

~~2002, the European Union concluded membership negotiations with the new acceding countries, so that these can participate as members in the 2004 European Parliament elections. While enlargement is due to proceed in a very short time, the process itself has confirmed that without a substantial reform of the institutions of the same Union and its decision-making processes, the European Union risks coming to resemble a monster without head. Moreover, enlargement not only requires the establishment of a certain vision of division of competencies, but also of the principles and values at the basis of the European civitas, of European citizens.~~

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**Shake Hands with the Devil:  
The Failure of Humanity in  
Rwanda**

**By Roméo Dallaire (with  
Brent Beardsley). Toronto:  
Random House of Canada,  
2003. Pp. xvii, 562. \$39.95  
(Hardcover)**

*"De profundus clamo ad te  
domine"* (Out of the depths, I cry

to you O Lord) were the riveting words that overshadowed Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire's prayers throughout his 100 days as Canadian Force Commander of UNAMIR (United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda) during the Rwandan genocide.

Born in the Netherlands during the years that followed World War II, Roméo Dallaire writes in his book *Shake Hands with the Devil* that he was born to a Canadian non-commissioned officer and a student nurse from Holland. Although this work takes the form of a bildungsroman, one might be prompted, through the sixteen chapters that constitute this book, to identify its major theme, which outlines the General's awful and demoralizing experience through the 1994 Rwandan horrific genocide. Of relevance is the fact that this book is not academic; rather, it is a first-hand-account and an eyewitness' records of the Rwandan genocide. It interests legal scholars, human rights and humanitarian activists. Moreover, the book includes a rich glossary and an insightful index.

While reading the book, it is important to know of the history of Rwanda in order to have a clear idea of the deep roots of hatred that led to genocide in the Rwandan community. In 1916, Belgium chases the Germans out

of Rwanda and implements a colonial system that lasts fifty-six years. In Rwanda, there exist three ethnic groups: the Hutu majority (90.0%), the Tutsi (9.0%) and the Twa (1.0%). In chapter three, Dallaire states that "the Belgians viewed the minority Tutsis as closer in kind to Europeans and elevated them to positions of power over the majority Hutu."<sup>1</sup> This concept together with other factors resulted in the killing and displacement of thousands of Tutsis to neighboring Burundi, Uganda and Zaire. A popular uprising led to the independence of Rwanda in 1962. Grégoire Kayibanda led the first post-colonial government and was later toppled and killed in 1973 by his cousin: Major General Juvénal Habyarimana. The latter began a twenty-year dictatorship that ended with the beginning of the Rwandan genocide.

The most interesting question about Dallaire's book is why he wrote it all. The answer, as men-

tioned in his introduction, is twofold. Firstly, "while well researched and fairly accurate (books) were beginning to hit the shelves, none of them seemed to get the story right."<sup>2</sup> In other words, thanks to his experience and his exceptional first-hand data, Roméo Dallaire was able to add "the sounds, smells, deprecations, the scenes of inhuman acts"<sup>3</sup> which were largely absent in other books narrating the Rwandan catastrophe. The second reason that eventually led to the birth of this book shapes as a psychological therapy for the author's post-traumatic stress disorder, which led, eventually, to his early retirement on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2000 from the Canadian armed forces.<sup>4</sup>

Notably absent from this book is a proper explanation of the title "Shake Hands with the Devil", particularly the reason for the choice of such a jaw-shattering title. "The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda" might have been changed to "the United

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<sup>1</sup> Roméo Dallaire with Brent Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil: the Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 2003), 47. [Hereinafter Dallaire]

<sup>2</sup> Dallaire, *Supra note 2*, at xi.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, xi

<sup>4</sup> General Dallaire was the Canadian Force Commander of UNAMIR, and the Chief Military Observer UNOMUR. He was promoted to the rank of Major General in the field on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1994 and he retired at the rank of Lieutenant General in Ottawa on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2002.

Nations' Failure in Rwanda", subsequently, adding another failure to the United Nations list of incapacibilities. For example, in chapter three, Dallaire writes "Maurice and others talked about Rwanda being a chance to redeem the reputation of the UN peacekeeping"<sup>5</sup>. This ironically ends up being one of the biggest failures of the United Nations, which terminated with the massacre of 800,000 Rwandans in less than four months. In this "terribly honest"<sup>6</sup> book, the author confesses the fact that he made many mistakes, which he regrets. Curiously, he forgets to mention a crucial one: his inability to foreshadow the shortcomings of the United Nations in Rwanda. The latter entails the Lieutenant General's inability to prevent these shortcomings.

In chapter five, he writes "I still felt that the "ideal" option of 5,500 troops and personnel was best, but there was no way to reopen that discussion." But, why is that? In chapter four, he stresses "If you had the temerity to raise the issue with them, they

would look at you with a world-weary cynicism so cold it could freeze your heart."<sup>7</sup> So, why stay? Why choose to be restrained? Why didn't he resign and ask for someone else to replace him as force commander? Why did he choose to pay, physically and psychologically, for the consequences of the ultimate failures of his superiors? The answer to these questions, as reflected in chapter eleven's title "To Go or to Stay?" seems to be, in due course, based on emotions, which he was known for in his military career. As a fieldsman, it was his duty to understand in the first place that yes, some people see themselves as superior than others, a point he raised in his conclusion. The international community and the United Nation are both, alas, politically manipulated by supreme powers (United States, France, etc.) that see their interests as a priority before humanity and human rights and stability. In examining the failure of the international community to prevent the genocide in Rwanda, a

<sup>5</sup> Dallaire, *Supra note 2*, at 55. General Maurice Baril was the Canadian Military adviser to the Secretary-General of the UN and head of the Military Division of the DPKO.

<sup>6</sup> See Isabel Vincent, *General Still Battling Own Internal Demons*, National Post, November 4, 2003, at A1.

<sup>7</sup> Dallaire, *Supra note 2*, at 78.

particular attention must be paid to the role of the Western powers, notably the United States, France and Belgium.

In chapter seven, Dallaire writes "Brent asked a Belgian officer what it felt like to be risking his life in Rwanda while his nation dealt arms that could be used to kill him."<sup>8</sup> This simply shows that Belgium, once again, considered Rwanda a place of resource and not as a land in need of humanitarian aid. In his conclusion, Dallaire writes about Belgium, who insisted after losing ten soldiers that the lives of Rwandans were not worth risking another Belgian soldier. So, why engage in such an important operation if one knows that one does not have the stomach to take the necessary casualties? Why did the United Nations accept Belgium as a peacekeeping country, knowing the hate Rwandans foster towards their ex-colonizers?

In parallel, according to Britannica's 2003 yearbook, Rwanda does not have any petroleum

products, which limits if not to say rubs out any chances of direct US implications in the country.<sup>9</sup> In chapter eight, Roméo Dallaire inscribes "The only recent event of any significance was the visit by Doug Bennett, the assistant US secretary of state for international organizations."<sup>10</sup> Paradoxically, while the Americans were not ready to risk the lives of ten American troops to stop the brutal genocide in Rwanda,<sup>11</sup> one is able to see President Georges W. Bush, at the moment, sacrificing the lives of hundreds of Americans in Iraq, the world's second largest oil reserve country.<sup>12</sup>

In the light of what Dallaire mentions in his work, one is never allowed to forget that the United States knew what was happening in Rwanda. The latter is established in Dallaire's twelfth chapter, where he writes "He told Brent that a friendly foreign power (we later confirmed it was the United States through the American embassy in Nairobi) had received informa-

<sup>8</sup> Dallaire, *Supra note 2*, at 156.

<sup>9</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica Annual Yearbook 2003*, 15<sup>th</sup> ed., "Rwanda."

<sup>10</sup> Dallaire, *Supra note 2*, at 169.

<sup>11</sup> In his conclusion, Dallaire writes "An American officer felt no shame as he informed me that the lives of 800,000 Rwandans were only worth risking the lives of ten American troops." Dallaire, *Supra note 2*, at 522.

<sup>12</sup> After eight months of the US-led invasion of Iraq, there were 463 American casualties.

tion that I was to be assassinated in the next few days.”<sup>13</sup> Another important example of US sabotages on deployment to Rwanda concerns the RTLM, the extremist radio station that hatefully incited the genocide and needed to be shut down. After general Dallaire’s request to do so, the Pentagon refused saying that “jamming a national radio station would violate international convention on national sovereignty.”<sup>14</sup>

The information given in this book is pertinent; even though this book does not have footnotes or a bibliography. Recently, after Georges Ruggiu, a former RTLM reporter who was sentenced to twelve years in 2000 after pleading guilty to direct and public incitement to commit genocide, testified against two defendants. Ferdinand Nahimana, a founding member of Radio Television Libres des Mille Collines (RTLM), was sentenced to life in prison along with Hassan Ngeze, owner and editor of the Hutu extremist newspaper

Kangura. By the way, it is of relevance to highlight that life in prison is the harshest penalty that can be given by the ICTR, since it is a UN sponsored tribunal.<sup>15</sup> Stripped of any expediency, the US actions on the ground show that the latter, through the Rwandan crisis, enrolls itself only where its interests as well as its allies’ are in danger. Since its creation, the United States puts a leg in front of anything it can’t control.<sup>16</sup>

One of this book’s strong points is that Roméo Dallaire kept his notes from his meetings and code cables. In chapter nine, he writes “The French ministry of defense must have been aware of what was going on and was turning a blind eye.”<sup>17</sup> He also states in chapter four, “the French still had a para-battalion in Kigali, supposedly to protect the European expatriate community, and also provided military advisers, both in and out of uniform, to the major units of the RGF (Rwandan Government Forces).”<sup>18</sup> Jean-Pierre, who was

<sup>13</sup> Dallaire, *Supra note 2*, at 338.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 375

<sup>15</sup> See On-line: “Rwanda genocide journalists sentenced” Accessed: Thursday, December 4, 2003 <[www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)>

<sup>16</sup> See Richard Goldstone, *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 13, 1999, at A10.

<sup>17</sup> Dallaire, *Supra note 2*, at 209.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

the informant who described the arms cache in January 1994, told Dallaire that the Interhamwe (Kinyarwanda for “those who attack together”) were trained in governmental areas (RGF) in order to carry out an ethnic cleansing that will lead to the slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutus; many of the Interhamwe leaders are now facing charges in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the UN-sponsored judicial body based in Arusha, Tanzania.<sup>19</sup> These facts not only show that France was turning a blind eye to the genocide but was even arming it. The latter had a protracted, consistent and systematic campaign for the genocide and the deliberate creation of hundreds of thousands of refugees. Alas, all these facts and many others are buried today in an effusive prattle better known as western or westernized media.

On a related subject, the

French General Assembly, the national defense and armed forces’ commission and the foreign affairs’ commission issued a five-thousand page document entitled “*Rapport d’information sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d’autres pays et l’ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994*”<sup>20</sup> on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1998 in order to wash its hands, tartuffely, from any alleged implications in the Rwandan genocide.

*Shake Hands with the Devil: the Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* is an interesting and consistent book. Any scholar undertaking a study of the Rwandan genocide should include this work in their research. Roméo Dallaire clearly has an agenda as he sets out to bolster the so-long-hidden truth. This is why his book is welcome, notwithstanding its limitations. Regardless of whether one agrees with every comment made by

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<sup>19</sup> The ICTR, until today, has completed nineteen cases and is in the processing of doing so for fifty-eight others. Colonel Théoneste Bagasora is still waiting for his indictment. The latter is seen by the tribunal as the person that masterminded the Rwandan genocide.

<sup>20</sup> See France, assemblée nationale, commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées et de la commission des affaires étrangères, “Rapport d’information sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d’autres pays et l’ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994” (December 15, 1998), no. 1271, President: M. Paul Quilès, Rapporteurs: MM. Pierre Brana et Bernard Cazeneuve, Députés. On-line: Mission d’information sur le Rwanda <<http://www.assembleenationale.fr/2/dossiers/rwanda/r/271.htm>> (date d’accès : 21 mars 1999).

Lieutenant-General Dallaire in his book, one cannot help but admire the effort that has gone into preparing this work. It will undoubtedly stand for many years as one of the most important contributions to the study of the Rwandan Genocide and crimes

against humanity that has been produced since the issue became of debate and consideration in the mid-nineties.

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