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RWANDA: THE STATE OF RESEARCH

Lemarchand, René

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Few events in history are more subject to controversy than the mass killings commonly designated as genocide. This is hardly surprising considering the lack of anything like a consensus of scholarly opinion about the precise meaning of the term, the different interpretations of the phenomenon offered by social scientists, and the enormous emotional charge it carries. Rwanda is no exception. There are few parallels for the sheer depth of the discords and disagreements the 1994 genocide has generated among observers, survivors and perpetrators.

This is a commentary on the hurdles that stand in the way of a dispassionate discourse about its roots, the responsibilities involved, and its ultimate implications, moral and political. Some are traceable to our still inadequate knowledge of certain critical events and circumstances leading to the carnage; others to the biases and preconceptions of individual analysts, and persisting denials of the facts, including the fact of genocide; others to the uncritical parallel drawn with the Holocaust; others still to the character of the revisionist agenda offered by certain key actors, scholars and journalists. No attempt to critically review the state of research on the genocide can overlook these challenges to our understanding of one of the most monstrous crimes of the last century.

Compounding such difficulties is the enormous volume of literature it has generated. The least that can be said is that it is of uneven quality. It ranges from journalistic accounts to scholarly works, from first person testimonies by survivors to interviews with convicted killers, from travel writing to in-depth investigations by human rights associations, from official inquests by aid agencies and international commissions to UN reports. To do justice to this massive body of evidence is beyond the scope of this review. Selectivity rather than comprehensiveness has guided our choice of sources. By and large the works discussed here have been selected with an eye to the most significant and contentious issues around which revolves much of the ongoing debate about the Rwanda bloodbath.

We begin with a brief sketch of what is known and what is open to speculation about the Rwanda genocide, and move on to an overview of the most significant general works on the genocide. We then turn to the Manichean temptation discernible in the early works of journalists and scholars, and take a critical look at the relevance of the Holocaust model as a reference point for Rwanda before reviewing some of the contributions of the witness literature. Finally we shift the focus to the revisionist agenda inscribed in some of the more controversial works recently published by Rwandan actors and outside observers, and conclude with an attempt to bring out the full complexity of the Rwandan tragedy.

Facts and Speculation

While there are still a number of gaps to be filled, the basic facts that emerge from the huge corpus of literature on Rwanda are beyond dispute. These can be briefly summarized as follows:

(a) unlike other mass killings in the Great Lakes region, which can best be described as partial genocides (as in Burundi in 1972), or massacres, we are dealing here with a total genocide, resulting in the death of anywhere between 500,000 and a million civilians, overwhelmingly Tutsi, killed in approximately one hundred days, beginning on April 7, 1994 (Des Forges 1999, 15);

(b) the precipitating factor behind the slaughter occurred the day before, on April 6, at 8:25 pm, when a

SAM-16 surface -to-air-missile scored a direct hit on the plane carrying the Rwanda president, Juvénal Habyarimana, as it was about to land in Kigali (Braeckman 1994, 174-180; Prunier, 1995, 213-217);

(c) the killers were drawn primarily from the solidly Hutu youth wing of the ruling Mouvement Républicain National pour le Développement et la Démocratie (MRNDD), the so-called interahamwe (those who fight together) as well as units of the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) and the Presidential Guard; much of the mobilizing force behind the grass-roots killings came from the communal authorities (burgomasters) and local civilian defense networks put in place in 1993 (Des Forges 1999 223-231; Melvern 2004, 24-32; Prunier 1995, 239-250);

(d) the first to be killed on April 7 were all Hutu, the Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a key member of the opposition party Mouvement Démocratique Républicain(MDR), Faustin Rucogoza (MDR), Minister of Information, Frédéric Namurambaho, Minister of Agriculture, and member of the Parti Social Démocrate (PSD), and the Tutsi Minister of Public Works and Secretary General of the Liberal Party, Landoald Ndasingwa (Melvern, 149-153);

(e) while Tutsi civilians were the prime target of the génocidaires, a substantial number of Hutu affiliated to opposition parties were massacred in the south and central regions (Des Forges 1999, 555-559);

(f) despite the presence on the ground of the 2,700-strong United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR), headed by Romeo Dallaire, the latter proved utterly powerless to pre-empt the crisis, let alone prevent the killings, owing in large part to the determination of certain key members of the Security Council, notably the US, Belgium and France, to stay away from the mounting violence (Braeckman 1994, 201-220; Melvern 2000, 2004, 245-264)

(g) nearly three months after the killings got under way, and after lending considerable logistical and military support to Habyarimana s FAR, France — in what seemed like an eleventh-hour attempt to redeem itself — received the backing of the UN to establish a humanitarian zone in the southwest of the country, and on June 23 the first elements of the 2,500-strong Opération Turquoise began to take up positions in Rwanda (Prunier 1995, 281-311);

(h) with the capture of Kigali by Paul Kagame s RPF, on July 4, 1994, the killings of Tutsi finally came to a halt but not the killings of Hutu. Just as in the course of the civil war a large numbers of Hutu civilians were deliberately massacred by FPR troops a fact substantiated in the so-called Gersony report, after the UN official who investigated the killings after the defeat of the génocidaires an even greater number of Hutu lost their lives within and outside Rwanda at the hands of the FPR (Des Forges 1999, 726-34).

From the standpoint of this discussion the above summary is perhaps less significant for it tells us than for what it leaves out.

Consider some of the questions it raises: Who bears the onus of responsibility for lighting the fuse that brought down of the presidential plane? How did this critical juncture relate to what Sémelin calls le passage à l acte , the move from the will to kill to the act of killing? (Sémelin 2005) What does the massacre of Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and other cabinet members tell us about what was left of the state and its relationship to the dynamics of mass murder? Who were the organizers of the killings in the capital city and the countryside? What were the motives behind the killings? How many Hutu were killed by other Hutu, where and why? How many Hutu were killed by the FPR between the time of the invasion, on October 1st, 1990, and the fall of Kigali on July 4, 1994? How does the numbers game "i.e. the evaluation of victims on both sides of the ethnic divide — relate to the double genocide thesis? How should one assess France s role prior to and during the genocide?

Our aim here is not to offer conclusive answers to these questions some may never be known but to bring out of the extant literature the complexity of the chain of events leading to the carnage, with due attention to the different positions taken by analysts on certain key issues. The absence of a common consensus of opinion about the why and how of the Rwanda bloodbath helps explain those grey zones which so profoundly complicate our understanding of why so many were killed, in so little time, and with such devastating consequences in Rwanda and beyond.

In the Belly of the Beast

The story of Rwanda s agonies has been told many times in many forms, but nowhere more persuasively than in Alison Des Forges s landmark investigation, Leave No One To Tell the Story (1999). It remains the most wide-ranging, thoroughly researched and reliable source of information on the 1994 genocide. Trained as a historian and with impeccable credentials as a Rwanda expert, with the help of eight research assistants the author takes us into the belly of the beast. With exemplary meticulousness she delves into the historical past, lays bare the workings of the propaganda machine, the organization of the killings, the strategies of slaughter, the social structures that provided support (including the clergy); she brings out the regional dynamics at work and leaves no doubt as to the mix of obfuscation and indifference that marked the international community s response. In dealing with motivations of the killers she underscores their diversity, noting that some moved by virulent hatred, others by real fear, by ambition, by greed, by a desire to escape injury at the hands of those who demanded they participate, or by the wish to avoid fines for nonparticipation that they could not hope to pay. (De Forges 1999, 770) But she also sees the other side of the genocidal coin the violation of the cease-fire and human rights abuses, killings and other abuses committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) during and after the genocide, including the ruse of holding public meetings designed to round up and kill Hutu civilians (Des Forges 1999, 109, 707, 728). If any work on the genocide can be called definitive, this is it.

Published five years before Des Forges s inquest, Colette Braeckman s Rwanda: Histoire d un genocide (1994) is the first serious attempt to look at the 1994 butchery from a broad historical perspective. A journalist with years of experience reporting from Central Africa for Belgian newspapers, the author looks at the impact of the colonial and pre-colonial past on Hutu-Tutsi relations; she dissects the workings of the Habyarimana dictatorship, the networks built around the informal power center (the so-called akazu), the mechanics of the killing machine; she shows the significance of the regional context (most notably of how events in Burundi reverberated in Rwanda), the part played by individual actors, Hutu and Tutsi, the complicated sequence of events leading to the bloodbath. Even though the author did not have the benefit of the information yielded by subsequent research (and notwithstanding her wholly implausible account of the circumstances surrounding the crash of Habyarimana s plane) at the time her book came out it had all the qualities of a pioneering work.

The same applies to Gérard Prunier s The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide (1995), by a historian thoroughly familiar with the Great Lakes region. The book immediately attracted a wide readership in the English-speaking world, and for good reasons: well written, richly documented, historically grounded, this is the best general introduction to roots of the carnage. The most illuminating chapters deal with the circumstances leading to the civil war, the origins and organization of the RPF, the dynamics of genocidal violence, and the politics of the French intervention under the code name Operation Turquoise. As an advisor to the French government during the deployment of French troops, the author gained an insider s

view of their less than successful efforts to carve out a Safe Humanitarian Zone for civilians fleeing the slaughter, an episode he refers to as Gotterdammerung in Central Africa (chapter 8). Of the early works on the genocide this is unquestionably the richest in analytic insights and the most original in terms of the scope and quality of information.

Central to an understanding of the colonial and pre-colonial roots of the Hutu-Tutsi problem are the works of French historian Jean-Pierre Chrétien. His early essay on Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi is still one of the best introductions to issues of ethnicity in each state (Chretien, 1985). His history of The Great Lakes of Africa (2003) stands as the most illuminating discussion of the transformation of ethnic identities under colonial rule, and how this phenomenon in turn led to the emergence of an African racism (Chrétien 2003, 317). To this theme his co-authored book on Les médias du génocide (1995) makes a decisive contribution: nowhere is the relationship between the stridently racist incitements to murder conveyed by the media and the killings more persuasively argued, and more richly illustrated, not just by quotes from the press and Radio Mille Collines, but also by countless cartoons and caricatures. Unfortunately, nothing is said of the propaganda distilled through the vehicles of the pro-FPR press, such as Kanguka, Kiberinka, Burakeye Hobe, Le Flambeau. A prolific writer on Rwanda and Burundi, a collection of his early articles, of somewhat uneven quality, can be found in Le défi de l ethnisme: Rwanda et Burundi 1990-1996 (1997). A more objective treatment is that of Pierre Erny in Rwanda 1994 (1994), one of the earliest efforts to reflect critically on the events leading to the bloodbath. Published a year later, Jean-Claude Willame, Aux sources de l hécatombe rwandaise (1995), brings into focus a number of neglected themes, including what he calls the mini-genocide of 1963 — when perhaps as many as 10,000 Tutsi were massacred in the wake of an abortive Tutsi-led raid from Burundi — the 1973 flight of Tutsi residents in the wake of anti-Tutsi pogroms, and the numerous massacres committed by the Habyarimana regime in the years immediately preceding the genocide.

A groundbreaking exploration of the relationship of Rwanda s past to its post-genocidal present is Jan Vansina s Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom, which, in addition to sketching a brilliant synthesis of the Hutu-Tutsi ethnogenesis, shows that an excessive concentration of power and the alienation of the people (Vansina 2004, 203) is not a new phenomenon in Rwanda s turbulent history. When one recalls that it was under king Rwabugiri(1867-1897) that the hated corvée labor was institutionalized, and violence elevated to the status of a standard practice against domestic and external foes, is easy to see why the revisionist chapter on his tormented reign should be titled Nightmares , and why some readers might detect in this period of ceaseless internecine strife an ominous prefiguration of later tragedies. Especially suggestive in this regard is the concluding chapter, a brilliant synthesis titled History and the Present .

No attempt to grasp the historical context of genocide can ignore Catherine and David Newbury s seminal contributions. These range from the relationship of ethnicity to the politics of history , to the interplay between local and regional loyalties in pre-colonial Rwanda and Burundi, the place of the peasantry in agrarian history, and the relevance of different types of patron-client relationships to an understanding of state formation in Kinyaga (Catherine Newbury, 1988, 1998; David Newbury 2001; Catherine and David Newbury 2000). In a different vein, Manigara Balibutsa s erudite treatise on the archeology of violence in the Great Lakes is worth mentioning for its interesting forays into the field of linguistics and critical re-examination of early European sources on Rwandan history (Balibutsa 1999).

Leaving aside the historically grounded longue durée dimension, Filip Reyntjens, a Belgian jurist intimately acquainted with the politics of the Great Lakes, offers an excellent overview of the Rwandan political scene on the eve of the genocide in L Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise (1994) Not the least of its merits is to analyze the murderous game of mirrors between Rwanda and Burundi, how Hutu-Tutsi violence in one state reverberated on ethnic tensions in the other — a crucial element in Rwanda s march into the abyss.. Co-editor with Stefaan Marysse of the Great Lakes Yearbook, L annuaire des Grands

Lacs, Reyntjens has established his name as the most reliable source on post-genocide developments in Rwanda. Valuable additional information can be found in André Guichaoua s massive tome, Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda: 1993-1994 (1995). A sociologist with privileged ties to key political actors, Guichaoua has assembled 33 contributions from French, Belgian, Swiss and American scholars as well as African observers and politicians, to which has been added a thick slice of Facts and documents relating to the crises in Rwanda and Burundi. The book defies classification. Despite its hodge-podge quality, it offers a rich palette of interpretations by key politicians, journalists and NGO activists, some of whom, like Dismas Nsengiyaremye, Alphonse Marie Nkubito, James Gasana, Jacque Bihozagara, Seth Sedashonga, have played important roles at one stage or another of the Rwandan tragedy. To James Gasana, one of the contributors to Guichaoua s volume and holder of several ministerial positions, we owe one of the most original and thoughtful discussion of Rwanda s political trajectory until the genocide. As might have been expected of a former Defense Minister, there is no better introduction to the politics of the military in the months following the FPR invasion than his Rwanda: Du parti-Etat à l Etat-garnison (2002). From a broader perspective, this is a first-rate insider s account of the complex inter-party maneuverings following the transition to a multi-party system in 1991.

Major contributions have come from the field social anthropology. Though much of the field work for her classic monograph, A Hill Among a Thousand, was done before the genocide, Danielle De Lame s description of rural life in pre-genocide Rwanda is of considerable significance for anyone trying to understand how the internal tensions at work in Rwanda society including the growing polarization between the middle classes (the fourth ethnic group) and the landless peasants were manipulated into a potential for violence against both Hutu and Tutsi (De Lame 2005). Particularly arresting and innovative is her recent exploration of the carry-over of traditional norms and institutions into the context of mass murder, including Rwanda s warrior culture , the organization of militias, the obligation of vengeance directed against a muderer s lineage, and the faithfulness to a pre-Tutsi past (De Lame 2004). Johan Pottier s Re-Imagining Rwanda (2002) is a highly successful attempt at deconstructing the officially inspired narratives of the tragedy, showing how the world s media in particular, most of them echoing the RPF line, have generally conveyed a misleading picture of the state of the play in both Rwanda and neighboring Congo. Nigel Eltringham s Accounting for Horror (2004) is a ground-breaking effort to show the inadequacy of conventional modes of historical explanation. Instead of looking for absolutist narratives , we need to recognize the limitations placed on the debate about history by individual and group representations and collective memories (Eltringham 147-182). Christopher Taylor s Sacrifice as Terror (1999) looks at the genocide from a radically different angle as it tries to bring out its cultural underpinnings. Its main focus is on the symbolic meaning of practices related to the body and aimed at maintaining it or restoring it to health and integrity (Taylor, 111). Bodily fluids , he writes, such as blood, semen, breast milk and menstrual blood are a recurrent concern as is the passage of aliments through the digestive tract& In the unfolding of human and natural events, flow/blockage symbolism mediates between physiological, sociological levels of causality (ibid., 111-2). There is more to his work than an arcane inquest into the symbolic aspects of murder. Following a chilling first chapter dealing with the atrocities that he and his Rwandan wife witnessed in the early days of the carnage, the author delves at length into the myth of the Hamitic hypothesis before turning to a sustained discussion of the cosmology of terror .

It is hardly surprising that the first book-length discussions of the genocide should have been penned by French and Belgian observers. Although subsequent works in English bear many traces of their indebtedness to these early efforts, this is not to deny the quality of their contributions. In addition to those above, at least three other deserve mention: Linda Melvern s Conspiracy to Murder (2004), Peter Uvin, Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda (1998), and Mahmood Mamdani s When Victims Become Killers (2001), the first by a journalist, the last two by political scientists.

Linda Melvern s earlier work, A People Betrayed (2000), dealt specifically with the responsibility of the international community in Rwanda s agonies; her more recent book, based on testimonies to the

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and interviews with participants and survivors, is an in-depth investigation of the role played by individual actors in the genocide. By giving voice to the actors, Melvern puts a new construction on the organization of the killings: reading at times like a Who s Who of the murderers, few books can claim to provide richer insights into the psychology of the brain-trust responsible for planning the genocide. Uvin, by contrast, turns the spotlight on the impact of development aid on processes of inequality and exclusion, and ultimately on the rise of structural violence , a concept borrowed from Johan Galtung to refer to the unequal life chances, usually caused by great inequality, injustice, discrimination, and exclusion (Uvin 1998, 105). Elsewhere the author uncovers a little-known dimension of ethnicity, i.e. how colonial and post-colonial census data have misrepresented ethnic identities through arbitrary categorization, and, in one specific example (post-colonial Burundi), have contributed to dissimulate massive state-sponsored violence by falsifying population data (Uvin, 2001, 154-5).

Building on previous research (Newbury 1988; Lemarchand 1970), Mamdani s book is an attempt to rethink the concept of genocide in the light of the Rwanda tragedy. The stated objective is to remedy the three silences from which most accounts of the genocide suffer: history, agency and geography. At another level it is an effort to recast the history of Hutu-Tutsi relations by emphasizing the racialization of ethnicity under Belgian rule and the carry-over of the phenomenon into the first and second republics (he could have added the third). Although the author s unfamiliarity with the French language literature on Rwanda cruelly shows up, notably in his questionable interpretation of the Hutu revolution (Lemarchand 2003), his discussion of The Politics of Indigeneity in Uganda adds an important chapter to the story of Uganda s involvement in the FPR invasion. The critical problems facing the Banyarwanda community in exile on the eve of the 1990 invasion are nowhere more convincingly demonstrated.

The Manichean Temptation

Nowhere is the temptation to frame the Rwanda tragedy in moral absolutes more likely to get in the way of sober analysis than in the relative weight to be assigned to the two principal underlying causes of the genocide. There is, on the one hand, the gathering force of genocidal rage, fueled by incitements to murder, mobilized by militias, supervised and manipulated by Habyarimana s cronies, local officials, and army men. And there is, on the other hand, the context in which it occurred the context of a civil war triggered by the invasion of the country by some 6,000 Tutsi refugee warriors from Uganda, fighting their way into the country under the banner of the RPF, and thus threatening to reduce to naught les acquis de la révolution everything that had been accomplished since the 1959-62 Hutu revolution. As Robert Melson persuasively argued no other context is more congenial to genocide than one in which civil war appears to pose a mortal threat to the legacy of revolutionary ideals (Melson 1992).

While it is fair to say that there would have been no genocide without an infrastructure of murder, i.e. the police and the army, the paramilitaries and the interahamwe, and the likes of Colonel Bagosora the chief organizer of the killings — it is doubtful that any of the above would have had recourse to mass murder without the climate of ethnic hatreds and intense fears generated by the FPR invasion. The retributive element, to borrow Helen Fein s terminology, (Fein 1990, 86-91) is clearly central to an understanding of the roots of the carnage.

Omission of this necessary dualism can only produce an extremely lop-sided image of the dynamics of violence. This is plainly demonstrated by the one-sidedness of the early accounts of the tragedy. Partly

because of the sheer horror of the images conveyed by the media what some refer to as the CNN effect and because of the skilful management of information by Rwanda s new leaders (Gowing 1998), many of these works are oblivious of the retributive side of the story, and thus tend to reflect the official version of the facts projected by the FPR. The result has been a politically correct view of the genocide which is only now being challenged in the light of a new body of evidence (of which more later). This is not to say that the early works of journalists and scholars were necessarily inaccurate, or that the authors twisted the facts or falsified the evidence. The point, rather, is that in many instances some crucial historical facts were left out, or their significance underrated or misinterpreted. Much of the literature that appeared in the wake of the tragedy revolved around a good guys vs. bad guys dichotomy, the former globally identified with the Tutsi, the latter with the Hutu.

A prime example is Peter Gourevitch s acclaimed best seller, We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families (1998). A staff writer for the New Yorker, the author has produced a masterwork of travel writing as well as one of the most chilling accounts of the sufferings endured by genocide survivors. No other work has had a more decisive impact in shaping the image of the genocide among the English-speaking public than his. Yet, for all its undeniable literary qualities, the book is distressingly short on analysis. It says very little about the how and why of the killings. It is one thing to describe the horror, and quite another to explain it. In the words of one critic, Gourevitch demonstrates little understanding of Rwandan culture and history, treating the genocide as pre-programmed by colonialism and Hutu as inherently violent (Longman 2004, 33). Allusions to the Holocaust as a frame of reference are unconvincing. So is his breathless tribute to Paul Kagame as the hero who brought the genocide to an end (see also Gourevitch 1996). From this uncomplicated tale of woe emerges an image of the Hutu as the collective embodiment of evil. This is where his narrative carries implications that go beyond the realm of travel writing: it is not unreasonable to assume that this highly naïve and uncritical rendering of the genocide has had a powerful hold on the official thinking of US policy-makers towards the new Rwandan state. To this day the Tutsi-dominated state enjoys the unconditional support of the US government.

Among the early reports on the genocide, none matches Africa Rights, Rwanda, Death, Despair and Defiance (September 1994) for the clinical description of the atrocities inflicted upon Tutsi victims, ranging from political murders to collective massacres in churches, schools and stadiums, and the daily manhunts conducted on the hills. Significant as it is to our understanding of the sheer savagery that has accompanied the carnage, the Africa Rights report is utterly silent on the grisly crimes and torture inflicted by Tutsi soldiers on innocent Hutu civilians, some of which are by now well documented (Nduwayo 2002, 9-16; Amnesty International 1994; Des Forges 1999; Reyntjens and De Souter 1994)).

Political correctness intrudes in more subtle ways in Colette Braeckman s early works (1994, 1996), notable for the absence of references to the countless human rights violations committed by Kagame s army in the course of the civil war. Indicative of her biases is this idyllic description of Rwanda in 1996: the cities are more animated than ever, the rural areas are again under cultivation, all children are attending school, the churches are overcrowded with people, the road-menders are at work on the roads and the widows weed out the public gardens (1996, 269). Not until 2003, with the publication of Les nouveaux prédateurs: Politique des puissances en Afrique Centrale (2003) an excellent introduction to the history of the crisis in the Great Lakes — would the image of the FPR strongman emerge in a much less flattering light, as one who denies the evidence and lies while looking at you in eye (Braeckman 2003, 213), ruling over a country compared to a Potemkine village (ibid.).

Much the same bias can be detected in Chrétien s writings, only to a greater degree. The struggle between good and evil comes through with striking clarity in his Défi de l ethnisme (1997, 307-388), where a number of journalists and scholars suspected of pro-Hutu biases are duly excoriated. His pro-Tutsi sympathies transpire through most of his works dealing with recent developments in Rwanda and Burundi.

Important as they might be in other respects, his contributions are consistently marred by a highly selective sifting of the evidence. This is true of his major collaborative work, Les medias de la haine, whose reductionist bias is made plain by the author s exclusive emphasis on the perverse effects of the Hutu-controlled media as the only determinant of the bloodshed. Here Michael Mann s cautionary advice is worth bearing in mind: it is not easy to gauge the effects of mass media in the absence of detailed sociological studies. Many scholars have a tendency to exaggerate the power of this propaganda (Mann 2005, 444). Recent research by Straus also shows the limits of ideology as a motivating force (Straus 2006, chap. 6; Mann 2005, 469). By and large Chrétien makes unduly short shrift of the intense fears provoked by the FPR invasion as a motivating force behind the killings.

Much the same criticisms could be addressed to Prunier (1995), except for the fact that the second edition of his book (1997) includes an excellent additional chapter which clearly brings into focus what was missing in the first edition: a clear recognition of the onus of responsibility borne by Kagame s FPR. The tendency to exonerate the FPR of all sins is nowhere more painfully evident than in the papers presented at the Genocide: A Collective Memory conference held in Kigali in January 1995, which, in the words of the editors, attempts to record the words and opinions of individuals who experienced the genocide (John Berry and Carol Pott Berry 1999, ix). This, however, is not meant to detract from an otherwise highly illuminating collection of testimonies from a broad cross-section of Rwandan elites (journalists, human rights activists, civil servants and army men).

Pro-Hutu analysts, one might add, are no less prone to fall prey to a Manichean interpretation, as shown by Charles Onana s highly selective account of the secrets of the Rwandan genocide (2001). Stating at the outset that since numerous works have been written about the Hutu and their responsibilities in the genocide, we do not see the need for another book on the accusations leveled against them (p. 12), the author reveals few secrets and not a few biases. Many of the accusations directed at Belgium, the US and the United Nations Missions in Rwanda (UNAMIR) are unsubstantiated. Despite its impressive array of valuable statistical data, A.E. Gakusi and Frédérique Mouzer s discussion of the structural constraints and governance in Kagame s Rwanda glosses over the countless human rights violations committed under the Second Republic. (Gakusi and Mouzer, 2003). As for Pierre Péan s notoriously tendentious effort to rewrite the history of the genocide as a Tutsi-engineered plot (Péan 2005), the least that can be said is that its more positive contributions notably in the form of some highly revealing official documents about France s role during the genocide are offset by many factual inaccuracies and the author s manifest urge to settle scores with dissenting analysts.

The Limits of the Holocaust Paradigm

Unsurprisingly, the comparison between the Rwanda genocide and the Holocaust has proved hard to resist. Both are total genocides, and both are dominated by a lethal social construction of the other . French and Belgian scholars were the first to call attention to the parallel, with Jean-Pierre Chrétien speaking of tropical Nazism (1994). For Alain Destexhe the extermination of the Jews is the only precedent one can prudently evoke to understand that of the Tutsi, for Jews and Tutsi were targeted as such and for no other reason than they happened to be born Jews and Tutsi (Destexhe 1994, 14).

In recent times the Holocaust analogy has received growing attention from English-speaking scholars (Hintjens 1999; Chalk, 1999), and in 1999 the African Studies Association (ASA) organized a special

roundtable session titled The Politics of Comparison: Nazi Holocaust and Rwandan Genocide (Miles 2003, 131). The most sustained exploration of the parallel came from Marc Levene, who argued that in Rwanda as in Nazi Germany genocide was the concomitant of the crises of experienced by modernizing states. Modern genocide , he writes, is closely bound up with the efforts of nation-states to operate independently and effectively within an international nation-state system& When a regime encounters, or perceives itself to encounter serious obstacles which seem to threaten not only the achievement of this agenda but the integrity of the state itself, the potentiality for it taking it out on some scapegoat group or groups is greatly magnified. (Levene 1999, 46).

Compelling as the analogy may be in some respects (Lemarchand 2002, 501), its limitations are no less obvious. The contextual differences cannot be ignored: Jews did not invade Germany with the massive military and logistical support of a neighboring state; nor did they once rule Germany as the political instrument of an absolute monarchy; nor were they identified with a ruling ethnocracy; nor did Jewish elements commit a partial genocide of non-Jews in a neighboring state 22 years before the Holocaust. Again, Jews did not stand accused of murdering the head of state of a neighboring state (ibid. 500-1). Furthermore, whereas the Holocaust is the classic example of an ideological genocide& the Rwanda genocide is better seen as a by-product of the mortal threats posed to the Hutu-dominated state by the RPF (ibid.). In one of the papers presented at the 1999 ASA conference Catherine and David Newbury correctly underscored the risks involved in looking at Rwanda through the lens of the Holocaust: such a view is ahistorical , they write, noting the differences in the context and the sequence of events leading to the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda ; furthermore, in contrast to the Holocaust, the Rwanda genocide is better understood as a case of retributive genocide (Catherine and David Newbury, 2003, 140-1). Drawing from a variety of materials, including interviews with exiles, Eltringham likewise offers particularly thoughtful critique of the Holocaust template (Eltringham 2004, 51-58).

Regardless of whether one can speak of a Great Lakes version of the Final Solution (Miles 2003, 134), this is indeed how many Tutsi survivors and exiles have internalized the agonies of their kinsmen (Sehene 1999, 120). But as Eltringham shows, on that score as on many others there is no unanimity among exiles; possibly as many among Tutsi and Hutu would endorse the analogy as would challenge it (Eltringham 2004, 51-54). Interestingly, among the former, Sehene does not hesitate to quote from Daniel Goldhagen to make the point that all Hutu, or at least a very large number, whether they took part in the massacres or not, were convinced that the Tutsi deserved to die (Sehene 1999, 120). Whether informed by Holocaust references or not, however, the tendency of Rwandan government officials to grossly overestimate the number of Hutu perpetrators is well established (Straus 2004, 95, note 1), and stands as a major obstacle to reconciliation.

The Witness Literature

A wealth of revelatory insights can be gleaned from the growing body of witness literature by Hutu and Tutsi survivors, as well as from the testimonies gathered by outside observers. In this latter category pride of place must be given to Scott Straus s invaluable interviews with convicted prison inmates in Kigali and several provincial towns. The accompanying photos by Robert Lyons provide a chilling visual counterpoint to the text (Straus 2006). What makes this contribution unlike any other is the resonance of authenticity conveyed by the interviews, which, in his words, combined with the extraordinary images of inmates, offer a largely unmitigated and intimate view of the Rwandan genocide (ibid., 14). Though lacking the powerful

rawness of Straus s narratives, Jean Hatzfeld s Une saison de machettes (2003) captures the cold cynicism as well as the terrifying ordinariness of the Hutu killers. Just as its earlier Dans le nu de la vie (2000) revealed the agonies of the victims, machete season brings us face to face with the inner workings of the killers motivations, reminiscent of Arendt s phrase about the banality of evil .

The witness literature can be conveniently divided into two kinds of narratives — by Tutsi survivors of the genocide, and by Hutu who survived the manhunt conducted by units of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) in eastern Congo after the destruction of the refugee camps. Among the latter, Béatrice Umutesi s recently translated narrative, Fuir ou Mourir au Zaire: Le vécu d une réfugiée rwandaise, is by far the most compelling. The scenes of apocalypse she describes are no less emotionally wrenching as the images of murder witnessed by Tutsi survivors. Hers is the voice of hundreds of thousands who never lived to tell their story of the countless men, women and children who died of hunger, disease and sheer exhaustion in a murderous game of hide-and-seek with advancing rebel units; of the untold numbers trapped at he Tingi-Tingui death camp (Lemarchand 2006, 94). The hell of Tingui-Tingui figures prominently in Maurice Niwese s moving testimony, Le peuple rwandais un pied dans la tombe :Récit d un réfugié étudiant, as well as many other localities evocative of the refugees agonies in their murderous game of hide-and-seek with the APR. His book is also a remarkably lucid commentary on the social context of Rwanda in the early 1990s, on the ambivalent relationship of ethnicity to murder, on the involvement of school drop outs in the killings. As former president of the Association Générale des Etudiants de l Université Nationale du Rwanda (AGENEUR) the author is particularly well placed to analyze the trend towards radicalisation among university students, and how off-campus extremists were able to make political capital out of this situation. This is only one of the many illuminating insights that make his book worth reading. No less important as a first-person account of the refugees harrowing Odyssey is Philippe Mpayimana, Réfugiés rwandais: Entre marteau et enclume. Récit du calvaire au Zaire, 1996-1997, by a former radio journalist for the Bukavu-based Agatashya station. To this must be added Benoit Rugumaho, L hécatombe des réfugiés rwandais dans l ex-Zaire: Témoignage d un survivant. All of these add up to a devastating commentary on the conspiracy of silence surrounding one of the biggest ethnic cleansing operations that followed in the wake of the genocide.

Among Tutsi survivors of the bloodbath Yolande Mukagasana was the first to tell the story of her excruciating experiences while trying to escape death, of how her husband and three children were murdered, the first before her own eyes, and how in the end she owed her survival to the reluctant protection of a Hutu colonel of the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR): La mort ne veut pas de moi , co-authored with Patrick May, is more than a tale of woe; it also tells us a great deal about the way ethnicity can be manipulated, both as an incitement and a deterrent to murder. In Les blessures du silence, in collaboration with the photographer Alain Kazienierakis, she returns to Rwanda to confront the killers, including those responsible for the death of her children. In a more explicitly political vein Venuste Kayimahe reflects on the collusion between the French government and its Rwandan ally, France s betrayal during the genocide, and the dramatic circumstances of his flight into exile. His France-Rwanda. Les coulisses d un génocide. Témoignage d un rescapé (2002), based in part on his own experiences while working for the French Cultural center in Kigali, is a scathing indictment of France s indifference to the fate of those who were left behind during the cut and run phase of the genocide. One of the most arresting and unbiased of such testimonies, by a survivor on mixed origins, is Edouard Kabagema s Carnage d une nation: Genocide et massacres au Rwanda, 1994 (2001). His message comes clear and loud in the first pages: Not only have I seen the genocide of Tutsi perpetrated by their neighbors and their huts going up in flames& I also saw many Hutu using a thousand tricks to save their Tutsi neighbors& and I saw FPR rebels engaging in a selective and then a large-scale massacre of Hutu, to avenge their own people and consolidate their grip on the country (Kabagema 2001, 5). Leonard Nduwayo s Giti et le génocide rwandais is a captivating and entirely credible account of why the Giti commune was spared the agonies of virtually every other locality, making it a commune d exception and why the subsequent bloodshed was largely the work of the RPA (Nduwayo 2002). The pertinence of this witness literature to an understanding of

mourning and memory in contemporary Rwanda is the subject of Catherine Coquio s excellent contribution on the theme of reality and the narratives (Coquio 2004).

The Revisionist Agenda

Revisionism covers a wide gamut, from the outrageous to the plausible. To this day some Hutu extremists stubbornly insist that no genocide ever occurred, only a spontaneous outburst of violence in reaction to the threats posed by the FPR (Braeckman 1994; Lanotte 2006, 300-301). Untypical though it is, the case of Antoine Nyetera, a Tutsi claiming royal origins, is worth mentioning: on the occasion of a colloquium held in the French Senate on April 4, 2002, Nyetera flatly stated that although massacres happened, there was no genocide , a statement echoed on the same occasion by none other than the former UN Representative in Rwanda, Roger Booboh, who volunteered the opinion that to claim that a genocide occurred is closer to the politics of surrealism than to the truth (quoted in Gauthier 2002, and Lemarchand 2002, 561). If anything can be termed surreal it is the calculated denial of the massive evidence supplied through countless testimonies and eyewitness accounts.

The numbers game: How many victims? How many perpetrators?

On both counts the answers are anything but clear. As has been noted, citing numbers is a widely used rhetorical device. Since accurate head counts could not be taken in most cases, none of the contradictory numbers that have been offered concerning victims of massacres (including the genocide) or of refugees fleeing from or returning to Rwanda and Burundi are substantiated (Vansina 1998, 38). Nonetheless, whether dealing with victims or killers, not all estimates are arbitrary.

Official statistics regarding the number of Tutsi victims are notoriously unreliable and predictably at variance with the estimates cited by social scientists. Based on demographic data of a total of Tutsi population of 657,000 on the eve of the genocide, Des Forges, after subtracting from that figure some 150,000 Tutsi survivors, arrives at a total of 507,000 Tutsi killed, or 77 per cent of the total population registered as Tutsi. But she goes on to note, deliberate misrepresentation of ethnicity complicates how many were actually Tutsi (ibid., loc. cit). Using data from the UNDP and HCR Filip Reyntjens reaches the figure of 600,000 Tutsi killed (Reyntjens 1997, 182). In view of the total number of human lives lost approximately 1.1 million he suggests a total of 500,000 Hutu killed. Compared to such careful estimates the totally improbable figure of 280,000 cited by Pierre Pean carries little conviction. The global figure of 1,074,017 dead cited by the Rwanda government, though too precise to inspire confidence, conveys a realistic order of magnitude, but there are reasons to question whether 93.67 per cent of these can be identified as Tutsi (Republic of Rwanda, Minister of Local Administration, 2002).

Even more controversial is the number of Hutu who participated in the slaughter. Mamdani recalls how from one year to the next Rwandan officials ratcheted up the level of Hutu participation, from three to

four million in 1995, to four to five million in 1997 (Mamdani 2001, 266). Christian Scherrer for his part suggests the possibility of an even higher percentage, i.e. 40-66 per cent of male Hutu farmers, 60-80 per cent of the higher professions, and almost 100 per cent of Rwanda s civil servants (Scherrer 2002, 115), but as Straus points out, no substantiation is offered for such claims (Straus 2004, 96, note 2). In an impressive piece of research based on field work and interviews with perpetrators and survivors, Straus reaches the more plausible estimate of between 175,000 and 210,000 active participants (ibid. 93). He goes on to raise the question of the perpetrators profile, and makes the arresting argument that most of the killing (75 per cent of all genocide deaths) was done by perhaps 10 per cent of a total of roughly 200,000 genocidaires, i.e. soldiers, paramilitaries, and extremely zealous killers , while the remaining 90 per cent, made up of non-hardcore civilians , might account for no more than 25 per cent of the killings (ibid., 95). In his landmark book on the Rwanda genocide the author comes up with an estimate of a number of perpetrators equal to 7 to 8 percent of the adult Hutu population and 14 to 17 per cent of the adult male Hutu population at the time of the genocide. (Straus 2006, 118).

Such findings are important not only because they run counter to the officially-sanctioned conventional wisdom of the Rwandan government, and much of the unwisdom of foreign observers, but because they demonstrate how erroneous and counter-productive is the collective guilt argument when it comes to exploring ways of bringing about national reconciliation.

The Responsibility of the FPR

Widely praised at first for stopping the genocide, the virtuous image projected by the FPR is now being seriously dented: there is a growing body of evidence pointing to its involvement in war crimes and crimes against humanity in eastern Congo, for its alleged participation in the military operation that brought down Habyarimana s plane, and more generally for its responsibility in the 1994 genocide.

In a provocatively titled article published in 2004 Provoking genocide: A revised history of the Rwanda Patriotic Front Alan Kuperman squarely blamed the RPFFPR for creating the conditions that led to genocide: with the support of the international community , he writes, the RPFPFR threatened Rwanda s Hutu regime to such an extent that it retaliated with genocide (Kuperman 2004, 61). Based on open-ended interviews with several top-ranking civil servants and FPR officers, the author s thesis is straightforward: The Tutsi rebels expected their challenge to provoke genocidal retaliation but viewed this as an acceptable cost of achieving their goal of attaining power in Rwanda (ibid., 79). He fully endorses Des Forges s contention that all five major outbursts of anti-Tutsi violence from 1990 to 1993 were launched in reaction to challenges that threatened Habyarimana s control (Des Forges 1999, 87-88), and goes on to identify the retaliatory massacres triggered by RPF challenges (Kuperman, 80). The pattern of challenge and response analyzed by Kuperman points to a key aspect of the dynamics of violence preceding the genocide. Much more could have been said, however, about the threats posed to the FPR and Tutsi civilians by Hutu extremists, or for that matter about the possible involvement of the FPR in the crash of April 6, 1994, the subject of Filip Reyntjens s important re-examination of the evidence (Reyntjens 1995).

This is where Abdul Ruzibiza s devastating testimony breaks new ground (Ruzibiza 2005). A former captain in Kagame s army, member of the crack unit known as the Network Commando and assigned to the Department of Military Intelligence (DMI), the author was directly involved in the operations leading to the shooting down of Habyarimana s plane on April 6, 1994. The careful marshalling of the evidence, the

remarkably precise information concerning who did what, where, and when, the author s familiarity with the operational code of the RPFFPR, leave few doubts in the reader s mind about Kagame s responsibility in triggering the event that led to the bloodshed. The narrative s dispassionate, factual tone, only adds to its credibility. While there is evidence that the author harbored deep grudges against Kagame for doing little to save his family from the clutches of the genocidaires, this is hardly enough to call his testimony into question. All the more so given that it substantiates the findings of the French investigating magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguière, as disclosed by Stephen Smith (Smith 1994) and corroborates the views of several other defectors from the RPA. Claudine Vidal s preface to the book, along with André Guichaoua s post-script provide a fascinating commentary on the author s background, and how they came in contact with him.

Ruzibiza s testimony refutes the notion that behind the shooting down of the plane lies a plot by Hutu hard-liners to rid themselves of the all-too-liberal Habyarimana the pinning responsibility on the so-called akazu and brings to light a massive body of circumstancial evidence concerning the crimes committed by the FPR in the course of the civil war. These had already been richly documented by F. Reyntjens and S. Desouter in their Working Paper, drawing attention to the thousands of civilians killed by the FPR after its violation of the cease-fire on February 8, 1993 (Desouter and Reyntjens 1995). Des Forges likewise makes reference to the findings of the UNHCR official Robert Gersony to the effect that during the months from April to August the RPF had killed between 25,000 and 45,000 persons, between 5,000 and 10,000 persons each month from April through July and 5,000 for the month of August (Des Forges 1999, 728). Without trying to downplay the atrocities committed by the interahamwe, Ruzibiza states that after April 6 Kagame had planned the massive elimination of Hutu in the regions under control of the FPR , and that after the fall of Byumba the APR has systematically killed the civilian population, irrespective of age or sex (Ruzibiza 2005, 272), adding that there was a will to exterminate the Hutu as a group (ibid.). He goes on to describe the wholesale extermination of Hutu populations in places like Kageyo, Meshero, Mukarange, the regions of Gokoro and Kabuga, the commune of Bicumbi where at least 3,000 persons were killed under the supervision of the High Command Unit, Kagame s personal guard, at the request of Kagame himself (ibid. 280).

Ruzibiza s record while serving in the Network Commando is somewhat spotty. As reported by Vidal, it includes a two-year prison sentence (May 2, 1997-June 5 1999) for the alleged mishandling of funds set aside for the payment of officers salaries (Ruzibiza, 2005, 48, note 1). We are told that in October 1999 he rejoined the RPA to participate in the invasion of ex-Zaire , and that after a training stage as company commander he felt threatened and fled to Uganda on February 3, 2001. (ibid., 49). Whether these facts lessen the credibility of his testimony is open to debate. The evidence at any rate is too overwhelming to be dismissed out of hand.

The double genocide thesis

In view of the litany of atrocities attributed to the RPA, it becomes tempting to subscribe to the double genocide thesis. The argument that the genocide of the Tutsi finds its counterpart in the genocide of the Hutu by the RPFFPR was first articulated by Hutu Power extremists before it became the stock in trade of the Internationale démocrate chrétienne (Saur 1998, 103-106). It gained further publicity when the same argument was made by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Alain Juppé in June 1994, and by Président Francois Mitterrand a month later in an interview to the south-african daily, The Star, both insisting on

pluralizing the G-word (Lanotte 2006, 302). The double genocide argument is also explicitly set forth by Ruzibiza (Ruzibiza 2005, 328-330). If we define genocide in accordance with the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, he writes, as the intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group& the APR has committed a genocide against the Hutu . The massacres perpetrated by the APR were always planned , he adds; we are not dealing with acts of vengeance nor accidental facts as some would claim (ibid. 335). Such being the case it is legitimate to view both Hutu and Tutsi as victims of genocide.

Much the same argument is endorsed by the investigative reporter Pierre Péan, who writes that in the ultimate phase of his conquest strategy Kagame planned the downing of the plane, and therefore also planned its direct consequence: the genocide of the Tutsi perpetrated as reprisal (Péan 2005, 19). By drastically downsizing of the number of Tutsi victims, he suggests that, if anything, Kagame is guilty of an even worse genocide. Although the book leans heavily on Ruzibiza s testimony, it is radically different in tone and substance. Where Ruzibiza is coldly descriptive and factual, Péan s style is that of a pamphleteer, in turn accusatory and sarcastic; where the first attempts to reconstruct a series events to which he was witness, the other uses the Rwanda tragedy as a pretext to settle personal scores. Woe unto those observers, journalists, scholars (e.g. Marie-France Cros, Colette Braeckman, Jean-Pierre Chrétien) and NGOs (e.g. Action Survie) whose views and actions are at odds with his own version of the truth. The polemical tone of his strictures is sometimes akin to the worst kind of yellow journalism. His characterization of Kagame is not untypical: A Fuhrer who ended up being director of Yad Vachem, the Shoa museum& From the top of his mountain of bones, here he is dispensing verdicts and morality lessons to the entire planet (ibid. 20).

What his book and Ruzibiza s have in common is their unambiguous adherence to the notion of a genocide of Hutu every bit as horrendous as that committed against the Tutsi. Why has this situation remained unacknowledged? asks Ruzibiza (ibid. 347). The short answer is that it fails to convince. More specifically, and notwithstanding statements to the contrary, the fact is that the scale of the massacres of Tutsi civilians far exceeds that of the killings of Hutu in Rwanda at the hands of the ARP; furthermore, the sustained coverage given to the genocide of Tutsi in the media has all but eclipsed the massacre of Hutu by the APR; finally, some of the worst atrocities committed by the APR occurred not in Rwanda but in eastern Congo (French, 2004, 125-149). That such atrocities could conceivably described as acts of genocide was noted by the June 1998 UN investigative commission: The killings (in eastern Congo)& constitute crimes against humanity, just as the denial of humanitarian assistance to Hutu refugees. The members of the team feel that certain types of murder could constitute acts of genocide, depending on the intention of the perpetrators, and request that such crimes and their motives become the object of further investigation (UN, 1998). Thus if applied to Rwanda, the double genocide thesis is indeed questionable, it appears nearer the mark when one takes into account the atrocities committed in eastern Congo. A radically different interpretation is set forth by Howard Adelman in his discussion of the use and abuse of refugees in Zaire , which dismisses NGO reports about the human rights violations that accompanied the destruction of refugee camps in the Kivu in October 1996 as a case of humanitarian hysteria , and argues — against all evidence — that the bulk of the refugees were in fact genocidal killers (Adelman 2003, 120).

The Role of France

Radically different assessments have been made of the role of France during and after the genocide. While some would not hesitate to assign a large part of responsibility for the slaughter to France s massive military, logistical and financial support to the Habyarimana government, others would seriously question

this judgment.

Much of the confusion surrounding French policies in Rwanda relates to the different phases and modalities of France s intervention. Code-named respectively Opération Noroit, Amaryllis and Turquoise, the first, launched in 1990, was meant to stop the FPR advance; the second in April 1994 was aimed primarily at saving the lives of French citizens; the third, in July 1994, involved both political and humanitarian objectives. As shown by Olivier Lanotte in his magisterial thesis, each must be seen in the overall context in which it occurred, and in the light of the forces at work in the French domestic arena as well as the international scene (Lanotte 2006). Although France s interventions have consistently been justified through a discourse of moral legitimation aimed at projecting an image of selfless commitment to the highest moral values (Ambrosetti 2000, 87-119), Lanotte identifies a more complex mix of motives, ranging from security interests and the need to live up to its reputation as a guarantor of stability to the conditioning influence of the Fachoda prism and the exigencies of ethnic clientelism. In what is perhaps the most original part of his discussion, he also draws attention to the discords among French decision-makers, and the efforts made by Mitterrand to counter Turquoise s strictly humanitarian objectives by developing an alternate plan (plan bis in Lanotte s terms) designed to stem the advance of the FPR as the first step towards a resumption of negotiations (Lanotte 2006, 376-380).

A major source of information, used extensively by Lanotte, is the multi-volume inquest conducted by the French Mission d information parlementaire in 1998, headed by Paul Quilès. While the main thrust of the final report exonerates France of all wrongdoing, it freely admits the government s shortsightedness in dealing with the Habyarimana government, its erroneous reading the military capacities of the FAR (Assemblée Nationale, Final Report, 1998), and disagreements among decision-makers. But the most interesting part of the evidence unearthed by the mission is found in the hearings or auditions which include the verbatim transcripts of the testimonies of experts and government officials (Assemblée Nationale, Enquete, tome 3, vol. 1 and 2, 1998). The French mission offers an interesting contrast with the Commission d enquete parlementaire appointed a year earlier by the Belgian Senate. Whereas the former s primary objective was to inform , its Belgian counterpart had as its mandate to investigate, to question, to cross-examine, to go to the bottom of the issues, and in so doing to shed light on Belgium s role in Rwanda (Willame, 1999). The selectiveness and ambiguity of the information disclosed by the French mission is one reason why France s role still remains a matter of considerable controversy.

The France-as-villain argument has been made a number of times by many competent observers (Des Forges 1999, 654-690; Melvern, 2000; Prunier, 1995, 281-311; Chrétien 1997, 123-144), but nowhere more vehemently than by Le Figaro s correspondent in Rwanda, Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, in L Inavouable: La France au Rwanda, a blistering indictment of the attitude of high-ranking French officials before, during and after the genocide (Saint-Exupéry, 2004). France s obsession with Francophonie and its corresponding distrust of Anglophone rebels, its unswerving military and financial support to the genocidal government, the extreme coziness of its relationship with key members of the presidential family, including those directly involved in the killings, the many shortcomings of Opération Turquoise — intended to save Tutsi lives but in fact deeply flawed by incompetence (Prunier 1995) all of these and more are part of the broadside directed by the author to his imagined interlocutor, Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, in response to the latter s reference to les génocides on Radio France Internationale in September 2003 (ibid. 14). There is little that is new in L Inavouable, and much that could have been added.

The information carved by Péan from the archives of the French presidency offers a partial corrective to Saint-Exupery s vituperations. For the author of Noires fureurs, blancs menteurs France s record needs to be set straight: Turquoise s aim was primarily humanitarian, not a thinly veiled attempt to throw its weight behind the new Hutu government; at no time did France provide military training to Hutu militias; France s intervention saved thousands of human lives, including 1,220 Tutsi in Bisesero (Péan, 457); in short, there is no basis for the accusations leveled by Saint-Exupery. The most valuable pieces of information in the

book are found in the unpublished materials reproduced in the annexes, ranging from confidential cables, notes and reports to verbatim proceedings of ministerial meetings chaired by Mitterrand. Once this is said, Péan s gift for mixing fact and fiction such as accusing Canadian Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire, Head of the UNAMIR, of being sold to the US makes it unlikely that his book will find a receptive audience among scholars and policy-makers. Which is unfortunate, for amid the polemics and settling of scores the discerning reader can find some rare nuggets.

New Research Dimensions

Among other attempts to shed new light on the genocide, the works of Timothy Longman, Scott Straus and André Guichaoua draw attention to a range of significant new breakthroughs. While drawing from different sources and methodologies, together they add immeasurably to our understanding of the Rwanda bloodbath.

The Role of the Church

In Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda Longman seeks to revoke a major paradox: how could it be that in one of the most Christianized countries in the continent Church buildings became the primary sites of mass killings, and Christians, including elements of the clergy, among the main participants in such killings?

Informed by an excellent grasp of the literature on civil society organizations, and extensive fieldwork in the early and mid-1990s, Longman s argument rests on the premise that Christian churches, whether Catholic or Protestant, were intimately connected to, and supportive of the ruling elites. Furthermore, unlike what can be seen in the case of Armenian and Bosnian genocides, religious affiliation is of no help in discriminating between victims and perpetrators. Nor is civil society necessarily free of interference by the state. In Rwanda, we are told, churches have a major trait in common with the civil society described by Gramsci: they are sites of class conflict . By the time the genocide began, the majority of church leaders had already clearly associated themselves with Hutu ethno-nationalism. They had made their support for the regime clear, and they had offered no condemnation of previous attacks on Tutsi (Longman 2010, 26). Notwithstanding this close identification of church and state, traceable to the strategy employed by the White Fathers to facilitate the recruitment of converts, Longman is keenly aware of the danger involved in hard and fast generalizations. He shows how the two Presbyterian parishes selected as case studies played radically different roles during the killings: in one case (Kirinda) church leaders were generally supportive of the genocide, in the other (Biguhu), although the Tutsi in the community were killed, the church presented a hindrance to genocide and was itself targeted (p. 29). Behind these contrasting patterns lies more than a doctrinal opposition between Catholicism and Protestantism; within the same denomination ideological and theological differences emerge as critical factors in explaining the role of Christian churches.

In setting forth his argument Longman takes pain to place his case studies in the broader historical context of the genocide; he expands at length on the role of Rwanda s churches as inherently political organizations, and shows the ambivalent relationship between religion and genocide. His book stands as a decisive contribution to our understanding of the multiple strands that make up the social tapestry of mass murder.

The Local Dynamics of Mass Murder

Scott Straus s The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda must be seen as a landmark in the social science scholarship on Rwanda. His argument revolves around the mutually reinforcing interactions between the racial myths surrounding issues of ethnicity, the role of the state as an instrument of power, and the civil war as a key contextual variable. The double entendre quality of order appears deliberate: genocide as involving orders from above, but also a certain logic. Obeying orders is not to be confused with blind obedience; it is better understood as a rational choice based on the risks involved in refusing to comply with the hard liners incitements to violence. What the evidence suggests , he writes, is that acute insecurity and orders from above ignited a categorical logic of race and ethnicity& neighbors became enemies in war and under the authorities direction (p. 173). He shows how the collective fears born of the civil war, reached a new pitch of intensity with the crash of Habyalimana s plane, thus opening a space of opportunity for power struggles at the local level, while drastically transforming perceptions of the other .

The transition from civil war to genocide is indeed inseparable from what must be seen as the tipping point in the process of escalation: the shooting down of Habyarimana s plane. One of the striking conclusions to emerge from Straus s interviews with convicted killers is their near unanimous perception of that event as the moment when Tutsi are globally defined as the enemy: I understood that the Tutsi was the enemy because the president had died & If (the RPF) had not killed the president there would have been no killing & The origin of this is the death of Habyarimana & (Straus 2006a, 39, 40, 46). Although radicalization and violence had been building up long before, with the crash of the presidential plane a critical threshold was crossed that marked the shift to genocide. In the constellation of factors behind le passage à l acte (Sémelin 2005), this is the one that most starkly framed the logic of the security dilemma : either we ll kill them first, or else we ll be killed

On the basis on open-ended interviews with local respondents and prison inmates Straus pieces together a captivating narrative of the local struggles that presided over the capture of power at the communal level. In one of his most illuminating chapters the author turns the spotlight on local dynamics and shows why, so far from being a sudden, uniformly orchestrated butchery, the genocide is best understood as the outcome of a play for power among Hutu (p. 65). Out of the deadly confrontations between moderates and extremists a pattern emerges, where violence spread as a cascade of tipping points, and each tipping point was the outcome of local, intra-ethnic contests for dominance (p. 93). On the basis of data drawn from five communes (Gafunzo, Kayove, Kanzense, Musambira and Giti), the author identifies the processes through which genocidal violence penetrated communal arenas: mobilization from above by civilian authorities, intra-communal challenge to existing authorities by subordinates, military mobilization of civilian authorities and local elites, and invasion from outside the commune either to remove or pressure recalcitrant officials. (p. 66). Seen through the prism of these intra-mural struggles the Rwanda genocide thus unfolds as a deadly competition for power among Hutu, rather than as a straightforward Hutu-Tutsi confrontation. Much the same conclusion emerges from his discussion of the genocidaires and their

motivations: from all the evidence intra-Hutu pressures and out-group fear or revenge were the major variables, with radio incitements to commit murder, the benefits of looting, and ethnic enmities assuming secondary significance. With exemplary methodological sophistication, ranging from regression analyses to triangulation, and lengthy citations from his interviews, the author conclusively demonstrates the central role played by intra-Hutu threats in the spectrum of motivations behind the killings.

Many of the theories spawned by the Rwanda case end up demolished, casualties of Straus s relentless probe into the dynamics of violence. One after another, the author refutes (or seriously qualifies) the notion of a planned total genocide, the myth of long-standing ethnic hatreds, the contention that the ideology of genocide propagated by the media lies at the heart of the killings, the cliché phrase of a culture of obedience. A more sustained discussion of these and other arguments lies beyond the scope of this review. Suffice it to note that while opening up new critical perspectives on the Rwanda genocide, on some specific points questions arise. This is particularly true of the chapter on Rwanda s Leviathan, which brings out the role of the state in the killings. Of the historic centrality of the Rwandan state system, and its enduring relevance through the colonial and post-colonial period, there can be no doubt. Whether the genocide can be seen as conclusive proof the efficacy of the strong state syndrome is debatable, however. Indeed much of the evidence set forth by the author in his painstaking analysis of the challenges faced by hard-liners at the local level suggests a rather weaker state than some might imagine. In the days immediately following the crash of the presidential plane the Rwandan Leviathan was effectively shot to bits, opening a space of opportunity occupied by non-state actors. True, in matter of days, an interim government came into being, which proceeded to re-appropriate what was left of the lame Leviathan; but surely this new state system, propped up by gangs of killers and army men, was a far cry from the republican mwamiships of Kayibanda and Habyalimana.

The book, however, is surprisingly thin on references to the plethora of works by Rwandans ranging from eyewitness accounts to court testimonies and first person narratives. Admittedly, this literature is of uneven quality, but even where the objectivity of the author may well be questioned it is illustrative of how the experience of genocide has been perceived and internalized by victims and actors. A particularly unfortunate omission, given the author s special attention to the case of Giti the only commune where genocide did not happen is Léonard Nduwayo s account (Nduwayo 2002), which offers a strikingly different interpretation of the Giti exception: for Nduwayo, a native of Giti, the absence of violence there is traceable to the specificity of the commune s socio-historical context, and therefore has little to do with the timely arrival of the FPR, as Straus argues. If anything, says Nduwayo, the worst killings were committed after the arrival of the FPR, mostly in the form of revenge killings. The case of Giti remains something of an enigma.

Again, despite his efforts to lay bare the killers social background characteristics and motivations, the author has relatively little to say about the individual profiles of the murderous big men who set in motion the wheels of the killing machine, their connections to the militias and communal authorities. Repeated references to faceless hardliners (the term appears again and again like a leitmotiv in the conclusion) prompts further questions about their social identities, resource-base, mobilizing strategies, local and regional ties: while there is little question about the central role played by the Bagosoras, Nindoreras, and Ngirumpatses, to cite but the most notorious, in orchestrating the carnage, little is said of the networks through which collective violence became operational at the communal and prefectoral level. This is where Guichaoua s anatomy of mass murder in Butare fills some important gaps in the Strausian frame of analysis.

Struggles for Power at the Top

The closest we come to an understanding of how local nets linked up with the bosses in charge of running the killing machine is found in Guichaoua s Rwanda 1994: Les politiques du génocide à Butare, a painstaking analysis of how the genocide came into effect in the southern prefecture of Butare despite considerable initial resistance (Guichaoua 2005). Central to his analysis is the detailed description of the political trajectories of certain key local actors, how they were able to establish close personal links among themselves, and with armed networks, the latter ranging from armed refugees from Burundi to presidential guards, gendarmes and party militias. He shows how the leading actors involved in the killings (including the omnipresent Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and Callixte Kalimanzira) were able to overcome the resistance of the Tutsi prefect by mobilizing radical support groups through patron-client ties running from the capital city to Butare and its environs. The result is a remarkably instructive case study of the politics of genocide at the prefectoral level.

Guichaoua s conclusion is entirely consistent with the pattern described by Straus in his discussion of how outside intervention helped neutralize local recalcitrance, but it paints a much fuller picture of the mobilization strategies employed by certain key personalities to transform the territorial administration into obedient clienteles of the killers. The wealth of empirical data unearthed by Guichaoua thus provides a crucially important addendum to Straus s chapter on local dynamics .

The role of agency in the genocide is the subject of his more recent but equally impressive work, Rwanda: De la guerre au genocide, les politiques criminelles au Rwanda (1990-1994), a heavy tome (621 pages) that calls into question many of the assumptions underlying the extant literature on the genocide, including the notion of a long-standing plan to annihilate the Tutsi population. His argument draws heavily from the documents and testimonies presented before the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda (ICTR), and interviews with key actors. Furthermore, the author brings to his subject the benefit of years of observation of the politics of the Great Lakes region as well as his experience on the ground on the fateful date of April 6 1994. His book is a wake-up call to take a fresh look at the events leading to the genocide.

In contrast with most other works on the subject the author goes to great lengths to analyze the internal discords and rivalries that accompanied to the decision to engage in a total genocide. He distinguishes among the different phases leading to the ultimate catastrophe, beginning with politicide as the preface to genocide, i.e. the killing of opposition government officials and civil servants by elements of the presidential guard, including the prime minister; this first phase was immediately followed by the informal meeting of the army high command, the setting up of a military crisis committee, and the appointment of an interim government. Through each phase massacres of Tutsi civilians went on, with the militias doing all the work . Not until April 12, when the interim government moved to Gitarama, did the genocide option win the day against the pacification policy advocated by the interim authorities. What clinched this decision was the ability of a small group of extremists to gain full control over the militias and the army. Directly involved in this final solution strategy were Joseph Nzirorera and Mathieu Ngirumpatse, respectively national secretary and president of the ruling party, along with Theoneste Bagosora, chef de cabinet in the Ministry of Defense. As the author convincingly demonstrates, among the many bearing responsibility for the extermination of over half a million Tutsi, those three deserve pride of place.

What the book demonstrates is not the absence of planning behind the killings, but the somewhat improvised, belated attempt at planning made by a handful of actors to organize a final solution, against the consensus of the pro-pacification moderates. The Rwanda genocide thus emerges as a process involving a convergence of factors and circumstances, but whose outcome was by no means foreordained by the existence of a long-standing conspiracy to kill all the Tutsi. What comes into focus out of the welter of

personalities, institutions, factions, bloody encounters and settlings of accounts painstakingly described by the author is not the image of an all-powerful state rooted in the pre-colonial past but the crucial role played by individual personalities. Agency, in short, is the name of the game. No one trying to get a handle on the enormous complexity of the Rwanda tragedy can ignore this monumental addition to the existing literature.

Genocide as the Dark Side of Democracy

That electoral democracy contains in germ a lethal confusion between demos and ethnos, and thus creates the conditions of ethnic cleansing or genocide, such, in a nutshell, is the essence of the argument developed by Michael Mann in The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing (2005). Out of seventeen chapters, two are devoted to Rwanda. Whether Rwanda is an appropriate case study in support Mann s thesis is open to debate, but there can be no question about the significance of his contribution on a number of important issues

Mann s answer to the question How premeditated was the genocide? (p. 442) rejects the notion of a long-standing genocidal conspiracy: It is tempting to view prior escalations as stages in a single planned process. But this would be mistaken. What more probably happened was that as the regime lost cohesion and then its presidential head, and as it suffered a coup and was then rebuilt, it experienced a radicalization that few had anticipated beforehand, but that was also paralleled by a radicalization of sentiments among ordinary Hutus. Genocide was then improvised by radical elites and militants out of opportunity and threat. It was not long nourished as Plan A (Mann 2005, 442). He cites from Romeo Dallaire in support of his contention that what was at first envisaged was a politicide, not a genocide: The plan aimed at exterminating the opposition& it was impossible that a plan to carry such a holocaust could have existed (cited in Mann, ibid. 451), a position shared by many others, including former Minister of Defense in Habyarimana s government, James Gasana (Gasana 2002, 280).

On the issue of participation in the killings he identifies six main levels of perpetrator : the Hutu MRND little house clan that seized power on April 7, 1994; other Hutu Power political factions entering the post-coup regime; cooperating Hutu officials and army and police officers; cooperating Hutu local social elites; Hutu paramilitaries; a large number of ordinary Hutu (Mann 2005, 449). The first five categories, he argues, formed the various levels of a party-state& whose ideological, economic, military and political powers enabled them to mobilize the sixth group in a genocidal process (ibid.). Exactly when and where each of these categories became participants in the killings remains unclear. The party-state, which he identifies with the first five categories, was, of his own admission, a highly disorganized apparatus. At the time of the crash, he writes, the state was divided from top to bottom into various party factions so that the genocide was not statist in the conventional sense (ibid. 453). After the death of the president and the chief of staff of the armed forces, and the killing of the prime minister, three ministers and president of the Supreme Court, there was little left of the state. What served as a surrogate state were the informal networks centering around the little house and ramifying into the civil society, the paramilitaries, the interahamwe, down to the prefectoral and communal levels (Gasana 2002, 281; Braeckman 1994, 154-158).

In this fragmented, faction-ridden environment, the central figure in the genocide, Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, is portrayed as the super-patron, while national notables quickly returned home to activate their patron-client networks into awful tasks (Mann 2005, 472). The role played by local big men mayors,

prefects and notables is well described by Mann (ibid., 454-460). It confirms the pattern observed by Michele Wagner in the course of her interviews with génocidaires: their face, she writes, was not the hoary face of time immemorial& (but) a modern face the self-confident smile of a rural fonctionnaire, projecting himself as an intellectual among non-literate farmers and striving to become a local patron in the politics linking his rural center to Kigali (Wagner 1998, 30).

Though somewhat remote from his central thesis about the negative implications of electoral democracy, his conclusions draw attention to some critical aspects of the Rwanda genocide: First, profound bi-ethnic rivalry underlay this genocide, not as constant ethnic hatreds but as a series of modern escalation over who was to control the state& Second, genocide resulted from particular form of power exercised by hundreds of leaders, thousands of militants and the 200,000 who eventually joined in& Third, genocide was again perpetrated not by a cohesive or totalitarian state, but by a party state recently factionalized and radicalized& Fourth, this resulted in very mixed perpetrator motives. In Rwanda even top-level perpetrators mixed personal material goals with a strong ideological sense of ethnic identity, justice and retribution& (Mann, 470-472). The principal contribution of Mann s discussion is not so much in the presumed novelty of the dark side of democracy argument as in its many stimulating insights into a broad range of critical issues having to do with the motivations, perceptions and levels of participation in the killings.

The Malthusian Dimension

The inner tensions arising from rising population densities and the growing scarcity of cultivable land constitutes a major variable in any attempt to grasp the dynamics of genocidal killings. The phenomenon has been ably analyzed by Catherine André and Jean-Philippe Platteau in their ground-breaking analysis of land relations under unbearable stress , in which they convincingly demonstrate the impact of land hunger on intra-Hutu killings in the Kanama commune of northern Rwanda. (André and Platteau, 1998) How the same causal factor has contributed to the killings of Tutsi by Hutu during the genocide is the subject of Jared Diamond s chapter on Malthus in Africa: Rwanda s Genocide in his best-selling work about how societies choose to fail or succeed , titled Collapse. (Diamond, 311-328)

After a brief and somewhat confusing historical sketch of ethnic relations in Rwanda and Burundi the author turns the spotlight on the two critical factors at the heart of his argument, i.e. Rwanda s high population density and its impact on land resources. By 1990, he notes, Rwanda s average population density was 760 people per square mile, thus approaching that of Holland (950). Holland s highly efficient mechanized agriculture , however, is in stark contrast with Rwanda where farmers depend on handheld hoes, picks and machetes, and most people have to remain farmers, producing little or no surplus that could support others (ibid. 319). Further aggravating the situation, even the most elementary measures that could have minimized soil erosion, such as terracing, plowing along contours rather than straight up and down hills& were not being practiced (ibid. 320). The combined effects of a rising population and shrinking land resources, Diamond argues, created the Malthusian dilemma: more food but also more people, hence no improvement in food per person (ibid.).

Just how the Malthusian dilemma contributed to the genocide remains unclear. In support of his argument Diamond leans heavily on the data supplied by André and Platteau to show the drastic shortage of land created by the population explosion. In Kanama, he writes, high population densities translated into very small farms: a median farm size of only 0,89 acre in 1988, declining to 0.72 acre in 1992. Each farm was

divided into (on average) 10 separate parcels average only 0.09 acre in 1988 and 0.07 acre in 1993 (ibid.). There is no reason to dispute these statistics. Nor is there any doubt about the centrality of the conflict between the relatively land-rich and the landless, as was the case in Kanama, where violence involved Hutu against Hutu. Whether one can generalize from the Kanama case to help explain the nation-wide mass murder of Tutsi by Hutu is left to the reader s imagination. In his attempt to demonstrate the pertinence of the Malthusian thesis Diamond leans over backward to qualify his argument: One should not misconstrue a role of population pressure among the Rwandan genocide s causes to mean that population pressure automatically leads to genocide around the world. To those who would object that there is not a necessary link between Malthusian population pressure and genocide I would answer Of course! & Conversely genocide can arise for ultimate reasons other than overpopulation, as illustrated by Hitler s efforts to exterminate Jews and Gypsies during World War II, or by the genocide of the 1970-s in Cambodia, with only one sixth of Rwanda s population density (ibid. 327). Between population pressure and genocide lies a range of intermediary factors, which the author enumerates but fails to analyze, much less prioritize: Rwanda s history of Tutsi domination of Hutu, Tutsi large-scale killings of Hutu in Burundi and small-scale ones in Rwanda, Tutsi invasions of Rwanda, Rwanda s economic crisis and its exacerbation by drought and world factors (especially by falling coffee prices and World Bank austerity measures), hundreds of thousands of desperate young Rwandan men displaced as refugees into settlement camps and ripe for recruitment by militias, and competition among Rwanda s rival political groups willing to stoop to anything to retain power. Population pressure joined with those other factors . In other words, just connect and you ll get the answer.

As in the case of the other chapters in his book, his treatment of the Malthusian roots of genocide is intended for the general reader. Whether in terms of theory or empirical evidence, it adds little to the painstaking research conducted by André and Platteau. Nonetheless, his discussion stands as a salutary warning in the face of what many would consider an impending catastrophe in Rwanda and Burundi. Severe problems of overpopulation , he writes, environmental impact, and climate change cannot persist indefinitely: sooner or later they are likely to resolve themselves, whether in the manner of Rwanda or in some other manner not of our devising, if we don t succeed in solving them by our own actions (ibid. 328). In this cautionary tale lies the principal merit of Diamond s encounter with Malthus in Africa .

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