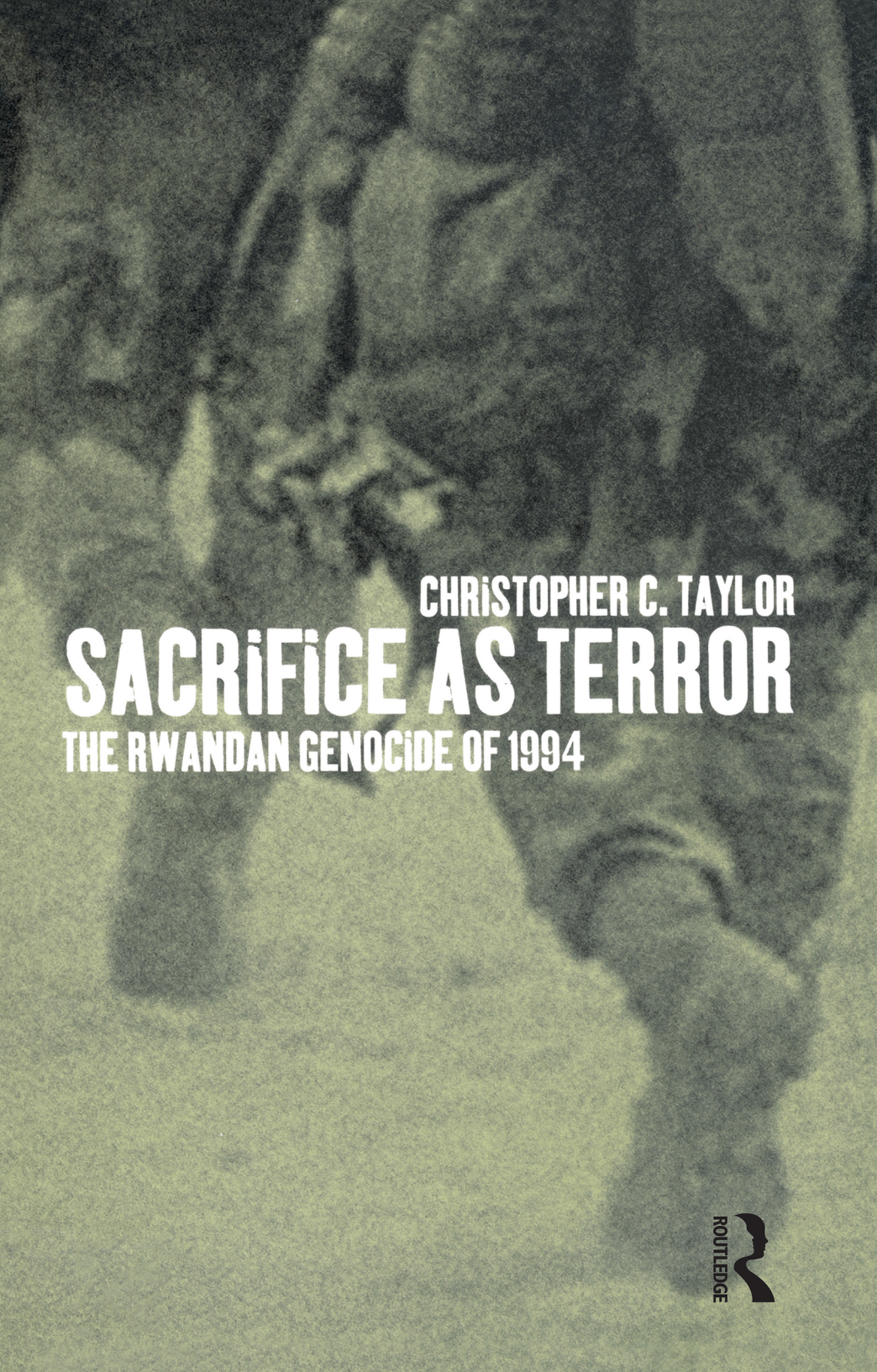

CHRISTOPHER C. TAYLOR
SACRIFICE AS TERROR
THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE OF 1994
ROUTLEDGE

Sacrifice as Terror

The Rwandan Genocide of 1994

Christopher C. Taylor

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1999 by Berg Publishers

Published 2020 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset by JS Typesetting, Wellingborough, Northants.

ISBN 13: 978-1-8597-3278-6 (pbk)

Contents

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

Acknowledgements

Writing is an eminently solitary exercise where one is alone with one's thoughts, one's feelings, and the anguish of the empty page, but the discipline of anthropology can never and should never be a solitary pursuit. This work has proven to me the truth of both these propositions. I would never have written it without the gentle encouragement, and sometimes prodding, of friends and colleagues. I feel that I may have tried the patience of some in taking so long, and if so, I apologize.

It may be that the events of which I speak in these pages are more to be forgotten than remembered but, since my wife and I were evacuated from Rwanda, it has been impossible not to relive every day some tiny bit of the pain and anger that both of us felt during the first weeks of refugee existence in Nairobi, Kenya. Many times while writing I have found myself obliged to stop and to do something intensely physical in order to dissipate the rekindled negative affect. Luckily I have usually been close enough to a bicycle or to a swimming pool to transform spiritual pain into muscular exhaustion. But if I have suffered, what I have suffered pales in comparison to what I know many Rwandan survivors continue to suffer. Many former friends and acquaintances, having survived the massacres, have subsequently died simply of a broken heart. Some have taken their own lives. Others have drunk themselves to death. Others live on as permanent emotional cripples, unable as yet to find joy in life again. What I have written can hardly do justice to them.

It is impossible to sufficiently thank all those Rwandans that I met in Kenya and who shared their thoughts and emotions with me. I hope that my presence among them was as therapeutic for them as it was for me. Among these refugees was Jean-Marie Vianney Higiro, former director of Office Rwandaise de l'Information

(ORINFOR), one of the few Rwandan journalists who, during the events leading up to the genocide, continued to exercise his profession with the highest standards of integrity and who educated me about the political situation in Rwanda before the genocide. I also remember one young boy about eight years old who told me about several encounters he had had with *Interahamwe* and how each time he had managed either by wit or by sheer luck to elude his pursuers and therefore death. Yet he continued to be haunted by the fact that he had been forced to leave his dog behind him in Rwanda and that he was unsure as to whether the dog had survived. He was aware that in all probability the rest of his family was now dead, but it was this one being who had depended solely upon him for sustenance and love that worried him most. I could not help but be awe-struck by this little boy.

But if this boy managed to show me something affirmative about humanity in what were probably the darkest days of my existence, I can hardly say the same about the world at that moment. For while in Nairobi I was profoundly aware, as an American, that it had been implicit from the outset of hostilities that saving my life and that of other Europeans and Americans was a higher order of priority than that of saving African lives. Where bodies are concerned, the social mechanisms of triage are always at work. This continues to be the case in Africa's numerous conflicts to this day.

Many friends and colleagues expressed their concern for me during those bleak days in Nairobi and I remain grateful to them. Richard Gringeri, Andrew Apter, Kurt Tolksdorf, John Napora, Roger Nance, and Fred Damon stand out particularly in this regard. I must also thank Fred Damon for keeping up an almost daily exchange of faxes with me while I was in Nairobi. These faxes were among the first of the gentle encouragement mentioned above and they helped me to step back a little from the events and to see them as would an anthropologist.

I must also thank my former AIDS Control and Prevention Project (AIDSCAP) colleagues, who were extremely supportive and helpful to my wife and to me while we were living in Nairobi. I particularly thank Rose de Buysscher for helping me rescue and repatriate much of my library and field notes. I would also like to thank Constant Kabwasa in this regard. Several other AIDSCAP staff members also helped me in Kenya. I thank Rukarangira and his wife for being the witnesses at my wedding at the magistrate's office in Nairobi, and I also thank 'Ruka' for lending me a ring for

a few minutes so I could place it on Esperance's finger. Jean Moulin of the Belgian Embassy and his wife also helped Esperance and me live through a particularly difficult time.

As for the writing of this work, I have profited from the perspicacious critical remarks of many colleagues. I would like to thank John Gledhill for his reading, extensive comments, and kind encouragement concerning an earlier version of this work. Vincent Crapanzano was also very helpful with his remarks pointing to the desirability of better framing the context and the argument of the middle chapters with a thorough initial discussion of Rwanda. My former Chicago colleague and friend, Ray Fogelson, has also offered valuable comments and advice on parts of this work.

I have presented earlier versions of chapters at various professional meetings. I presented a paper at the 1997 Satterthwaite Colloquium where I benefited from the comments of Dick Werbner and other participants, including: Birgit, Stefan, Kit, Simon, and Alex. I would also like to thank Roy Wagner for his comments on an earlier version of the same paper. Rene Lemarchand also provided kind encouragement concerning one of the chapters, as did Alex Hinton. Others whose critical remarks and suggestions have proven invaluable include my University of Alabama, Birmingham (UAB) colleagues, Tom McKenna and Brian Hesse, and three of my former colleagues and friends at the University of Chicago, Richard Gringeri, John Macaloon, and Andrew Apter. More recently I have benefited from remarks made on the penultimate version of this text by a French colleague, Jean-Francois Bare, who, along with his wife, Annie, is helping me to prepare a French version of this work. I would also like to thank another French colleague, Claude Raynaut of the University of Bordeaux-2, for the many conversations that we have had together not only concerning the present work but about anthropology in general. Other people at Bordeaux-2 have also been quite helpful including Mmes. Laurence, Marie-France, Marie-Helene, and Sheherazade, as well as Charles Cheung who has put his cartographic skills to work on the two maps in this book.

I have also been fortunate to receive financial support during some of the time that it took to write this book. I heartily thank the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities (VFH) for one semester of support at the University of Virginia. While at Virginia I also benefited from interaction with my colleagues at VFH, with Roberta Culbertson, and with several University of Virginia (UVA) faculty

members who read and commented on my work, including: Joe Miller, George Mentore, and Chris Crocker. I also thank the African Studies programme at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana for providing me with a small summer stipend that afforded me the possibility to use their impressive library.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my wife, Esperance, who lost parents, relatives, close friends, and her entire life's savings as a result of the genocide, but who has managed to continue to live a life free of hate and bitterness.

Introduction

How does one make sense of events that defy reason – events like those that occurred in Rwanda during 1994, costing the lives of one million people, one seventh of the country's population? How many ways are there to understand mass violence and murder? What constitutes sense under such circumstances? Is it singular? Is it plural? Or is it neither, nothing but a useless conceit driven more by the scholar's need to explain than a world's desire to understand? How do we harness the tools of anthropology to make such an event comprehensible? What kinds of understanding can prevent future violence in Rwanda? Are there 'magic bullet' insights out there whose revelation might break the cycle of crime and counter-crime that have plagued the region for the past forty years? Will Rwanda's people ever be able to bridge the chasm that ethno-nationalism and genocide has left among them?

And where to begin? With the historical antecedents? The political divisions? The social tensions? External pressures? Class disparities? Gender disparities? Or, as some have suggested, internal cultural proclivities to violence? How does one speak dispassionately of the unspeakable, the horror of genocide – a genocide that took the lives of close friends and colleagues? These are questions that have tortured me ever since I was evacuated from Rwanda on 9 April 1994, just two-and-a-half days after hostilities resumed between Rwandan Government Forces (RGF) and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) when President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in a missile attack on his personal plane on 6 April 1994.

With some notable exceptions, most media depictions of armed conflict in sub-Saharan Africa have tended to reinforce negative Western stereotypes about Africans. The genocide in Rwanda did nothing to dispel these impressions and, if anything, rekindled them with added intensity. Yet how quickly many of us in the West forget


UGANDA
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
ZAIRE
BURUNDI
International boundary
Prefecture boundary
Road
Track
National capital
Prefecture capital
Town
Airport
KAGERA NATIONAL PARK
VIRUNGA NAT'L PARK
RUHENGERI
BYUMBA
GISENYI
KIBUYE
GITARAMA
KIGALI
KIBUNGO
BUTARE
GIKONGORO
CYANGUGU
Lac Kivu
Kigali
Map No. 3931.2 UNITED NATIONS
June 1996
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Rwanda

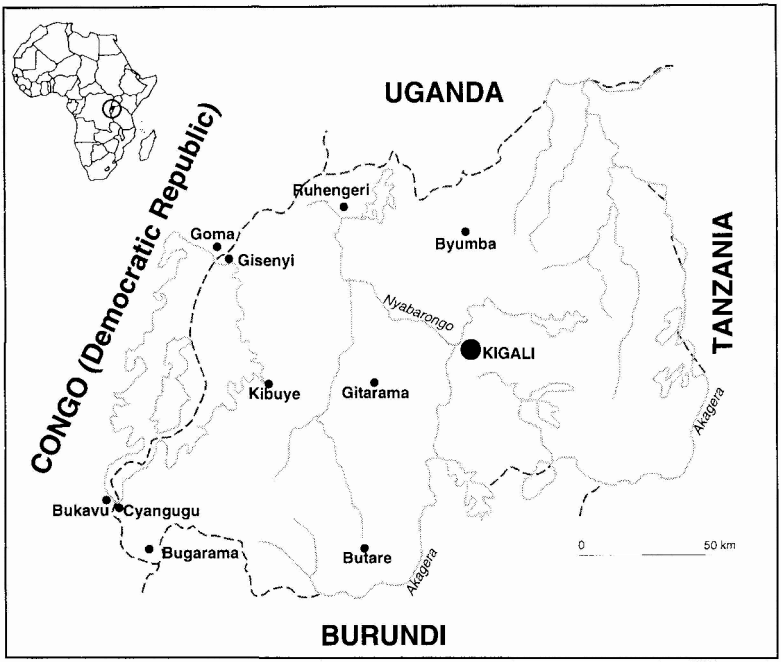
the crimes against humanity that our predecessors committed in Europe and in the Americas: the horror of two world wars, the Nazi holocaust, and the wars of extermination that native American populations suffered at the hands of people of European origin. Was the violence perpetrated against native Americans not genocide? Has genocide been uncommon in this century? Armenians, Jews, Gypsies, and Bosnians would certainly beg to differ. Yet Africa retains a privileged place in the minds of many Westerners who need to think of themselves as 'civilized' and of others as less so. Where Africa is concerned, 'heart of darkness' images continue to lie close to the surface of consciousness. The spectre that persists juxtaposes contradictory images of verdant freshness and putrefying decay, of noble beings still intimate with nature yet propelled by archaic and primal urges of savage bloodlust. How quickly we forget that three of the greatest mass murders in this century – the genocide of the Armenians by the Turks which took up to two million lives, the Stalinist campaign against the kulaks which killed six million, and the Nazi holocaust which claimed between five and six million souls – were perpetrated by white people against other white people. Nor have Asians shown a much better record when it comes to annihilating their fellow man. The enormous loss of civilian life that characterized the Japanese conquest of Manchuria is one example, the violence that accompanied the partitioning of India and Pakistan another, the 1970 purge of 'communists' in Indonesia a third, and the Khmer Rouge 'killing fields' where almost two million died yet a fourth.

On virtually all continents, although under different circumstances, mass murder and genocide have seemed to some political leaders and their followers like rational courses of action, yet the cumulative effect of their presumed rational choices has been irrational. And rarely has the 'world community' in the form of the League of Nations, the UN or some other supra-national entity stepped in to put an end to the killing. Even in Bosnia today it is difficult to argue that NATO involvement in the peace-making process was primarily motivated by the desire to put an end to rape, genocide, and 'ethnic cleansing'. As for Rwanda of 1994, there can be no ambiguity. Humanitarian motivations were simply too weak to affect policy. As ordinary people in the world looked on in horror, the leaders and institutions of its strongest nations chose to play Nero. During the months of April and May at the UN Security Council, 'general fatigue on the part of the international community

regarding participation in peace-keeping operations' (Boutros-Ghali, 1996: 50) led to a reluctance to commit manpower and money to what was fast becoming yet another twentieth-century killing field.

When Ghana offered to send several hundred troops, difficulties were encountered in equipping them (Boutros-Ghali, 1996: 50), and other nations offered only to send non-combatant support units. In the United States, fear of being held to the 1948 Geneva accords on genocide, which required intervention, led spokespersons for the Clinton administration to scrupulously avoid using the term 'genocide' to describe what was occurring during those fateful months of 1994. Although one can partly understand the US administration's hesitancy to act in Africa in the wake of the Somalia intervention, which cost the lives of eighteen American soldiers, US inaction, and that of the other developed nations in the world, resulted in the probable deaths of one million Rwandans.[1] But there was something deeper and less savoury behind the inaction. In the minds of many, the Rwandan holocaust was simply African tribalism rearing yet again its atavistic head. There was nothing to be done. The UN had tried and failed to bring peace to Somalia and closer to home there were more serious preoccupations. The quagmire of Bosnia continued to boil like Hecate's cauldron with every Security Council action serving only to show the world that the UN was a paper tiger. Was the world community prepared to take on another basket case? For the one million Tutsi and Hutu moderates who lost their lives in the Rwandan holocaust, it was this thinking that prevented anyone from doing anything to help them. As for the French action, 'Operation Turquoise', which came at a time when most of the genocide's victims had already been killed, it served more as a means of rescuing the shards of a former client government than of saving innocent lives (Prunier, 1995).[2]

How poorly the world powers read the situation. But for that matter, did a sincere desire really exist at the time to understand it? The US was going through a phase when it was weary of intervention; and only France and Belgium had much interest in Rwanda. Belgium, the former colonial ruler of Rwanda and its principal Western sponsor after independence, had ceased its military assistance when it became clear after 1990 that the Rwandan Government was systematically abusing the human rights of many citizens (Chretien, 1997). France had leaped almost without thinking into the breach left by the Belgians, and the son of then President



Francois Mitterrand, Jean Christophe, was given the task of bailing out 'old man Habyarimana' and saving the French language in central Africa (Prunier, 1995). There was little of value to the world economy in tiny Rwanda – no oil, no strategic minerals, no precious stones. Although there were a few cassiterite (tin ore) mines, these had been shut down in the mid-1980s due to low world market prices for tin. Rwanda's principal exports, coffee and tea, were commodities that brokers could easily obtain elsewhere. In the absence of strategic or economic interests, only humanitarianism could have brought the world community to action in Rwanda.

Had the world community acted and acted decisively, the horror of genocide could have been arrested in its tracks. Rwanda of 1994 was not Somalia, it was not Cambodia, and it was certainly not Nazi Germany. The Hutu extremist militias in Rwanda did not possess 'technicals' nor did most of them have firearms of any sort. Most were unemployed or underemployed adolescent males armed with clubs and machetes and imbued with the assurance that they were acting out the will of their country's leaders with the support

of the majority of their compatriots. They could have been neutralized with little or no loss of life on the part of an intervening force. As for Rwandan Government Forces, who were indeed well armed, that is another story. These latter might have resisted an intervention, but their resistance would not have lasted long. In four years of war with the Rwandan Patriotic Front, Rwandan Government Forces had shown that they were poorly organized, poorly led, relatively unmotivated, and only effective when backed by French artillery and advisors. Rapid and unambiguous action by an intervention force could have bottled up most of the RGF in their garrisons. Instead, shortly after the death of ten Belgian soldiers who were part of the UN peacekeeping forces, the Security Council chose to reduce its forces in Rwanda to an ineffectual number and to observe the genocide from the sidelines.

When I journeyed to Rwanda in October of 1993 to begin work on a USAID project intended to slow the spread of HIV (human immune deficiency virus) and AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), it had not been my intention to study the war that had begun with the RPF invasion in October 1990 and culminated in the genocide of 1994. It was not that I had any special distaste for such subjects. On the contrary, in earlier stints of fieldwork in Rwanda during 1983 to 1985 and in the summer of 1987, when I studied popular medicine, I had encountered human malevolence, albeit of an individual nature, that had sometimes resulted in illness, misfortune, or death. I had studied the underside of the Rwandan character, as well as its creative and life-affirming side. On rare occasions I had also witnessed the lingering racism that some Rwandans held for members of other ethnic groups. But I had always felt that the moral intelligence of most Rwandans would predominate over the ignorance and malevolence of the few. My experience with Rwandans of all groups, after all, had usually been positive. More often than not, they had shown kindness to me. I could never have predicted, in 1985 or 1987, that events would take the turn that they did in 1994. I had seen too many instances, with my own eyes, of Hutu and Tutsi living close to one another, cooperating with one another, fraternizing with one another, and sometimes intermarrying. Moreover, in October 1993 and during the months that followed, I had too many other things to think about and to do than study the war and the political situation in Rwanda. Nonetheless, I could not evade the reality of the war, whose events continued to intrude, growing more ominous with each

passing month. I found myself drawn into the maelstrom, at a distance at first, then more closely and irrevocably.

Once, in December 1993, while I was descending Kigali's Avenue de Kiyovu in my Jeep Cheorkee, I noticed a Mercedes with most of its windows shattered parked in a driveway off to the side. Around it stood four men with pensive expressions on their faces and a motorcycle police officer busily writing on a notepad. Later I would learn that a grenade attack had been made on a prominent Hutu member of the democratic opposition. As he was alighting from his car, two men passing by on a motorcycle had thrown a grenade. The man escaped with minor injuries, but his assailants were never caught. It is not likely that the incident was ever seriously investigated, although obviously the victim of the attack had alerted the police. I was quite shocked, as I must have passed the vehicle only minutes after its driver was attacked, but even more shocking was the blasé attitude of most of my Rwandan acquaintances who considered it business as usual.

A couple weeks later, in January 1994, I was driving my closest Rwandan friend, Victor, and his wife, home from work. They lived on the side of Mount Kigali in the Nyamirambo section of Kigali. Although their house was not a palace, it was pleasant, surrounded by a beautiful garden, and was high enough on the mountainside to enjoy a magnificent view of Kigali below and of the hillsides in the distance. On some of these distant hills one could make out white specks dotting the landscape. With Victor's high-powered binoculars, one could readily discern that the white specks were tents – tents that had been placed there to accommodate the large number of internally displaced people from northern Rwanda who had fled the RPF's 1993 February offensive. One could even make out numerous human shapes moving among the tents. That Rwanda was a country in the throes of a war was hard to ignore when one could see its consequences from a vantage point within Kigali's city limits, even if binoculars were required. But that cool, rainy January evening as we began the steep climb up the dirt road that led to Victor's house, no one was thinking about the war. Despite the rain, we were all in a good mood. We passed a little bar, where Victor suggested we stop and order brochettes. We entered, found a table, ordered, and when our beers arrived began to patiently sip away knowing that the *brochette-frites* could take anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour. But I felt uncomfortable there. The atmosphere in the place was strange, too silent for the number of

clients, although not overtly hostile. Everyone seemed to be attentively listening to the radio. It was Radio Television Libre de Mille Collines (RTLM) - Rwanda's infamous 'hate radio', principal disseminator throughout the country of virulent anti-RPF and anti-Tutsi propaganda. Naturally Victor was nonplussed; he was a Tutsi. Although his wife was Hutu, I could read the tension on her face. She had good reason to be frightened: to be Hutu and married to a Tutsi was, to some Hutu extremists, more reprehensible than simply being Tutsi. We had come to the bar at an awkward moment, at a time when its patrons were listening to a station that we all loathed and feared. I grew nervous.

'Let's get out of here,' I said to Victor.
'That will only draw attention to us,' he replied.

We tried to be invisible, tried to disappear into the green plywood walls, tried to blend in with the sound of falling rain on the corrugated iron roof, but we had grown too frightened to open our mouths, mute and fidgety patrons waiting for their brochettes. Soon the radio orator reached a climax in his speech, he wasn't speaking anymore, he was screaming: 'Hutu powa, Hutu powa, Hutu powa'. Several voices in the bar took up the chant like a Greek chorus: 'Hutu powa, Hutu powa, Hutu powa'. Some even raised clenched right fists, punctuating each shout in a gesture reminiscent of the Black Power salute. But these were not an oppressed minority here. They were the majority and they still controlled the government. A shiver traversed me; the same chill that I remember feeling when once I saw newsclips of the Attica prison uprising in New York State during the 1970s when at the end, the police and prison guards had retaken control. There had been enormous loss of life - forty or so inmates had died and several guards. As the police left the prison, they and onlookers shouted 'White power! White power!' Bigotry is an equal opportunity employer.

On another occasion bricks were thrown at the car in which I was a passenger. The driver, a close Rwandan friend, managed to throw off the aim of our attackers by driving straight at them. The bricks hit the hood of the car, just beneath the windshield. In yet another incident, my friend, Victor, sustained a knife wound to his face as I pleaded with his attackers and three police officers observing from a safe distance to let him go. I did not see the knife and did not know he was injured until the incident was over. Had I

seen it, I probably would have chosen flight rather than back alley negotiation.

On some days during the last months before the genocide there were glimmers of hope that the political problems were close to a solution. 'The President's people are trying to negotiate a general amnesty. It must mean they're getting serious about peace,' I heard one day in the corridors of USAID. On other days the optimism that continued to be expressed among Western diplomats, even as late as February and March of 1994, sharply contrasted with the pessimism and despair that Rwandan acquaintances expressed in my presence. Several of my male Rwandan friends asked me to help them procure any kind of firearm. Female friends expressed anxiety about sexual attack and told me of precautions that they took to avoid it (see Chapter 4).

After January 1994, the situation in Rwanda never improved. There were several serious incidents, several assassinations, mini-rehearsals for the coming pogrom. Once, in late March, the gardener I employed at my house came to work carrying a pair of blood-stained jeans. As he proceeded to wash them, he mumbled away about someone nicknamed 'CDR,' after the extremist Hutu political party, Comité pour la Défense de la République. Apparently 'CDR', who was a notorious assassin of Tutsi, had himself been assassinated in a Nyamirambo bar the previous evening. Albert had been seated right next to him. CDR's blood had spattered all over Albert's clothing. Someone had taken revenge – maybe the RPF, maybe an RPF supporter. All Albert said about the incident and what was happening in general was 'Abahutu bica abatutsi' ('the Hutu are killing the Tutsi'), although clearly it was sometimes the other way around. I began to wonder about Albert. Is he an *Interahamwe*?[3] What was he doing with such a person? What if he tells some other *Interahamwe* that I am living here with a Tutsi woman?

I had always liked Albert. He was hard working and efficient, and always seemed eager to learn more. Occasionally I had even seen him in one of the Nyamirambo nightspots that my closest Rwandan friends and I sometimes frequented. One night in early March, at the Cafe Rio, I invited him over to our table. At the table was a Rwandan Army officer, Lieutenant Joseph, Hutu but the farthest thing from an anti-Tutsi racist. There were two others: someone I didn't know very well but who was Hutu. and another friend of Lieutenant Joseph's and mine, who was Tutsi and a known RPF supporter. Despite the mix of ethnicities and political

tendencies, we were all relaxed and having a good time. There was no animosity between Phillip, the Tutsi, and Joseph, the RGF soldier. In fact they appeared to be very good friends. They had known each other since childhood as both had grown up in Nyamirambo. Yet here they found themselves at opposite poles of Rwanda's political crisis. Neither seemed to care that evening; their friendship transcended that. Then Michel came in the bar, saw us, and came over to the table. Michel was another Tutsi, and fairly well known for his pro-RPF sentiments. His father had been arrested in October 1990 along with hundreds of others and put in Nyamirambo stadium. All the prisoners had endured harsh treatment at the hands of their captors. Michel's father had even been shot through the leg during an apparent riot in the stadium, although he managed to survive. As a joke I called out to Michel as he came over to our table, 'Inyenzi! Inyenzi!' the pejorative term that RPF soldiers and supporters were known by. Everyone at the table howled with laughter, almost falling from their chairs. Even at this tense moment (just a week or so earlier, there had been two assassinations of high level political leaders) the political situation could be viewed with a degree of irony. Most of us there at the table clung to the belief, despite all the evidence to the contrary around us, that cooler heads among the leaders of both sides would prevail and that the crisis would be resolved without further bloodshed.

That, of course, turned out to be a vain hope. Several attempts to install the 'transitional broad-based government' failed during the months of January, February and March. Finally, in April, President Habyarimana was summoned back to Arusha, Tanzania where he met with several of the region's top political leaders including President Museveni of Uganda and Burundian President Ntaryamira. The message to Habyarimana at these meetings was a stern one, as he was widely perceived to be behind the repeated failures to fully implement the August 1993 Arusha accords that he and his government had signed with the RPF. He was told that he had better do something to see that the accords were fully implemented or else risk dragging the whole region down in flames. It was en route back to Kigali in the early evening of 6 April 1994 that his private plane carrying him, Burundian President Ntaryamira, several highly placed Rwandans, and two Burundian cabinet ministers, was shot down by two shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles. That day remains indelibly etched in my memory.

A couple of hours after I returned home from work that evening.

I received a call from the American community's neighbourhood warden. Virtually every American in Kigali who worked for the US embassy, USAID, or for an NGO during the troubled times after October 1990, kept in touch with others via telephone and two-way short-wave radio. There had been one or two emergency evacuations since the beginning of the war in 1990 and people needed to be informed of rapid deterioration in the security situation. Every neighborhood with a sizeable American community had a 'warden' who would contact others in the neighbourhood by phone when there was trouble. In addition, every Friday morning at 07.00 we would receive a transmission over the radios issued to each one of us to verify that each person's equipment was in working order. Everyone had a code name and would respond in turn to a call from the American who captained the network: 'This is White Angel calling High Five. Do you read me High Five?' The usual response was: 'This is High Five, White Angel. I read you loud and clear.' Then 'White Angel' would contact the next person on the list until all members of the American community who had been issued two-way radios had responded or in some way been accounted for. On 6 April my phone was working but not the two-way radio; it had broken down just a week before and a replacement was on order. Over the phone, the warden advised me to stay at home that evening as there were rumours to the effect that the President's plane had been shot at. He did not know whether anyone had been hurt.

At the time I thought the threat to order was not serious – just a pretext on the part of the President's more extremist supporters to set up roadblocks and rob anyone they happened to catch in their traps. That was their usual *modus operandi* and I had come close to getting caught in such binds more than once. Twice stones had been thrown at my car. On the evening of 6 April the neighbourhood warden lacked precise details, but I assumed he was correct in warning us to stay at home. My fiancée, who was a Rwandan Tutsi, and I retired at around midnight as usual. Neither of us thought that anything momentous was in the works. Then, at about 03.00, our house watchman came to the bedroom window and woke us up. He said, 'they've just announced on the radio that the President's plane has been shot down near the airport and that he is dead. Everyone is supposed to remain at home.' I asked him if he preferred to stay inside the house, but he declined. We drifted back to sleep. About one hour later we were awakened by loud

shooting, small arms mostly, but more horrendous booms as well: grenades, artillery, and mortar fire. The degeneration of the situation that I had witnessed for months, but tried to deny so tenaciously that night, had come to a head.

Nine months of shaky truce between the Rwandan Government Forces and the Rwandan Patriotic Front were over. The RGF started the attack, blaming the RPF and all Tutsis in general for the death of President Habyarimana. As part of the Arusha accords the RPF had been allowed to bivouack one battalion of 600 men at the Conseil National du Developpement, a large building and fenced-in compound in a Kigali suburb called Remera. Not far from the RPF encampment, the UN troop contingent had its headquarters. Shortly after Habyarimana's assassination, the RPF announced over their radio station, 'Radio Muhabura', that they had had nothing to do with it. They had not fired the missiles or authorized anyone else to do so. They issued a general appeal for calm, saying that they would not take hostile action unless attacked. Their appeal fell on deaf ears. By early Thursday morning they were under heavy fire. Later that morning they asked the UN for permission to leave their compound to defend themselves. That permission was granted. Nevertheless, much of the ordinance that we heard exploding during the early hours of 7 April was not directed at military targets such as the RPF headquarters. Political opposition leaders and important Tutsi were being surrounded at their homes by RGF soldiers or Hutu militia members and slaughtered, along with everyone in their households.

My fiancée and I remained at home for the next two days as fighting raged all around us. I moved a mattress into the house's central corridor. There were bedrooms on both sides of this corridor whose windows and doors I closed. I placed other mattresses on their sides and propped them up against both sides of the corridor to act as a buffer in the event that bullets or shrapnel might penetrate the walls. I closed all the other windows and doors in the house opening a few of them only when noise of the fighting appeared to subside. Into the protected space of the corridor I brought a radio that received two bands of commercial short wave and listened to it until its batteries went dead, then I hooked it up to a 12 volt car battery until it died about a day later. It was from listening to the BBC World Service that we obtained the most accurate information about what was happening in Rwanda. All we heard on Rwandan radio was the occasional announcement that