

# Who Is Guilty For Africa's Holocaust ?

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**The world said it should never happen again but stood by while genocide took place in Rwanda. DAVID BERESFORD calls for a new Nuremberg**

A FEW hundred yards from the United Nations' headquarters in Rwanda there is a Jesuit "social and cultural centre", a pleasant little community set in lush gardens on a Kigali hillside. The complex has been turned into a press centre and, in the central courtyard, journalists are to be found in the evening, hunched over satellite-telephone dishes peering skywards, or gossiping around a communal table.

On the wall above the table are two hand-prints. Only the outline of two fingers define them as such, for the rest are blurs of recorded movement. Perhaps a forensic scientist could read something into them, extrapolating from the swirls the bodily contortions that left them there. The layman merely has the certainty that they are made from blood and is left contemplating the obscenity of

their presence on an otherwise pristine white wall.

There is other, stronger evidence of the horror which took place in the Christus Centre. A few dozen yards away in room 28, almost the only object left untouched by blood, which paints the walls, floor and ceiling, is a picture of a swan. The inscription underneath offers an unintended epitaph for the eight priests, seven nuns, cook and visitor who died in Christ's centre : "Lord, do not let us waste the beauty and the joy of the world."

There are horror stories aplenty in Rwanda. The body of a mother pulled out of Lake Victoria with a child bound to each limb, the Belgian paratroopers found dead with their penises rammed into their mouths, tortured and killed in defence of the former prime minister. And, of course, the cholera pits of Goma.

It is the frustration of the Jews that the world is too forgetful. In Kigali today one cannot help but share the frustration. But if it is the les-

son of the Holocaust that an accumulation of horror is merely deadening in its effect, it is enough to gaze at the hand-prints on the wall to feel the need to echo the cry of "Never again".

The city itself, although still largely abandoned by those fleeing the horror and the threats of retribution, is cleaned of the memory of what happened on its streets. It was almost palpable on the faces of the first of the refugees to return this week : wide-eyed wonder at the calm of it all as they gazed from their perches on the backs of UN trucks. Where were the piles of dismembered corpses that were stacked next to barricades? The roving gangs of the dreaded Impuza Mgambi (The Single-minded Ones) and Interahanwe (Those Who Stand Together) with their bloodied clubs studded with nails, their assault rifles, bows and arrows and grenade-launchers? There is also a forgetfulness in the world's fixation with the relief disaster that is Goma.

The story of Rwanda is not that of a cholera epidemic, terrible though it may be ; cholera is the consequence of the central horror of the last few months - genocide. And while the ineptitude and inadequacy of the relief effort at Goma gives cause for comment and concern, the questions which Rwanda presents to the world are those raised by that central horror : why did it happen ; what should the international community have

done when it was happening ; and what can it do now that it has ?

Popular wisdom about the causes of the Rwandan catastrophe is that it was ethnic ; a primitive eruption of tribal rivalries in another of Africa's Bongo-Bongo-lands. And, while tribalism obviously has its place, it is a dangerous over-simplification to ascribe to the happenings of the last few month to Hutu-Tutsi rivalry. Certainly Rwanda's new prime minister, Faustin Twagiramungu - a Hutu moderate - fiercely denies it, ridiculing the tendency of foreigners to explain the country's difficulties by the racial differences in terms of their height, the sharpness of their noses, the size of their buttocks, or their rival affections for cattle and beans.

"It is ridiculous. We are the luckiest people in Africa. We have the same language, the same religion - traditional religion, at least. No dance or song is particular to either Tutsis or Hutus," he says. "Before the arrival of colonialism, this population did not suffer any conflict similar to the one we have been experiencing."

The history books are limited where Rwanda is concerned, but they do offer some support for the prime minister's contention. The origins of the two groupings is disputed, but it appears the region was originally occupied by a small tribe of pygmies, the Batwa (now about 1 per cent of the population) followed by the Hu-

tus (85 per cent) and then the Batutsi (14 per cent). Kinship ties led to the development of rival kingdoms among which the Nyiginya kingdom became dominant. Within the Nyiginya, the Batutsis - used to cattle raiding - formed a warrior elite, exploiting the Hutus who tended to be farmers. It was something of a caste society, but one which appears to have been stable.

Colonialism arrived with the Germans at the turn of the century, the Belgians taking trusteeship under the League of Nations after the first world war. Initially the Belgians exploited the pre-colonial state structures, confirming the Tutsis as the ruling elite.

The distrust sowed between the two groups by colonial favouritism and exploitation (domestic slavery was only abolished in 1927) exploded in civil war and a race for power as independence fever swept through the continent. In 1961 the country was declared a republic under the triumphant leadership of PARMEHUTU (the Movement for the Emancipation of the Hutus). The mass killings which accompanied and followed independence - in which tens of thousands of Tutsis were killed - seem to have brought it home to the former elite that the playing of the ethnic card is a gambit from which they can never hope to benefit.

Early attempts were made to

create new political parties transcending ethnic differences. And when the drive to overthrow the Habyarimana regime got under way, with the formation of the mainly Tutsi Rwanda Patriotic Front (FPR) by exiles in 1979, Hutus gained high positions in the resistance movement. They finally took control of the country two weeks ago, helped by internal divisions in the ruling Hutu elite.

But exactly what happened, politically, in those grisly few days which followed the mysterious death in April's air crash of President Juvenal Habyarimana still has to be established. However, there is strong evidence that the violence was planned and orchestrated. It is apparent in the readiness of the Hutu militias to start the pogrom, and the fact that the first to be killed were actually prominent Hutus - such as the prime minister, Agathe Uwingliyimana - as well as Tutsis, their executioners having seemingly been armed with lists of targets.

As the slaughter got underway, the Tutsi-led RPF began driving the Hutu-dominated army and militias out of the country. In that first phase, about 1.2 million people fled with them, panicked by government propaganda that the Tutsis would exterminate them.

Among the fugitives were the soldiers and militiamen who had carried out the genocide. Many of them are

now to be found in the “safe zone” established by French troops in the south-west of the country. And they are evident as a sinister and still powerful presence in the refugee camps across the border in Zaire, where 1.7 million people now huddle and wait for death or salvation on the barren volcanic wastes beneath the smoking volcano at Goma.

Many of the militiamen are bound to stay in Zaire, fearing reprisals because they took part in the slaughter. Their numbers, aid officials fear, may soon swell if France pulls out of its zone.

In Kigali and further afield, there are fears that a hard core among this group is reasserting itself with the aim of moving at some stage against the RPF government.

In the Zaire camps incidents are already taking place in which gangs of young men, apparently members of the Hutu militias, are intimidating refugees, threatening violence or saying they will be killed by the RPF if they go home.

“Of course Rwanda will be a basket case for years. How can it possibly recover? It’s a country that has been raped and denuded. Why should it change for the better?” asks one UN official.

Yet tales of solidarity across tribal lines have emerged from the carnage. The assumption that the violence was the product of a spontaneous out-

burst of ethnic hatred is contradicted to some extent by accounts of Hutu nobility saving Tutsi friends and neighbours.

Stories like that told by Unurungi Assunpta, whose husband, Renzaho, a clerk in the ministry of finance, was slaughtered in their Kigali home. She managed to escape with her 18-month-old daughter through a hole in the garden wall - prepared for such an eventuality - into the home of a Hutu neighbour. A Tutsi family of four from the other side did likewise. A Hutu family took Unurungi’s daughter in, passing her off as their own. They all survived.

Marie Louise Ingabire is another survivor. Her family was wiped out. She survived after a month in Kigali football stadium, the scene of several massacres. “We can live with the Hutus no problem; even in the stadium we lived with the Hutus,” she says of the experience.

If the violence was pre-planned, the charge of genocide is obviously justified. That raises the same issue that has haunted the world since aerial photographs first confirmed the existence of the Nazi death camps: what should we have done?

“They should have intervened and stopped the massacres,” says the new prime minister, Twagiramungu. “Instead of protecting the population, the UN’s tiny military force ran away.”

“In retrospect the reduction in the

number of troops was extremely unfortunate,” agrees the UN Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Peter Hansen. “It might have helped stabilise the situation. Even the Security Council members, officially or unofficially, have come to realise that that was an over-reaction and a mistake.”

So were the French right, in sending troops in, in the face of worldwide censure? Baroness Linda Chalker, the Minister for Overseas Aid, looked momentarily agonised by the question, in the northern border region - which was as far as the Foreign Office would allow her into Rwanda earlier this week. “I can’t say, it’s almost impossible,” she hesitated. “Somebody had to stabilise it and the Belgians couldn’t have done it. By and large it has probably worked.”

What should have been done? “It is very difficult to say, because warring between Hutu and Tutsi has been going on for generations,” she said. “I would like the international community to be able to do more prevention work. Governments need to have a more open relationship with the UN when they are facing trouble, and the UN needs to be better equipped in a preventive role.”

Whatever the posthumous judgments on the Rwanda disaster, the action now demanded from the international community in consequence of it is fairly obvious. A pointer is pro-

vided by a line of washing hanging from fifth-floor balconies of what used to be “the luxurious” Meridien Hotel in Kigali. Piles of sandbags in the gloomy, reflected light of the foyer - by which one can just read a noticeboard displaying the menu of the last meal served in the establishment, more than three months ago - are all there is to indicate this is the locus of state power in Rwanda today. The fifth floor is where Rwanda’s government is holed up; the washing being the personal laundry of the country’s cabinet ministers.

When the UN’s Peter Hansen made his visit to Rwanda this week, he left in happy astonishment at the extreme co-operativeness being shown by the new FPR government. But the explanation for the cooperation is simple. “We have no money,” confirms Twagiramungu, with a glum shrug. The banks as well as state coffers having been looted by the ousted regime and its defeated army; the new government is not even able to pay its own cabinet ministers - or, for that matter, civil servants, to the extent to which they have managed to discover any.

The implications of Rwanda’s complete dependence on international goodwill are apparent from Twagiramungu’s reaction when questioned about the future plans of the government. “If we want to get assistance we also have to follow a certain

line of principles. Democracy is an essential and the principles of democracy must be followed. That is very important.”

It needs to be said that, as prime ministers go, Twagiramungu is not the most representative of the government he heads. Selected as an interim prime minister on agreement between the FPR and the Habyarimana administration in peace talks which were wrecked by, and may have been a cause of, the president's death, his confirmation in the position is a gesture of good faith by the country's new rulers. But that gesture, too,

confirms the nation's dependence on foreign goodwill.

It is a dependence which the UN is exploiting to get relief supplies through to Goma, to get refugees back and to get guarantees of non-retaliation. It is a dependence which, as Twagiramungu anticipates, will be used to try and smooth the way for the creation of a democratic society. But it is a dependence which must also be used to record fully and then close another dark chapter in the story of mankind. Genocide invites a Nuremberg. The hands on the wall demand it.