

## Interview – Philippe Gaillard

Frontline, September 12, 2003

He headed the International Committee on the Red Cross mission which remained in Rwanda throughout the genocide. In this interview, he talks about the moral dilemma he and Gen. Dallaire confronted after the world had left Rwanda to its fate : What do you do in the face of evil? Gaillard, who unlike Dallaire had the support of his organization back in Geneva, challenged the extremist government by getting word out to the media about the killing of Red Cross patients. And he cultivated a relationship with the regime which he believes helped the Red Cross save an estimated 65,000 lives, « When we talk about mass saving, I think the best and the only way is to talk with the people who want to kill them. » As to the issue of whether the outside world understood what was happening in Rwanda, Gaillard is adamant – « Everybody knew every day live what was happening in this country. You could follow that every day on TV, on radio. Who moved? Nobody. Nobody. » This interview was conducted on Sept. 12, 2003.

Tell me how you came to go to Rwanda.

Well, I'd been working for more than ten years in Latin America, a couple of years in the Middle East. I was a bit fed up with Latin America, and I've worked almost everywhere. So I asked a friend of mine if he knew about any place in Africa, just to work in another context, in another continent. He told me, "There is a very interesting process in Rwanda where civil war and guerrilla fights started three to four years ago in the beginning of the '90s. And you like fishing, there's plenty of lakes and it's full of tilapia, so try to go there." So I did some internal lobbying, talked in the corridors with different bosses, and showed my interest to go Rwanda, and I got it.

*Before dinner every evening, instead of praying ... I read one poem of [Rimbaud's] A Season in Hell to 20-25 colleagues. It was incredibly silent. They were not people especially sensible to poetry, but these poems in this context ... every word meant something ...*

So I went there in mid-July '93, and the peace agreement was signed around three weeks later, I think the 4th of August '93 in Arusha, [Tanzania], under a lot of international pressure. The Rwandan government didn't want to sign this agreement. They did it under international pressure. ...

What was the agreement ?

I think I never read it. Maybe because I never believed in it, I don't know. A couple of weeks later, after the agreement was signed I had a talk with the President of the MRND, the government party, which is the only real party. ... I will never forget what he told me : "In Africa, peace agreements are usually toilet papers." This was end of August, beginning of September '93. Gives you some idea about the context.

**How did you interpret that ?**

Well, that people [at the] top of the government were forced to sign it by the international community ; they were not convinced at all. It was just cosmetic. I wonder if the signing of this agreement has maybe not provoked but accelerated the genocide process. One can wonder if the genocide was not an answer to this forced peace agreement. But you can say that only afterwards.

And then there were a lot of other signs that things were not going well. I remember... maybe two or three weeks after [U.N. Force Commander Dallaire] set up his team in Kigali with the first foreign troops, more than fifty people – peasants, civilians – were killed in the so-called "demilitarized zone." Every day, many times a day, [there was] this radio/television [propaganda] which was encouraging people to kill with machetes and screwdrivers. For weeks after this, 50 to 60 peasants were killed in the demilitarized zone, this radio was just joking about the U.N. role – and especially about Dallaire's role, because he was the boss of the mission – reminding the facts that 55 peasants have been killed and asking ironically, what is General Dallaire doing? How can this happen if he is responsible for setting up a demilitarized zone? And [ensuring] that nothing happens in the

so-called demilitarized zone, which was not demilitarized at all. I think that this [killing] was done not only to kill these 55 poor innocent peasants, but to give strong a negative [signal] to the U.N. troops and especially to Dallaire.

...These peasants, they were Hutu. My personal feeling was that they had been killed by their own people, Hutu people. And for weeks Dallaire was publicly targeted by this bloody radio/television. ...

**After Dallaire sent the fax to New York [warning of the arms buildup by the militia] sometime in January of '94, he and Booh-Booh told you about it afterwards.**

I was invited by Dallaire to the residence of Ambassador Booh-Booh, who was a special envoy of the U.N., at the political level, for the implementation of this peace agreement. Dallaire told me that he knew that a lot of arms, including machetes, had been bought, imported, distributed to the Interahamwe, that he sent this information to the U.N. in New York and that the answer of New York was "OK, just don't move." And this fax is a piece of history.

**Was he angry, when he told you this ?**

Yes. And he was aware, we were all aware, that this peace process was not working. And we were getting every week more and more signs that things were going wrong. What I think nobody could say beforehand is that the dimension of the killings would be genocide. ... To be able to kill around one million people in less than three months, I think nobody imagined that, not even these people from the U.N. in New York telling Dallaire, "don't move."

The RPF sent [a] battalion to Kigali. They were placed in the parliament, which was a brand new beautiful building, which had never been used because there was no parliament in Rwanda, and I think this is symbolic. They arrived in Kigali on the 28th of December '93. It's amazing. But a lot the diplomats who were involved in those months all believed the peace process was working. Booh-Booh, Rawson, and Joyce Leader were telling the State Department, "everything's working." This is wishful thinking. ...

**Why was there so much wishful thinking?**

... I don't know if I can answer your question. People take decisions without knowing the context, being far away from the context, not smelling things. ... And who is the international community? I don't believe in it. This is nobody, this is a way to say nobody. It's a no name. You are not indicating responsibilities when you talk about the international community. "The international community" sounds virtual.

**What's real then?**

What's happening in the field – that is real. And I guess for most of these ambassadors, representatives of the so-called international community, the field is without importance, especially when you talk about Rwanda. Now did Rwanda exist? I mean, did you heard about Rwanda before the genocide of 1994? ...

In the months before the genocide, you had contacts with the Rwanda government. ... Was the genocide in their minds in those early months? Do you think it was being planned?

Yes, I think so. People were nervous, anxious. I remember the first

time I met President Juvenal Habyarimana, on the 20th of July '93 when [the ICRC] president came to Rwanda. One of the points he talked about was the anti-personnel minefields on the front line. This was before the peace agreement was signed on the 4th August. I remember President Habyarimana answering to the president of the ICRC, "I know this problem, Mr. President, but this is not the main point. The main point is that the hearts of the Rwandan's people are mined." This is at the end of July '93 – words of the former president of the country.

**The hearts of the Rwandan people are mined. With what – hatred?**

With hatred. Not with anti-personnel mines, with hatred. This is nine months before he was killed.

Two weeks before the genocides started I was invited by the president of the Rwanda Red Cross, a Tutsi. He had been former minister of health. I remember him asking me, ... "If something happens, do you think you will be able to do something for us, for me and for my family?" And I asked him, "What do you mean?" There was not more explanation. I understood two weeks later why he was asking that. ...

**How did you hear about the death of President Habyarimana?**

At that moment, I was in the parliament talking about [humanitarian] problems in the northern part of the country. ... I remember the face and the reaction of the RPF people I was talking to when they heard by radio that the presidential plane had been shot. They were not expecting that. We really had the same reaction. They could not believe it.

...We learnt maybe one hour later by radio – it was around six, seven

o'clock – [that] the parliament was targeted, so two of my colleagues, myself and all these political people from the RPF went down to the basement of the parliament and spent the night underground. Nobody slept. During the night, nobody was able to see anything, but the following day when we came out of the basement and started to watch through the windows of the parliament, three or four hundred meters away you could see how some people were running after other people and killing them. We saw that and the RPF people saw that. There were two or three U.N. guys in the parliament–

**The peacekeepers.**

Yes, peacekeepers, the blue helmets. And I remember some very daft discussions between RPF military guys and U.N. blue helmets. The RPF people [were] telling them to do something and saying, “If you don’t do anything, we will do it,” and the U.N. people just told them, “Please don’t move.” I think the U.N. guys were not fully aware of what was happening. The RPF was; I think the U.N. guys were not.

We had to take a decision : if we decided to stay within the parliament, we were a target, and you cannot do anything if you are in a building on fire. We took the decision to leave the parliament. So I took my car, with my two colleagues, and I went first to the house of my secretary, who was alone in her house, not really aware of what was happening. She was there, alive, and I told her, “I give you five minutes. Take your passport and some clothes. Within five minutes we leave.” So she took a small bag and left. Then we went to the houses of my colleagues.

**What were the streets like ?**

At that moment, from the parlia-

ment to the house of my secretary, it was empty. A very strange atmosphere, nobody in the streets. ... On the way back, heading to my colleague’s house, we were stopped at a military checkpoint. ... I opened the window and the guy told me in French with this incredible strong Rwandan accent, “Give me the keys of your car.” I told him, “Listen, sir, I’m really sorry but I cannot give you the keys of my car because this is not your car, this is a car of the International Committee of the Red Cross.”

I opened the door, went out of the car and then the guy put his machine gun on my belly. I introduced myself – I could not shake his hand – and asked his name. He refused to give me his name. I had this machine gun on the belly, and at that moment you have to be a good actor, so I told him, “Listen, I’m a very close neighbor of your boss, the minister of defense, Augustin Bizimana, and I also know very well the Chef de Cabinet of the Ministry of Defense, Colonel Bagosora. If you insist with your machine gun in order to get my car, I will complain to the minister of defense and to Bagosora.” I don’t know [how], but it worked. The guy put down the machine gun and told me, “It’s OK, go on.” Why did he decide not to shoot? Why? It’s so evident that if I’m killed I cannot complain, so he will get the car, which was his intention. ...

So we reach the houses of my colleagues, we spent one or two nights there. ... The Tutsi minister for social affairs, or something like that, was married to a Canadian lady, they had one child. They were living just [next door] to the house of one of my colleagues, and we learned that he had been killed. People came into his house,

killed him, the wife, the child, the same way Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana was killed while with [10] U.N. Belgian blue helmets in the compound of the United Nations.

We started to go out of our houses, and this was amazing because one group of around 15 Interahamwe close to our house told us, “You are from the Red Cross, you should work.” That was a good sign, so I took the decision to gather my people – we were more than 30 expatriates in Rwanda at that time, with around 120 local staff – into the delegation and to leave the houses. The local staff started to come in with wives, with children, with mothers, with grandfathers, with family. I remember one of them; he was a radio operator. He arrived at the delegation on the 8th or 9th of April. He was Tutsi, and his hand was deeply cut by a machete. He had the good idea – I say good because it worked – after [he received] this first wound to take out his ID card and to tell them, “Please don’t kill me, I’m working for the Red Cross,” and it worked. They let him go. So he arrived, with his hand bleeding. We took care of it. We could save his hand, but this bloody piece of paper saved his life. Why did these people decide not to kill a Red Cross worker? It’s interesting.

**Around that time, a lot of other NGOs, the U.N., the embassies left Rwanda. Did you think of moving?**

Yes, of course. I think the main reason why we decided to stay was because of our local staff. We reduced the expatriate staff to six, only key staff, doctors, logistics [remained]. To my knowledge out of the 120 local staff only one was killed. ...

**Other NGOs, the embassies,**

**the U.N., they all had local staff?**

Yes.

**And they left.**

Yes.

**Why?**

Ask them. ... To leave you also have to [check with] your own headquarters. I remember we had some phone calls with our headquarters in Geneva, and they told me that they were working on an evacuation plan. I told them, “That’s a good idea, work on it. I’ll call you back tomorrow and you can tell me about your plan.” I called them back the following day and asked them, “Well, what’s happening? I mean, we are in the very center of the town, any crazy killer could come in with 20 men and kill us if they decide to do so. So what’s your plan?” And they were very frank: they told me, “We have none.” I told them, “Fair enough. Thank you for being so frank.” I mean, if you are not able to do something, don’t say bullshit, just say “we cannot do it.” But it’s important to recognize that you cannot do anything, that you have no evacuation because it’s physically impossible. ...

From the very beginning, we started to go out with our ambulances, both the Rwandan Red Cross and the ICRC, evacuating wounded people. When I say “wounded,” it’s wrong. They were not wounded, they were “not finished off.” This is a better definition.

**You mean they were Tutsis who had been wounded with machetes?**

Machetes and screwdrivers.

**But they hadn’t died somehow.**

Yes. These were the first people we took to our improvised field hospital close to the delegation, a school for

young girls we just adapted. On the 14th of April, volunteers of the Rwandan Red Cross came to my office and told me that their ambulance had been stopped. They had six “not finished off” Tutsi people in the ambulance who were taken out by the militia and just killed on the side of the road. The volunteers of the Rwandan Red Cross were completely shocked. How do you deal with this kind of information?

I decided to call my headquarters in Geneva to tell the story and my counterpart in Geneva asked me, “Do you think we could make it public?” And then you think twice, because if you make it public, then people might kill you. But we decided to do it. [We sent out] a very short press release, five lines, about these six wounded taken out of the Red Cross ambulance and killed on the side of the road, and the following day, it was everywhere : on BBC, Reuters, Radio France Internationale. And then we had a promise – and it was even [announced] on Radio Television [Libre des Mille Collines (RTL)] that the Red Cross ambulances would be respected. So these six people didn’t die for nothing. Because of their deaths, hundreds of other people could be saved.

**During these first few weeks, did Dallaire know what was happening ?**

...Around the end of April, the U.N. sent the High Commissioner for Human Rights Ambassador Jose Ayala Lasso to Rwanda, and I remember a discussion we had with Dallaire, Ayala Lasso and myself at the U.N. headquarters. Ayala Lasso asked me, “What’s your estimation of how many people have been killed?” ... I told him at least 250,000. This was on the 12th of May. Dallaire was shocked, and said,

“Come on Philippe, you are exaggerating.” No, I was not exaggerating. ... I think it was more than that, because most of the people were killed I think during the very first weeks. I think that 80 percent of the people were killed during the first month, between the 6th of April and mid-May. ...

But [Dallaire and I] had a very close relationship. We were friends, and this is one of the pains I still have in my heart. Dallaire has been and still is in bad shape. He feels guilty. He should not feel guilty. He did what he could ; he could not do much. ... He was abandoned by his own organization. This is terrible, to be abandoned by his own organization. I was always supported. It’s a big difference, a huge difference.

**Why do you think he was abandoned ?**

Because some people, the so-called “international community” in New York, decided not to give a shit about what was happening in Rwanda. Rwanda doesn’t exist. Look at the map. Who cares ? Do you think that if something similar should happen again in such a country like Rwanda, the so-called international community would act differently ? I’m not sure.

**A month into the genocide, you estimated 250,000 killed, and Dallaire said that was an exaggeration. Why do you think he believed that ?**

I think basically for lack of information. I mean, where were the U.N. in Rwanda in 1994 when the genocide started ? They were in Kigali, and that’s all. They had no information on what was happening in other places. The genocide happened everywhere. ...

About numbers, I remember a couple of funny phone calls from BBC London who made the first call around

the 20th of April asking me the same question, "What's your estimation of the number of people killed?" and I told them at least 250,000. One week later they called again and asked me, "What's your estimation today?" So I told them, "You can double it. Five hundred thousand people have been killed." One week later they made a last call about this very specific question ... and I answered, "Listen, after half a million, sir, I stopped counting." This was broadcast ... in the beginning of May. Everybody knew every day, live, what was happening in this country. You could follow that every day on TV, on radio.

**But the U.N. Security Council and even Dallaire to some extent were calling it civil war.**

In order not to use the word "genocide," yes. It's easier to use the word "civil war" legally. The Clinton administration was against the use of the word "genocide," strongly against it. ...

**And you decided to be outspoken about it.**

I had to speak, to be outspoken, in such a context. When you're seeing it every day in the streets, in your hospital, on the roads ... In such circumstances, if you don't at least speak out clearly, you are participating in the genocide. If you just shut up when you see what you see – morally, ethically you cannot shut up. It's a responsibility to speak out. It did not change anything, and it ...[did not] move the international community. I just can say that they cannot tell us or tell me that they didn't know. They were told every day what was happening there. So don't come back to me and tell me, "Sorry, we didn't know." No. Everybody knew. And if my organization, which is usually not outspoken would

have told me, "Please Philippe, don't talk so much," I would have left the organization. You cannot be silent, no. And they never told me to shut up.

**You said this is the first time the Red Cross had been able to do something in one of the genocides of the 20th century. Did you feel you were in the middle of something historic? Something of that scale?**

Yes. In the last century – as far as we know, maybe we don't know enough – it's publicly acknowledged we experienced at least four genocides. The Armenians at [the] beginning of last century. The Holocaust in the Second World War, six million Jews. In Cambodia, two million, or something like that. And Rwanda.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, which is a 140-year old organization, was not active during the Armenian genocide, and shut up during the Holocaust – everybody knew what was happening with the Jews. We knew and all the governments knew, but nobody spoke out, and as a humanitarian organization it was our moral obligation to tell publicly what everybody knew and what nobody had the courage to say. ... We were expelled from Cambodia at the beginning of the Pol Pot regime.

It was told to me by my bosses in Geneva that [Rwanda] was first time ever the International Committee of the Red Cross could do something. I think [we saved about] 65,000 lives during the genocide. ... What's 65,000 lives when one million persons were killed? Seven percent. ...

**During the genocide, you were talking to and dealing with the killers?**

All the time.

### Why ?

Simply said, the best way to save people is to talk with the people who want to kill them. You can save some people because you are lucky, and by chance there are some wounded on the side of the road, you pick them up. When we talk about not one or five cases, but thousands of people, I think that the best and the only way is to talk with the people who want to kill them. ...

### Talk about when you went to see Bagosora.

... I went almost twice, three times a week to the Ministry of Defense and I remember one day I met by chance Colonel Bagosora. ... I told him, "Colonel, do something to stop the killing. This is absurd. This is suicide." And his answer was – there are words you never forget – his answer was, "Listen, sir, if I want tomorrow I can recruit 50,000 more Interahamwe." I took him by the shirt– I'm 58 kilograms and he must be 115– I took him by the throat, looked in his eyes and told him, "You will lose the war." He didn't answer anything.

They [lost] the war, but the war, it didn't mean anything. ... Genocide is a complete negation of war. In a war you have rules, you make prisoners of war, you try to respect as far as you can the civilian population, you try to take care of the wounded. Genocide is the complete negation of these basic rules. There is not one millimeter of humanity in a genocide. Eliminate people – children, fathers, mothers, girls. With the girls it's a bit different.

Why do I say that with girls it's a bit different? I remember a story at the very end of June or very beginning of July '94, three or four days before Kigali was taken over by the RPF on the 4th of July, a small truck

came to the delegation with five or six people, Interahamwe with machine guns, hand grenades, machetes, and whatever. They told me, "We have with us a young Tutsi lady. She's a nurse and she has been with us for the last three months in case we would have been wounded. We are leaving the town now and we thought that it was more useful to bring the young Tutsi lady to your hospital than to kill her." Great. They needed more than three months to understand what Colonel Bagosora never understood.

### And that is what ?

That it's absolutely useless to kill innocent people. Strategically, tactically it's worst way to fight. It's not intelligent; it's military suicide.

### What was Bagosora like ? How important do you think he was in the planning and execution of the genocide ?

I've no proof of it, but I have a strong feeling [that] he's one of the conceivers of the genocide. ... He never told me, "Yes, I have been organizing that," but my feeling is strong, and usually my feelings are good. When I told him, "Colonel, please do something to stop the killings," and his answer is, "If I want tomorrow I can recruit 50,000 more Interahamwe," is that not a strong sign? For me, yes. I mean, he never told me, "I cannot stop the killings." ... It's semantically not very complicated to understand, no?

### How was it possible for them to recruit so many killers and get them all to do what they did ?

I don't know. I think the killers must have been [in the] hundreds of thousands. When all these Hutu refugees came back from Zaire, 150,000 people were put in jail. Today there are still 80,000 or something. I think that



there was a very strong collective pressure, and many people killed in order to show that they were on the right side, and to protect themselves. Imagine that in front of professional Interahamwe killers you say, “I’m sorry, I won’t do that.” They would kill you. ... I’ve not seen it, but I’ve been told that some Tutsis participated in the killings in order to save their own lives. It’s possible. ...

**There were some Hutus who did resist and help you.**

On the 10th or 11th of April I went to the Ministry of Defense and had a talk with Minister himself, Mr. Augustin Bizimana, whom I know quite well because I’d been in touch with him tens of times. I told him, “Minister, I don’t want to disturb you every time I need to talk to you, what I would need in order to make your life and mine easier is a liaison officer,” and the same day he appointed Colonel Francois ... a Hutu colonel affected by HIV and in the final stage – and this is maybe the main reason why he was chosen as our liaison officer.

Colonel Francois made miracles. He helped a lot to cross the checkpoints, and it was not easy. He had sometimes to be very tough with the Interahamwe. I think this guy understood that this [genocide] was a huge mistake. ... Once he took the initiative because we got information that in Butare an orphanage with Tutsi children was under enormous pressure from the Interahamwe, and some of them were killed. Colonel Francois took his car, went alone to Butare and organized the evacuation of 1,619 orphans from Butare to Burundi. He died before the end of ’94. ...

**Can you talk about the effectiveness of the U.N. during the ge-**

**nocide ?**

Despite some exceptional individual behaviors, for the U.N. it was a complete failure. From the very beginning of the genocide the U.N. was logistically and politically a phantom. ...

**“Phantom,” what do you mean by that ?**

They didn’t make any difference, because they decided not to anything. I mean, when you decide to reduce the troops from 3,000 to 400, when you don’t support your representative on the field, General Dallaire. You abandon your staff, you don’t give your staff the means to act. Lack of means, lack of political will, lack of logistical means, everything. [It was] a phantom. ...

**You had support from your organization..**

I had a lot of support. We were on the phone with Geneva every day. Just in terms of human resources, for instance ... we asked for more support, because we needed surgeons, nurses, this kind of very specialised staff, and they arrived within days. ...

Another big difference between the U.N. mission in Rwanda and the ICRC was that they were brand new there. Dallaire came in for the first evaluation mission in October, then the first troops arrived in the beginning of December, so they were all brand new without knowledge of the context. ... We had that [understanding], mainly through the local employees. We saved most if not all our local employees, but they also saved us. I was in consultation with them all the time. This was something the U.N. mission didn’t have. We knew everybody in Kigali. ...

**At night you would read poetry.**

You have to find a way to pray.

I had with me *A Season In Hell* by [Rimbaud]. It was a sort of ritual act, before having dinner every evening around seven o'clock instead of praying, which I don't really believe in. I read one poem of *A Season in Hell* to, I don't know, 20, 25 colleagues. It was incredibly silent, and they were not people especially sensible to poetry, but these poems in this context took much more strength. Every word meant something. ...

**How many people do you think you saved ?**

I think it's something between 60,000 and 70,000 people. Ten thousand people were taken care of in our hospital. Hundreds if not thousands of orphans were saved by us or because of our initiative. ... We had a makeshift hospital also in [a town] close to Gitarama, and there were altogether 35,000 people there. ... We knew that they took wounded people out of the hospital and killed them. I think hundreds of them were killed, but still it's 35,000, less some hundreds...

In [Gisuma] close to Cyangugu, they took all the Tutsis, brought them to the football stadium and started to kill them. We entered Cyangugu from Zaire with a lot of difficulties; it took us four or five days to be able to cross the border and talk to the local authorities. Most of the killings had already been done, but 9,000 people survived. ... In the north in the region under RPF control, 20,000 displaced persons went back, and they were fed by us. ... I don't know, [in total] I think 60,000 or 70,000.

**That you think you've saved ?**

Yeah. I don't know if this means something, 60,000 or 70,000, after half a million [were killed]. ... But [there were] tens of thousands of people that would

have been killed without our presence there, and this helps. I'm ashamed to say that, but it's somehow a satisfaction that Dallaire could not have, unfortunately. I think this is the reason why he is still deeply wounded while my scars are OK. I don't feel guilty. I never felt guilty. Dallaire felt guilty all the time. I'm a lucky man. It's very important not to feel guilty. Imagine you have to live thirty more years feeling guilty. This is awful. ...

**Can you talk about how your experience in Rwanda has affected you ?**

There's something which definitely has changed in my perception of things. I'm not affected any more by horrors. Horrors are meaningless, nonsense. But beautiful things are miracles. ... When you see, just very simple, children playing happily, it's wonderful. ... "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Keats wrote that. ... Beauty gives sense to everything. ...

**And even in the horror, you found beauty saving people, or seeing other people help you save people.**

Yes, this is our job, to find beauty, create beauty in the very core of horror.

I don't participate anymore in family reunions. Because of war, sometimes you have children separated from their fathers or husband and wife or whatever and sometimes people meet again. We have been able, after the genocide, to reunite thousands of children with their families. And this is to create beauty within the horror. ... [But] I cannot go [anymore]. It's too beautiful.

**Once you met somebody at a conference in Britain who said that you had saved their life. Do**

**you want to talk about that?**

I met this lady in Great Britain in 2001. I didn't recognize her but she recognized me. ... It was emotionally so strong for her and for me to meet again that after two seconds, we started to cry. But it was a cry of happiness of pure happiness. ... But it's not very healthy. We should not experience these kind of things. It's just too strong. I will never in my life go back to Rwanda. Not at all because this would remind me of awful things. I don't want to meet again with people we have saved, because it's too strong. It's unbearable. It's too beautiful.

In 1998 a colleague of mine who was just coming back from Rwanda told me, "Philippe, you should know

something. I spent six or eight months there, and I've been amazed by the quantity of children whose first name is Gaillard. 'Gaillard Habyarimana,' or whatever." Okay, thank you very much, thank you. [But] I don't want to see these children. It's not necessary. ...

When we came back from Rwanda, my wife and I had been married for seven years. We had deliberately had no children. It was so evident for her, for me, that after this experience we both wanted to create life. And it is so beautiful. [My children] will know it, they will discover it, [but] I would never explain to my son that he was a product of a genocide. That's not easy to explain.