

RWANDA: THE PREVENTABLE GENOCIDE----JULY 2000

EXCERPTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL PANEL OF EMINENT PERSONALITIES TO INVESTIGATE THE 1994 GENOCIDE IN RWANDA (appointed by the Organization of African Unity)

The tone of the Report.

We freely acknowledge that it has been impossible to do our task without being profoundly, at times helplessly, shaken by the subject matter. Our experiences in Rwanda - the witnesses to whom we listened and the memorial sites we visited – often left us emotionally drained. This is not a report that could be produced with detachment. For those seeking bureaucratic assessments or academic treatises, there are other sources. The nature of these events demands a human, intensely personal response, and this is very much a personal report from the seven of us. Readers have a right to expect us to be objective and to root our observations and conclusions in the facts of the case, and we have striven rigorously to do so. But they must not expect us to be dispassionate.

Colonial roots of ethnic division.

Together [during the colonial era], the Belgians and the Catholic church were guilty of what some call “ethnogenesis” - the institutionalisation of rigid ethnic identities for political purposes. The proposition that it was legitimate to politicise and polarise society through ethnic cleavages - to “play the ‘ethnic card’ ” for political advantage, as a later generation would describe the tactic - became integral to Rwandan public life. The Belgian administration introduced identity cards that were issued to every Rwandan, declaring each to be either Hutu or Tutsi. This card system was maintained for over 60 years and, in a tragic irony, eventually became key to enabling Hutu killers to identify during the genocide the Tutsi who were its original beneficiaries.

What the World Knew Before the Genocide.

Massacres of the Tutsi began at the very outset of the 1990 civil war when the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front invaded from Uganda, and, in a real sense, they did not end until the RPF victory of July 1994. After the war, a great debate broke out, and continues still, over who knew what about the events unfolding in Rwanda. In our view, this is a phoney debate. The major actors in the drama, the world that mattered to Rwanda -most of its Great Lakes neighbours, the United Nations and the major western powers - knew a great deal about what was happening, and they soon learned that the events were being masterminded at the highest level of the state. They knew that this was no senseless case of “Hutu killing Tutsi and Tutsi killing Hutu”, as it was sometimes dismissively described. That world knew that a terrible fate had befallen Rwanda.

There is a record of atrocities, all of which was publicly exposed throughout the early 1990s by credible human rights organisations. Massacres of Tutsi were carried out in October 1990, January 1991, February 1991, March 1992, August 1992, January 1993, March 1993, and February 1994. On virtually each occasion, they were carefully organised.

The only thing that was not clear was exactly how far the plotters were prepared to go. Large numbers of observers had little doubt that a vast, monstrous slaughter was virtually inevitable if it could not somehow be deterred. But the fact is that the overwhelming

majority of observers did not believe a genocide would be launched. More precisely, they could not bring themselves to harbour such a belief. As members of the Panel wrestled with this vexing question, we came finally to understand that it was literally unthinkable for most people to believe that genocide was in fact possible; it was simply beyond comprehension that it could be possible.

General Dallaire's "genocide fax".

On 11 January 1994, General Dallaire, commander of the UN mission to Rwanda [UNAMIR], sent his controversial "genocide fax" to his superior, General Baril, at the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York. It was prompted by an informant, a militia commander known in UN correspondence only as Jean-Pierre. "...he has been ordered to register all Tutsi in Kigali. He suspects it is for their extermination. Example he gave was that in 20 minutes his personnel could kill up to 1000 Tutsis." Jean-Pierre offered to take UNAMIR officials to caches of guns. The interahamwe, the militia attached to the President's party, had 1,700 men scattered in groups of 40 around the capital, each of whom had been trained in "discipline, weapons, explosives, close combat and tactics.... They hoped to...provoke a civil war." On 12 January, Dallaire received a response from Iqbal Riza in New York, writing over the signature of his superior, Kofi Annan, head of UN peacekeeping operations. In it he denied Dallaire permission to seize the arms caches revealed by Jean-Pierre.

The Responsibility of the "International Community"

The central argument of this report is that for 150 years, the outside world played a central part in carving out the building blocks that built to the genocide. This role extended all the way back to the racism of the first European explorers, to Belgian colonial policy, to Catholic church support for "demographic democracy" under a Hutu military dictatorship, to the Structural Adjustment Programme imposed by western financial institutions and to the legitimising of an ethnic dictatorship by France, the United States and many international development aid agencies. In our very strong view, the world carries a heavy responsibility for the events in Rwanda. There was an honourable and inestimably useful way in which the world might have discharged that responsibility, and human rights groups and a small number of UN officials tried frantically to get it to do so. Instead, world leaders chose to play politics and pinch pennies as hundreds of thousands of innocent Rwandans needlessly died.

The Preventable Genocide.

If there is anything worse than the genocide itself, it is the knowledge that it did not have to happen. The simple, harsh truth is that the genocide was not inevitable, and it would have been relatively easy to stop it from happening prior to 6 April 1994 and then to mitigate the destruction significantly once it began. In the words of one expert, "This was the most easily preventable genocide imaginable."

The obvious, necessary response to the situation in Rwanda was a serious international military force to deter the killers. This Panel wants to go on record as sharing the conviction of UNAMIR Force Commander Romeo Dallaire: "The killings could have been prevented if there had been the international will to accept the costs of doing so..." Virtually every authority we know believes that a larger, better-equipped and toughly mandated force could have played a critical role either in deterring the conspiracy entirely or, at least, in causing the plotters to modify or stall their plans and in significantly reducing the number of deaths.

Rather than respond with appropriate force, the opposite happened, spurred by the murders of ten Belgian Blue Berets and Belgium's withdrawal of its remaining troops. Exactly two weeks after the genocide began - following strenuous lobbying for total withdrawal led by Belgium and Britain, and with American UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright advocating the most token of forces and the United States adamantly refusing to accept publicly that a full-fledged, Convention-defined genocide was in fact taking place - the Security Council made the astonishing decision to reduce the already inadequate UNAMIR force to a derisory 270 men.

Today, it seems barely possible to believe. The international community actually chose to abandon the Tutsi of Rwanda at the very moment when they were being exterminated.

The Double Standard.

On April 8 and 9, 1994, France sent 500 soldiers to evacuate French citizens and the Akazu members who led the genocide conspiracy. Dallaire's UN troops were immediately ordered by the Secretariat in New York, under strong pressure from western countries, to work with the French to evacuate foreign nationals rather than protect threatened Rwandans.

Equally startling were the guidelines Dallaire was given... "You should make every effort not to compromise your impartiality or to act beyond your mandate," the April 9 cable from Kofi Annan and Iqbal Riza stated, "but [you] may exercise your discretion to do [so] should this be essential for the evacuation of foreign nationals. This should not, repeat not, extend to participating in possible combat except in self-defence." This double standard seems to us outrageous. No such instructions were ever given to Dallaire about protecting innocent Rwandan civilians. He was never explicitly directed that the Blue Helmets should protect such civilians and could fight in self-defence if attacked while doing so. He was never told, "exercise your discretion...to act beyond your mandate" when it came to Rwandans. On the contrary, every time he raised the issue, he was specifically instructed not to go beyond the rigidly circumscribed mandate approved by the Security Council under any circumstances. Is there a conclusion we can draw from this incident other than that expatriate lives were considered more valuable than African lives?

The Role of France.

Immediately upon the RPF invasion from Uganda into Rwanda in October 1990, the French government committed itself to defend and support the Habyarimana regime. Among the usual variety of French motives, francophonie unquestionably played a key role. Mitterrand himself, Admiral Jacques Lanxade told the 1998 parliamentary inquiry, "considered that the RPF aggression was a determined action against a francophone zone" France made itself the de facto public relations agent for the Rwanda government in international forums... automatically dismissing the ever-increasing stories of serious human rights abuses perpetrated by that government. Medecins Sans Frontieres makes the indisputable point that "France supported the regime of President Habyarimana even though racism was the pillar of all the policies of his government."

The importance of this role can hardly be overestimated. France's unequivocal public support constituted a major disincentive for the radical Akazu faction in President Habyarimana's entourage to make concessions or to think in terms of compromise. The French chose not to use its singular influence at the highest echelons of Rwandan

society to demand an end to government-initiated violence, a decision that sent its own clear message. Those guilty of terrible human rights violations drew the obvious lesson: they could get away with anything.

French forces were to remain for the three turbulent years following the Rwandan Patriotic Front's 1990 invasion from Uganda. France did all it could to prevent the victory of the RPF by shoring up Habyarimana. Throughout these years, French officials worked intimately with senior Rwandan government officials while French officers became an integral part of the military hierarchy, involved in virtually every aspect of the civil war that broke out after the incursion. Throughout this period, the French army worked closely with Rwandans widely known to be associated with, if not guilty of, murder and other human rights abuses.

During these years, France was also one of Rwanda's major sources of military supplies. Officially, France imposed an arms embargo on April 8, 1994, two days after the plane crash that killed President Habyarimana and triggered the genocide. The facts indicate that France provided arms or permitted them to be provided to the Rwandan forces right through until June, the third month of the genocide.

As for this Panel, the indisputable facts of the case lead us to several irresistible conclusions. First, until the genocide began, the French government was far and away the most steadfast ally and public defender of an elite it knew beyond any doubt was guilty of massive human rights abuses. Second, as a matter of deliberate policy, it failed to use its undoubted influence to end such behaviour. Third, we find it impossible to justify most of the actions of the French state that we have just described. Four, the position of the French government- that it was in no way responsible for the genocide in Rwanda- is entirely unacceptable to this Panel.

Two months into the genocide, the French government decided to send troops to Rwanda; this action, known as Operation Turquoise, led to the carving out of a safe zone in the south-west of the country. Analysts calculate that in the course of their mission, the French force did save not the "tens of thousands" of people proclaimed by President Mitterrand, but probably some 10,000 -15,000 Tutsi, a feat that can only be applauded. But beyond any doubt, their other task was to give support to the interim government. Most of the genocidaire regime, large numbers of high-ranking military officers, as well as thousands of heavily armed interahamwe and the majority of the Rwandan forces (now called ex-FAR) managed to escape the inexorable Rwandan Patriotic Front advance by retreating to the convenience of the safe zone. Once it was clear the RPF could not be halted, France facilitated the escape of much of the Hutu Power leadership, the Hutu radicals, into Zaire.

Africa continues to pay dearly for this development to the present moment. The genocidaires were able to survive to fight another day. This was beyond question the single most significant post-genocide event in the entire Great Lakes region, launching a chain of events that eventually engulfed the entire area and beyond in conflict.

French authorities permitted ex-FAR soldiers to move back and forth between the safe zone and Zaire without hindrance. Sometimes the French helped them on their way; they were seen refuelling army trucks before they took off for Zaire with the goods looted from local homes and businesses. In Zaire itself, French soldiers drove their Rwandan colleagues around in official vehicles, and on at least one occasion. French soldiers delivered ten tons of food to ex-FAR troops at Goma.

Throughout this period, the ex-FAR continued to receive weapons inside the French zone via Goma airport in adjacent Zaire. Although French officials have consistently

maintained that all arms shipments to the Habyarimana government ended right after his murder, the evidence tells a different story.

Through July, August and September, according to UN officials, the French military flew a raft of genocidaires out of Goma to unidentified destinations. None of these men had shown an iota of remorse. On the contrary, they were refreshingly candid about their next steps. They were going back to finish the "work" they had not quite completed. Thanks to the unanticipated opportunity provided in substantial part by France, they could now begin re-organising themselves from Zaire and elsewhere.

The Role of the United States.

As for the American role in the Rwandan genocide, it was brief, powerful and inglorious. There is virtually no controversy about this. Not only do authorities on the subject agree with this statement, so now does the American president who was responsible for the policies he belatedly finds so reprehensible. Unlike France, America has formally apologized for its failure to prevent the genocide, although President Clinton insists that his failure was a function of ignorance. It was not. It was a function of domestic politics and geopolitical indifference.

The problem was not that the American were ignorant about Rwanda. The problem was that nothing was at stake for the United States in Rwanda.

Following the deaths in 1993 of 18 US soldiers in Somalia, the American government made it a policy to weaken subsequent UN peacekeeping missions. The Rwandan mission was the first to be affected. What makes this episode even more disturbing is the way it was distorted by virtually the entire American establishment in both political parties. The tactic, simply, was to blame the UN for what had in fact been a purely American disaster. Only a few Americans ever learned the truth. The disastrous US operation had been planned and launched entirely without the knowledge of UN officials. No nation did more than the US to undermine the effectiveness of UNAMIR [the UN Military Mission to Rwanda]. Throughout the genocide American machinations at the Security Council repeatedly undermined all attempts to strengthen the UN military presence in Rwanda; in the end, not a single new soldier or piece of military hardware representing the United Nations reached the country before the genocide ended.

Looking at the record, an American chronicler of the Rwandan genocide bitterly concludes that "anybody who believes the words 'never again' is deluding themselves dangerously about future holocausts." In early 2000, as this report was being written, the leading Republican presidential candidate was asked by a television interviewer what he would do as president "if, God forbid, another Rwanda should take place". George W. Bush replied: "We should not send our troops to stop ethnic cleansing and genocide outside our strategic interest....I would not send the United States troops into Rwanda."

The UN Plays into the Hands of Rogue Elements.

The failure of the international community to stand up to Hutu Power reinforced the culture of impunity that further empowered the Hutu radicals. In a terrible irony, the very feebleness of the UN's intervention emboldened the radicals, persuading them that they had nothing to fear from the outside world regardless of what they did.

A perverse dogma had somehow taken hold in the Security Council and Secretariat during the months of March to June 1994. It was widely understood that the Hutu

radicals were conspiring to drive UNAMIR out of Rwanda. Nevertheless, the Security Council insisted that continued support for the mission be contingent on implementation of the Arusha peace agreement, an irresistible incentive for the Hutu radicals to escalate their efforts to undermine the accord. In a history teeming with incomprehensible decisions and events, this action by the Security Council seems to us to rank among the most bizarre. Frankly, we can still hardly believe it happened. Yet it has re-emerged again this year [1990] as a precondition for the new UN mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The mission is authorized only if all the warring parties in DRC agree to a ceasefire and to cooperate in future negotiations. But if they do so, as OAU spokespeople cynically ask, why is the UN needed? The time a robust UN force is most required is precisely when there is no agreement and no good faith among the parties. Yet in DRC, the Security Council has again bowed to the dogma that had been so completely discredited in Rwanda.

The Role of the Security Council

On 21 April, two weeks into the genocide, the Security Council passed a resolution stating that it was "appalled at the ensuing large-scale violence in Rwanda, which has resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children." It then voted unanimously to reduce UNAMIR to a token force of about 270 personnel and to limit its mandate accordingly. Thankfully, General Dallaire "postponed" acting on this resolution and was able to keep some 450 men.

The Role of the Church

During the months of the genocide, the Hutu leadership of the Catholic and Anglican churches did not abandon their traditional close relationship with the Hutu establishment. They were anything but neutral in their sympathies. It is not too much to say they were at the very least indirectly complicit in the genocide for failing over the years -- and even during the genocide itself -- to dissociate themselves categorically from race hatred, to condemn ethnic manipulation and to denounce publicly human rights violations. Some believe that "Church pulpits could have provided an opportunity for almost the entire population to hear a strong message that could have prevented the genocide. Instead, the leaders remained silent. Being the clearest embodiment of moral authority in the communities," this silence was easily interpreted by ordinary Christians as an implicit endorsement of the killings.

The church leaders did nothing to discourage the killings. Not even the Pope's demand for an end to the killings swayed his representatives in Rwanda. It was five weeks into the genocide before four Catholic bishops, together with Protestant leaders, produced anything remotely like a conciliatory document, and even then they could bring themselves to do no more than blame each side equally and call on both to "stop the massacres." The word "genocide" was never mentioned.

Among the many sources of particular bitterness felt by the post-genocide Rwandan government has been the failure of the Roman Catholic church... that still commands the allegiance of almost two-thirds of the Rwandan people to acknowledge any collective responsibility for the genocide. Both the Catholic and Anglican archbishops had been personally close to Habyarimana and acted largely as Hutu Power apologists during the genocide. The latter fled to exile and is shunned by his church; his successor has publicly apologized on behalf of the Anglican church for its role in the genocide.

Nothing similar has emanated from the Catholic hierarchy in Rwanda. The Rwandan government has repeatedly demanded a formal apology from the Vatican, but with no success. We regret that

in his February 2000 apology for the past mistakes of the church, the Pope chose not to include, or even apparently to allude to, Rwanda. But it is by no means too late for him to do so, and to urge his Rwandan flock to confess whatever guilt they carry and to actively seek reconciliation with their fellow citizens. In our view, this would constitute a major contribution to healing in the country.

The Major Villains.

Large numbers of outside agencies must take a certain responsibility for Rwanda's tragedy -- the churches, the international financial institutions, all the aid organizations that loved operating in Habyarimana's Rwanda and whose largesse made possible the increased coercive capacity of the state prior to the genocide, and every nation that ignored the overtly ethnic basis of Rwandan governance and turned a blind eye to the ethnic-based massacres that had begun in 1990.

Nevertheless, beyond these, the evidence is clear that there are a small number of major actors whose intervention could directly have prevented, halted or reduced the slaughter. They include France in Rwanda itself; the United States at the Security Council, loyally supported by Britain; and Belgium, which fled from Rwanda and then tried to have UNAMIR dismantled altogether after the genocide had begun. In the bitter words of UNAMIR Commander General Dallaire, echoed by his Belgian second-in-command, Colonel Marchal, the "international community has blood on its hands".

How Many Tutsi Were Killed?

In the nature of the event, it has always been difficult to establish the numbers killed in the genocide. Serious authorities disagree by hundreds of thousands of deaths -- a quite remarkable variation. The highest persuasive figure for Tutsi killed seems to be 800,000, the very lowest, 500,000. Unfortunate as it is, the truth is that we have no way of being certain. The fact is that even if the most conservative figure is used, it still means that over three-quarters of the entire population registered as Tutsi were systematically killed in just over 100 days.

Public Accountability.

The price of this betrayal by the international community was paid by countless Rwandans, overwhelmingly Tutsi, who will forever remain anonymous to the rest of the world. In contrast, none of the key actors on the Security Council or in the Secretariat responsible for this betrayal has ever paid any kind of price. No heads have rolled. No resignations have been demanded. No one has resigned on a matter of principle. Many of their careers have flourished greatly since 1994. Instead of international accountability, it appears that international impunity is the rule of the day.

The Failure to Disarm the Genocidaires

We should emphasize that the role of Hutu Power leaders in the Kivu refugee camps of eastern Zaire after the genocide was not remotely clandestine. Their activities were public knowledge, because they spoke about their plans publicly and because they carried out their terrorist tactics openly. The ex-FAR received arms shipments in the camps, conducted military training exercises, recruited combatants and (in terms used in documents later found in one of the camps) planned a 'final victory' and a definitive solution to Hutu-Tutsi antagonisms.

In response, the RPF, its neighbouring governments and the OAU called for the urgent repatriation of all legitimate refugees and the immediate separation and disarmament of armed elements operating among the refugees. The Security Council refused to act. As a result of this deliberate policy choice by the international community, the camps remained under the control of unrepentant armed killers who used them as bases to launch raids across the nearby border into Rwanda. This triggered a series of stunning developments, most notably two successive wars centred on Zaire/Congo, whose impact continues as we write this report.

Supplying Arms to Central Africa.

China is the leading supplier of arms to Central Africa, the US second, and France is third; in southern Africa, Russia is the leading supplier, with the US and France tied for second. Being among the Big Three suppliers of arms to poor countries at war seems to us highly dubious distinctions, and at least one branch of the US government concurs. In late 1999 the US State Department described the impact of arms trafficking to "the politically fragile Central Africa/Great Lakes region" to be "catastrophic." The State Department concluded, however, that it would "continue unabated for the foreseeable future" since there was not sufficient "sustained political will on the part of the regional and international leaders" to restrict it.

Rwandans Inherits their Killers' Debt

Perhaps there was no better reflection of the world's shabby treatment of post-genocide Rwanda than the matter of the debt burden incurred by the Habyarimana government. The major source of the unpaid debt was the weapons the regime had purchased for the war against the RPF, which had then been turned against innocent Tutsi during the genocide.

Incredibly enough, the new government was deemed responsible for repaying to those multilateral and national lenders the debt accrued by its predecessors. The common-sense assumption that Rwanda deserved and could not recover without special treatment, that the debt would have been wiped out more or less automatically, had no currency in the world of international finance. Instead of Rwanda receiving vast sums of money as reparations by those who had failed to stop the tragedy, it in fact owed those same sources a vast sum of money.

The RPF and Human Rights Abuses

Accusations against the RPF for human rights violations, often of massive proportions, have been heard since the incursion of 1990. Having scrutinized carefully the sources available, we have been persuaded by the evidence that at least some and perhaps many of these charges are true, that such violations took place before, during and after the genocide, and that they have included the period since late 1996 when Rwandan troops began hunting genocidaires throughout central Africa. On very many occasions, RPF soldiers have been guilty of killing civilians, often in large numbers, although exactly how many is in serious dispute. Hutu Power representatives consistently claim that the RPF have killed hundreds of thousands of Hutu in Rwanda in the past decade, constituting what they call a "second genocide"; the evidence, however, does not justify this accusation, which more plausibly should be considered simple propaganda. A UN fact-finding body has also raised the possibility that RPF forces were guilty of genocide in Zaire/ Democratic Republic of Congo in 1997, but it is impossible to verify this charge. Finally, there is evidence that the numbers of RPF killings and human rights abuses in

general have declined significantly in the past year as Hutu Power attacks from the Congo have been repelled.

The Organization of African Unity.

Throughout April, May, June and July 1994, the OAU, like the UN, failed to call genocide by its rightful name and refused to take sides between the genocidaires (a name they would not use) and the RPF or to accuse the one side of being genocidaires. The slaughter was denounced as “carnage and bloodletting” or “massacres and wanton killings” but the condemnation was strangely impartial; no group was condemned by name, implying that the two combatants were equally culpable. Both parties were urged to agree to a ceasefire and to return to the negotiating table.

Under the circumstances of the time, this Panel finds the silence of the OAU and a large majority of African heads constituted a shocking moral failure.

Who Will Fight for Africa?

During the same decade that African leaders repeatedly called upon foreign countries to send in their troops or to offer logistic support to African troops, more than a dozen new or protracted conflicts flared across the continent. Three-quarters of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa were engaged in armed conflict or confronted by a significant threat from armed groups during 1999. Many of these were between state governments, not least the very war in central Africa that the Lusaka Agreement for central Africa is intended to resolve. Apart from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, direct military participants in that war include the governments of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi pitted against the governments of Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Chad; several other governments have lesser military involvements. Among them, they also support a large array of rebel groups, including those who are guilty of genocide and other crimes against humanity. Somehow or other, despite their poverty, all these governments as well as other African governments engaged in costly full-scale wars, have found the resources they need. None of them has needed the assistance of the United Nations to do so.

Military expenditures in sub-Saharan Africa totalled nearly \$11 billion in 1999. Excluding South Africa, spending on arms in the region increased by about 14% at a time when its economic growth rose by less than 1% in real terms. Armed exports to the region nearly doubled in the year 1999, as different factions fought not only over territory but for control of valuable mineral resources.

Such information does not make the OAU's case for foreign logistic support for African troops more persuasive. Already in the past decade or so a backlash has grown among donor countries and agencies against providing assistance to poor countries that were spending a substantial portion of their meagre budgets on defence expenditures. A similar backlash is surely inevitable by industrialized nations against committing military resources to African countries for peacekeeping missions because their own military resources are tied up in inter-African wars. Surely potential donors will legitimately question why it can be considered their responsibility to fund operations that African governments cannot afford because they are overburdened warring against each other.

We repeat our conviction that Africa must bear substantial responsibility for African challenges and crises. Beyond the outside world, it was after all certain Rwandan Africans who launched the genocide against other Africans in Rwanda, and it is African governments that are, at great cost, fighting a war in DRC. African governments

therefore surely have an inescapable obligation to cease fighting each other and to pursue peace by offering their troops to a major peacemaking effort.

Rwanda Today.

Total Rwandan government expenditures in 1998 were about US\$375 million; to put this figure in some context, the budget of Austria, a country with a similar population, included expenditures of US\$ 60 billion, 160 times greater than Rwanda's. Even then, Rwanda's revenues, US\$310 million, were not nearly adequate to cover expenditures. Further, domestic revenues contributed just two-thirds of this amount; fully one-third came from external sources. Finally, the military received in 1998 between US\$73 and 85 million (depending on sources), while servicing the external debt cost another US\$40 million. That means that almost one-third of a very small budget went to the military and the debt.

Rwanda is overwhelmingly dependent on foreign agencies, governments and NGOs for any number of programs that are crucial to rehabilitation, reconciliation and development; these include assistance to victims of the genocide, demobilisation and reintegration of soldiers, civil service reform and "the establishment of governance institutions."

The important truth that while Rwanda is very poor, it is by no means simply another poor African country. Many of its problems have either been created or seriously exacerbated by the genocide, the subsequent war in central Africa, and the continuing determination of former genocidaires, whom the international community refused to disarm, to carry on the fight to destabilise the present government.

Rwanda is not just another country. Too many people, it seems to us, deal with Rwanda as if the genocide were already an ancient story that should be relegated to the history books and that it is time for the nation to move on. We strongly repudiate this view... There is no statute of limitation for those guilty of genocide, and there is no statute of limitation on its memories and ramifications. The consequences of an event of such enormity continue to be felt, individually and collectively, for decades.

Pretending that ethnic divisions do not exist and will not be recognised, as the government of Rwanda insists on doing, is an answer that satisfies no one. These divisions exist and everybody knows they exist. Many of the government's actions exacerbate the divisions, the war in DRC reinforces them, and the political turbulence within the government keeps them in the public eye. By themselves, all the reconciliation projects in the world will do nothing to change this situation.

Rwanda is unlikely ever to be an ethnic-free nation, but this need not be a cause for despair. Diversity, properly appreciated, strengthens a society, and unity in diversity is the mark of a strong nation. We believe Rwandans should acknowledge ethnicity for what it is – legitimate, value-free distinctions between groups of people who share and accept a larger identity in common. There can be Rwandan Hutu and Rwandan Tutsi and Rwanda Twa without ascribing superior or inferior value implications to those groupings.