A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE LIFE AFTER

Fifteen years after the genocide in Rwanda, the reconciliation defies expectations.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

AGENCE VU/AURORA

The village gacaca courts were designed not only to render rudimentary justice but to allow some emotional catharsis by establishing a collective

accounting of the crimes where they were committed. Photograph by Kathryn Cook.

When I began visiting Rwanda, in 1995, a year after the genocide, the country was still pretty well annihilated: blood-sodden and pillaged, with bands of orphans roaming the hills and women who'd been raped squatting in the ruins, its humanity betrayed, its infrastructure trashed, its economy gutted, its government improvised, a garrison state with soldiers everywhere, its court system vitiated, its prisons crammed with murderers, with more murderers still at liberty—hunting survivors and being hunted in turn by revenge killers—and with the routed army and militias of the genocide and a million and a half of their followers camped on the borders, succored by the United Nations refugee agency, and vowing to return and finish the job. In the course of a hundred days, beginning on April 6, 1994, nearly a million people from the Tutsi minority had been massacred in the name of an ideology known as Hutu Power, and, between the memory of the slaughter and the fear that it would resume, Rwanda often felt like an impossible country. Nowadays, when Rwandans look back on the early years of aftermath, they say, "In the beginning."

On the fifteenth anniversary of the genocide, Rwanda is one of the safest and the most orderly countries in Africa. Since 1994, per-capita gross domestic product has nearly tripled, even as the population has increased by nearly twenty-five per cent, to more than ten million. There is national health insurance, and a steadily improving education system. Tourism is a boom industry and a strong draw for foreign capital investment. In Kigali, the capital, whisk-broom-wielding women in frocks and gloves sweep the streets at dawn. Plastic bags are outlawed, to keep litter under control and to protect the environment. Broadband Internet service is widespread in the cities, and networks are being extended into the countryside. Cell phones work nearly everywhere. Traffic police enforce speed limits and the mandatory use of seat belts and motorbike helmets. Government officials are required to be at their desks by seven in the morning. It is the only government on earth in which the majority of parliamentarians are women. Soldiers are almost nowhere to be seen. Kigali is now home to nearly a million people—roughly double the number ten years ago—and

there is incessant construction of new homes, office blocks, medical facilities, shopping centers, hotels, schools, transport depots, foreign embassies, and roads. A billboard used to stand beside one of the main traffic circles, riddled by machine-gun fire and advertising Guinness stout with the slogan "The Power of Love"; today, a new billboard across the street says, "Pay Taxes—Build Rwanda—Be Proud." Most of the prisoners accused or convicted of genocide have been released. The death penalty has been abolished. And Rwanda is the only nation where hundreds of thousands of people who took part in mass murder live intermingled at every level of society with the families of their victims.

"So far, so good," Rwanda's President, Paul Kagame, told me. Kagame, who is fifty-one, and is so thin that in official photographs with visiting dignitaries it often looks as if his guests had been posed with a cardboard cutout of him, led the rebel force—the Rwandan Patriotic Front—that stopped the genocide. He has presided over Rwanda's destiny ever since, and he has come to be recognized, by his adversaries and his admirers alike, as one of the most formidable political figures of our age. "Fifteen years," he said. "It sounds like a pretty long time. But if you look at it, and the value of the whole country—maybe where the country has moved to and where it should be—it becomes a very small thing."

Kagame, who is commonly described as authoritarian even in the Rwandan press, was elected in 2003 with more than ninety-five per cent of the vote, after running effectively unopposed. But he told me that if he cannot build the national institutions that allow him to retire and preside over a peaceful transfer of power by 2017, when the Constitution requires that he step aside, then "It's a failure."

In the meantime, it maddens Kagame when Western observers assess Rwanda by how far it still falls short, rather than by how far it has already come. His attitude is: You're telling me? "I wish there were a way of winding time and making it run faster," he said. "I would do it." In his view, the West is in no position to scold Rwanda, where the legacy of colonialism led directly to the genocide, and where some Western powers (notably France and the Vatican) supported the *génocidaires* before, during, and after the killing, while the rest did nothing to stop it. Like most of his original comrades in the R.P.F., Kagame grew up in exile, in Uganda, as a refugee from earlier anti-Tutsi pogroms in Rwanda, and he speaks with contempt of critics of his human-rights record who had accepted for decades the ethnic apartheid of his childhood as a legitimate form of majority rule.

"The first time I came to my country was in 1977," he said. "I was still very young, and I went to some of my relatives who have since been killed in the genocide." In Kagame's youth, Rwanda existed for him only through the memory of his elders and the rumors of fellow-exiles—he was four when his family fled, in 1961—and at the age of nineteen he had slipped back in for that first visit to form his own impression. "Even at that age, I would see the oppression," he said, and went on, "I could see the panic, the sense of frustration and desperation with the people I was visiting. . . . I was just a mere student, you know, just finished secondary school—and this is my aunt, this is my uncle. But every day they were being policed to know who visits them, to know whom they have written a letter to, to know who has written to them. And it's, like, on the one hand they were happy to see me, on the other they wanted me away, they wanted me to leave them alone, because if they discovered that I had come from a refugee camp in Uganda they could easily perish."

I had met Kagame five times between 1995 and 2000; on each occasion, the interview ran for hours, and he often spoke of growing up in exile, and how his experience of exclusion had led him, as a young man, to take up armed struggle. But when he talked of being Tutsi it was always as an identity that had been held against him, never as an affirmative declaration of belonging. And, when he came to power in Rwanda, the fact that he was Tutsi was still held against him. It branded him as a minority, and, to those who persisted in the belief that in Rwanda all politics must be tribal, that made him illegitimate. Kagame did not want to be perceived as the Tutsi President; he wanted to be accepted as the Rwandan President.

Emmanuel Ndahiro, one of Kagame's closest advisers, who is now his intelligence chief, told me how encouraged he was by Barack Obama's election. "Obama represents ideas and thinking, he doesn't represent the blacks," Ndahiro said, and asked, "So why can't a Tutsi be a President where the majority are Hutus?" The genocide made Kagame's challenge harder than ever, and also made it more essential that he succeed. So when Kagame spoke of the terror that his aunt and uncle had accepted as normal, I wondered if he could be sure that Hutus in the countryside didn't feel oppressed, in turn, in post-genocide Rwanda.

"I don't have to tell you this," he said. "Go ask people. They will give you their views." But he told me his view anyway: "Ten million people now in this country have never been happier in the history of this country. It's better, Rwanda, far better than it has ever been. I have no doubt about it. Look around, go around, go to villages. If you fail to see the sense of hope in their eyes, then I won't be telling you the truth."

I set out the next morning for Taba, a village in Rwanda's central highlands. I wanted to see what had become of a woman named Laurencie Nyirabeza, an elderly genocide survivor, and Jean Girumuhatse, the man who in 1994 had massacred a number of people in her family, and left her for dead, too, after striking her with a machete. I had met them in 1996, a few weeks after Kagame sent his army into Congo (or Zaire, as it was called at the time) to drive the vast majority of the Rwandans in the U.N. camps there home, and to hunt down those who resisted repatriation. Girumuhatse had come back from Congo in the mass return a few days before my first visit to Taba. Nyirabeza said that he had asked her to forgive him and she had refused. She showed me where he lived—at the time, he was sharing his home with some genocide survivors who had squatted there in his absence and had not yet found anywhere else to go—and he told me that it was true: he had been the leader of a band of *génocidaires* who manned a roadblock in front of his house, and he said he was responsible for the killings there.

I had been collecting stories of the genocide for a year and a half by then, and Girumuhatse was the first who told me that he had killed. Yet even as he announced his guilt he hedged. He said that he had ordered others to kill, allow-

ing merely that he "might" have been a killer himself. He would admit to having a part in "only" six murders. Some of his accomplices at the roadblock, whom I found in the local lockup, said he had killed more. The survivors I spoke with in Taba agreed: many more, they said. He had even tried to kill his own brother-in-law—Girumuhatse's wife was a Tutsi—but the brother-in-law had escaped into the bush, and when I met him he told me he believed that Girumuhatse had killed at least seventy people.

I spent a week in Taba in December of 1996, and when I returned to Rwanda six months later I wanted to go back to the village. But after the mass repatriation from the border camps there had been a sharp escalation of killings by Hutu insurgents—fighters who had returned from Congo and their comrades who had stayed there and were now sneaking back. The violence was most intense in the north and west of the country, near the Congolese border, but piecemeal attacks had been reported in much of the rest of the country as well, including the ambush of a bus on the Taba road shortly before I arrived. The attacks tended to target Tutsi genocide survivors, who could bear witness against the killers, and even if I could have made the trip safely I did not want to place anyone in Taba at greater risk.

I had always driven myself in Rwanda, but this year Jean-Pierre Sagahutu, my Kinyarwanda translator, drove, and without him I'd have been lost. It wasn't just Kigali that has been transformed in recent years; the roadside landscape, as we headed west into the countryside, also seemed rearranged. Where I remembered an empty valley overgrown with bush, there were now neatly planted fields of beans, manioc, and sorghum, dotted with men hoeing and women stooping to harvest and reseed—a saw mill here, a livestock corral there. Old buildings were missing, new buildings were everywhere, and places where I'd never seen anyone were crowded with foot traffic. Much was familiar. Indeed, much felt eternal: the rise and fall of the sweeping, vaguely Tuscan vistas—rigorously terraced hills, pocked by low stands of banana trees and an occasional towering eucalyptus, with farmhouses clinging to the slopes, and every so often an imposing red brick church on the summit, its bell tower cut against a hazy, cloud-spattered sky.

But I didn't recognize the turnoff to Taba, and the road seemed wrong. I remembered a rutted dirt track that ran through eucalyptus groves; now both sides were lined with the squat, boxlike, adobe dwellings of Rwanda's rural poor, and the surface was wide and smooth. Along the way, we saw bulldozers and graders making improvements. Then we came around a bend, and the picture resolved itself: this was the spot where Girumuhatse's roadblock had been, and here was the big eucalyptus that he had stood under when he watched me drive away after my last visit.

There was someone standing under the tree now. It was Girumuhatse, right where I'd left him. I got out of the car and he came over—a lean man, with a distinctive loping gait. He wore a torn and filthy yellow windbreaker, gray trousers shapeless from use, and yellow rubber clogs. I asked if he recognized me, and he said, "You were here twelve years ago." I was surprised by the precision of his memory, which had been so elusive in the past. "When you left, it was a Saturday," he said. "I was arrested the same day. I spent eleven years in prison, then I confessed everything in *gacaca*"—a system of outdoor community courts, convened for genocide cases. "I asked forgiveness," Girumuhatse said, "and I was released about a year ago."

Gacaca was designed to reward confessions, because the objective was not only to render rudimentary justice and mete out punishment but also to allow some emotional catharsis by establishing a collective accounting of the truth of the crimes in each place where they were committed. During a trial run of *gacaca* courts, in 2005, there were many reports of corrupt judges, and of intimidated witnesses, including an alarming number of cases in which genocide survivors were murdered before they could testify. Whenever that happened, Emmanuel Ndahiro told me, Tutsis in the villages would be muttering, "Kagame loves Hutus." And Richard Sezibera, the minister of health, told me that such killings could undermine years of progress toward what is officially called "reconciliation." "You can't imagine the psychosis in this country," Sezibera said.

Last year, however, the government decided to clear the genocide caseload. More than twelve thousand *gacaca* courts were convened around the country, and, according to official statistics, more than a million cases were adjudicated, with a remarkably high degree of public participation, and limited violence. There were surely false convictions of those who insisted on their innocence, and there was a surprising number of acquittals of those who had probably been falsely accused in the first place. But in many cases, like Girumuhatse's, confession was its own reward: a sentence for multiple murders re-

THE AGENTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

"Bear with me—I put my hat on upside down."

duced to little more than time served.

Girumuhatse led us to his house, a low adobe with no right angles, no windows, and no door, only a doorway. A teen-age boy rose from a bed in one corner, shedding a blanket, and shuffled out. Girumuhatse fetched folding chairs, and we sat down to talk. He was breathing hard, as he always did when we met in the past, taking his air in short, rapid puffs. He said that in prison he had been given a diagnosis of severe asthma, and he showed me his prison-release papers, which he kept in a book entitled "Glorifying God in Song"—a hymnal. I asked him if his punishment had been just. "I think it was a short sentence," he said. "For my crimes, I should have been punished much longer, and still be in prison." Sagahutu, my translator, whose father was killed in the genocide, remarked, "Yeah, they all say that."

Girumuhatse said that the judges at his *gacaca* trial had found his confession to be accurate and complete, so I asked him how many people he had confessed to killing. He began reciting names, sometimes a first name, sometimes a last name, sometimes both. He said, "Eric and his brother Mugabo. Munyaneza. Oswald Twamugabo. Candide. Donatille and the baby on her back. Stanislas Busirimu and his son Wellars Busirimu. Gakombe. Ntampuhwe. That's all."

Eleven people. I asked how old they were. He told me, "Eric and Mugabo were about thirteen years old—not twins, they were brothers by different mothers. Munyaneza was about seventy. Oswald Twamugabo was in his early thirties. Candide was about fifty-five. Donatille with the baby was thirty. Stanislas Busirimu was sixty and his son Wellars about twenty-five. Gakombe was fifty. Ntampuhwe was sixty-five." He said, "None of these were killed at the roadblock. They were people I hunted at their houses and in the bush. And the other dead, at the roadblock, I explained in *gacaca* what had happened in those cases, too." He did not tell me their names. He said, "During the *gacaca* trial, since everyone was there—all the people of the village—I said, I will tell you everything. I even showed them where I threw the corpses. And I was a witness in the trials of others, all the trials."

I had always been told that Girumuhatse killed with a machete, but he said that he had preferred to use a *masu*, a nail-studded club. He described killing Oswald Twamugabo. "I hit him in the head with my club and when he fell to the ground I crushed his skull." It was that easy. "The Tutsis in '94 knew they were to be killed," Girumuhatse explained. "They had got weak in their heads, and so their bodies were weak. They expected it. We felled them like cows." Since his release from prison, he said, he had made amends with "everyone in the village": "I went from door to door asking forgiveness. I come to the house. I ask for the person. I say, I am here to ask for your pardon." He was not afraid of the survivors, although he was sometimes afraid of the other killers he had testified against. "Nobody ever threatens me," he said. "But I don't stay out late. I come home by seven o'clock. I stay in with my wife and children. So if I am killed it will be at home, and if someone else is killed, and they blame the former prisoners, I am here, nobody can blame me."

Everything that Girumuhatse said came out with the same swift, emotionless directness. He never hesitated before answering a question. He listened, hunched slightly forward on his chair, watching a chicken pecking around outside the doorway, then looked directly at my translator, and sometimes at me, when he spoke. He was, after all, a veteran of many *gacaca* trials: a professional witness—he knew what to say. He said, "I regret killing people for nothing. I regret killing neighbors who were friends or I had no problem with them." He said, "In 1994, we were just like animals, we could not reason. It was the state that told us the enemy was a Tutsi, and when I killed it was like communal work duty." The fact that his wife was a Tutsi hadn't troubled him, he said, "because I love her very much" and "really, she had become a Hutu like me." Nothing seemed to have troubled him when he went to work with his club, and I wondered whether he had enjoyed it.

"Yes," he said. "For me, it became a pleasure to kill. The first time, it's to please the government. After that, I developed a taste for it. I hunted and caught and killed with real enthusiasm. It was work, but work that I enjoyed. It wasn't like working for the government. It was like doing your own true job—like working for myself." He said, "I was very, very excited when I killed. I remember each killing. Yes, I woke every morning excited to go into the bush. It was the hunt—the

human hunt." And he said, "The genocide was like a festival. At day's end, or any time there was an occasion, we took a cow from the Tutsis, and slaughtered it and grilled it and drank beer. There were no limits anymore. It was a festival. We celebrated."

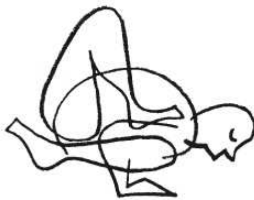
So Girumuhatse had found his vocation as a murderer. Before that, he had been a peasant, as he was again now, living in poverty and toil, tending the fields of slightly less poor peasants for beer money and enough beans and bananas to sustain himself, his wife, and seven children. But for a few months in 1994 Rwanda had become a kingdom of death and he had lived more fully, more like a lord, than he had ever imagined possible. It occurred to me that, just as the genocide had set him free, the *gacaca* process had liberated him to talk about it. I had no doubt that he was still hiding more from me than he was telling, but Girumuhatse had revealed himself. The law required that he be accepted for that. "Now," he said, "when I go to people's houses and ask forgiveness, they say, 'O.K.—you told the truth.'"

It was not so easy for the survivors. Girumuhatse's brother-in-law, Evariste, lived just a few hundred yards away, in a new house—a modest place, but generously proportioned by village standards. There was a fresh harvest of beans drying out front, and from where we sat, in a narrow entry parlor, a doorway led into the kitchen and a further doorway opened into a cowshed where a single heifer stood munching cud. Evariste and his wife had six children; the oldest was thirteen, and the youngest was two—a cheerful little boy, who pranced from room to room playing with a ball. A sister of Evariste's was there as well, visiting from out of town, and wearing a festive dress. A clump of pink cloth flowers sat in a pot on the parlor coffee table, and the only other ornament in the room was a giant 2003 campaign-poster portrait of Kagame.

Evariste had attended Girumuhatse's *gacaca* trial. "He really said everything, everything," Evariste said. When Girumuhatse had come to him and asked for forgiveness, Evariste told him that he forgave him. But he said to me, "All this reconciliation and the confessions—that's the program of the state. And when a killer comes and asks your pardon you can't do anything else. You pardon him, but you don't really know if it comes from your heart, because you don't really know about the killer—if he is asking forgiveness from his heart."

Still, Evariste believed that it was better to fake it than not. "For a survivor, when you see a killer you're a bit shocked, and it only makes sense to have fear," he said. "But you can't do anything. You can't kill him. And the killer—it's better if he comes and says hello than if he flees, because it creates a climate of great distrust when a killer avoids a survivor and won't greet him. But there is really no solution. In the evening, you see someone, you fear. At home, at night, when I think of it I'm afraid. It's the situation of the whole country."

Evariste's sister, Mariane, who had seemed high-spirited and chatty when I arrived, had turned away with pursed lips at the first mention of Girumuhatse. Now she let loose: "I can't understand a person who kills ten people and asks for pardon. It's always a problem to live with them, and if I could afford to live somewhere else I would leave this country." Girumuhatse's wife—her sister—had come with him when he asked Mariane for pardon. "But this is all theatre," she said. "It doesn't mean anything. A killer is a killer, and you have to abandon them. I just can't support it. Yes, I visit my sister. My sister lives with a killer because they have children together, and it's not the children's fault, and to make a child is not a game. Yes, when I visit my sister I speak with him, but it's theatre. . . . If ever the occasion arose, if there was an opportunity, they would kill again. Because I think they're all killers. They only asked pardon because of *gacaca*. Why didn't they ask forgiveness before *gacaca*? It's because of the President that they don't kill. Forgiveness came from a Presidential order. He's the one who pardoned them." She glanced up at the enormous head of Kagame on the wall, staring coldly out through wire-rimmed glasses. "Yes," she said. "If he were not there, we would all be killed."



With that, Mariane sat back in her chair, her tension apparently spent. The conversation drifted for a while to happier subjects—the economy, the harvest, the cow out back. Then Mariane spoke again. "It becomes a bit easier with time," she said. "Because people are more or less safe, and we're at a stage where the killers and the survivors can speak. It's a kind of trust, and it takes a very, very long time."

A light rain began as we left Evariste's, and we drove a few hundred yards back past Girumuhatse's place, to the home of Laurencie Nyirabeza, the woman who had first told me about him. The house was about the same size as Evariste's, but much older and more weathered. In the damp gloomy light of the late afternoon, it looked barren and abandoned, but a young woman came out to greet us, and another was in the parlor—Nyirabeza's granddaughters. They were sisters, in their mid-twenties, and had been orphaned in the genocide; Nyirabeza had looked after them, and now they looked after her. She was seventy-nine, and in bed. Eventually, she emerged, a tiny bowed figure, barefoot and wrapped in a bright blue-and-yellow batik, supporting herself with both hands on a tall wooden staff, which she worked in a rowing motion, easing her way to a chair as if she were in a dugout in shallow water. Her wizened face wore a quizzical, inward expression, at once witty and distant, but she spoke with great presence.

Nyirabeza had worked for the *gacaca* courts, and she had not been impressed. "It's an official thing," she said. "Even when the killers ask forgiveness, it's from the government and the Rwandan people and the victims, but they never name our names." I read to her the names of the people Girumuhatse told me he'd killed. "Munyaneza was my brother," she said. "I was at his house during the genocide. Oswald was my nephew. Wellars and Stanislas—neighbors. Gakombe, too, a neighbor. Ntampuhwe was also my nephew. And he also killed Ntampuhwe's children, which he didn't say." One of the granddaughters told me that the thirteen-year-old brothers Girumuhatse killed, Eric and Mugabo, were her schoolmates.

"When he killed Munyaneza, my brother, he struck him and he threw him alive in a latrine to die," Nyirabeza said. "So it's true that he told a lot in *gacaca*—because he was a big killer." But

she had not attended Girumuhatse's trial. "I was sick," she said. "Ever since Jean hit me, I don't feel well." And, she said, "He never came here." She spat on the floor and turned away. "Nobody's come to see me and ask for pardon, and I wouldn't give it. I've heard about reconciliation on the radio, but it doesn't bring back my family."

As she spoke, Nyirabeza pulled her batik wrap slowly up from her shoulders until it covered her head. Then she fell silent, and curled into herself until she was entirely covered. After a while, she began to shiver, and her granddaughters helped her to her feet and led her back to bed.

The granddaughters, who had listened to Nyirabeza in silence, became talkative after she was gone. "It's much better here now than twelve years ago," one said, but she added, "Economically, it was better before '94, because now we live in a village built by the government and it's not near our fields. They built these villages by the road for security, because there were times when people were threatened or were killed in their fields. And before '94 we had families—we had parents who helped us live. And now we're by ourselves."

I didn't see any great hope in the eyes of the people I visited in Taba. But as I travelled around Rwanda there was a greater sense of ease among people than I remembered. It wasn't anything that you'd notice if you hadn't been there before, because what I was feeling wasn't so much the presence of strikingly positive energy but, rather, the absence of a mood of wary inwardness. The country was becoming less spooked. At times, it was simply a neutral place to be, like anywhere else. It was normal, which was extraordinary.

I never did meet a survivor who spoke well of *gacaca*. "It's awful," a friend of mine in Kigali said, a gentle family man of enormous quiet strength, who had served for a time as a minister in Kagame's government, and now worked in the private sector. For nearly a year, he had had to go back again and again to the village where his mother had lived to attend the trials of her murderers. He was glad to learn the truth, but he said, "The arrogance of these guys—just standing there, telling how they killed my mother, where they threw her. It was nothing to them. So arrogant." He found the confessions unbearable; others complained of the stonewalling, the denials and evasions. A woman who had just sat through the *gacaca* trial of a man accused of helping to kill one of her brothers told me, "They all say the same thing—'I was sick during the genocide, I never left the house, I never looked out the window.' It's ridiculous. This man's own brother was already convicted of killing my brother, and it's this guilty brother of his who implicated him." The woman told me that of her parents' ten children six had been killed in 1994, and that those who survived had all been in Europe. "They talk about reconciliation. It's the reverse. Every time I come to *gacaca* with an open mind, I just get more upset."

But none of the survivors I spoke with thought that there was any better solution. Never mind reconciliation, Tutsis and Hutus had to coexist. Sagahutu expressed the sentiment most succinctly: "It's our obligation, and it's our only way to survive, and I do it every day, and I still can't comprehend it." When I repeated Sagahutu's formulation to other survivors and to members of Kagame's Cabinet, it was always met with recognition: Yes, that's it. So what was required politically was emotionally incomprehensible, and the President's idea of the common good hung in the balance.

"At the beginning, it is very fragile, but with time I think it holds," Kagame told me. "People's hearts and minds need some time to heal. A very long time indeed. They will probably need a whole generation, and the memories will keep lingering." Then he told me a story. Every year, on April 7th, Kagame presides over a national genocide-commemoration ceremony at one of the major massacre sites that have been preserved as memorials to the victims. In 2005, the ceremony was at Murambi, where a young man in his mid-twenties got up to speak. "A survivor," Kagame said. "Somebody who actually was killed, almost, and dumped in a mass grave of close to four thousand people. Our forces arrived after they had just been killed and brought out twelve people from the mass grave who lived, survived. They had been cut with machetes and were in very bad shape. They were treated and nursed, and over time this young person was there giving testimony of what happened."

President Kagame answers critics who assess

Kagame told me that when the young man got to the end of his account he said, "Recently, some of those people who killed our families and killed us have been released. . . . They are there in the village living normally." It was Kagame, of course, who had issued the order granting the killers their reprieve, so after the ceremony he called the young man over. "And I asked him, How do you manage? When you meet them, what do they tell you or what do you tell them? What is your feeling? I want you to gen-

Rwanda by how far it still falls short, "I wish there were a way of winding time and making it run faster." Photograph by Pieter Hugo.

uinely tell me how you feel. This young man looked me in the face and he said, 'Well, President, I manage because you ask us to manage.' "

Kagame repeated the man's words in a tone of some astonishment—"This is what he told me. He said, 'President, I manage because you ask us to manage' "—as if he had only just heard in them the echo of the soul-molding power of his office. But there was a chastening twist at the end of the young survivor's story. It turned out that the released killers avoided him in his village. "They would rather take another route," Kagame said. "When he passes them, they always look down. It was very revealing. You see, it's like, We are managing because what else?"

In other words, I suggested, the young man wasn't managing so well, after all.

"Yes," Kagame said. "That's really what he meant."

Such was the hard bargain of Rwanda's reconciliation project. The common presumption among Western critics of *gacaca*, who lodge their complaints in the language of international law and human rights, is that the system fails to offer the accused sufficient protection and consideration. But the shortcomings cut both ways. "Not the victims, not the perpetrators—nobody will tell you he is happy with the *gacaca*," Kagame said, and he thought that was probably the best one could hope for. He didn't want either side to be happy—"because whichever way we go we are left with nothing." *Gacaca*, he said, "gives us something to build on," and he understood that ultimately

the system asked more of survivors than it does of *génocidaires*.

"That's the dilemma," Kagame said, and he added, "The heart of the matter is in these stories." Then, after a moment, he said, "In April, when I'm talking to whatever part of the audience that I address on that commemoration day, I have a moment to spill out this anger. In politics or in diplomacy, you don't spill out the anger sufficiently. And that's why one time I said, I wish I had to fight another war, literally." He went on, "The battlefield has a definition, it has very clear lines, and even though it relies on tactics and strategy and bravery and so on, it provides the way to vent your anger and get it out. But managing these fluid situations, and then the politics and the histories and the cultures—fighting this in the way we do in modern times consumes a lot of energy and drives somebody crazy."

When Jean Girumuhatse spoke of the pleasure that killing had given him, I asked him if he thought it could happen again. "No," he said. "Because 1994 was a big lesson. I respect the authorities today, but if they told me to kill I would not." A clever dodge: he was saying that he would not kill for Kagame's government. Yet, a moment later, he said that when he was in the U.N. camps in Congo, from 1994 to 1996, "there were a lot of extremists" who "always said we'd return in arms" to Rwanda, but "unfortunately" the Rwandan Army had attacked the camps first.

Girumuhatse said that even as he was rendering his confession to the *gacaca* tribunal, a year and a half ago, he had continued to hope that his old extremist comrades who had remained in Congo after the breakup of the camps would reconquer Rwanda. "In prison, we all thought there was still an army outside the country that would come to liberate us, and now we see that it's not true," he said, and added, "It was a dream that we told each other." In fact, there still is a genocidal Hutu army outside Rwanda. It is right where Girumuhatse left it, in Congo, and its presence there is one of the chief causes of the wars that have ravaged that vast country since the Rwandan genocide. After all, for most of the past fifteen years, the Hutu fighters have operated in Congo as the guests or allies of a succession of Congolese governments.

In Kigali, in January, I met a man named Paul Rwarakabije, who was, for nearly a decade, one of the top officers of this genocidal army in exile and, for a time, its over-all commander. Rwarakabije was a professional soldier, and a pure product of Rwanda's ancien régime: a graduate of the École Supérieure Militaire, in Kigali, and of advanced officer-training programs in France and Belgium. He came from northwestern Rwanda, a region that had been the Hutu Power heartland; in 1990, when the war with the R.P.F. broke out in Rwanda, he served at the front as the leader of a combat battalion, and he served in the high command during the genocide, too. Yet today he is a general in the Rwandan Defense Force—Kagame's Army—and entitled to all the rights and respect befitting his rank, including a full pension upon retirement. When I asked him how that came about, he told me the story of his life as an enemy of the cause he now serves, and he told it without apology, even at times with pride, as if he had only been fighting for his country all along and by losing he had wound up winning.

Still, Rwarakabije was circumspect. When he spoke of war-fighting—his soldiers against the other side's—he used the first person: he said "we" regrouped in Congo, "we" recruited in the camps, "we" got arms from Mobutu. (Mobutu Sese Seko, the Congolese dictator, was a great patron of Hutu Power, especially when the *génocidaires* in the camps began massacring Congolese Tutsis, and driving tens of thousands of them into Rwanda as refugees.) But when he spoke of genocide—killing Tutsis for the sake of killing Tutsis—Rwarakabije used the third person to describe the crimes of his old comrades in arms. "When they were in the camps, they went to hunt the Tutsis," he said of the ethnic cleansing in Congo. He even slipped into the second person to describe the cross-border attacks that his troops in the camps launched inside Rwanda, to slaughter survivors, and sow terror and instability. "You also saw the operations of destabi-

TREATMENT

It's a little spa for the mind—seeing butterflies
set themselves down by the dozen like easels

on bromeliads, when out on the street the boutiques
are dilapidated, construction can't be told from ruin.

A single taste bud magnified resembles an orchid
but what that one's drinking from is a woman's eye

which must be brineless. I wonder what she consumes
that her tears taste like fructose. For minutes she's all its.

Then the moon rises and the river flows backward.
Composed of millions of tiny north poles, iron's

punched out of the environment, hammered into railways.
Pubs serve shepherd's pies with marcelled mashed-potato crusts

and each tree casts its shade in the form of its summary leaf.
Is a woman's eye a single taste bud magnified?

Yet construction can't be told from ruin.
Out on the street the boutiques are dilapidated

by the dozen like easels. And the mind—it's a little spa.

—*Ange Mlinko*

lization of Rwanda at that time," he said.

Of course, Rwarakabije was deeply involved in all these activities. He was a brigade commander in his camp, Katale, in the Congolese province of North Kivu—the same camp, as it happened, where Girumuhatse had been. Katale was known as one of the most militarized of the U.N. camps. (In 1995, a relief worker named Richard Danziger told me that, driving to Katale early one morning, he had been greeted by a strange, high whining noise as he approached—a sound that he could not identify until he rounded a bend and found the road blocked by scores of young men who were using the tarmac as a whetstone to sharpen their machetes.) The message that camp leaders like Rwarakabije used to recruit new fighters was simple: if you go home, the Tutsis will kill you. In reality, the vast majority of Hutu civilians who returned were reintegrated into their communities, while former soldiers were sent to demobilization camps and sometimes were even recruited into the Rwandan Army. For Rwarakabije and his fellow-officers in exile, the message that to go home was to go to one's death was effective, a logical perversion of the golden rule: they will do unto you as you would do unto them.

After the camps were destroyed, in 1996, most of the Rwandan Hutus who remained in Congo fled west into the equatorial rain forests, where the Rwandan Army pursued them, accompanied by a Congolese rebel alliance that swept across the country and, with the support of the armies of at least half a dozen other African states, overthrew Mobutu, installing in his place the rebel leader Laurent Kabila. Mobutu's pathetic army had barely put up resistance; the only people who fought hard for him were the fugitive Hutu *génocidaires*, and in the course of the campaign the Rwandan Army killed tens of thousands of them and their civilian followers. At the same time, large groups of Rwandan Hutus gave up and were sent home, while others took refuge in neighboring countries.

Rwarakabije had remained in eastern Congo with a contingent of fighters from the camps, who waited until the Rwandan Army had passed by, and then began moving in small parties into Rwanda to fight in the north and west of the country. The "war of infiltration," as this insurgency came to be known, lasted for a year and a half, and, as it intensified in the latter half of 1997, its original leader and then his replacement were killed, leaving Rwarakabije in command. His fighters mingled with the local population, who accommodated them—in sympathy and in fear—and who suffered accordingly.

"That was real combat in '97 and '98," Rwarakabije said. In the camps, when the *génocidaires* plotted their return to Rwanda, "the aim was to retake power." But now, with their forces depleted and scattered, he told me, "we said, Instead of dying in exile, we'll go die in our homeland." There was no hope of victory, and no cause to fight for; the objective was simply to visit destruction on the country they could not have. "It was a sort of *sauve qui peut*," Rwarakabije said—every man for himself. So Rwarakabije's forces slaughtered Tutsis wherever they found them, and the Rwandan Army fought back just as hard—and at least ten thousand fighters and civilians were killed, while hundreds of thousands of villagers were displaced and rounded up into holding camps until the insurgency was suppressed, in the summer of 1998. "The Army chased us out once more," Rwarakabije said. "They returned from Congo, and we returned to Congo."

At almost the same moment, a thousand miles away in the Congolese capital, Kinshasa, President Kabila, who had proved to be every bit as capricious as Mobutu, and even less popular, turned against the Rwandan Army, which had helped put him in office, and embraced instead the Hutu fighters whom he had helped to pursue on his march to power. Rwanda struck back swiftly, reoccupying much of Congo. Anti-Tutsi propaganda filled the airwaves, and Tutsis were hunted in the streets. Kagame said that he wasn't leaving until there was a Congolese government in place that promised to disarm and disband the genocidal Rwandan renegades. Instead, the Congolese President put his son, Joseph Kabila, in charge of military operations, and, following in Mobutu's footsteps, he mustered the fugitive Hutu army as his special forces. "We profited," Rwarakabije said, "because it was he who gave us the equipment, the war matériel, the ammunition, and the arms."

Congo was soon split up, with Rwanda and its local proxies occupying much of the eastern part for the next five years. The bond between Kinshasa and the fugitive *génocidaires* grew stronger in 2001, when Laurent Kabila was assassinated—shot point-blank by his own bodyguard—and Joseph Kabila succeeded him as President. By then, the scattered Hutu forces had fully reunited, forming an army of some twelve thousand fighters, who called themselves the F.D.L.R. (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda), and in 2003 Rwarakabije became its overall commander. But, he told me, he no longer had the will to fight.

Rwarakabije said that his change of heart had begun two years earlier, after the F.D.L.R. attempted a major attack on Rwanda, and the Rwandan Army captured nearly two thousand of his men. Rwarakabije had assumed that they would all be killed. Instead, the prisoners were sent to demobilization camps, to be reformed and instructed in the ways of civilian life in post-genocide Rwanda. "And after the training they were returned to their homes," Rwarakabije said. He was stunned. Until then, he said, he had always regarded the Rwandan Army as "the worst—they're vile, they're killers, they'll do anything." But when he saw that the soldiers he had lost were spared, he convened several like-minded officers to evaluate the situation. "We said, Look at the war that we have fought until now. We lost the war of 1990 to 1994. And '97, '98 we lost again. In 2001, we lost, and a great number of people were captured. Are we going to continue to fight? For what? And so our reasoning brought us to the question: Can we still change?"

Rwarakabije wanted more information, and he took his time collecting it. In 2003, he said, the F.D.L.R. was preparing another attack on Rwanda, but this time, he said, he sent a spy into the country first, to talk to family members of his troops, and to friends, people who had supported the insurgents during the war of infiltration five years earlier. Now the message from those same people was: "When you make war, it's we, the population, who suffer. We die from the bullets and we just can't keep it up." Rwarakabije realized that his war was no longer welcomed by the people he claimed to be fighting for. "They told us, Stop. Stop. The fighting is destroying us instead of constructing us." He decided not to go

ahead with the attacks, but he knew his comrades: they had always been glad to execute deserters.

"I began to think about my life, too," he said, and he told me that he set about establishing phone contact with the chief of general staff of the Rwandan Army, General James Kabarebe, the man who had led Rwanda's wars in Congo and whom the F.D.L.R. accused of killing its people en masse. Kabarebe remembers it differently. He said that it was he who reached out to Rwarakabije. In any case, when they spoke Kabarebe told Rwarakabije that he would be welcomed if he came home. They stayed in touch, talking regularly for months. Kabarebe invited Rwarakabije to send some of his officers to Rwanda to have a look around. "We'll protect them," Kabarebe said, but none of Rwarakabije's men were willing to go. Rwarakabije then proposed that he be allowed to return to Rwanda with a hundred and three men in arms: not to fight but so as not to draw attention as they left Congo, and as a matter of pride—which is how the scenario played out, in the middle of a November night in 2003.

"I was done with the war of rebellion," Rwarakabije told me. "So I was a collaborator with the country." Rwarakabije still speaks of himself as the commander of the twelve thousand fighters he left behind, and for the past five years he has worked for Rwanda's demobilization commission, sending the message to the F.D.L.R. that there is no future for them in Congo, and helping those who come home to adjust. "Because we don't want our colleagues to die in the forest," he said. And, gradually, singly or in small groups, about half of his men have returned in his wake.

Rwarakabije is hardly alone in his efforts. Kagame told me that family members are often sent into Congo to persuade their F.D.L.R. relations to surrender. "The wife comes and shows up and says, Your four children are still alive, they are in school, we are happy, what are you doing here?" he said. "And the man the next day makes the decision to leave, because, after all, he can really tell for himself what he is experiencing on the other side." Sometimes, he said, a little money can help, too. Fighters who have genocide crimes to answer for may have to submit to *gacaca*, but a great many of the F.D.L.R. troops are too young to be charged. "I would say they are now indoctrinated in the ideology of genocide but they are not *génocidaires*," Rwarakabije said.

Kagame said that last April, during the genocide-commemoration ceremony in the Bugesera district, south of Kigali, an old man addressed the gathering, telling stories of the genocide, and naming offenders as he went. At one point, Kagame told me, "this old man said, 'There was a man here called Rwarakabije.' And Rwarakabije was there with all of us. He was with the officers in Army uniforms with pips—he was a major general." The old man had terrible memories of Rwarakabije, and he remarked that Rwarakabije must be with the masterminds of the genocide who were on trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the U.N. court in Arusha, Tanzania. "You know, there was that atmosphere of sadness," Kagame said. "But everybody burst out laughing—the whole area where the officers were sitting." Remembering the moment, Kagame laughed again. "This is the way of our life," he said.

Rwarakabije has not been prosecuted. Kagame told me that that was for the best. "You see, here we are trying to maneuver through very, very complex terrain, and it's like you always look for some opening and we exploit it as much as we can," he said. Even before the genocide, Kagame had made a point of absorbing enemy defectors and dissidents into the R.P.F., and if the risk of such a strategy seemed greater after 1994 so did the reward. "I have come under fire from my own people for some of the things I have done," he said. "It's, No, no. It's, You are favoring the other group. And I tell them no, for me I know one group—one group of Rwandans."

Although the R.P.F. has delivered some of its own to the genocide courts, Kagame continues to draw criticism for refusing to prosecute some of his soldiers for revenge killings after the genocide, and for war crimes committed during counter-insurgency operations. He clearly favors political expediency over justice. He doesn't want to have to prosecute either his former soldiers or Rwarakabije for their crimes during the war of infiltration. After all, he said, "how we have treated Rwarakabije—it helps to win others over," and he added, "We don't want really to be stuck in the complexities of our past."

At Rwanda's demobilization camps, former F.D.L.R. fighters are given reintegration training; they are taught to use banks, and to form business collectives. When they complete the program, the government gives each of them a few hundred dollars—a handsome sum—to reëstablish himself; and when they go home community monitors regularly follow up with them to insure that they are finding a place in civilian life. This is more than the government has done for survivors, or for children born of genocide rapes. The political calculus is clear: resources are painfully limited, and neglected victims pose no immediate threat to society. Rwarakabije clearly approved of this system, but, when I asked him if Rwanda is better today than it was before the genocide, he threw up his hands. "Ahh—bah! I'm not saying," he said.

A year after the genocide, a World Bank team came through Rwanda to survey its economic condition and prospects, and in summing up its findings one of the team members told a Kagame adviser, "Rwanda is a nonviable country." Today, Kagame will tell you that the No. 1 threat to the country is not ethnic extremism or violence but the underlying scourge of poverty, and when I reminded him of that World Bank assessment he said, "The same people who were saying that Rwanda is not viable economically, they are the same people who were saying that the Hutus and the Tutsis can't live together."

Although Rwanda still relies on foreign aid for roughly half its budget, Kagame regards aid-dependency as one of the greatest obstacles to development in post-colonial Africa, and he sees his promotion of trade and entrepreneurship as a continuation of the liberation struggle. Rwanda has just signed a three-hundred-million-dollar deal with an American energy company to extract vast stores of methane from Lake Kivu,

which forms much of Rwanda's border with Congo. The methane will drive electrical generators, more than doubling the national supply while cutting the price by more than half. There are now also mining operations in Rwanda, producing respectable amounts of cassiterite, coltan, wolframite, and gold. There are plans to create a large new airport and a free-trade zone about half an hour outside Kigali, and to set up a railroad link to a port in Tanzania. Banks are proliferating, and, increasingly, white-collar professionals from other East African countries are coming to Rwanda in search of opportunity.

Everything is still very rudimentary; the country cannot train new employees as fast as they are needed, but Kagame is frequently out in the world—Davos, New York, Beijing—trying to lure private investors. At home, he plays host to visiting members of the global—and particularly the American—power élite: Bill Clinton, Pastor Rick Warren, and Michael Porter, the head of the Harvard Business School's Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, are all friends of Kagame and members of his kitchen cabinet of advisers. Paul Farmer's organization works to provide medical services there. Google's C.E.O., Eric Schmidt, is in the Rwanda loop, too. As an apostle of entrepreneurial self-reliance, Kagame does not want Rwanda to be like any other African country; his model is Singapore.

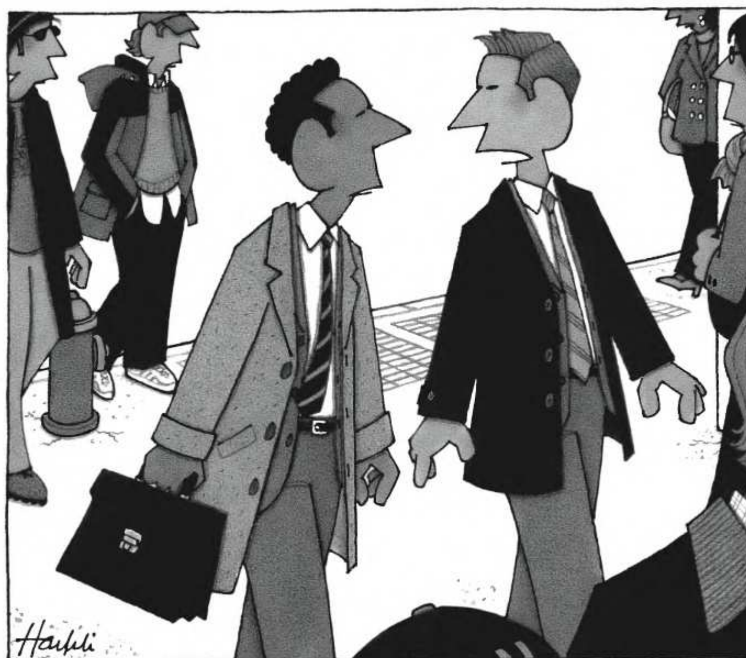
In his Cabinet and, more broadly, in the R.P.F., Kagame is often referred to as the Boss, and he is known as an exacting and exhausting taskmaster. He is a great believer in competition at each level of society. Every year, he takes his government on retreats, during which Cabinet members and senior legislators make public declarations of their goals and are then pressed to meet them. The same goes for local government leaders, and Kagame frequently travels the countryside lambasting lazy public officials in front of their constituents, demanding more hard work and higher standards, and insisting on individual accountability not only on the part of civil servants but from every citizen. Communities are required to take responsibility for the poorest among them, and seek collective solutions to families that fall into delinquency owing to alcoholism or other dysfunction. And villages compete against one another in annual poverty-alleviation contests.

There has been a broad shift away from the genocide-tainted Catholic Church on the part of Rwanda's overwhelmingly Christian population, and Kagame has responded by welcoming Protestant evangelists into the country. He has embraced Pastor Warren's "Purpose Driven" mission as the closest thing to an official state religion. It is Warren's pragmatism and entrepreneurial skills that Kagame particularly admires. He is glad to see others turn to God in the face of cosmic questions of life and death, reconciliation and forgiveness, but Kagame told me that he himself remains only minimally religious. "I go on the side of purpose," he said. "Fatalism—I don't go for it."

Kagame said that war is much simpler than peace, and that he sometimes wished he had another war to fight, but in the last months of 2008 the international press began reporting that he in fact was basically fighting another war. The trouble, once more, was in eastern Congo. In 2002, Kagame had agreed to withdraw his Army from Congo in exchange for a commitment from President Kabila to dismantle the F.D.L.R. But Kabila had done nothing to disband his genocidal allies, and before long a renegade Congolese Tutsi general named Laurent Nkunda had launched a new rebellion in North Kivu, claiming to protect Congolese Tutsis from the renewed threat of genocide.

That threat was real, and Rwanda's position was: What did anyone expect? For several years after Rwanda's withdrawal, Kagame regularly sent Emmanuel Ndahiro, his intelligence chief, to meet with Kabila and urge him to understand that as long as he supported the F.D.L.R. he was going to have a war in the east. Yet Kabila preferred to fight Nkunda rather than to negotiate a settlement with him.

Late last summer, Nkunda rebuffed a series of government attacks and went on the offensive, sweeping down from his stronghold in the highlands, routing the national Army with ease, and seizing new territory. The fighting had come, as always in Congo, at a terrible cost to noncombatants. There was slaughter, and pillage, and an epidemic of savage rape. Much of the horror came at the hands of Congolese government soldiers, who preferred to flee and go feral than to fight, and at the hands of the F.D.L.R. and other government-allied militias. But



"I've stopped carrying a briefcase. I don't like to flaunt my employment."

"I don't think this is doing me any good."

Nkunda's men, too, were accused—and not for the first time—of perpetrating massacres and sex crimes; and as they captured territory last fall more than a quarter of a million civilians fled their homes in North Kivu, adding to the hundreds of thousands already displaced in eastern Congo. At the peak of the fighting, in late October, Nkunda's rebels were on the verge of overrunning the provincial capital, Goma. Then, suddenly, Nkunda called off his advance, and agreed to engage in negotiations with the government. Around the same time, his rhetoric shifted, and, instead of talking about ethnic self-defense, he claimed that he was waging a national-liberation struggle with the aim of regime change. The story caught on in the press that Rwanda and Congo were engaged in a proxy war.

So it was with some astonishment that I learned, as soon as I arrived in Rwanda in January, that Kagame and Kabila had been in regular phone contact for months, while exchanging high-level military and diplomatic delegations, and that the two Presidents had reached an agreement to conduct a joint military operation against the F.D.L.R. in Congo. The Rwandan officials I spoke with seemed in high spirits, which was not their usual style, especially when it came to the wars in Congo. But what about Nkunda? "The only thing we have in common with Nkunda is that he fights the F.D.L.R. Period. Nothing else," Ndahiro told me, and he added, "We don't supply uniforms, we don't supply ammunition, we don't supply food, we don't supply anything. The only thing we do for Nkunda, which I must admit—whether it is me or the President—is we say Nkunda has reasons."

Kagame went further. He said that of course he was happy that someone else was fighting the F.D.L.R.—that was a good cause—but he said that he had never met Nkunda, and had never spoken to him, or even seen him, except on television. For that, he had his military-intelligence officers, and he said, "No question about it, day in, day out, we know what is going on." He said that the only time he had sent Nkunda a message directly—through his minions, but in his own name—he had done so at the behest of President Kabila. That was when Nkunda was about to march into Goma, and Kagame said that Kabila had called him pleading for help. Kagame's message to Nkunda was: Stop. "You will completely lose the justness of your cause." Nkunda wasn't happy about that. "He's gone on talking about blaming us for that," Kagame said. He called Nkunda "irrational" and "high-handed" and "undisciplined," and he accused him of "behaving like a warlord." He did not deny that he had sympathy for Nkunda's cause. But Kagame was plainly disgusted by the fact that Nkunda—who loved to pose for press cameras in flamboyant costumes, wearing a white robe, or carrying a cane crowned with a silver eagle's head while sporting a "Rebels for Christ" lapel pin, or leading a snow-white pet lamb named Bettie around on a leash—had made the war in North Kivu so much about himself.

Kagame said that, when he agreed to help Kabila by telling Nkunda to back off from Goma, he knew that Kabila would blame him for controlling Nkunda. The blame was annoying—some European governments had cut aid to Rwanda—but what really angered Kagame was the assumption underlying that blame, that Nkunda was the big problem in eastern Congo. No, he said, the problem was that a pack of *génocidaires* was running loose in Congo, and nobody there wanted to deal with them. The problem was the F.D.L.R., and, Kagame said, Nkunda was just a symptom of that problem, because if you got rid of the F.D.L.R. he'd have no reason to exist, whereas if you got rid of him, and the F.D.L.R. remained, someone would arise to take his place.

By the same logic, Kagame argued, the F.D.L.R. was really a symptom of Kabila's weakness, because it would be nothing without his backing. This was what he had spent the last months of last year trying to explain to Kabila. Kagame said that he didn't want another war in Congo. Rwanda had paid a heavy price in international opinion for its part in the wars there, but Kagame had always depicted those wars as the price that had to be paid for reconciliation at home. And now he wanted to forge an alliance with Kabila, at precisely the moment when it appeared that they were at each other's throats. "That's why we are not so much focussed on the F.D.L.R. per se," he said. "In fact, our view is that by relating to Kinshasa well we eliminate the F.D.L.R. problem. Our approach is not just, Go for the F.D.L.R.—hit, hit, hit, you know. That time is gone."

What Kagame was seeking was not so much a military solution as a political realignment. During Rwanda's extended occupation of the mineral-rich eastern Congo, he had been accused of running a colonial war of pillage, but he had always said that Rwanda's economic well-being required peace and trade with its

neighbors. Nkunda, he allowed, had been useful insofar as he had placed enormous pressure on Kabila "to feel that associating with us is much better and more profitable than associating with the F.D.L.R." But now that the two Presidents were working together, Nkunda suddenly seemed like the sideshow that Kagame had always said he was. To complicate matters, on January 5th Nkunda's second-in-command issued a statement announcing that Nkunda had been removed as the leader of his rebellion. The talk in Kigali was of a coup, but Nkunda was denying it. When I saw Kagame two days later, he seemed quite certain that it was true—Nkunda was being sidelined—and he seemed to think it was for the best. According to his intelligence, he said, Nkunda was the loser, "even if he may continue to exist." As for the joint Rwandan-Congolese campaign against the F.D.L.R., Kagame said, the battlefield results were not as important as the fact that the two countries had joined forces against their respective rebel threats. "So they benefit and we benefit," he said, and he added, "They have much to offer, we have much to offer, and this can only best be realized through business."

I wondered how Nkunda saw the situation. So one morning in the second week of January I travelled north out of Rwanda into Uganda, then west into a rebel-controlled zone of Congo, and onward, following a series of increasingly rough dirt tracks that ran through the bush of North Kivu province, slicing occasionally through tiny war-deserted villages, until the road came to an end at the base of a steep hill. I continued on foot to the top, where, in a cluster of tents and the concrete shell of an unfinished house, Nkunda had his field headquarters.

Nkunda was wearing an immaculate white Adidas tracksuit with black piping, matching sneakers, and a baseball cap inscribed with the legend "Survivors Never Surrender." He assured me that he was still in command of his movement. I had no way of knowing if he really believed that, much less if it was true. I asked him what he was fighting for, and he spoke for nearly two hours about everything that is wrong with Congo, a subject that might easily have engrossed us for two years. He spoke of the weakness of the central government, the need for an opposition party, the desirability of a federal system that would respect minority rights. He was clear and convincing, but he never managed to tell me what he meant to do about any of these things. He said that it was good to resist and to fight, and when at last I thanked him for his time, and said I had to be going—my driver wanted to get out of Congo well before dark—he looked offended. He had more to say, he told me, and what he said was this:

"There is one thing that gives me courage in life. I was in Rwanda during the genocide. I saw what Rwanda was during the genocide. And after the genocide I saw Kagame come to power. He was still young. I saw the challenges that lay before him, and today when I see what Rwanda has become I say, It's possible. It's possible. Me, I have no more that I fear—I fear only what is inside a man. Man is not destroyed from the exterior. Man is destroyed from within. Because if there was ever destruction in the world it was the destruction of Rwanda—where the country was empty, the banks were emptied, the Army had fled, the people had fled, all the infrastructure gone. But the Rwanda of today, I don't know if it is a miracle or what—but there is a man. A single man. The Rwandans are still the same—and without Kagame the genocide could come back. Perhaps the Tutsis would even avenge themselves against the Hutus."

And he went on: "Rwanda has no resources. And Congo with all this, why has it not developed? Why not? Why not? Because there is not a man." He said, "In Rwanda there is no petrol, but in Congo there is. In Rwanda there are no diamonds; in Congo there is. In Rwanda there is not this fertility—only in a little part of it—but in Congo it is everywhere. In Rwanda there's only a little forest, but in Congo there is the greatest forest in Africa, in the world. Why hasn't this country developed? Listen, Congo gives electricity to Rwanda. In Rwanda there are no blackouts, but in Congo it's black. What's happening? There's a man. Just one. There aren't two."

He thought about that for a moment, and then he wound up where he had started: "I have participated in the destruction of Rwanda and I have seen the reconstruction of Rwanda, and I tell you I still don't understand how that man did it."

Two weeks later, on the second day of the joint Rwandan-Congolese military operation against the F.D.L.R., Kagame's troops arrested Nkunda. Rwandan officials say that they are considering whether to turn him over to the Congolese, but they do not seem to feel any urgency about it. "Nkunda, if you will, is our guest," Kagame told the BBC. In the meantime, Nkunda's army has disbanded and many of his troops have been integrated into the Congolese military.

Nkunda's arrest heightened the drama of the return of Rwandan soldiers to Congo. There had been great alarm about the operation among human-rights activists and Western diplomats, who predicted mass civilian casualties and displacement—as if that weren't the status quo that the operation was trying to change. There was great skepticism, too, that the Rwandans would ever leave Congo when the Congolese asked them. But everybody was on his best behavior. The anticipated bad news never came. Some F.D.L.R. fighters were killed, and about seven hundred took the occasion to return home and demobilize along with a thousand of their civilian followers. The operation lasted a little more than a month, and, on a day that had been agreed upon in advance, the Rwandan troops lined up at the border to bid farewell to their Congolese counterparts. They were given a festive sendoff, and a festive welcome home.

Since the withdrawal of the Rwandan Army, the F.D.L.R. has gone on a rampage, killing and raping Congolese and causing them to flee their homes. And there are still countless other armed bands tearing up what is left of eastern Congo. There are also still about fifty thousand Congolese Tutsi refugees in Rwanda, where they have been since 1996, when the *génocidaires* in the camps chased them there. At the news of Nkunda's arrest, these refugees staged angry demonstrations, and the police were sent in to quell them. There is still no peace in Congo. But Kagame has finally rewritten the script in the way he had wanted to since he came to power—the way he had tried to rewrite it when he installed Kabila's father in the first place, all those bloody years ago—and for the first time in fifteen years there is near-universal agreement that there is a possibility of peace. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Philip Gourevitch talks about Rwanda.