2011, p. 139.
19. Stearns 2011, p. 275.
20. Stearns 2011, p. 253.
21. Stearns 2011, p. 251.
22. Stearns 2011, p. 252.
23. Stearns 2011, p. 262.
24. Stearns 2011, pp. 300–301.
25. Stearns 2011, p. 57.
26. Stearns 2011, p. 94.

27. Stearns 2011, p. 58.
28. Stearns 2011, p. 59.
29. Stearns 2011, p. 59. Emphasis mine. How can anyone refute things one sometimes hears people saying?
30. Stearns 2011, p. 60.
31. Stearns 2011, p. 67.
32. Stearns 2011, p. 73.
33. Stearns 2011, pp. 79–80.
34. Stearns 2011, p. 80.
35. Stearns 2011, p. 93.
36. Stearns 2011, p. 94.
37. Stearns 2011, p. 111.
38. Stearns 2011, p. 111.
39. Stearns 2011, p. 112.
40. Stearns 2011, p. 95.
41. Stearns 2011, p. 107.
42. Stearns 2011, p. 283.
43. Stearns 2011, p. 98.
44. Stearns 2011, pp. 132–133 are examples.
45. Stearns 2011, p. 134.
46. Stearns 2011, p. 270.
47. Stearns 2011, p. 296.
48. Stearns 2011, p. 270.
49. Stearns 2011, p. 271.
50. Stearns 2011, p. 286.
51. Stearns 2011, p. 181.
52. Stearns 2011, p. 183.
53. Stearns 2011, p. 191. Stearns’s source on this sequence of events is Paul Rwarakabije, commander of the insurgency in northwestern Rwanda, who was rehabilitated into Kagame’s army. Might this have affected what he told Stearns?
54. Stearns 2011, pp. 100–103.
55. Stearns 2011, pp. 105–106.
56. Stearns 2011, p. 106.
57. Stearns 2011, p. 184.
58. Stearns 2011, p. 193.
59. Stearns 2011, p. 185.
60. Stearns 2011, p. 197.
61. Stearns 2011, p. 196.
62. Stearns 2011, p. 193.
63. Turner 2013, p. 95.
64. Stearns 2011, p. 197.

65. Stearns 2011, p. 198.
66. Stearns 2011, p. 211.
67. Stearns 2011, p. 211.
68. Stearns 2011, p. 151.
69. Turner 2013, p. 128.
70. Turner 2013, p. 131.
71. Turner 2013, p. 188.
72. Turner 2013, p. 193.
73. Turner 2013, p. 192.
74. Turner 2013, p. 24.
75. Turner 2013, p. 25.
76. Turner 2013, p. 39.
77. Turner 2013, p. 124.
78. Turner 2013, p. 203.
79. Turner 2013, p. 26.
80. Turner 2013, p. 154.
81. Turner 2013, p. 155.
82. Turner 2013, p. 157.
83. Alex Veit. 2010. *Intervention as Indirect Rule*, p. 120.
84. Veit 2010, p. 121.
85. Veit 2010, p. 121.
86. Veit 2010, p. 121.
87. Veit 2010, p. 121.
88. Veit 2010, p. 121.
89. Veit 2010, p. 121.
90. Veit 2010, p. 122.
91. Autessere 2010, Cambridge University Press.
92. Autessere 2010, p. 1.
93. Autessere 2010, p. 75.
94. Autessere 2010, p. 80.
95. Autessere 2010, p. 78.
96. Autessere 2010, pp. 182–187.
97. Autessere 2010, p. 250.
98. Autessere 2010, pp. 182–187.
99. Autessere 2010, p. 3.
100. Autessere 2010, p. 4.
101. Autessere 2010, p. 7.
102. Autessere 2010, p. 126.
103. Autessere 2010, p. 7.
104. Autessere 2010, p. 145.
105. Autessere 2010, p. 145.
106. Autessere 2010, p. 19.



107. Autessere 2010, p. 147.
108. Timothy Raeymaekers. 2014. *Violent Capitalism and Hybrid Identity in Eastern DR Congo*. Cambridge University Press. p. 117.
109. Autessere 2010, p. 71.



## The Warlord's Aide and the Broken Alliance: The 1998–2003 Congo War

When Laurent Kabila arrived in Kinshasa, he created a government made up of his faction in the Rwandan-assembled coalition that overthrew Mobutu. He excluded the parties and activists that had fought peacefully for multipartyism in Zaire (restored to its post-Independence name of the Democratic Republic of Congo) throughout the 1990s. Those political parties and movements—Etienne Tshisekedi's UPDS, Antoine Gizenga's PALU, and the FSDC—took to the streets on May 24, 1997, the very day after Kabila's arrival.

Kabila's troops dispersed the demonstrators, dragging dozens off for torture in Mobutu's old chambers. Like Mobutu before him, he declared his party (the AFDL), the only legal party in the country.<sup>1</sup>

Kabila had famously said that all it took to launch a rebellion was “ten thousand dollars and a satellite phone.” Now he had to get on the phone to the Western sponsors who had agreed to Mobutu's ouster, and deliver to them what they wanted.

The stated position of the Western powers was that they wanted prompt elections and they wanted the economy further opened up. But the opening up of the economy was just a Western formula applied everywhere, for the Congo's economy wasn't closed. It was collapsed. Mobutu hadn't closed the economy, he had run it into the ground. The mines and infrastructure were crumbling and Mobutu had taken all the cash with him when he fled.<sup>2</sup>

Nor was the West really all that keen on elections. Having thrown in with Kagame and Museveni, the US was bound to supporting whatever

those two men decided to do in the Congo. They had set up the coalition to overthrow Mobutu, they had installed Kabila in power. Rwanda occupied the Kivus; Uganda occupied Haut Congo and Equateur.<sup>3</sup>

Knowing he could not win elections, Kagame had avoided them on his route to power in Rwanda in the early 1990s, opting for assassination and war, all with US support. Now, as Kagame installed Kabila in office, the US saw no benefit in a rush to elections that could undermine the regime they had put in place through war. Their public justification was slightly different, and hard to credit. Jason Stearns suggests that “an immediate opening to multiparty democracy and elections in this context could have led to a rebound by the Mobutists.”<sup>4</sup> But based on the pattern of protests and arrests, it was the democratic opposition to Mobutu that Kabila and Kagame feared, not the supporters of the 30-year dictatorship.

Kagame’s loyal aide James Kabarebe was in overall charge of the Kivus, and he kept up with the RPF’s main preoccupation: “pushing and massacring Rwandan Hutu refugees (and any Congolese civilians they suspected of helping them), looting and raping.”<sup>5</sup> In the Kivus, Rwandan forces set about establishing their control by murdering local chiefs and elders.<sup>6</sup> Under Kabarebe’s guidance, the government was given a specific ethnic form: Formal government positions were given to Rwandans and to Banyamulenge who had fought in the Rwandan army. The people who were killed or fled into exile were from Shi, Bembe, and other ethnic groups; the people who replaced them were ethnically Rwandophone and nearly all Tutsi. The RPF strategy in the Kivus inflamed ethnic conflict far beyond what had existed there in the early 1990s.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the Kivus, Kabarebe was tasked with reorganizing the entire Congolese army—integrating the tens of thousands of defeated soldiers of Mobutu’s Zairean Armed Forces and the thousands of child soldiers brought into the AFDL by Anselme Masasu. The former Zairean army men had been disarmed and put into detention camps where they were starved and tortured to death, their leaders summarily executed, often in public. Rwandan RPF troops and AFDL men took over the Zairean army bases, which “included extensive housing facilities for families of officers and other ranks. What is little known is that when the Rwandans and AFDL insurgents occupied these bases, they felt at liberty to rape thousands of the ex-FAZ soldiers’ wives and daughters, as well as women randomly arrested in surrounding towns.”<sup>8</sup>

Kabarebe built the new Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) out of these brutalized detainees and child soldiers, stiffened by the Rwandaphone Congolese Banyamulenge volunteers and RPA regulars. Kabarebe hired “a mix of foreign instructors that can only be described as exotic,” including North Koreans, Chinese, Tanzanian, and Rwandan instructors.<sup>9</sup> The strongest soldiers in the new army were the Banyamulenge, and they were prepared to mutiny and switch to the Rwandan (RPF) side at any moment.

Elsewhere, the Angolan army had occupied the Cabinda enclave inside Congo on the border and were massacring their own Angolan refugees there.<sup>10</sup>

When Kabila did get on the satellite phone to the Western donor countries, looking for help consolidating power over his partitioned and occupied country, he did not get the responses he hoped for. Having helped Kagame and the RPF massacre the Rwandan refugees in the war, by ‘disappearing them’ in satellite photos, presenting them as a ‘guilty mass’ that deserved what it got, and weighing their mass murder as a balance of the mass murder in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the West now insisted that Kabila needed to answer for the refugee massacres. Having agreed to be the front man and the new president of the Congo, Kabila was also set up to wear the massacres of the Rwandan refugees. At a World Bank meeting in December 1997, Kabila asked for \$575 million and received \$32 million. He also received the news that the Congo had inherited Mobutu’s \$14 billion debt—and interest payments on it.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, Kagame, the actual author of the massacres (as opposed to its front man), had his country, Rwanda, lavished with foreign aid by Western donors, aid for post-genocide rebuilding that was being diverted to the war in the Congo, as well as covert funds that paid for a range of services and products from the world’s military contractors.

The Congo’s state mining companies had been privatized just before Mobutu’s fall, in 1995, with multinationals from Australia, Belgium, and Canada moving in. The 1996 war had created a gold rush atmosphere. Not because gold had been discovered in the ground—but because the Congolese state’s assets were up for grabs. Private tycoons entered the Congo. Jean-Raymond Boule was a Mauritian-born international diamond tycoon who made his first \$400 million from a Canadian nickel deposit in Voisey Bay, Canada. Boule had sought and lost mining contracts (worth \$20 billion) with Mobutu. He moved to support

the AFDL after they took Kisangani. He paid the rebels \$1 million in “advance taxes,” then advanced them another \$20 million.<sup>12</sup>

In 1997, Laurent Kabila created an export–import parastatal called COMIEX, funneling venture capital from Lundin (\$25 million) and \$3.5 million from Gecamines into it. Starting as a “rebels’ bank,”<sup>13</sup> COMIEX was used in the 1998 war to create joint-businesses with Angola and Zimbabwe.<sup>14</sup> Zimbabwe was given a \$53 million contract in October 1998 to supply the Congolese military.<sup>15</sup> But OSLEG, Zimbabwe’s part of COMIEX, “did not get a good return on its investments in the Congo,” which would have required much greater investments in infrastructure to make steady profits.<sup>16</sup>

Without the aid funds he wanted, Kabila tried to squeeze the foreign mining companies and make mining deals with low-flying operators in the hopes that these might get money flowing more quickly. His frustrations with the mining corporations bubbled over when his minister of mining “accused two of the biggest mining companies, De beers and Anglo American, of ‘monopolism’ and ‘lack of social responsibility’ and stripped them of some of their Congolese assets. The government began demanding that any foreign investor provide 15% of the planned investments as a nonrefundable cash payment up front and that they keep the involvement of expatriate staff to a strict minimum.”<sup>17</sup>

But this didn’t work either: Western investors had many ways to get Congolese minerals, and with most of the mining areas of the country occupied by foreign armies, saw no reason to go through Kabila.

Kagame and Kabarebe’s massacres of the refugees in the 1996/1997 war, their rape and pillage of the areas the RPF passed through, and the ethnic reconfiguration of the Kivus engendered resistance, eventually armed resistance: “Large-scale public massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees, arbitrary arrests, torture and summary executions of political and ethnic opponents, looting, raping and ill treatment of Congolese civilians by the Rwandans generated a situation in the Kivus where thousands of people – primarily the Hunde, Nyanga and Tembo ethnic groups – began joining the local Mayi-Mayi militias.”<sup>18</sup>

The Stanleyville-based Lumumbist rebels of the 1960s once used “Mayi Mayi” as a battle cry. The militias that arose in the 1990s to battle the Rwandan occupiers evoked that history of Congolese nationalism. The Mayi-Mayi organized in a fragmented way on a self-defense basis to protect their lands from invaders. They “reflect[ed] the political manifestation of the social exclusion affecting a growing number of

marginalized young men in eastern Congo.” Some “were simply criminal groups.” But “most,” “had an ideology of self-defense and aimed to protect political space against foreign occupying forces, especially Rwandan forces.” In South Kivu, they had popular support, as “a reaction against the Rwandan government’s attempt to extend its territory to the Kivus.”<sup>19</sup> They were no match for the Rwandan army—neither in terms of weapons nor in ruthlessness, though they committed atrocities against civilians too. But they persisted, because their war was one of existence. “The occupying forces understood the link” between traditional leaders and the community, “and their first act was to harass traditional authorities and even kill the recalcitrant ones.” The Mayi-Mayi “partly represents a reaction against acts viewed as deliberate attempts to destroy local communities.”<sup>20</sup>

The ousted Rwandan army (sometimes called the ex-FAR), as well as the surviving Interahamwe militias (some of whom had participated in the Rwandan genocide), formed the backbone of a guerrilla force based in the Kivus, initially under the command of an ex-FAR officer named Paul Rwarakabije. These forces survived through predations on the local population and several times tried, and failed, to infiltrate Rwanda.<sup>21</sup> First called the Army for the Liberation of Rwanda (ALIR), they rebranded as the FDLR, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda under the command of ex-FAR general Augustin Bizimungu.

The presence of these defeated Rwandan forces fighting against Kabarebe’s occupying troops in the eastern Congo left Kabila in a political bind. The Rwandans and Ugandans were ethnically cleansing the Kivus and “transferring large sums of money, as well as coffee, gold, diamonds, and coltan, in fact anything it could lay its hands on, to Rwanda.... treated the Congolese with a disdain that was heavily resented, at the same time settling Tutsi families from Rwanda, Uganda, and North Kivu, requisitioning houses and land, and claiming the best positions in the new administration and military, while randomly arresting and executing traditional chiefs.”<sup>22</sup> Kabila tried to remedy this by installing “his Katangan friends in crucial positions” in the Congolese army (FAC). Elsewhere, he “entered alliances with various local militias, the Mayi-Mayi and surviving Rwandan Hutu extremists. The latter move was seen by the Rwandans as a failure to respect Kabila’s commitment in relation to recognizing the rights of the Banyamulenge to Congolese nationality and – more importantly – as a threat to their influence in the DRC.”<sup>23</sup>

At the end of July, Laurent Kabila went on the radio to order all Rwanda troops to leave the Congo. James Kabarebe, the Rwandan officer who was the de facto ruler of the eastern Congo, went to say good-bye to Kabila, who had just replaced his bodyguards from Rwandans to Congolese men from Katanga. “The colonel who commanded them asked Kabarebe to leave his sidearm at the guard’s desk before entering the president’s office, which he did. But the colonel had a doubt at the last minute and asked Kabarebe to let himself be frisked. ‘Commander James’ reluctantly agreed and was found to carry a small .32 caliber pistol in his boot. The colonel confiscated it, fuming. Kabarebe grinned and said he had to be careful about his security. As he was about to step into Kabila’s office the colonel shouted at him to take off his beret, saying that out of respect he had to appear bare-headed in front of the president. Kabarebe refused and a scuffle ensued. In the scuffle the beret was torn off his head – and a very small .22 caliber automatic fell to the floor... Four days later the war broke out and ‘Commander James’ was leading the attack.”<sup>24</sup>

Kagame had been planning a renewed operation in the Congo since April 1998. When Kabarebe returned to Rwanda, he and Kagame felt they were in a better position than they had been in 1996: Kabarebe ruled the east, installed his loyalists in every position of power, and knew everything about what Kabila’s forces had and could do.

The plan that Kagame and Kaberebe came up with is now famous, lauded as an act of “fantastic courage” and “one of the most daring operations in the region’s military history,” “still talked about by foreign military attaches and Congolese army commanders alike,” “an operation that exemplified audacity and courage.”<sup>25</sup>

Kabarebe hijacked passenger airliners and flew them across the Congo to Kitona Air force Base in Bas-Congo. From there, the plan was to “rally the ex-FAZ troops held in detention there, and then advance on Kinshasa to instigate a swift and seamless coup.” This force would shut down the ports, capture the Inga Dam (the western DRC’s power supply), and march on Kinshasa. The Banyamulenge inside the Congolese army would revolt and the country would fall back into the Kagame’s lap.<sup>26</sup>

By August 5, Kitona was under Kabarebe’s control—three RPF battalions and one Ugandan one had set up shop and were negotiating with the Zairean detainees. “Following 30 minutes of negotiations, during the course of which Kabarebe expertly exploited his knowledge of

the plight of ex-FAZ troupes, and coupled with the handover of a few suitcases of dollars, the Congolese agreed to join him.”<sup>27</sup> By the end of the day, Kabarebe had 5000 troops under his command. By August 7, they had walked 100 km east of Kitona to take and pillage the town of Boma, “killing 22 civilians and herding dozens of women to the Premier Bassing Hotel, requisitioned by Kabarebe as his HQ, where they were repeatedly raped.”<sup>28</sup>

They moved on three days later, in stolen cars and a hijacked train, shutting down the port of Matadi, then taking and turning off the Inga Dam, a war crime that left Kinshasa and the rest of the western Congo in the dark.<sup>29</sup> In six days, Kabarebe’s men had traveled 210 km out of the 500 km they needed to go to get to Kinshasa. It was fast. But too slow.

Kabila had signed an agreement with Zimbabwe’s president, Robert Mugabe, on August 4. Zimbabwe’s air force set up at N’Djili air base at Kinshasa on August 8 and had airlifted 800 elite troops there by August 12. When Kabarebe turned the lights out in Kinshasa, the South African Development Community (SADC) decided to deploy additional troops to stop Rwanda from overrunning the Congo.<sup>30</sup>

Zimbabwe’s troops were able to bolster the Congolese army in Kinshasa when the Banyamulenge mutiny inevitably occurred, preventing the collapse of the Congolese army in the capital. After the threat of the mutiny had passed, Kabila’s undisciplined troops, as well as civilian mobs, attacked Tutsi civilians, and from there, “committed murder, execution, rape and acts of torture, not only against Tutsis and people of Rwandan origin, but also against political opponents (primarily members of the UPDS and PALU) and ordinary civilians – this with complete impunity. Several hundred people were killed in this wave of state-sponsored violence. Their bodies were usually thrown into the N’Djili and Congo rivers.”<sup>31</sup>

When Zimbabwe’s air force got into position, they found Kabarebe’s columns on the march. Kabarebe had made little provision for air defense, and a Zimbabwean combined arms attack on August 24 destroyed most of tanks he had captured and deployed from Kitona.<sup>32</sup>

Colonel Patrick Karegeya, the intelligence officer who Kagame eventually had strangled in South Africa in 2013 had been meeting with senior ministers in Angola to sound them out on an invasion of Congo. Advisors to Angola’s President dos Santos told Karegeya that Angola wouldn’t intervene. But when dos Santos heard about the invasion, he overruled them. Angolan troops were behind Kabarebe’s positions. They



attacked Kitona on August 22 and defeated Kabarebe's troops. They recaptured, and then re-sacked the town of Boma, "pillag[ing] several hospitals and many homes in the town, raping 30 women and executing whomever they suspected of colluding with their enemy."<sup>33</sup> Like the Rwandans had, they summarily executed captured troops.

As the Angolans slowed down their advance and stopped in towns to pillage and rape, Zimbabwe's commanders feared losing the momentum of their counterattack. They sent paratroopers to recapture the Inga Dam from Kabarebe's forces.<sup>34</sup>

Even after the Zimbabweans and Angolans entered the war against him, Kabarebe had 15,000 troops and remained confident. With his superior numbers, he opted for another RPF infiltration move, another strike deep behind enemy lines: This time he advanced on N'Djili airport, where the Zimbabweans were headquartered.

The Zimbabwean commander, Major-General Mike Nyambuya, anticipated the tactic. He stationed his elite troops at blocking positions to ambush the infiltrators and call down air strikes, destroying many of Kabarebe's vehicles and stalling his advance on August 25.

Kabarebe's troops wore Congolese army uniforms, but they were identified by the Zimbabweans, who mowed the first wave down. Kabarebe's second wave captured the runway and the main terminal, but the Zimbabweans remained in the control tower, "where a small group of paras and SAS snipers... poured a heavy volume of fire into enemy lines, causing extensive casualties."<sup>35</sup> The Zimbabweans picked Laurent Kabila up in Kinshasa and flew him out of harm's way to Lubumbashi in Katanga. They then proceeded to use air power to knock out all of Kabarebe's tanks and heavy weapons on August 27.<sup>36</sup>

The Zimbabweans counterattacked. Kabarebe's forces fell back into street fighting in the N'Djili neighborhoods, which were destroyed as the Zimbabweans advanced and forced Kabarebe all the way out of Kinshasa by the night of August 30.

By September 1, the Inga Dam was back under government control and Kabarebe's bold attack had failed. Kabila and his Zimbabwean, Angolan, and Namibian allies celebrated. Kabarebe's 15,000 troops were isolated, surrounded on all sides, their heavy weapons destroyed, and ready to be annihilated. So, Kagame did what he always had when at a disadvantage: He called Washington, which "applied immense pressure on Kinshasa, Luanda and Harare to spare their defeated enemies. In light of a possible end to fighting, the Congolese asked their allies to allow

their defeated enemy to withdraw.”<sup>37</sup> By convincing these African armies to spare Kabarebe on the battlefield, the Americans ensured that the war would go on for many more years, and take many more thousands of lives.

With the deal in place, Kabarebe abandoned his Congolese forces to their own devices. They scattered, some changing sides to rejoin the Congolese army or other local militias. Kabarebe took his RPF and Ugandan troops and made his way to northern Angola, and in December, “the surviving 3,000 RPA and UPDF troops were extracted in some 30 flights of Viktor Bout’s aircraft.”<sup>38</sup>

Kagame had failed to topple Laurent Kabila. But Rwanda still ruled in the eastern Congo. Kabarebe’s vaunted hijack operation, the Kitona airlift, had ended with America begging Kabila’s allies to spare Kabarebe and his forces, but the other part of the strategy, the Banyamulenge mutiny inside the Congolese army, had worked.

It began with the capture of Goma and Bukavu. Congolese army loyalists who refused to mutiny either fled or were executed. An example: The Kavumu airport slaughter, during which 38 loyalists were “forced to lie down on the airport runway. RPA officers then ordered the captured kadogo (child soldiers) to execute all their officers and NCOs.”<sup>39</sup> The Rwandans moved on southward to Uvira, the loyalists fleeing ahead of them, and when they arrived they were “free to arbitrarily arrest, torture, and execute a number of loyal officers, traditional leaders and administrative officials... hardly any of those arrested was ever seen again.”<sup>40</sup>

Once North and South Kivus cities and towns were under Rwandan military control, Kagame commenced the next stage of the plan as he had done in 1990 with the RPF and 1996 with the AFDL—he created a front organization, this time called the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) on August 16, 1998. As with the previous front organizations (the AFDL and before it, the RPF itself), the real power lay with Kagame and his army. Kagame sent 35,000 of his own troops<sup>41</sup>; wrote the press statements, and approved all RCD expenditures, a budget of about \$2.5 million per month.<sup>42</sup>

Kagame’s forces advanced out of the Kivus and moved west, seizing the important mining towns as they went. Supported by the Banyamulenge and other Congolese mutineers, they had more troops and better equipment and were “able to make use of an improved variant of their usual tactics: a weak spearhead would infiltrate and then attack the objective in a bold and mostly swift move, then the main force would follow to mop up and secure the conquered area.”<sup>43</sup>

But things didn't go as planned. Kabarebe had been surprised to find that Zimbabwe's and Angola's militaries were stronger and better than his own and able to stop the conquest of Kinshasa. In the eastern Congo, Kagame found that once he controlled the towns, insurgencies sprung up around them: "most of the countryside and the road networks soon came under the effective control of various Mayi-Mayi groups."<sup>44</sup>

The RPF reacted the way it always had, since the Uganda civil war—with genocidal ruthlessness: "For example, after the Mayi-Mayi ambushed an RPA column on the road between Bukavu and Kindu, killing around 20 Rwandan and Banyamulenge troops on 23 August 1998, the RPA entered the villages of Kilungutwe, Kalama and Kasika, pillaged them, set the houses on fire and massacred over 1,000 civilians, including women and children. Such search-and-destroy operations became a norm for the next three years of the Second Congo War."<sup>45</sup>

The specific methods of the RPF were summarized by one author as follows: "Injecting syringes of kerosene into ears. Smothering people with plastic bags. Choking with ropes and cords. Impaling women and girls with tools. Using agafuni – the RPF's war hammer – to crack skulls and spill brain matter out like porridge. Burying people alive. Forcing victims to dig their own graves. The methods are intimate, sadistic... [a] signature technique is the akandoyi, a variation of the strappado torture device... [which] involves tying a person's elbows behind their back so tightly that the head tilts downward."<sup>46</sup>

The Mayi-Mayi militias and local self-defense forces targeted Rwandaphone and especially Tutsi civilians as well. The People's Civil Defence (PCD) organization in particular, while not having any significant military capacity, in several instances detained and massacred Tutsis—in Kalemie in Katanga in late August 1998 and in Vyura in September. The Congolese army did the same to Banyamulenge soldiers and Tutsi civilians in Kisangani and in Kamina air force base in Katanga.<sup>47</sup> As Kagame's troops moved into these areas, they evacuated Tutsi civilians behind their lines. Ethnic cleansing became a part of the war in the eastern Congo, with militias attacking Banyamulenge villagers and Banyamulenge and Rwandan soldiers attacking members of other ethnicities.

Laurent Kabila's most effective allies were Zimbabwe and Angola. They knew that taking the Kivus from Kagame would be extremely arduous, and for now, they would have to rely on the Mayi-Mayi insurgents to tie the Rwandans down. The first priority was to stop the Rwandans

from coming any further west. Their grand strategy was to “establish a front line – a kind of Eastern Front – along the Congo River that would rely on a number of fortified airports, from Pepa to Pweto and Manono in the south, via Ankoro, Kitanda, Kabalo, Bokungu and Kindu, to Kisangani and Ikela – where their troops could be supported by air or along the Congo River, and thus halt the Rwandan advance.”<sup>48</sup>

The key to the strategy were the cities of Kisangani—the former city of Stanleyville where the Lumumbist rebels had made their last stand against the white supremacist mercenaries—and Kindu. If Zimbabwe could get there before the Rwandans did, the Eastern Front idea could work.

But the RPF got to Kisangani first, advancing from Lubutu with 15,000 troops and taking the city on August 23, capturing and summarily executing 400 Congolese troops in the process.<sup>49</sup> Once Kisangani was taken, the RPF established control over the rest of Province Orientale by mid-September. As for Kindu, the RPF battled the Congolese army, then the Zimbabwean reinforcements, but the city fell in mid-October 1998 to the Rwandans. Once Kindu fell, it gave the RPF a logistical advantage because of its proximity to the Rwandan border. The RPF “now enjoyed the advantage of much shorter communications than their opposition. The Zimbabweans had to haul nearly all their supplies along a 1,500 km-long road from Harare through Zambia, or by aircraft over 1,200 km, from Harare or Kinshasa to Kamina,” while the Rwandans could airlift supplies from depots 350–500 km away.<sup>50</sup>

The Zimbabweans almost broke through to the port of Kalemie, while their Namibian allies took the town of Moba from the Rwandans. One battalion of Zimbabwean troops got surrounded and cut off in the town of Ikela by Rwandans, and fought there under siege for months while being airlifted supplies by the Zimbabwean air force. Ikela was the site of multiple battles over the next year and a half, with the Zimbabweans finally relieving the siege in February 2000 and drawing down their forces in the Congo from there.

When his ally Kagame invaded in August 1998, Uganda’s President Museveni moved his forces into the Congo immediately, occupying Province Orientale and Equateur (the northern Congo). Uganda and Rwanda agreed on a partition of the Congo along a line defined by Kisangani: The Ugandans got the north and the Rwandans the south.<sup>51</sup> The Ugandans got the worse deal: From Equateur “they rarely got more than \$50,000 a month”<sup>52</sup> in plunder.

As Kagame had created the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), Museveni created his own Congolese front, the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), which, with its Ugandan backers, had close to 10,000 troops.<sup>53</sup> Most of these two provinces, Orientale and Equateur, were securely under Ugandan control by December 1998. Laurent Kabila met Museveni under a Libyan mediator that month, to no avail: Uganda had too much to gain by continuing at war.

After the failed talks, Kabila invited a contingent of about 2000 Chadian troops to bolster Congolese army forces in Gbadolite, one of Mobutu's favorite cities and the site of one of the old dictator's now looted and hollowed-out palaces. On the battlefield, the Chadians used a tactic that the Ugandans could not easily answer: the *rezzou*, "a high-speed, raid-style attack by columns of highly mobile Toyota 4WDs armed with an assortment of heavy weapons." The Chadians routed the Ugandans in Equateur, capturing 121 Ugandan and Rwandan soldiers and "crushing Ugandan hopes of a swift and easy conquest of Equateur Province."<sup>54</sup> Neither Chad nor Kabila had the ability to follow this up, however, and northern Congo settled into the same kind of stalemated war of attrition as the rest of Congo by 1999. When Chad signed a separate peace with Museveni and withdrew in June 1999, Uganda moved ahead and captured Gbadolite, Gemena, and Libinge by mid-July. The Congolese army unsuccessfully counterattacked in October. Basankusu fell to Ugandan forces at the end of November 1999, and all of Equateur and Province Orientale were in Museveni's lap.<sup>55</sup>

The Second Congo War was a bonanza for private military contractors. Between 1998 and 2001, the Congo government was spending about 70% of its revenues, about \$130 million in 2000, on the war alone.<sup>56</sup> Viktor Bout's private airline prospered from delivering to the Rwandans and moving them around, but the Swiss Aviation Support and Training Organization got a piece of this business as well. Uganda purchased its arms from the Israeli company Silver Shadow. Rwanda used the Israeli Air Defence Consultants Corporation (ADCC), whose representative Danny Reshef tried unsuccessfully to sell Kagame a half-dozen Mig-21 s. ADCC recruited pilots from Russia and Ukraine to fly helicopters and transport aircraft.<sup>57</sup> "Much of the Ugandan and Rwandan purchases of these arms were paid for either with the spoils of war or by redirecting development aid provided by the West."<sup>58</sup> Uganda did ad hoc looting; Rwanda, under Kagame, was methodical in looting as in all things: "Over time, the RPA, UPDF and RCD tightened their grip

over the mining sector by occupying mining sites in order to directly organize and supervise production and export to Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi.”<sup>59</sup> The UN estimated that the RPF was taking \$20 million a month in profits between 1998 and 2002 from plundering the Congo.<sup>60</sup> But ex-RPF spokesman Theogene Rudasingwa told a reporter that “he and his colleagues were constantly surprised when the UN estimated its Congo revenues in the millions, when Rwandan commanders had already sucked out ‘a billion dollars’ worth’ of coltan, diamond, gold, tin and copper, along with revenue from timber and extortion networks.”<sup>61</sup>

The plunder was so tempting that Rwandan and Ugandan forces broke into open war over it in Kisangani, the center of the Congo’s diamond trade (an industry in which 1 million Congolese work<sup>62</sup>) on August 7, 1999, “resulting in the indiscriminate shelling of much of the city, causing nearly 600 civilian casualties and forcing much of the population to flee into the jungle.”<sup>63</sup> The Rwandans and Ugandans fought on in Kisangani for months before they finally partitioned the city in October 1999 and came to a rough understanding over who could plunder what. That understanding fell apart again in 2000, with the Rwandans killing some 1800 Ugandans and driving them out of the city by June (the Rwandans probably lost 140 killed). In the process, 760 civilians were killed, more than 1700 injured, 60,000 displaced, 418 houses destroyed, 4083 houses damaged,<sup>64</sup> “the power station was heavily damaged, as was the Tshopo hydroelectric dam and one of the hospitals, the cathedral of Kisangani was burned down, water and electricity supplies were destroyed, as were most civilian and commercial properties.”<sup>65</sup>

Laurent Kabila wanted to work with the Israelis too, but decided it unwise when he realized they were already working with Kagame. Kabila cancelled the Israeli contracts he’d made when he was Rwanda’s front man and switched his business to the UK, which also armed his Zimbabwean ally.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately for both Zimbabwe and the Congo, Zimbabwe suffered some logistical problems when the UK imposed an arms embargo on Zimbabwe. Tony Blair overruled the embargo in January 2000 for a few months, which gave Zimbabwe the time to develop a supply line through a group of friendly Kenyan businessmen and a company called Aviation Consultancy Services (ACS) led by a man named John Bredenkamp, which “functioned very satisfactorily for the rest of the war.”<sup>67</sup>

Libya stepped into sell discounted surplus Libyan Arab Air Force stocks to Kabila and finance the Zimbabwean military intervention.<sup>68</sup> The Belgian company Damaesia Export facilitated some weapons deals.<sup>69</sup> The former Soviet Republic of Georgia's Tblisi Aircraft State Association delivered Sukhoi Su-25 fighter-bombers which were used by the Congolese in the war.<sup>70</sup> A Dutch company, TransBalkan Cargo Service, helped out with transport.<sup>71</sup> So did the Swiss company Aerotech, even though another Swiss company (ASTRO) was working for the Rwandans.<sup>72</sup>

In mid-February 1999, Kagame tried to break the stalemate with a major offensive to try to take towns on the eastern front held by Zimbabwe's troops: Kabalo, Lubao, Kabinda, and Pweto. But under Zimbabwe's aerial bombardment of all Rwandan-held airports all over the country and a Congolese army counterattack in the southeast around Kibombo (in the direction of Mbuji-Mayi), Kagame's offensive collapsed.<sup>73</sup> He tried again in March and again in June, each time repulsed by Zimbabwean airpower and, in Kabinda, Angolan armor. But when the Congolese army tried to re-take Kindu from the RPF in March 1999, they also failed. The RPF was usually able to defeat the Congolese army and rout or capture and execute hundreds of Congolese soldiers after each battle, but was unable to withstand counterattacks by Zimbabwean or Angolan forces and lost thousands of soldiers in these failed 1999 offensives.<sup>74</sup>

A southern offensive from Kagame down Lake Tanganyika toward Kalemie and Moba also was stalled by the Zimbabweans and Congolese in May of 1999, aided by Mayi-Mayi insurgents behind Rwandan lines. Kagame's front organization, the RCD, also split in 1999 "when non-Tutsi members began questioning Rwandan and Banyamulenge dominance over the organization."<sup>75</sup> Previously (with the RPF and the AFDL), this had only happened after Kagame had already won the war. Now it was occurring during the war, which posed some serious problems for Kagame, who had to send another 7000 men from Rwanda into the Congo. "Even then, the large convoys of Rwandan troops moving from Uvira to Bukavu and then to Bunyakiri and Walungu were repeatedly ambushed by Mayi-Mayi and then hit by [Zimbabwean] fighter-bombers."<sup>76</sup>

Kagame announced a unilateral cease-fire on June 1, 1999, to create confusion, then moved his troops forward again to recapture Kalemie and resume the attack toward Moba and Manono. Kagame's forces took

Manono on June 20 and moved north toward Ankoro, but were stopped by a fresh contingent of 3000 Zimbabwean troops who were rushed into match the new Rwandan deployment.<sup>77</sup>

In August 1999, all the belligerents signed another cease-fire before they resumed fighting.

The MONUC was authorized by UNSC Resolution 1279 on November 30, 1999, with a Chapter 7 mandate to disarm foreign militias and run a DDRRR program.<sup>78</sup> MONUC was an ineffective instrument for ending the war, but it did provide various points of leverage for managing it, a point to which I will return.

As the front lines of the war became static, Uganda and Rwanda “dug in” in both senses of the word: fortifying their positions and looting the occupied country’s mineral wealth. Uganda and Rwanda, countries with no diamonds, multiplied their exports of them,<sup>79</sup> purchasing \$20 million in uncut diamonds per month.<sup>80</sup> Uganda’s chosen trader was Philippe Surowicke, while Rwanda brought Lebanese traders.<sup>81</sup>

The Bakwanga Mining, or MIBA, diamond mine company in Kasai (once the short-lived “Mining State”) was treated as a “cash cow” and declined steadily during the war and consequent expansion of the smuggling economy. From 6.8 million carats in 1998, output declined to 5 million in 1999 and 3.5 million in 2000. MIBA suffered from new extortions, irregular power, seizures of their diamonds, and seizures of food and fuel intended for their workers.<sup>82</sup>

Belgian writer Collette Braeckman mapped the smuggling networks. Gold from Katanga, Kasai, and Maniema diamonds from Kisangani, and minerals from the Kivus (areas controlled by Rwanda) went to Rwanda. Diamonds from Bafwasende, gold from Isiro and Buni, and minerals from Ituri (areas controlled by Uganda) went to Uganda.<sup>83</sup>

In the Kivus, the business worked as follows. Armed groups control the mines. Transporters pay armed groups extortion fees to take the minerals to one of hundreds of trading houses in Bukavu and Goma. The trading houses are supposed to pay for government licenses but don’t. The trading houses send minerals to Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, which exports them as their own country’s exports. In 2007, Uganda produced \$6 million in gold and exported \$74 million; Rwanda produced \$8 million in tin and exported \$30 million.<sup>84</sup> Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi export the minerals via the Gulf states (especially Dubai). The armed groups made about \$180 million on the minerals trade in 2008.



In the Rwanda-controlled Kivus, asset-stripping was the order of the day. Many of these minerals were not being dug from the ground to be sold in Rwanda—they were stolen from the warehouses of the state-owned company. It was simple armed robbery. “Between November 1998 and April 1999, the Rwandan army and its RCD allies removed between 2,000 and 3,000 tons of tin ore and up to 1,500 tons of coltan from the warehouses of SOMINKI... worth between \$10 and \$20 million... the Congolese commander of the RCD troops, Jean-Pierre Ondekane, brazenly entered the Central Bank offices in Kisangani and seized between \$1 million and \$8 million in Congolese francs, which he then dispatched to Kigali.”<sup>85</sup> Individual soldiers looted civilian property, and Rwanda set up systematic, vertically integrated systems to control “all stages of mineral production.” Rwanda “sent hundreds of prisoners – mostly Hutu who had been accused of taking part in the genocide – from jails in western Rwanda to work in coltan, gold, and tin mining pits.”<sup>86</sup> In 2000, a one-time price rise of coltan from \$10 to \$380 per kilogram “injected millions into the local economy,” and Rwanda exported hundreds of millions dollars of coltan it didn’t have.<sup>87</sup> Rwanda made profits of \$250 million per year during the occupation—on a budget of \$380 million. Kagame called it “self-sustaining,” enabling him to boost his military budget from an official \$55 million in 2001 to a real \$135 million.<sup>88</sup>

The war dragged on. In October 2000, Laurent Kabila planned a big offensive move in Pweto. Anselme Masasu, one of the three surviving members of the four initial leaders of the AFDL (along with Laurent Kabila and Deogratias Bugera—Andre Kisase Ngandu had already been eliminated by Kagame in the 1996 war for protesting the pillage of his country) was sent by Laurent Kabila with his child soldiers to take Pweto back from the Rwandans. Masasu was the “father” of the child soldiers (kadogo), “always present on the front line, eating beans and corn with his ‘children’.”<sup>89</sup> He had already been arrested by Laurent Kabila in November 1997, who was suspicious of the close friendship between Masasu and the Rwandan commander in the east, James Kabarebe. Then, the kadogo had threatened to mutiny and Kabila, very sensitive to disunity in his weak military and the possibility of a coup, had relented, letting Masasu go. When Kabarebe left the Congo and came back as an invader at the head of a Rwandan army, Laurent Kabila decided that Masasu was the right man to send to fight his former friend.

On paper, the Congolese army had committed 50,000 troops to the battle, but desertion rates were around 60%<sup>90</sup> and Masasu's kadogo, who had mostly been used in mop-up operations in the 1996 war, were put on the front lines against Kabarebe's crack RPF veterans, who surrounded them and mowed them down. The kadogo broke and fled into Zambia. The Zimbabwean forces bolstering the kadogo had air superiority, but were "ever more concerned about the potential threat of Ugandan MiGs, especially if these were to be overhauled and upgraded in Israel."<sup>91</sup>

When the kadogo in the capital, Kinshasa, heard about their compatriots being sacrificed in the east, they mutinied again—and were in turn tortured and executed en masse by Laurent Kabila's army. "A witch hunt for kadogo from the Kivus was launched in Kinshasa. Security services stripped detainees bare and searched for ritual scarification on their chests and backs, claiming that Masasu was anointing his adepts with traditional medicine to make them invincible to bullets."<sup>92</sup> The survivors crossed the border into exile in Congo-Brazzaville.<sup>93</sup> Masasu was not so lucky—he was arrested at the front line and executed on November 27, 2000.<sup>94</sup>

The Pweto offensive failed to push the Rwandan forces back. By the beginning of 2001, the front lines hadn't moved.

Kagame's time was running out though: Bill Clinton's time in office had come to an end, and the Bush regime had other priorities. "When Kagame visited the USA in late January [2001], the new US secretary of state, Colin Powell, made it unmistakably clear that throwing the Lusaka Agreement out the window would not be tolerated, and that the Rwandans should find a peaceful solution to the war... Something similar happened to the Ugandans and the MLC... They were perfectly aware of the fact that if they attempted a dash for the capital, for example with an advance by river, this would not only expose them to the Zimbabwean air force, but was also likely to prompt another full-scale Angolan intervention. After finding themselves under pressure from the new US administration, they therefore abandoned all the related ideas."<sup>95</sup>

On January 16, 2001, Laurent Kabila was assassinated too, probably by Rwanda and with at least the approval of the US.<sup>96</sup> "Some conspiracy-theory narratives... the US provided GPS data on the whereabouts of Savimbi in exchange for Angola's role in eliminating Laurent

Kabila a year earlier.”<sup>97</sup> The motivation? Angola had helped overthrow Mobutu in 1996 because Mobutu had allowed the Congo (then Zaire) to be a base for Angolan rebels (UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi). UNITA’s activities were funded by the illicit diamond trade from mines it controlled in Angola, to the tune of \$200 million a year. One rumor had it that “Kabila, in a desperate bid for cash, had begun to allow UNITA to deal through Lebanese gem traders in Kinshasa.”<sup>98</sup>

But more likely it was Rwanda. Kabarebe had tried to walk into Laurent Kabila’s office and shoot him once, and assassination was a key part of the RPF’s arsenal. As with the assassination of Habyarimana, Kagame seems to have given little thought to who would succeed his enemy upon the success of the assassination. Habyarimana’s assassination in 1994 had led to genocide, but it had also brought Kagame to power in Rwanda. Laurent Kabila’s successor, by contrast, beginning from a position of weakness, was able to reduce the Congo’s diplomatic isolation and weaken Kagame’s alliances.

Laurent was succeeded by Joseph Kabila, who managed a partial diplomatic isolation of Rwanda while also keeping up support for the *Mayi-Mayi* against Rwanda’s proxies. Laurent, with his long memory of the UN in the Congo since the 1960s, had alienated the institution. Joseph asked for more UN deployment. Laurent had talked like a Third World Marxist while making deals with the shadiest capitalists. Joseph entertained Western ambassadors, who “came with lists of people they would like to see sacked and made decisions that needed to be made to advance the peace process.”<sup>99</sup> Laurent was famous for his endless talk. Joseph spoke so little that it unnerved the formidable older men—Kagame and Museveni—from under whose thumbs he was emerging.<sup>100</sup> But like Laurent, Joseph continued to enjoy the support of Angola and Zimbabwe, who were no more interested now in seeing the Congo’s fall to Kagame’s designs than they were before.

Joseph’s efforts were rewarded when the UN expert report on the illegal exploitation of Congolese resources appeared in 2001, the first of a series that showed in forensic detail the business Kagame and Museveni had made of plundering the country. Even Kagame’s allies, the US and UK, made some behind-the-scenes entreaties.<sup>101</sup>

In the medium term, Joseph also knew that the Rwandan and Ugandan proxies had no legitimacy. Like Habyarimana had hoped to do in 1994 before his assassination, Joseph used an electoral strategy to defeat the Rwandan and Ugandan occupiers politically.

Militarily, Joseph could not improve the effectiveness of his conventional forces. His allies held the line, preventing Kagame from moving too far west from the occupied Kivus, while he pursued the diplomatic and political options. Within the Kivus, though, the Congolese could only fight as an insurgency against the Rwandan occupiers. The *Mayi-Mayi* militias tied Rwanda's army down, while Rwanda enacted a genocidal counterinsurgency in the areas it controlled, massacring entire villages, using mass rape and other atrocities as tactics of terror. The horrors inflicted by these Rwandan forces on the Congolese have created new categories of atrocity, such as REV ("rape with extreme violence").<sup>102</sup>

The Congolese government submitted a complaint against Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in 1999 (under Laurent Kabila's government) about intentional transmission of HIV. The complaint included massacres at Kavumu airport outside Bukavu, the seizure of the Inga hydroelectric dam outside Kinshasa, massacres at Kasika and Mwenga, Luberizi, Bwegera, Luvungi, and Makabola, and systematic looting of resources.<sup>103</sup> The invaders "managed to string out the process of dealing with the DRC complaint," Turner writes. The commission deferred in 2001, waiting for Burundi to respond, then waited again in 2002 (after Laurent Kabila had been assassinated) because the OAU hadn't responded—a novel international method for deferring action for years; if only other murder suspects could avoid trial by not responding. In 2003, the commission found in favor of the DRC, but not on the factual claims about intentional HIV transmission or ethnic cleansing.<sup>104</sup>

Joseph's diplomatic pressure began to tell. The change of government in the US from Kagame's unconditional boosters, the Clintons, to the Bushes, who had other priorities, also changed the game. Washington abstained from a vote to renew the IMF's loans to Rwanda, while London privately made clear to Kampala that it would not extend further loans if it did not withdraw its troops.

In June 2002, President Kagame committed to withdrawing all Rwandan troops within three months. Museveni followed suit in November. "Journalists lined up at border posts to see a total of 30,000 foreign troops march across, as crowds of Congolese celebrated."<sup>105</sup> South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki oversaw the negotiations in Sun City. The peacemaking method was unusual: "The former belligerents were attracted by a generous sharing of spoils; impunity and corruption

were, to a certain extent, the glue holding the fragile peace together. As opposed to other transitions in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where warlords were not allowed to stand for public office, the transition in the Congo stacked the new government with the very people who had plunged the country into internecine conflict.”<sup>106</sup>

What Role Did Western Economic Policy Play in This War? The World Bank “began supervising the DRC government’s mining policy in 2001,” restructuring the state mining company, creating a more “investor friendly” mining code in 2002, and creating a new Mining Registry. A side effect of this restructuring was the dismissal of 10,000 employees.<sup>107</sup> In 2000, a year before this helpful restructuring, inflation had reached 550% and government salaries were going unpaid.<sup>108</sup> Because the state mining companies were being privatized and restructured, the government relied on taxing diamonds and oil—which spiked diamond smuggling.<sup>109</sup> As the Africanists were blaming Congolese culture and psychological-historical dysfunction for the conflict, the World Bank was restructuring the country’s main industry in the middle of the most destructive war going on in the world at the time.

A private businessman named Dan Gertler from Israel, “a leading player in Congo minerals for a decade,” purchased a \$3 billion mining property and another large piece of the state mining company with an unannounced price. But the World Bank agreement had stated that the prices of privatized assets should be made public.<sup>110</sup> In August 2000, Gertler also paid \$20 million per year to Laurent Kabila “in return for the right to export 88% of DRC’s diamonds,” which “crippled the sector and alienated the powerful Lebanese diamond trading community in Kinshasa.”<sup>111</sup> The diamond market was worth \$600 million, but Congo’s exports were about \$175 million.<sup>112</sup> “Congolese corruption” was again blamed—but it was Western business that picked up Congolese assets at low prices.

Copper was the major industry of the DRC under Mobutu, not gold or diamonds or the other minerals. During the war, the Swedish tycoon Alfred Lundin tried to get Tenke Fungurume mine (the Congo’s largest copper mine with about \$26 billion), fronting \$50 million as a down payment and negotiating a deal to pay \$250 million to the state and invest \$1.5 billion, and then operate tax-free and retain a 55% share in the mine.<sup>113</sup> Lundin then turned his share over to the US, who negotiated even better terms. Turner: “The American copper mining company

Phelps-Dodge won the biggest prize in the scramble for... Congolese minerals... the huge copper-cobalt deposits at Tenke-Fungurume (in the Katanga copperbelt). With the apparent help of the US embassy, the company was able to navigate through the mess about wartime contracts and secure majority ownership of Tenke-Fungurume.”<sup>114</sup> One detail of this negotiation was that “In 2005, DRC negotiators agreed to reduce the Tenke-Fungurume fee from \$250 million to \$50 million and reduce their country’s ownership share from 45 to 17.5 percent. The reduction in DRC’s share represented the surrender of revenues from 5 million tons of copper – worth at least \$30 billion – over the life of the mine.”<sup>115</sup>

Laurent Kabila made deals with Zimbabwe and Angola business through COMIEX and its Zimbabwe counterpart, OSLEG, and businessmen like Billy Rautenbach. Rautenbach undermined the long-term viability of the Kakanda mine, extracted \$20 million from the Kababankola processing facility over 18 months, processed \$6 million of cobalt (150t) a month at Likasi, but drove Gecamines into further decline. He laid off 11,000 state workers and was replaced in 2000.<sup>116</sup>

Zimbabwe businessman John Bredenkamp made a \$1 billion deal in 2000 with Laurent Kabila, on a down payment of \$400,000, promising 68% of profits to the Congo and Zimbabwe governments. South African businessman Niko Shefer got a diamond trading deal from Kabila.<sup>117</sup>

As documented by the UN Mapping Report and other organizations, foreign occupiers used atrocities to terrorize civilians, to try to change the demography of the areas they controlled, and to clear territories for their and exploitation. The use of mass rape as a weapon of war was one such strategy.

A report by Congolese women’s organizations from South Kivu interviewed 492 women, finding rapes of married women were 59% of the sample, widows 18.5%, single women 17.7%, and divorced women 4.7%. 60% of the rapes were of Congolese ethnicities Bembe (1/3) and Shi (1/4), who live near the Rwandan border and have been “especially resistant to the invaders or seen as such.” The rapists were invaders—Interahamwe, FDD, RCD, and RPA.<sup>118</sup> “The women credited foreign forces – the Interahamwe and RPA of Rwanda and the FDD of Burundi – with some of the cruelest and most degrading abuse.”

The 1998 war, characterized by such atrocities, also had the highest death counts of any war at the time. Four million people between 1998 and 2002, one scholar estimated.<sup>119</sup> According to the mortality studies:

Violence caused 2% of excess mortality; child mortality was 60%. Most of these deaths were in the eastern, Rwandan-occupied part of the country.<sup>120</sup> The International Red Cross estimated 5 million deaths from 1998 to 2008,<sup>121</sup> about 500,000 per year. Half of the deaths, 2.5 million, were of children under five, dying of fever, malaria, neonatal death, measles, and diarrhea.

The Africanists have picked these casualty figures apart, attempting to bargain them down or attribute them to problems that preceded the war. Turner<sup>122</sup> argued that three of the hardest hit areas in the mortality survey, Kunda, Ankoro, and Ngandajika “represent areas with almost no social services whatsoever,” compared to North and South Kivu which “had received significant international assistance” and had lower mortality rates than these three areas despite being the epicenters of conflict. Patrick Ball argued that the problem was that the peacetime mortality in the DRC was underestimated.<sup>123</sup> “We’re not ever going to figure out Congo,” Ball concluded.

Turner cites a study from Simon Fraser noting that “large numbers of Congolese would have died without the conflict, simply because basic living conditions were so tough”—their “correction” brought the conflict-related death count down to 3-million, or 300,000 per year on average. Another study mentioned by Turner, by two Belgian demographers, estimated 200,000 deaths from 1998 to 2004.<sup>124</sup> These types of debate would be taboo in Rwanda: Try to imagine Western scholars arguing that victims of the Rwandan genocide would have died anyway due to hunger or disease. Imagine a Western scholar saying “we’re not ever going to figure out Rwanda.”

For the Congo, however, Western audiences are unfamiliar with who is dying and how. The fact that the occupiers, the main killers in the eastern Congo, were the same people (Kagame’s RPF) that committed massacres in Rwanda and, before that, in Uganda, is known to people in the region—but not outside.

The Sun City Agreement of 2003 declared peace over a country in ruins. Uncounted millions had died—raped, murdered, tortured, starved, killed by the elements without shelter. Tens of thousands of children had joined militias. Warlords controlled the villages, which were riven with local ethnic wars. The formal economy was destroyed, the informal one criminalized.<sup>125</sup> A decade that began with Rwandans, Burundians, and Congolese dreaming of multiparty democracy ended in

war, genocide, and dictatorship. People buried their dreams along with their dead.

While this all happened, Western countries sponsored Kagame and Museveni, sold them weapons, trained their forces covertly, covered for their crimes diplomatically, negotiated safe passage for Kabarebe's genocidal army when it was surrounded, and restructured the mining economy of the occupied Congo, snapping up assets and promises of future profits.

The Western sponsors of the war had no program to rebuild the country. Instead, they designed a system to rule over the rubble and keep extracting wealth from the ground below it. The system had a name: post-conflict management.

## NOTES

1. Cooper. 2013. *Great Lakes Conflagration: The Second Congo War, 1998–2003*, p. 4.
2. Cooper 2013, p. 4.
3. Cooper 2013, p. 4.
4. Stearns 2011, pp. 168–169.
5. Cooper 2013, p. 4.
6. Kisangani 2012, pp. 133–134.
7. Kisangani 2012, p. 134.
8. Cooper 2013, p. 5.
9. Cooper 2013, p. 6.
10. Cooper 2013, p. 4.
11. Stearns 2011, pp. 174–175.
12. Stearns 2011, pp. 286–287.
13. Stearns 2011, pp. 290–291.
14. Stearns 2011, p. 291, citing the Lutundula report.
15. Stearns 2011, p. 295.
16. Stearns 2011, p. 295.
17. Stearns 2011.
18. Cooper 2013, p. 13.
19. Kisangani 2012, pp. 137–139.
20. Kisangani 2012, p. 140.
21. Cooper 2013, pp. 13–14.
22. Cooper 2013, p. 23.
23. Cooper 2013, p. 23.
24. Prunier 2009, p. 179.



25. Stearns 2011, pp. 188–189.
26. Cooper 2013, p. 24.
27. Cooper 2013, p. 25.
28. Cooper 2013, p. 25.
29. Cooper 2013, p. 25.
30. Cooper 2013, p. 26.
31. Cooper 2013, p. 26. Cooper goes on: “Arbitrary arrests, rape and summary executions in Kinshasa continued for about a year.”
32. Cooper 2013, p. 27.
33. Cooper 2013, p. 28.
34. Cooper 2013, p. 28.
35. Cooper 2013, p. 29.
36. Cooper 2013, p. 29.
37. Cooper 2013, p. 31.
38. Cooper 2013, p. 33.
39. Cooper 2013, p. 33.
40. Cooper 2013, p. 33.
41. Stearns 2011, p. 297.
42. Stearns 2011, pp. 208–212.
43. Cooper 2013, p. 33.
44. Cooper 2013, p. 33.
45. Cooper 2013, p. 33. Grisly details of these massacres are described in Stearns 2011, pp. 256–261, and in the UN Mapping Report p. 176.
46. Rever 2018, p. 70. Note that this “double tie” is also described by Epstein as being a characteristic method used by these forces in the Ugandan wars.
47. Cooper 2013, p. 34. Cooper notes that “similar scenes occurred in Lbumubashi, Kipushi, Likasi and Kolwezi, where hundreds of Tutsis, people of Rwandan origin and any civilians who resembled them were arbitrarily arrested, tortured, with dozens of them executed.”
48. Cooper 2013, p. 35.
49. Cooper 2013, p. 35.
50. Cooper 2013, p. 35.
51. Stearns 2011, p. 224.
52. Stearns 2011, p. 228.
53. Uganda’s man in Gbadolite was the former Mobutu loyalist and millionaire businessman Jean-Pierre Bemba, who would later be tried at the International Criminal Court for crimes committed by his forces in the Central African Republic, to which he sent 1000 troops in a “purely mercenary affair”. His troops pillaged and raped (Stearns 2011, p. 230). For these crimes, he was in 2007 brought before the ICC. Bemba’s force was popular enough in Equateur that the population voted in

favor of his party in the 2006 election (64% in the first round, 98% in the second) whereas “almost everywhere else in the country, the population clearly rejected its rulers” (Stearns 2011, p. 229)—Katanga was the other exception, which voted for Joseph Kabila.

54. Cooper 2013, p. 42.
55. Cooper 2013, p. 50.
56. Stearns 2011, p. 294.
57. Cooper 2013, p. 42.
58. Cooper 2013, p. 43.
59. Cooper 2013, p. 43.
60. Cooper 2013, p. 43.
61. Rever 2018, p. 46.
62. Turner 2013, p. 172, citing the US Geological Survey in 2007—the survey said 500,000–1 million worked in mining and an additional 100,000 in trading.
63. Cooper 2013, p. 51.
64. Figures are from Stearns 2011, p. 247.
65. Cooper 2013, p. 54.
66. Cooper 2013, p. 43.
67. Cooper 2013, p. 46.
68. Cooper 2013, p. 45.
69. Cooper 2013, p. 44.
70. Cooper 2013, p. 44.
71. Cooper 2013, p. 44.
72. Cooper 2013, p. 46.
73. Cooper 2013, p. 46.
74. Cooper 2013, p. 48.
75. Cooper 2013, p. 48.
76. Cooper 2013, p. 49.
77. Cooper 2013, p. 49.
78. Kisangani 2012, p. 151.
79. Stearns 2011, p. 241, citing the UN report on illegal exploitation of resources.
80. Stearns 2011, p. 241.
81. Stearns 2011, p. 241, citing Prunier p. 215.
82. Turner 2013, p. 173.
83. Turner 2013, p. 158, citing Braeckman.
84. Turner 2013, pp. 161–162.
85. Stearns 2011, p. 298, citing UN expert panel and Global Witness.
86. Stearns 2011, p. 298.
87. Stearns 2011, p. 299. Stearns tells it as “Exports from the eastern Congo and Rwanda soared”.

88. Stearns 2011, p. 300.
89. Stearns 2011, p. 278.
90. Stearns 2011, p. 272.
91. Cooper 2013, p. 55.
92. Stearns 2011, p. 279.
93. Cooper 2013, p. 55.
94. Stearns 2011, p. 279.
95. Cooper 2013, p. 56.
96. Turner 2013, p. 59.
97. Turner 2013, p. 70.
98. Stearns 2011, p. 281.
99. Stearns 2011, p. 314.
100. Stearns 2011, p. 315.
101. Stearns 2011, p. 313.
102. Stearns 2011, p. 263.
103. Turner 2013, pp. 125–126.
104. Turner 2013, pp. 126–128.
105. Stearns 2011, p. 317.
106. Stearns 2011, p. 318.
107. Turner 2013, p. 152.
108. Stearns 2011, p. 270.
109. Stearns 2011, p. 271.
110. Turner 2013, p. 154.
111. Turner 2013, p. 174, and Stearns 2011, p. 271.
112. Stearns 2011, p. 271, citing UN expert panel 2001, paragraphs 67–68.
113. Stearns 2011, p. 288.
114. Turner 2013, p. 168.
115. Turner 2013, p. 169.
116. Stearns 2011, pp. 292–293.
117. Stearns 2011, p. 293.
118. Turner 2013, pp. 129–130.
119. Kisangani 2012, p. 119.
120. Stearns 2011, p. 250 citing Les Roberts/IRC study.
121. Cited in Turner 2013, p. 121.
122. Turner 2013, p. 122.
123. Tina Rosenberg. “The Body Counter.” *Foreign Policy*, February 27, 2012. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/27/the-body-counter/>.
124. Turner 2013, p. 123.
125. Kisangani 2012, pp. 146–150.



## Conclusion: The Empire's System for Central Africa

The same way that the wars became self-financing, the empire's system for governing Central Africa has become self-sustaining. Rwanda is a dictatorship and an exporter of military might. The DR Congo is a collapsed state, strung along on a shoestring of aid and mostly bled revenue, trying to get back on its feet. The region is a source of income and adventure for donors, NGO workers, humanitarians, diplomats, UN soldiers, journalists, and scholars.

There are Africanists<sup>1</sup> who believe state collapse need not be such a terrible thing. But every instance of state collapse has been disastrous for people. The Congo is no exception. Still, there are bits of money to be made.

After the establishment of the transitional government, "petrol stations popped up like mushrooms in Beni and Butembo, directed by the same businessmen who had been close to the rebellion." Traders paid the Congolese army (the FARDC): "petrol officially took the form of military supplies, which meant businessmen benefited twice... they not only were exempt from taxes but also received official military protection for their trucks from the border post of Kasindi right to their petrol stations in Beni and Butembo."<sup>2</sup> The new system "proved to be much less stable than the previous one. Similarly to changes occurring in the minerals trade at the time, heightened competition within the military to ensure a cut in such tax-free petrol led to regular clashes between army units."<sup>3</sup> Mining companies also needed to pay for protection to "local strongmen." "Military elements also controlled main entry points to

mining sites, where they forced miners and traders to pay tribute, just like the rebels during the war... The main loser of such hybrid protection schemes remained of course the state's central tax agency, which could only stand and watch as its rights to redistribute resources were systematically absorbed by a variety of marauding and nonstate agents."<sup>4</sup>

Low pay for state employees leads to corruption: "the poor socio-economic situation of the majority of FARDC troops during the immediate postwar years. Because they received little or no pay at all, it became quite tempting for them to predate on the produce and labour of local villagers rather than fight the enemy." He cites the example of the joint FARDC-MONUC operation in Rwenzori in 2005, which alienated peasants to the degree that they "preferred to remain loyal to Ugandan militias operating in the area rather than accept the FARDC's authority. The operation also frustrated UN peacekeepers at the time because they felt completely abandoned on the battlefield."<sup>5</sup>

In North Kivu, the Federation of Enterprises of the Congo or FEC maintained a "strategy of tension," one that "aims to divide, manipulate, and control public opinion using fear, propaganda, disinformation, and actions of indiscriminate violence with the objective to establish authoritarian government."<sup>6</sup> Specifically, "FEC businessmen consciously manipulated the army battalions garrisoned in major towns to create a climate of fear and suspicion against the ruling city council. At regular intervals, soldiers were given orders to increase their nightly looting operations and kill with impunity." Targeted assassinations "increased considerably," with over 100 in two months of 2012. Dead bodies were placed on the cities main roads "as if someone had been given directions to place them there as a message."<sup>7</sup>

In the 1950s, the US sent the Belgian Congo its first nuclear reactor under the Atoms for Peace program. The country was a safe Western colony, and it had the uranium resource. What could go wrong? In 1997, after Mobutu's fall, two fuel rods went missing from the place. Years later, Italian police recovered one of them from the Sicilian Mafia. The other one is still out there somewhere. The Shinkolobwe uranium mine in Katanga was officially closed after a 2004 collapse. But it is being mined by artisanal miners who pay a fee to Congolese soldiers to let them enter.<sup>8</sup>

Since the 1960s Kivu's location had made it a key smuggling hub, a "safe haven for illegal trade activities with Uganda" which in 1961–1962 "cost the Congolese government some 5 billion francs, or \$226.7

million... while the government received only 10 million francs, or less than \$453, 206 (2010=100) in customs duties.”<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the politicians in charge created a tax-exempt trade enterprise that made them 800 million francs (\$35 million in 2010 dollars).<sup>10</sup>

“Between February 2004 and November 2005, the government concluded deals for 75 percent of the Congo’s copper reserves.”<sup>11</sup> The contracts, for example to Dan Gertler and the Belgian tycoon George Forrest, were very unfavorable to the Congo government, though the two businessmen had helped finance Joseph Kabila’s 2006 electoral campaign.<sup>12</sup>

A South African company, Clackson Power, started construction of a new dam at Ivua in North Kivu, a few kilometers from Butembo, to provide more steady electricity to communities. The consortium of local businessmen invested \$300,000 USD. Soon after installation, the system failed on a regular basis and businessmen were asked to pay for repairs. “Towards 2005, the local businessmen in Butembo had already coughed up nearly one million USD, but the system continued breaking down at regular intervals. In the course of that year, Clackson Power disappeared from Butembo, only to reappear again in East Kasai to introduce a similar project there.”<sup>13</sup>

In the Ugandan-controlled zone of Ituri, the war went on among its 4.5 million people for a decade after the peace. With the Mongbwalu and Kilomoto gold fields, Ituri was a prize for Uganda and its proxy, the MLC: coffee, coltan, timber, and oil are all available in “the most fertile and resource-rich area in the Great Lakes region.”<sup>14</sup> Allying with militias of Hema ethnicity, the Ugandans collected millions of dollars in revenues.<sup>15</sup>

Ituri was one of the first territories in eastern Congo to come under Leopold’s rule in the wake of the Batetela Mutiny in the 1890s.<sup>16</sup> The colonial administration introduced “ethnically based sectors” in 1920, institutionalizing indirect rule and imposing a Hema chief on the Lendu.<sup>17</sup> When the Lendu killed the Hema chief, the district commissioner brought the territory under military occupation—to suppress the revolt and control the Kilomoto gold mine.<sup>18</sup> The area was occupied again in 1929. The Belgians privatized land and introduced a land registry, “which resulted in state alienation of thousands of hectares of land from the local Lendu communities.”<sup>19</sup> The colonials based policy on a racist theory of Hema superiority, opening schools to Hema children and allowing them to dominate clerical jobs in administration, mining, and plantation, with the Lendu as farmers and laborers.<sup>20</sup>

At independence, Ituri voted for Lumumba's MNC, and Ituri did not split. Indeed, "ethnic politics did not become an issue" until 1966, long after the MNC/L was destroyed. As in Nord-Kivu, Mobutu's 1973 land law and nationalization law were implemented in an ethnically biased way, here privileging the Hema at the expense of the Lendu.<sup>21</sup> In 1974, a Lendu liberation party (PLW) organized but "soon turned to terrorism, ambushing and killing Hema civilians" and poisoning children. A surrender by the Hema in the wake of this terrorism led to a truce until the "liberalization" of 1990, when Hema and Lendu again organized on ethnic lines (ETE and LORI). The liberalization led to ethnic mobilization because "there was no political party with nationalist and unitarist ideology such as the MNC/L of the early 1960s. Ethnic lexicon rather than a national ideological language became the political call of the elites."<sup>22</sup>

In 1993, Mobutu sent the 412th battalion which used heavy artillery against Lendu rebels, killing hundreds.<sup>23</sup> Local efforts at peace in the late 1990s were crushed by the Ugandan occupation in 1998.<sup>24</sup> The Ugandan officers favored the Hema. There were no pitched battles in Ituri, just armed groups attacking unarmed civilians of the opposite ethnic groups. From 1999 to 2005, the militias killed 80–100,000 people.<sup>25</sup> Atrocities were part of the strategy: "the violence took the form of terrorism and became a ritual as both the Hema and Lendu groups publicly paraded in the streets displaying the heads of their victims. Body mutilation, cannibalism, and exhibition of body parts as trophies were regularly practiced."<sup>26</sup> There is more to say about this strategy, which is common to conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, Colombia, Rwanda, Uganda, and other parts of the DRC, and more recently Iraq and Syria. Public atrocities are a weapon of psychological warfare.

Despite the roles of Uganda and Rwanda in favoring the Hema in the war, "the UN SG requested in September 2002 that security responsibilities should continue to be discharged by the Ugandan army in an impartial manner until such time as it could be replaced by a capable police force."<sup>27</sup> The UN brought 800 soldiers to Bunia in 2003, but "MONUC concentrated its efforts to protect its own installations and members... The failure of the UN to protect civilians, exacerbated by its inability and unwillingness to act decisively even within these apparent constraints, had severe consequences for stability in Ituri."<sup>28</sup> On May 30, 2003, Resolution 1484 authorized Operation Artemis, with 1800 French troops to Bunia to replace the Ugandans. The mission lasted

from May 30–September 1, 2003.<sup>29</sup> Then resolution 1493 on July 28, 2003, authorized MONUC II, with 10,800 troops. But MONUC II “was not proactive in dealing with the inflation of militia groups in Ituri and remained weaker than anticipated... had many deficiencies... did not have the ability to monitor either the militias’ movements or their communications.”<sup>30</sup> The first person to ever be convicted by the International Criminal Court, Thomas Lubanga, had run several armed groups in Ituri. He was arrested in 2005. After his election in 2006, Joseph made a special effort to close out the Ituri conflict. By 2010, Ituri was “apparently more politically stable than Nord-Kivu.”<sup>31</sup>

Rwanda continues to plunder the DRC and punctuate its plunder with occasional magnanimous gestures. In 2011–2012, Rwanda “turned over to DRC several tons of minerals confiscated within Rwanda. Then it arrested four high-ranking military officers on charges of ‘indiscipline’ for having engaged in business dealings with civilians in DRC... one of the four officers reportedly had previously headed the ‘Congo office’ at the Rwandan presidency, which coordinated the pillage of minerals.”<sup>32</sup>

After the peace agreement of 2003, the pattern of permanent war in the east was told as a story of out-of-control former *genocidaires* (the FDLR) hiding in the interior, ambitious Mayi-Mayi commanders refusing to stand down, Kagame periodically forced to raid into Congo to attack these forces for the sake of Rwandan security, and of former Rwandan proxies “going rogue” and rising up in rebellion against Joseph’s government in Kinshasa. Against these problems, the foreign forces of the 17,000 man, \$1 billion per year United Nations mission (MONUSCO) were posed as the solution. In fact, all of these forces, MONUSCO included, were part of the war and smuggling economy, with covert interconnections and interdependencies. In 2009, the UN partnered with Joseph’s and Kagame’s armies in the Kimia II and Umoja Wetu operations against the FDLR, which lost hundreds and had thousands captured, but which retreated deeper into the interior in the face of the offensives. The FDLR gradually came out of the jungle and surrendered, hundreds at a time, each time demanding a dialogue with Kagame’s government—which rejects them (for genocidal ideology, which they claim to reject).

Meanwhile, Kagame’s “rogue” proxies made several plays for power in the east. By pure coincidence, their goals overlapped perfectly with Kagame’s strategic interests in the region. General Laurent Nkundabatware (Nkunda) was the first such “spoiler.” Claiming to be



rebelling out of concern for his Congolese Tutsi community, he called his organization the CNDP. His troops occupied Bukavu in 2004,<sup>33</sup> raping, murdering, and attacking with a particular viciousness organizations in rehabilitating child soldiers. But the world had changed. “Pressure from the United States and France on both Rwanda and RCD forced Nkunda to retreat to Masisi in Nord-Kivu, where he began recruiting soldiers to start his war against the central government.”<sup>34</sup> In 2006, Nkunda attacked again, trying to take Goma. MONUC forces repulsed the attack.<sup>35</sup> Nkunda kept fighting in North Kivu, in 2007, following the pattern of Rwandan forces of ethnically cleansing villages through big massacres, resisted by Mayi-Mayi militias.<sup>36</sup> He was finally arrested in 2009<sup>37</sup> and is living by the pool under house arrest in Rwanda.

The CNDP was rebranded as the M23 with a new commander, Bosco “the terminator” Ntaganda, with the same troops, the same sponsors, and the same strategies. Born in Rwanda, Ntaganda was a veteran of the 1990–1994 Rwandan war. He invaded Zaire with the AFDL in 1996 and stayed on, joining the Union of Congolese Patriots in Ituri, and Nkunda’s CNDP (National Congress for the Defense of the People), before he joined M23. In 2012, Ntaganda’s M23 took Goma and planned to take Bukavu, but Ntaganda was ousted in a coup by his fellow officer Sultani Makenga, and a joint Congolese-UN force routed M23 in 2013. Makenga surrendered to Uganda, who have reportedly put him and his troops to work. Ntaganda popped up in the US embassy in Kigali to surrender himself to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, which sought his arrest (only) for his crimes in Ituri.<sup>38</sup> The terminator was convicted on 13 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in 2019.

In Butembo, a local body was struck for governance called the *Comite des Sages*: “Inspired by the prewar courts they used to settle internal disputes, this committee came to incorporate an interesting mix of authorities involved in the daily governance of the city in wartime. The committee regularly organised security meetings, for example, in which several state and nonstate authorities, business leaders, and political representatives as well as the international peacekeeping mission of the UN intervened in consultation with other local political organisations in all sorts of local security decisions.”<sup>39</sup> In Butembo, traders paid the rebels to stop harassing them and allow them to trade. This arrangement “appeared entirely logical in a situation where the Congolese state

was being completely destructured, and violence increasingly appeared as a legitimate way to force access to economic resources.”<sup>40</sup>

At the national level, the international community oversaw a fair constitutional referendum in 2005 and a fair election in 2006<sup>41</sup> which Joseph won handily, thanks to war-weary voters in the eastern provinces. Finally, the donors increased aid levels to support some rebuilding. Joseph's government found some clever ways to profit from demobilization money, inflating the army by incorporating ex-rebels, then having the troops go through donor-funded programs DDR (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration).<sup>42</sup>

Under Joseph, the DR Congo began contracting with the Chinese government—minerals-for-infrastructure—in 2007.<sup>43</sup> These deals are controversial in the West and in the Congo but they have been better for the DRC's economy than equivalent deals with Western corporations. Still, they are based on the extractive model and won't help the country build an industrial base, nor to formalize most of its economy. “Instead of authorizing decent official salaries for civil servants, [Joseph Kabila] allows many to scrape by on salaries of less than \$100 a month, only to send them envelopes of several thousand dollars at his discretion to keep them happy.”<sup>44</sup>

Having seen the possibilities of the International Criminal Court with the arrest of Thomas Lubanga, Joseph benefited from the arrest of his principal rival in the 2006 election, Jean-Pierre Bemba, Mobutu's former protege who had won 40% of the vote. Bemba was arrested visiting family in Brussels in 2008 and charged with crimes that his militia (the MLC) committed not in the Congo (where unraveling Bemba's activities might implicate other, more protected parties) but in the Central African Republic where they had worked as mercenaries. Bemba was convicted on all charges in 2016.

In the meantime, Joseph had won a second term in 2011, in elections that were not quite so squeaky clean. Most tallies and international observers had given the election to the old stalwart of the multiparty movement (and sometime minister under Mobutu) Etienne Tshisekedi, who declared himself the winner. Joseph put him under house arrest and resumed ruling.

As the end of his second (and constitutionally last) term approached in 2016, Joseph delayed, claiming a new census was needed. A new generation of young people protested in the streets, and Joseph's army

shot, jailed, and disappeared many of them. The Filimbi and Telema movements didn't relent, and Joseph eventually had to accept new elections—these, too, tainted by fraud—and handed over power to opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi in 2019. Felix held a state funeral for his father, Etienne, who had died two years before. Kagame attended.

An Ebola outbreak in 2019 killed hundreds of people in the exact areas that had been most devastated by war: North Kivu and Ituri.

In 2010, Victoire Ingabire arrived in Rwanda from abroad to announce her candidacy in the Rwandan election. She visited a genocide memorial site and asked why Hutu victims of the genocide were not remembered. The government had her charged with genocide denial and jailed, not released until 2018. Kagame went on to win the election—with 93% of the vote. He had the constitution changed in 2015, in a fit of generosity, not wanting to deprive the Rwandan people of his leadership. In 2017, Diane Rwigara, the daughter of an assassinated RPF financier, announced that she was going to run for president against Kagame. She was promptly arrested and disappeared into the Rwandan prison system. Kagame went on to win the election—with 99% of the vote. Rwigara was “found” by the system and released at the end of 2018.

The democratic opposition can be jailed. The exiled opposition can be assassinated. But Kagame still worries about grenade attacks and terrorism from his former comrades-in-arms. The new constitution says Kagame can be president until 2034. By then, he may be the “dinosaur”—Museveni is already being referred to in such terms, now and again. At that point, America will have to redesign the system, find a different client. Perhaps Kagame's crimes will be discovered by the Africanists and a spate of books about them will come out. They will be rendered understandable in light of the need to contain the genocidal Hutu and lying Congolese, but cast as excessive. America will be praised for changing course and supporting a new generation of leaders.

There are other possibilities too. The independence movements of the 1960s and the democratic movements of the 1990s were not easily predictable. That the empire was able to respond and reassert itself was not a foregone conclusion. Central Africa's people are young: Most have grown up since the wars and genocides of the 1990s and will be looking to find their own way. Young people protested and forced Joseph to accept an election. Young people have been turning off of Kagame's self-serving decades of demonization of his enemies as *genocidaires*. They can expect no help from the donors, corporations, smugglers, and

mercenaries who are in Africa for their own reasons, and they will have to forge their own understandings of the past and present in spite of the weight of Africanist literature bearing down on their minds. If they can do it, the future will be theirs.

## NOTES

1. Autesserre and Raeymakers, mentioned in the previous chapter.
2. Raeymakers 2014, p. 125.
3. Raeymakers 2014, p. 125.
4. Raeymakers 2014, pp. 125–126.
5. Raeymakers 2014, p. 124.
6. Raeymakers 2014, p. 124.
7. Raeymakers 2014, p. 136.
8. Turner 2013, p. 170.
9. Kisangani 2012, p. 174.
10. Kisangani 2012, p. 175.
11. Stearns 2011, p. 320.
12. Stearns 2011, p. 320.
13. Raeymakers 2014, p. 114.
14. Kisangani 2012, p. 194.
15. Kisangani 2012, pp. 229–230.
16. Kisangani 2012, p. 195.
17. Kisangani 2012, p. 195.
18. Kisangani 2012, p. 196.
19. Kisangani 2012, p. 196.
20. Kisangani 2012, p. 196.
21. Kisangani 2012, p. 196.
22. Kisangani 2012, p. 201.
23. Kisangani 2012, pp. 197–198.
24. Kisangani 2012, p. 198.
25. Kisangani 2012, p. 198.
26. Kisangani 2012, p. 201.
27. Kisangani 2012, p. 203.
28. Kisangani 2012, p. 204.
29. Kisangani 2012, p. 204.
30. Kisangani 2012, p. 205.
31. Kisangani 2012, p. 206.
32. Turner 2013, p. 165.
33. Kisangani, p. 153.
34. Kisangani, p. 153.
35. Kisangani, p. 159. Citing Stearns 2008, p. 252.

36. Kisangani, p. 159.
37. Kisangani, p. 160.
38. Prosecution for his crimes in North Kivu would of course have embarrassed his Rwandan and Ugandan sponsors and their American patron. As usual the ICC kept the investigation within the desired parameters.
39. Raeymakers 2014, p. 115.
40. Raeymakers 2014, p. 118.
41. Kisangani 2012, pp. 154 and 157–158.
42. Kisangani 2012, pp. 154 and 157–158.
43. Turner 2013, p. 153.
44. Stearns 2011, p. 322.

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