

## **RWANDA**

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**WILLIAM N. HARBEN**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Kigali (1964-1966)**

*William N. Harben was born in New York in 1922. He graduated from Princeton University and joined the Foreign Service in 1950. His career included positions in Germany, Colombia, Rwanda, Indonesia, the Soviet Union, Mexico, Cambodia, and Washington, DC. This excerpt is from his personal memoir.*

HARBEN: I wanted to escape the Department. I am a good linguist and I was wasted in Washington, where I would soon be lost in the faceless masses of plodding, cautious bureaucrats. The easiest way to escape was to volunteer for an African post, preferably French-speaking because of the dearth of French-speaking officers following the disastrous lowering of the standards of the service during the Eisenhower-Truman period, when the language requirement was virtually abolished.

Chad was discussed and rejected. Then the capital of Mauritania, a hamlet on the edge of the Sahara populated only intermittently by nomads. Finally they settled on Kigali, capital of Rwanda, on the eastern frontier of the Congo, which was then engulfed in a civil war between the Communist-backed Lumumbist (named for Patrice Lumumba, a much overrated Congolese who had been assassinated) and the central government, itself divided into quarreling factions. I was to be deputy chief of mission under Ambassador Charles Withers, who was not on speaking terms with Ambassador Dumont of Burundi, to the south, from which occasional raids were launched against Rwanda. Dumont's wife had seized a tea table intended for the Withers' which had passed through Burundi en route to Kigali.

My arrival was inauspicious. The small aircraft which was to fly me, my wife, and my small daughter Valerie to Kigali was otherwise occupied flying wounded combatants of the Congolese civil war to hospitals. Finally I managed to hitch a ride with an Italian construction worker driving to Kigali, but when I went to the airport baggage room to get our luggage a drunken guard threatened me with his rifle and refused to give it to me despite my protestations of diplomatic immunity etc., etc. I went to the office of the Belgian airport manager, explained the situation. He simply muttered a foul oath and left the office, I following. He went behind the baggage counter, pushed the drunken guard down on his back, calling him a "black monkey", and handed me the baggage while the guard crawled about mumbling, looking for his rifle.

The Italian was quite jolly, and was beginning to revive the spirits of my now terrified wife. Until she asked him if there were many snakes in Africa. "Si, Signora, Dey's a lotsa da snakes. Dey's a gaboon-a viper he's a bite and you die. Dey's a spitting-a cobra. Spit in you eye you go

blind. But is a no trouble da snakes, Signora. When da snake he's a come-a to you in da night, you taka da blanket, shove in 'is face. He's a bite-a da blanket, you grabba his neck and pulla da blanket an' pull out his teet'. Is-a no trouble da snakes, Signora."

The Communist-supported rebellion of the Lumumbists raged in the Congo. The only airport from which the ragtag and only intermittently reliable government troops could be reinforced and supplied lay in Rwanda at Shangugu. Our main diplomatic task was to ensure that Rwanda remained friendly and continued to allow the Congolese Government to use this airfield. For this we - and the Western allies - had programs of technical assistance.

Our problem was complicated by recent Rwandan history. The country, like Burundi, had been a kingdom ruled by the Banyiginya, a clan of the noble class of Tutsi, a Nilotic race ethnically distinct from the 95% of the population belonging to the Bantu race. The Tutsi, known as Watusi in America, were very tall - members of the royal family reaching heights of almost seven feet. The Mwami (King) Rudahigwa looked like a praying mantis. As pressure mounted internationally on the Belgians to grant independence, the Belgians strove to allay it until they could prepare the country for majority, i.e., Hutu, rule. The Tutsi nobles, whom no Hutu even dared look in the face, feared democracy and pushed for instant independence while they still held the Hutus cowed. To the Russians this meant that the Tutsi king and his barons were "progressive" anti-imperialists and, in the Marxist-Leninist scripture "the anti-imperialist struggle takes precedence over bourgeois-democratic transformation" (i.e., democracy).

The Belgian archbishop read a pastoral letter in the churches - Rwanda was 95% Catholic - saying, "that all men were equal in the eyes of God." The oppressed Hutu took this as divine sanction to rise in revolt against the Tutsi lords. They slaughtered about 60,000 with their families. The rest fled to Burundi, Uganda, and the Congo, where they received Russian and Chinese Communist arms and plotted to invade Rwanda and restore the Mwami to his throne. (Rudahigwa had died and was succeeded by Kigeri V.)

The Rwandans needed Western support against this threat. The Belgians and the U.S. supplied arms and the Belgians supplied a half-dozen officers who proved decisive when the Tutsis invaded Rwanda from Burundi and were routed by two Belgian officers with a mortar on a causeway after the Rwandan troops fled in terror at the sight of their former lords.

This Communist stupidity of arming and bankrolling the Tutsi aristocrats forced Rwanda to remain pro-Western and the use of the airfield at Shangugu enabled the Congolese government troops to keep the Congo, with its vast resources of copper, cobalt, and uranium within the Western orbit.

Too late, the Russians realized the blunder of their ideological priesthood and established diplomatic relations with Rwanda. The Rwandans agreed, due to the dimwittedness of their Foreign Minister, said some, but perhaps as a result of a shrewd calculation of the highly intelligent Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, Martin Uzamugura, that a Russian embassy in Kigali would finally discourage the Tutsi exiles. [I am informed that Uzamugura was later murdered by a hostile political faction.]

Washington's craven stupidity almost destroyed our advantage while I was Chargé d'affaires ad interim in the absence of the ambassador. An impresario for the New York World's Fair had recruited, for the African Pavilion, a group of Tutsi exile youths in the Congo who had been court dancers for the Mwami - very folkloric - dressed in leopard skins, shaking spears, and all that. It seemed harmless, but not to Martin Uzamugura, who summoned me to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and demanded that the U.S. deny the Tutsi entry visas.

"On what grounds?" I asked.

"I know them and their Communist friends," he said (he had been Rwandan ambassador to the U.N.). "They will set up some sort of propaganda bureau in New York and stir up the other African countries against us."

"But I have to suggest some legal grounds. This World's Fair fellow will surely raise a fuss."

"I've read your McCarran Act," said Uzamugura. "It is so broad that you can deny a visa to anybody under its provisions." He was angry and unmoveable and said that if I had witnessed young Tutsi nobles kicking a pregnant white woman in the belly perhaps I would understand. The memory of Tutsi cruelty toward their serfs still enraged this brilliant and patriotic Hutu.

Our precious airfield was at risk! I sent a message to Washington asking that visas be refused and explaining the possible consequences. No reply. I cabled again. No reply. Uzamugura was pressing for a reply. Frantic, I cabled our embassy in the Congolese capital at Leopoldville and warned that they could lose the use of the airfield and therefore the whole Eastern Congo if the visas were granted. Our embassy in Leopoldville persuaded the Congolese government to declare the Tutsi exiles Congolese citizens under a U.N. resolution permitting host countries to declare exiles citizens. They then denied the Tutsi exit visas.

Months later a Department official, whose job I suspect had been bought by his rich wife passed through Kigali and I asked why the Department had not replied when our entire position in that part of Africa had been at stake.

"You don't understand how things are in Washington, Bill, Congresswoman Bolton of New York had a big investment in the African Pavilion..."

So the Department simply did not reply! All is not well that ends well!

We still heard rumors of a Tutsi force massing in Burundi for an invasion of Rwanda. The ambassador had aggrandized his embassy by unwisely acquiring a military attaché who had been expelled by Burundi. Underemployed, he spent such time as was not spent on his doctoral dissertation on drawing up alarming military contingencies. Despite the pathetic Tutsi performance in the past he frightened the ambassador into thinking that a Tutsi force, bypassing the border post in the Bugesera - bordering Burundi - could seize the Kigali airfield and block our escape. The ambassador ordered us secretly to fortify the embassy. Welders at night constructed a steel grate across the entrance. All hunting weapons were brought to the embassy. They were quite numerous since we shot most of our diet. M-16s were also flown in. Food and

water was stocked. The military attaché drew up plans to barricade the windows with steel filing cabinets and assigned embassy officers to the defense of particular windows. Small planes were chartered and all women and children were flown to Nairobi. The diplomatic corps was astounded. Unaware of any threat, foreign civilians were enraged at their own embassies for failing to warn them. Bonn cabled German Ambassador Steinbach demanding to know why he had failed to report the slightest deterioration of the situation when the Americans were fleeing the country. A small crowd of frightened Belgians besieged their ambassador, Standaert.

I had tried to convince the ambassador that there was no threat, but I was outweighed by the professional prestige of the military attaché and the massacre of whites at Stanleyville, which weighed on the ambassador's conscience. He did not want to be responsible for Tutsi atrocities against our wives and children, which comprised a greater proportion of our people than in the embassy in Paris. [And the Peace Corps had refused to send its people to Rwanda on the ground that it was too dangerous and primitive!].

Basically the problem was the ambassador's inability to assess probabilities, and the incompetence of the CIA representative, who, like the military attaché, saw Tutsi armies massing on all sides. (He once warned me not to drive through Uganda for my East African vacation because I would run into a Tutsi force coming in from Uganda). Contributing to the fear was the absence of a competent Rwandan intelligence service. The Rwandan government, like the American ambassador, was prey to the wildest and most improbable rumors, which panicked the ambassador into foolish alarms even before I could verify the facts. Since he had no staff meetings one could never tell what blunder was being prepared until it was too late.

The military attaché and I drove one day to Nyanza, half way to Burundi, to speak to the Belgian commander of the few hundred men of the Rwandan Army. He claimed that a Tutsi force of two thousand was poised just over the border. While the Belgian conferred with a black scout who had just arrived I expressed doubt that any African was capable of counting such a force, even if they were drawn up in formation on a parade ground. The attaché mused that the Belgian colonel had a strong motive to exaggerate. If the Rwandans fled the battle he could claim that he was overwhelmed by superior numbers. If the Tutsi fled, he could claim victory against heavy odds. The threatened invasion never occurred, though there were more false alarms later.

On another occasion I was on a trip to the northwest border. When I returned I found that the ambassador had sent a NIACT (night action) telegram to the Secretary of State, who was awakened and informed that "the armed forces of Burundi" had invaded Rwanda. The facts, which the ambassador had not checked, were laughable: some Hutu serfs who had fled with their Tutsi lords to Burundi three years before were determined that those who had remained should not harvest their manioc, which they had planted before their flight. They crossed the border to get the manioc and were set upon by the Hutu on the Rwandan side - a scuffle with cudgels. A Burundi policeman in uniform came over and broke it up. He was the "armed forces," magnified hundreds of times as the report was passed from one uneducated official to the other to Kigali.

The Lumumbists tried an invasion - across a bridge over the Rusizi River from the Congo. A Rwandan platoon under a Belgian lieutenant slaughtered hundreds as they crossed the bridge drugged with hashish. A photo taken by the military attaché from a small airplane showed a pile

of bodies blocking further progress over the bridge. Bodies had fallen off the pile into the rapids below, where they were caught on rocks. I was to see nothing so horrible until Cambodia.

After so many abortive attempts we heard of an invasion across the Nyabarongo River in the southeast in the prefecture of Kibungu. I warned Ambassador Withers that it was surely another wild exaggeration and asked permission to go down there to see for myself. I would report by hand radio to Third Secretary Du Bose posted atop Mt. Kigali. The ambassador agreed, but told the USIA rep and one other fellow to accompany me in our Jeep Wagoneer, the worst 4-wheel drive vehicle ever manufactured. We set out equipped with hunting weapons - always a good pretext if one encountered officials - mine a .375 Winchester, the others with similar buffalo-caliber rifles. We reconnoitered the area of the reported invasion - mostly off the roads. On one road we met one very taciturn Rwandan official fleeing in a Peugeot, a machine pistol on the seat beside him. He would say nothing.

While driving down one side of a shallow valley toward a mine the USIA fellow, who was driving, decided we would do better on the other side. I warned him that the vegetation in the middle, which we had to cross, was very green, which meant soggy ground. He ignored the warning and sank in up to the hubcaps. We were stuck, and the Tutsi horde might pour over the ridge at any moment. I decided to head for the mine on foot to seek help.

With the heavy Winchester on my shoulder I headed south. Suddenly I heard the engine of an airplane, which soon flew directly overhead at an altitude of no more than 200 feet. The one-plane Rwandan Air Force, a U.S. gift, flown by a couple of Belgian officers. I looked up and waved. When I got back to Kigali I discovered that they had reported a "Cuban adviser" among the enemy. My dark complexion had darkened still further in the African sun.

At the mine I found only one half-crazed Belgian, who, however, had a Landrover. With it he pulled our Wagoneer loose. When we arrived back at the mine several truckloads of "soldiers" drove up, headed by the Prefect of Kibungu. I asked him about the invasion.

"There were ten thousand of them. We killed a hundred and the rest ran away. We captured a mortar."

I asked him how many enemy weapons had been captured. None, except the "mortar," which turned out to be a length of galvanized iron water pipe open at both ends. One unarmed body had been found - obviously a peasant shot down as he was hoeing his bean patch. I explored the rushing Nyabarongo and found a dugout canoe hidden in the reeds, another a few hundred yards further on. It would have taken several days to move even a few hundred men across the Nyabarongo with such transport. I radioed DuBose from the summit of a high hill. The Prefect of Kibungu asked me to review his troops, a mass of sleepy, dirty Hutus with zombie-like expressions. When they lined up they were all dressed in frayed and ragged ladies' overcoats - obviously rejected Salvation Army stock bought up by Arab traders and shipped to the interior of Africa. Bits of fur hung loose from collars, big plastic buttons flashed in buttonholes surrounded by Hungarian hussar embroidery, and big black bare feet stuck out from below the hems. The Hutu are very short, shorter than the ladies who had donated the coats.

They held their ancient rifles at parade rest. The bores looked abnormally large. "They can't have ammunition for those guns," I said to the crazy Belgian. "They look like castoffs from Von Lettow's [black German] army in the First War!"

"Oh, they don't shoot with them, Monsieur L'Ambassadeur. They hit chaps on the head with them!"

The "invasions" petered out when a Belgian recluse on the Rusizi River border with the Congo shot about a dozen Lumumbists trying to cross his rope bridge from the Congo side.

The embassy tried to foment economic development in a feeble way. As a former geologist I was sure that much tin could be dredged from the alluvium in the Nyabarongo River Valley. Such a dredge might have used hydroelectric power from the power line which followed the course of the river. There was gold in the Kamiranzovu Swamp, and vast deposits of peat could have replaced the loss of trees due to firewood cutting. Methane gas in the water of Lake Kiwu might have powered trucks, but was used only to run a brewery. But nothing was done - or even planned.

The indolence of the natives was best illustrated by a conversation I had with Motani, a Pakistani who owned a primitive soap works which consisted of nothing more than several steel barrels perched on rocks beneath which wood fires heated the contents. Above each barrel, standing on a stool, a Hutu stirred the contents of the barrel. I asked Motani how much he paid these miserable drudges. He named a ridiculously low figure. "I only barely break even," he explained. "The government fixes the prices. I run this soap works only to have the right to stay here. I actually make my living speculating in currencies by telegram. Once in the market I asked the price of manioc and calculated that my workers could make three times what I pay them if they simply cultivated manioc on the vacant land on Mt. Kigali. I asked them why they didn't do it, and they replied that when they are home they do not like to work. They work for me because I make them work."

The Anglican Church had an agricultural missionary in the Bugesera who was at his wits' end. He toiled in the hot sun making a garden for the instruction of the natives. Once he asked why they did not help him. One replied, "Oh, you Bazungu like to work; we don't like to work!" Too lazy to walk their cattle to the nearby lake they diluted the milk with cows' urine. "Frightful taste!" said the missionary.

One day the capital (pop. 7000) was aroused by a report of a Tutsi attack on an agricultural experiment station on the Burundi border next to the vast swamps of the Nyabarongo. Just a few shots in the night, no casualties. A couple of weeks later the Rwandan Government issued a "white paper" denouncing the attack and the harboring by Burundi of Tutsi exiles. I read it, and idly examined the title page, at the bottom of which were a few lines of small print such as one finds in any publication. Among other administrative data was the date the text was sent to the press - two weeks before the attack! I went into the ambassador's office and showed it to him.

"They attacked their own post to blame it on Burundi," I said. The ambassador was very nervous and lamely protested that it could not be true. I asked permission to visit the site with the

disreputable Count de Hagenau, a Belgian remittance man now on our staff. The ambassador agreed. I searched the grass outside the high wire fence of the station compound, hoping to find spent cartridges which I could send back to CIA for analysis of their origin. I found none. Much later I decided that it was a scheme of our CIA man and perhaps some government officials - with the approval of the ambassador.

There were various frightening incidents typical of Africa: a Polish count who was driving into the Congo to pay the workers of a plantation of which he was in charge forgot to bring his pistol and was ambushed by natives who had blocked the road with rocks. Meat with white skin attached was seen on sale at the Goma market a few days later. (I never went anywhere unarmed.) The pouch run to Burundi was fraught with danger, since armed rebels along the flight path often shot at the small aircraft we chartered for the purpose and drunken guards at the Bujumbura airport often brandished their rifles menacingly when we took off without bribing them.

On rare occasions I crossed the border into the Congo at Gisenyi, on the north edge of Lake Kivu. One had to run a gauntlet of drunken Congolese border guards, who staggered out, loaded machine pistol in hand, brandy bottle sticking out of a pocket, the other arm around the waist of a simpering prostitute. I always had a revolver in my lap to discourage "confiscation" of my car.

One incident in the Congo near Bukavu brought home to me the awful crime committed by Western liberals in inflicting independence on the helpless peoples of Africa. All around the town bullet-riddled shops and demolished factories used as mines for building materials for huts gave testimony to the recent fighting between the government and the Lumumbists. The latter were finally annihilated in that area when, dazed by hashish, they drove in trucks down the main street of Bukavu while Congolese troops leisurely shot them all from the sidewalks

As I strolled about an African approached me and asked if I could bring him to Rwanda. I told him that I could not and asked him why he did not wish to stay in the Congo, which was obviously very fertile and a much easier place for a peasant to prosper. He replied in his primitive French that if he built a hut and planted a crop the soldiers would come, rape his wife, burn the hut, and steal all the food. Then he asked, "Monsieur, when will the independence stop?"

Surprised, I questioned him and discovered that he thought the French word "independence" meant "murder, pillage, rape" and so forth.

**LEO G. CYR**  
**Ambassador**  
**Rwanda (1966-1971)**

*Ambassador Leo G. Cyr was born in Limestone, Maine on July 28, 1909. He received a bachelor's degree from Holy Cross College in 1930, a master's degree in Foreign Service from Georgetown University in 1933, and a law degree from*



*Georgetown University in 1939. Ambassador Cyr's career included positions in Morocco, Cameroon, Tunisia, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Rwanda. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 4, 1988.*

*Q: Coming to your time, now how did you act as ambassador? You were ambassador to Rwanda from 1966 to 1971. Did you rearrange furniture?*

CYR: There you go! Now that's a very good question. I guess I asked for it! No, I didn't. However, I would describe myself as a hands-on ambassador, one who because of the size of the post had time to take care of a lot of details, which I did until the mercenaries came along. And I think that any of my subordinates commenting on my approach might mention that I got into details.

As a matter of fact, as the second Ambassador in Rwanda, I inherited from my predecessor and friend Dudley Withers a situation which he had built up in a hurry. Dudley and I had blacklisted together in WT. I was amazed when I arrived to find the number of people on the staff. This personnel build-up was not all Dudley's doing, but a lot of it happened between our tours. In addition to that, changes made in the embassy in Bujumbura resulted in the transfer . . .

*Q: Bujumbura, in Burundi?*

CYR: Burundi. Resulted in the transfer to Kigali of a military attaché and his staff. It didn't take long to realize that we were overstaffed. As a result the lonely life in this isolated post bred problems, particularly among wives with time on their hands. One had to be busy and I had to do something about the size of the staff.

I recommended against the continuance of the military attaché, much to the distress of the incumbent. A problem in Bujumbura had been solved by creating a problem in Kigali. I indicated that we didn't really need a CIA man in Kigali.

The net result was that I eliminated many positions, many leased houses, sold a great deal of U. S. furniture, and returned a considerable amount of money to the Treasury of the United States. Frankly, I'm not sure that the budget people in the Department particularly appreciated this. It was not the type of management that they were accustomed to. Build-up is more the rule. I'm not sure what has been done since then. I do know that the ambassador's residence has been added to. In our particular case it was adequate, but ambassadors with children might well need more room than we had, but we were comfortable.

*Q: What was our policy towards Rwanda?*

CYR: Our policy toward Rwanda . . .

*Q: We're talking about 1966 right now.*

CYR: 1966.

*Q: To '71.*

CYR: I think it can be said that underlying my instructions when I went out there was a general acceptance of the fact that we don't have so much very much to do with Rwanda. It's not very important, but it is a traditional function of an embassy to promote friendship. And Rwanda does have a vote in the United Nations, and they do sell an awful lot of coffee to Folger's. You should be able to take care of almost everything locally, and that would be a big help. Go out there and keep them friendly, and that is what I did. The Government was just feeling its way in its fifth year of independence.

President Kayibanda was the George Washington of his country. Diminutive in stature, it was hard to believe that he had wrested control of his Hutu country from the haughty Tutsis, who had invaded the country and become overlords some 400 years ago. Kayibanda was very shy, so much so that he would never look you in the eye. Yet he had years of seminary education and, as I think back, must have had a very dogged character. He was proud and naive. He didn't ask for anything, and he didn't seem to expect anything. Ambassador Withers had initiated a few AID projects which were implemented during my tour. I had an excellent AID officer in the person of John Nulle, who did his best to acquaint the Rwandans with AID procedures. They knew how to ask for money, but did not conceive projects readily. We had an excellent USIS operation with an excellent staff.

I was visited by the Assistant Secretary, Dave Newsom in 1970.

*Q: Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.*

CYR: For African Affairs, Dave Newsom. And he asked, "What is the prospect here?" There's a dispatch in the Department's files which I was in the midst of writing at the time. Dave read it in rough draft, which gave him my estimate of the situation at that time. It could be incorporated here by reference, if that is your practice. You don't do that?

*Q: Well, we'll assume a researcher would do it.*

CYR: Newsom asked, "Who's going to follow Kayibanda?"

Now, Kayibanda was drinking a lot, and wasn't providing leadership as he should. And I said, "If and when there is a change, the present minister of defense will be the next president. Juvenal Habyarimana." And that's what happened after I left. He is the present president. And so there have been just two presidents of Rwanda since it became an independent country.

*Q: What was the role of the Belgians when you were there?*

CYR: The Belgians acted like the trustee that they had been before independence. Like people who had more power in the past and who still had definite economic interests there. They still considered themselves, the Belgian ambassador, as the first among equals, and the Rwandans, I think, welcomed this role, and the Belgians did a very good job.

*Q: Did you have close contact with the Belgians?*

CYR: Very close and friendly with the Belgian, the Israeli, and the French ambassadors. Hermann Dehennin, the present Belgian ambassador to the United States, was my Belgian counterpart in Kigali.

*Q: Well now, while you were there, there were some rather serious disturbances between the Hutus and the Tutsis, as I recall. What was happening? Did we have anything to do to ameliorate the situation?*

CYR: You're thinking of the insurrection in which the Hutus overthrew the Tutsi ruling class and declared a Hutu republic in 1962. But there were serious disturbances of a different nature while we were there. On July 4, 1967 my wife and I had the usual Fourth of July reception. After our guests left we congratulated ourselves on how things had gone. And we said, "Well, it's going to be a quiet summer."

The next morning we were awakened to the news on Radio Rwanda that European mercenaries in Mobutu's army had invaded Bukavu in the Eastern Congo on the Rwandan border. We were much closer to it than Kinshasa was. We immediately sought more information and tried to abreast of developments. The foreign mercenaries had revolted against Mobutu, demanding more pay, and they were joined by Katangese troops in Bukavu. Then they marched northwest up to Kisangani. They overextended their lines of communication and eventually had to return to Bukavu. They held out for months in Bukavu, but eventually they had to realize that their demand for more pay had become a fight for survival.

The stalemate lasted for quite some time with the Congolese army playing a waiting game. Eventually the International Red Cross became an intermediary. Instead of going to Kinshasa, the capital of the Congo, they came to Kigali. Dean Rusk ordered me to make available our communications to these people for any messages they wanted to send to their headquarters. All messages were repeated to Washington, to Kinshasa and Brussels.

*Q: These were of the mercenaries, or of the Red Cross?*

CYR: These were of the Red Cross, who were serving as intermediaries and needed communications facilities. The papal nuncio, who was a Frenchman at the time, and I flew down to the town opposite Bukavu on the Rwandan side, and looked the place over.

Anyway, our embassy became very much involved because it had the best communications, and I received from the Red Cross drafts of messages which they wanted to send, and on which they wanted my input. And so, we drafted and redrafted, often into the wee hours of the morning. Eventually, an agreement was reached. It was agreed that the Katangese would filter back to Katanga, their province of origin. The European mercenaries would be loaded on trucks and brought to Kigali and transferred to two C-130s. That was done, and the whole plan went off without a hitch. They came across country to Kigali, they were loaded on the C-130s, and they were flown to European airports and out of our jurisdiction.

In between there were all sorts of episodes and interludes.

*Q: Were there problems between the two tribes, the Hutus and Tutsis when you were there?*

CYR: No, that was before my time. The Hutus were very much in charge by then, and that was no problem.

*Q: I talked to your successor in a former interview, Robert Corrigan, and he said that the major interest of Washington was trying to get Rwanda's vote in the UN, and that he spent a great deal of time going up and talking about UN votes. Did you feel the same?*

CYR: I did that too. Every UN member nation assumed importance because of its UN vote. I dealt with them also on AID projects.

*Q: Because Corrigan was saying that every time that he came up asking for a UN vote, he would find he would be asked for more AID money, but he had a very limited program. And that he found that Tanzania, which almost invariably voted against us in the UN, had a far greater AID allotment than did Rwanda. Did you try to increase your AID package?*

CYR: Nyerere of Tanzania was more worldly wise and more on the ball than Kayibanda. Perhaps by the time Bob arrived, Nyerere had briefed Kayibanda that you have to keep pushing for US aid. Seriously though, it is likely that the Rwandans had been perfectly happy during my tour as we tarred three streets and installed waterworks in Kigali.

I was always ready and willing to entertain Rwandan requests for aid, but never pressed them to make requests. In my opinion, my implementation of projects initiated during Ambassador Withers' tour served to promote friendship and acknowledged Rwanda's importance to us. Granted, it was less than the Belgians did but, if the truth were known, this was the way both the Rwandans and the Belgians thought it should be. Belgium had a special interest and status there. But I don't believe that our aid was matched by any other country. I turned down no requests and heard no complaints. And I was fair to the US taxpayer, seldom thought of in this context.

I did, however, have to think of the US taxpayer very seriously in connection with one of our AID project which provided jeeps to the Kigali police. It came to my attention that the jeeps were being used to transport the children of police to and from school. Byron Engle, Director of AID's Office of Public Safety, happened to be visiting me. I told him that I intended to cut off the remaining \$200,000, in the pipeline for this project. He agreed 100%, saying that better use could be made of such funds. I never heard a peep out of the Rwandas after the cutoff.

When I left Kigali, our projects had been largely implemented, and there wasn't much in the pipeline. Unlike Bob, I had no requests on my plate, or I'd have done something about them. I'd have taken a constructive approach, using their requests for money as an occasion to coach them how to submit well conceived projects in lieu of requests for money. In the spirit of friendship, I would have urged these inexperienced people to abandon their traditional notions of baksheesh and to get to work conceiving legitimate projects. And I wouldn't have worried about Tanzania.

*Q: I was asked by Ambassador Corrigan to ask you about how you dealt with the problem of the moon rock. Does this ring a bell with you?*

CYR: Oh, yes.

*Q: He was saying that they were having trouble delivering a piece of the moon which had been sent up with the Rwandan flag, and that you had tried to deliver it, and nobody was interested in this.*

CYR: So, apparently nothing happened after my departure? It was weird, absolutely weird. My hunch is that they viewed the rock with superstition, particularly Kayibanda. It was the type of thing that could happen only in Rwanda.

*Q: Corrigan said that we had taken on one of our voyages to the moon some flags and delivered them back to all the countries, each with a little piece of moon rock, which was usually put on exhibit in the countries. But Rwanda just had absolutely no interest in this, you couldn't deliver it.*

CYR: Yes, we received a circular instruction for the Department on what Bob described, asking that we deliver the flag and the moon rock to the Rwandans. I don't recall the scenario very exactly, only that it unfolded over a period of time. As I remember what happened, I probably spoke to Kayibanda first, saying I would like to deliver the flag and moon rock to him. He suggested I contact the Foreign Minister. I spoke to the Foreign Minister, who was evasive. He would be in touch. Time went by and the Department may have asked for a report. I checked with the Foreign Minister several times and continued to get the run-around. My tour of duty came to an end. Some ambassadors leave their successors aid projects to finish. In Rwanda we leave them moon rocks! I must ask Bob what he ever did with the moon rock.

Oh, the gorilla woman. Do you want to know about the gorilla woman?

*Q: Yes, I'd like to know about the gorilla woman.*

CYR: Dian Fossey preceded me to Central Africa when she went to the Congo. She was in the mountains of the eastern part of the Congo for several months before I arrived. There were troubles in the area where she was and Congolese soldiers required her to move on the grounds that she was in danger. She moved her operation to Mount Visoke in Rwanda.

*Q: This is the woman who had international renown for her observations of the life of gorillas.*

CYR: That's right. She had borrowed money to go to Nairobi and talk to the expert there, the anthropologist Leakey, whom I had met on my first trip to Africa in 1950. He had encouraged her in this work, and eventually they got the funds to work with.

So, I had been there several months, when she eventually came down from her mountain, and came to the embassy. A very independent woman. Very self-reliant, self-confident, sensitive but with a sardonic sense of humor. She enjoyed her bluntness. She autographed a photograph of my

wife and me : "To two of the nicest primates I know!" As time went on, she'd come down oftener and she'd come to our house. We became good friends. She was also a good friend of Rosamund Carr, an American widow living up in the Ruhengeri area, growing pyrethrum, not far from Dian's mountain. She's still there. Rosamund was also very good friend of ours.

I visited Dian up on her mountain, a very exhausting climb, 10,000 feet up. I went chiefly at the urgings of the French ambassador, who was very anxious to go. So he and his wife and I went up. We spent one night in her camp and came back.

We saw her a few times after that and then we left Rwanda in September '71. She was murdered on December 26, 1985.

*Q: She was murdered, yes. They think maybe by poachers.*

CYR: Yes. I have no insights into that at all.

*Q: Well now, I notice that you spent about five years in Rwanda, which is a very long time. I take it then that you found it an interesting and satisfying post?*

CYR: I can assure you that during the first two weeks, I wondered whether I would be able to take it. It was isolated. The weather was fine, but the lack of amenities and diversion was something. That's why I got into details, I guess. I took up ham radio and often talked to King Hussein of Jordan. It boosted my morale to hear his voice say, "Oh, hello Leo, my good friend in Kigali."

But, after that July 4th reception and the invasion of Bukavu, we had more than we could handle. For a solid year, we worked day and night on the mercenary problem and on our housing project for refugees, American Protestant missionaries from Eastern Congo, who came pell mell into Rwanda.

*Q: Was this during the Stanleyville time?*

CYR: Yes. There were French and Belgian Catholic missionaries who also crossed into Rwanda. My French and Belgian counterparts took care of the Catholics. The Protestants were Americans, so we took care of them.

We set up a sort of a dormitory with some surplus cots, etc. that we had. Even newspaper men stayed there. Refugees would come in waves and stay there until they could get a flight out. So, we had a really busy time for about a year.

And after the evacuation of the mercenaries in C-130s, I came on home leave. As you know, any ambassador from a post the size of Rwanda would normally be received by the Secretary of State about four or five minutes. Dean Rusk kept me almost an hour, and he was just bubbling over about Rwanda, and the way we had handled the communications problem. He was very flattering. I was most pleased.

He indicated that he'd worried about what might happen throughout Africa if the insurrection prevailed and the Katangese were able to separate from the Congo. It could have been the beginning of a fragmentation of Africa, of a throwing over of the artificial European boundaries that had been set up during the colonial era. He was not an advocate of the existing boundaries except for the fact that they were in being and he didn't want to see them disrupted. It would open Pandora's box.

*Q: Particularly with the European interference that was coming because of the commercial interests which were helping the rebel forces and all this.*

CYR: Exactly. And so Secretary Rusk just made my day. After I went back after home leave and never again had any feelings of wasting my time. I thought, well we had our day in the spotlight, and now I'll just see what happens. And I was completely geared to it by then.

*Q: You're talking about what is a phenomenon within the Foreign Service, and I'm sure other organizations, that we respond better in case of an emergency. Otherwise you get the feeling of marking time. What am I doing?*

CYR: Exactly. Oh, I may have exaggerated our lack of things to do. If I went back and looked at my files, I could refresh my memory about things that did keep us busy and were good, and worthwhile.

In the fall of 1970 Assistant Secretary for Africa, Dave Newsom was there, and he said, "We think you're doing a fine job, and you can stay as long as you want to. You have been here five years though. Almost five years."

I said, "I would like to stay until I've been at the highest level of my grade for five years for pension reasons."

*Q: A pension is calculated on the average salary over the last five years of service.*

CYR: Yes. And he said, "Fine. Stay until February 22, 1972." Come Christmas '70 we got a card from a friend of ours who owned this in Bethesda house saying "I am thinking of selling my house."

We knew the house. We wrote back quickly and said, "We would like to buy it." We owned a house on Hampden Lane but we wanted to buy this one on Randall Lane. She wrote back and said "okay, I will sell it to no one but you."

In July of '71 we bought it. But once we had bought it and it was sitting here empty, we began to wonder whether we wanted to stay until February '72. And by the time September came around, we had decided and notified Washington that we would like to resign in September. So that was when we resigned, in September 1971.

**ROBERT F. FRANKLIN**  
**Public Affairs Officer USIS**  
**Kigali (1967-1968)**

*Robert F. Franklin, a native of San Francisco, California attended the University of California. After serving in World War II with the National Guard, he joined USIS. He served in Morocco, Vietnam, the Congo, Rwanda, Kenya, Germany, and Tunisia. Mr. Franklin was interviewed by Earl Wilson in 1988.*

FRANKLIN: At six o'clock on the morning of July 5th we heard gunfire from the other end of town. This turned out to be the start of a rebellion on the part of the mercenaries, who had not been paid by the Congolese government, with Katangese troops. And they had decided to take over Bukavu, this was just a local situation: Take over Bukavu and hold it for ransom, so to speak, until the government paid them. Mobutu was Congolese president then, as now.

*Q: These mercenaries were from Rhodesia?*

FRANKLIN: Yes. Well, there were a few of them from Europe. But the greatest number of them were either South African or Rhodesian, either northern or southern Rhodesia at that time.

And they came in firing. Well, the consul was Frank Crigler, T. Frank Crigler. Anyway, Frank ordered a convoy of all Americans that we could get. They were mistreating American missionaries out in the bush. We heard radio reports. So everybody who could get into the head missionary's house--he had a nice big house--and we formed a convoy. We went across the Rusizi River, the border into Rwanda.

There are two bridges across the Rusizi at Bukavu. One of them was blocked. The other one was down by the slaughterhouse. And for some reason or other nobody thought to block that one and we got across. And, mind you, we took only what we could carry in our cars. Everything else was left. At that time I had a little Volkswagen bug--not much room for freight! So we got across the river. No sooner were we across than we were fired upon by Rwanda troops who thought they were being invaded and who were guarding the border.

Well, the reason we wanted to cross the border for one thing was that the airport that Bukavu used was in Rwanda. Well, I managed to intimidate the soldiers--that's the only way I can put it--about the horrible things that would happen to them if they gave us a bad time. And they let us through. The consul, didn't speak much French at this point. He had come from Latin America only about a month before and was fluent in Spanish but had very little French.

Anyway, we got through. Nobody was hit by the firing. I'm not sure whether they were warning shots or not, but they were very, very close. We were maybe a car-length apart, and the bullets were hitting between the cars right in front on the road.

So we got to the plane. This was a US Air Force C-123 transport they had sent us from Leopoldville. A great many people went out. My wife, as it turned out, had had an appointment to fly to Nairobi that day to see a specialist about a very bad sinus problem. Well, of course,



everything had dropped dead at the airport--no commercial flights in or out--because of the rebellion.

Everybody who wanted to stay in the area drove or rode up to Kigali where Leo Cyr was our ambassador. He did a marvelous job of making us at home. My wife flew from there to Nairobi the following day. We didn't know what was going to happen. Okay. I wanted to get to Nairobi to see what was happening to my wife, because she had a serious medical problem. I wound up driving over to Nairobi, which was maybe 500 miles, across the center of Africa. I had trouble getting air passage quickly. The roads were pretty good, however. Not so much in Rwanda, but in Uganda and Kenya which comprised most of the trip. The British had done a fairly good job of road building. A lot of them were dirt, but good dirt roads.

So anyway, I got there. My wife, I found, was all right. There was absolutely nothing to do. I didn't want to stay in Nairobi. And things looked to be simmering down. Well, I thought, maybe I'd go back and help. For this I ultimately got a superior service award, by the way.

After just a few days in Nairobi, I actually went back in to Bukavu, although I did not stay in my house which by that time had been looted completely.

*Q: You didn't have much luck with your personal possessions.*

FRANKLIN: That's twice we lost everything.

I stayed in one of the few apartments that were normally occupied by the communications personnel in the consulate. I stayed in one of those for a few days. Of course, everything was disrupted by this point. The Congolese army had driven the mercenaries out of town for the moment but they were not far away. We started distributing food flown in by our embassies to the natives gained a lot of popularity in that respect.

Then the governor, who was the same Engulu who had been with me on the other side and who had thereafter been appointed as governor of this province, said we had 45 minutes to leave before they closed the borders. The mercenaries were on the march.

Oh, I must tell you one point that put us in pretty well with Governor Engulu. When the first attack came, he fled his palace, his big governor's mansion, on foot, and took refuge with two of his security men in the consular residence which was a good distance away from his headquarters, but quite near our house. The wife of the consul didn't speak much French either. So she called on my wife, whose French is not great but really quite adequate for most things, to go down and pacify the governor and his aides. She put this fellow in the attic. He was scared to death he was going to get slaughtered. And she arranged to smuggle his wife out by motorboat. (Don't forget we were at the edge of a lake, and the eastern side of the lake was Rwanda.) The Mobil Oil agent, an American whose name I've forgotten, was the one who owned the motorboat and took her out.

So we got 45 minutes to leave. My Belgian secretary there had a blind, dependent husband, and I felt obliged to get them across first. This left me practically no time to go grab what I could that

was left in the house and take it over. When I got to the bridge there was a Congolese soldier there who pointed a machine gun at my chest and said I was not to cross unless I gave them the equivalent of \$2,000 in Belgian francs--which, of course, I didn't have. At this point my friend Engulu pops out of the sentry box. He was standing there watching what was going on. He said, "Mr. Franklin is okay. He's cultural. Let him go."

Oh, I'll tell you. That was a very fortunate thing.

I managed to rescue a lot of radio equipment that I had had with me personally. And once across the border, we set up a radio monitoring operation, because the mercenaries were using radio and we were trying to find out what they were doing.

On the other hand, the Rwandan government was so nervous about all these goings-on that they prohibited us from transmitting by radio back to Washington and to Leopoldville, Kinshasa it was called by then. We didn't know what to do. The consul and I were in communication by little portable VHF gizmos. And the communicators, of course, used CIA equipment. (They--the Communicators--were CIA employees as a matter of fact.) The one communicator who was there brought over a really archaic portable radio with batteries but with no battery connectors. He and I got together and made up jury-rigged battery connectors.

Rwanda is an odd country in that there are very few cities. The population is spread out almost evenly all across the country. It's hard to find a place where you can even take a leak. Somebody's always watching, you know, on the road.

But we did find a little copse, a little wood, and we brought this portable equipment. He had to contact with Asmara, the big Signal Corps station in Eritrea. But he couldn't. In the meantime, because I didn't know where to go or what to do I got out the pump to my car and pretended that I had a flat tire and was pumping it up. And I stayed there while Jon, the communicator, was in the wood, a few dozen yards off the road. Every time a car would come by I'd pump with my foot, you see. Nobody paid any attention until this one car stopped. And he said in French, "Just what is the trouble, Monsieur?" And I said, "Oh, a flat tire."

"Yes. I've seen you pumping this up. I've passed here three times in the last half hour and seen you pumping it up. I am of Rwandan security." Bear in mind we had been prohibited from any radio transmission.

So I said, "Well, I think I found the trouble. It's the valve. I'll screw it in tighter, and I think I can get away from here."

"Tres bien, Monsieur. Au revoir," and he left.

I very quickly got word to Jon that we'd have to do something else. He wasn't having any luck anyway, so I said, "well, I'll go and I'll come back in about 20 minutes. You have everything ready, get near the edge of the woods and when I come, throw it all in the car. This we did.

*Q: That would make a good movie.*

FRANKLIN: It would, you know? Now, our consul had been very, very friendly with the honorary German consul in Bukavu. He was a nice young fellow who was running a chinchona [raw material for quinine] plantation, of which there are several in that region. He was friendly in turn with a German fellow who had been sent in as supervisor for a UN tea-growing project in Rwanda, and who lived quite near the airport. We had had no success at all in finding any refuge for ourselves. I mean, here we had radio equipment and other stuff with us and nowhere to put it.

The German consul said, "I think I can get you in. This fellow's a bachelor. He's got a house. It's not a big house. But it will be a room, at least."

To make a long story short we brought in our good radio, a Collins transceiver. Jon had brought it as well as the battery portable but it takes power to run it; you can't run it off batteries. Well, we set up in this back bedroom and rigged a really ridiculous antenna over a peach tree in the back yard, and we made contact with Asmara.

Now, I'm an old radio operator. So I did the actual operation in Morse. And Jon, the communicator, who was expert at one-time-pad stuff, did all the enciphering and deciphering. We went on for a couple of days like this. And the consul in the meantime was out gathering--

*Q: He was contacting Leopoldville.*

FRANKLIN: No, it went directly to Asmara, then to Washington and back to Leopoldville, I think is the way it worked. But it doesn't matter; we got out. In the meantime, the consul was out finding out what's going on then returning to this little house to write reports which we sent out.

This went on for a couple of days and we got out message after message, report after report of what's going on. And eventually the mercenaries took over the town. They came back in and occupied everything. One of them, in fact, was living in my house, I learned later.

So there was nothing to do. I mean, we couldn't attack them. We had to rely on the Congolese Army which we did, and they eventually got them out and resolved the situation.

Meantime, on my birthday, which is August 9th, I got a telegram over our little haywire system in the back bedroom of this tea-planting supervisor that my wife was going into surgery the next day.

"Please go to Nairobi. It's a serious sinus surgery."

Well, what could I do? We couldn't do anymore there. We had done about all the reporting we could. By this time the traffic had slowed down so that Jon could do both enciphering and the Morse transmission. And he didn't need me, although I was useful up till then.

So I set off for Nairobi. There was a Papal Nuncio that came down from Rome to see what he could do, and he had chartered the Mobil Oil plane. This was a plane operating in the region whose pilot I knew, an Italian fellow, and I bummed a ride with them up to Kigali. Well, It took

me about three days or four days to get from Kigali to Nairobi. My wife's surgery was all over. It turned out okay.

Another thing that I might mention that has a curious little twist to it: When we had to evacuate to Kigali after the second Congo rebellion, Ambassador Leo Cyr asked me to stay as his Public Affairs Officer. His former PAO had just left, and we had worked very well together. I had in fact acted briefly as a kind of DCM for him for a while in the absence of his regular DCM.

I said, "Sure. That's nice. I'd like it." So he put the usual notice through channels there in Kigali-- and was turned down. I'd had a tourist visa to get into Kigali, but that was about to expire. And the reason he was turned down was because, "I was a refugee from the Congo." And I'll tell you if you were tarred with that brush at the time, you just weren't for anybody in Rwanda. They were scared to death of anybody from the Congo, be they white, pink, green or black.

So while I was assigned as Public Affairs Officer to Kigali for a very brief period, it didn't last long. As soon as my tourist visa ran out I was obliged to pack up and head out for Nairobi.

**E. MICHAEL SOUTHWICK**  
**Administrative and Consular Officer**  
**Kigali (1970-1972)**

*Ambassador Southwick was born in California and raised in California and Idaho. Educated at Stanford University, he entered the Foreign Service in 1967. Basically an Africa specialist, Mr. Southwick served largely in African posts, including Burundi, Rwanda, Niger, Kenya and Uganda, where from 1994 to 1997 he was United States Ambassador. He also served in Switzerland and Nepal. In his Washington assignments, he dealt with African and United Nations matters. The ambassador was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.*

*Q: Then you were in Rwanda, was it?*

SOUTHWICK: Rwanda, we went there in 1970.

*Q: You were there until when?*

SOUTHWICK: Until 1972. It was a two year tour. This was a tiny post. It was shrinking during the year before I arrived. There had been probably about 25 to 30 Americans there. Most of them had gone by the time I had arrived. During my period they closed USIA. It became a State only operation.

*Q: Was there a purpose behind the contraction?*

SOUTHWICK: Vietnam. I don't think there was much of an appetite for doing much in other parts of the world at that time. Rwanda was not high on anybody's list of countries strategically

important to the United States. It's not just when I went there. I knew a wealthy American Wall Street type who collected Asian art. He said, "You're going to Kigali? Don't you know anybody? Do you want me to make a phone call?" I said, "No, I've been reading up on this place and I'm kind of interested in it and I'm going to give it a whirl." From a personal professional point of view, the work was okay. It wasn't great, but we made a lot of friends. Our first child was born there. We did a lot of safari type travel and we got a great affection for that part of Africa.

*Q: What was Rwanda like, sort of politically, socially and all of that?*

SOUTHWICK: It was 10 years after independence. At independence the Belgians had engineered a transfer of power from the old Tutsi aristocracy that had run the country for 400 years to the Hutus. The Hutus were kind of an underclass if you want to put it that way. Much more of this is known now than what was known then because of the genocide in 1994. It was a very quiet country. The government did not function very well, but it was not necessarily a very oppressive government. It certainly was very watchful of Tutsis and didn't want Tutsis to regain power. Everybody felt that the situation was decided for all time. The ethnic situation and over time the country would begin to develop. Most of Africa didn't start falling apart until a year later in 1971 when Idi Amin came to power in Uganda next door.

*Q: What were you doing?*

SOUTHWICK: It was administrative and consular work. There was a little bit of consular work, not much. Administration, we were disposing of property, we were consolidating the embassy into one building as opposed to another building. I was supervising a GSO crew. We had plenty to do, but it was basically kind of keeping the store open. There had been some excitement the previous year. I guess it was the year before I arrived because some of the rebels in the Congo had transited through there. To the extent there was interest in Rwanda, it was a function of what became Zaire and possible anti-Mobutu activity. Not that the Rwandan government would stage anything like that, it's just that Rwandan territory was involved because the government was essentially incompetent.

*Q: How about dealing with the government? How did you find that?*

SOUTHWICK: It was friendly and straightforward. The ambassador, when I arrived there, was Leo Cyr who was one of the Department's first Africanists. It was his last tour and we went through a period where there was a chargé. Then we got an ambassador who spent his entire career in Latin America and wound up in Kigali. Robert Corrigan had previously been consul general in Sao Paulo. He went from Sao Paulo to Kigali, Rwanda that has about 25,000 people and there are no traffic lights. I think it was a little bit much for him. He got the title. There was a lesson in that for me, which was, the title isn't everything. If you get to a point in your career where you can be ambassador do it somewhere that you really are interested in, not just to become ambassador.

*Q: Well, how did you find the people in dealing with Africa?*

SOUTHWICK: People were friendly. People were quiet. The Hutus were self-effacing. They were not self-confident people and I think it was because of this caste system that they had lived under for 400 years. The Tutsis were stereotyped that they were proud, they were aristocratic, they were devious, they were self-confident. They felt themselves equal if not superior to everybody. A huge difference in the way they behaved, but the Tutsis were out of power. We were just keeping things going, a vestige of an AID program, self-help program. That's all that was going on. There was nothing really demanding.

*Q: Was there any reflection from say when Idi Amin did his thing?*

SOUTHWICK: When Idi Amin came to power it was a jolt. At first people didn't know really what it meant. There's a lot of feeling against him on the part of the diplomatic service of the United States. We thought he was leftist. He was nationalizing things. He was sort of an African socialist. Idi Amin at first didn't seem all that bad. Then he started showing his true colors very quickly and took the country right down to rock bottom.

*Q: How about Tanzania?*

SOUTHWICK: Tanzania, those countries were interesting and Kenya was the main regional post there.

*Q: Was that where you would kind of go to get away?*

SOUTHWICK: Nairobi was the place. Nairobi was the big city. You could get a gin and tonic. The hotels were nice. It was cosmopolitan. You could fly any day of the week to Europe. Frankly you could from Uganda at that time. At the time, both TWA and Pan Am time served Entebbe and there was a big tourism industry in Uganda and in Kenya. The game parks in Uganda were the equal of anything in Kenya. Uganda at that time didn't know they had a forest where they had half the population of the world's mountain gorillas. Subsequently a decade later, they discovered them.

*Q: How about I guess it was called the Congo in those days.*

SOUTHWICK: It was Congo, but then Mobutu had taken over and I think it was during the period I was there, '70 to '72, that he changed the name of the country.

*Q: Zaire, But, was there, rebellion seems to come out of Rwanda or at least going across the lake or something?*

SOUTHWICK: Well, it could be a transit point or a staging point for rebels. It never figured very heavily, but the Congo, Zaire had had this turbulent history and then Mobutu established some kind of order and basically became a kind of a kleptocratic leader which Africa has had in too many instances and kind of neglected the Eastern part of the country.

*Q: Did the Belgians play a significant role?*

SOUTHWICK: The Belgians were the main country because they were the colonial power. They had a big AID program. They had some investment there. The Belgian Catholic church had been instrumental in establishing the Catholic Church in Rwanda, so if you traveled around Rwanda you'd see a lot of big churches and mission establishments. They were quite powerful socially and economically there. They had a big force in educating people. The country was regarded as about 60% Catholic, probably more than that actually.

*Q: Did you have to deal with the Belgian expatriate community?*

SOUTHWICK: Somewhat. We didn't have children in school. Having a child in a school makes a huge difference in what kind of people you know. We didn't have that, but we knew other young couples. People from UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). People from some of the other, small diplomatic service, had to work on French because not that many people used English. My French improved quite a bit in that period. Dealing with other people was fun, but it wasn't. This was not a main focus of diplomatic activity. You could be interested in the place culturally, anthropologically, things like that, but the business of diplomacy there just wasn't much.

*Q: I take it the ambassador, I mean was he looking for something to do?*

SOUTHWICK: I think some of them were. Cyr had an appreciation for where Africa had come from because his experience in the State Department had gone back to the '40s and he could see how these countries were developing; their elites were developing capacity to govern and he could have some patience with that. Corrigan having been in Latin America, Sao Paulo, places like that, I think it was just some point of exile. You could do the safari thing. You could drive to Uganda to the major game park there, Queen Elizabeth Park, which is one of the most spectacular places in the world. You could go to Lake Kivu, which is spectacular. There are volcanoes. There were gorillas up in Northern Rwanda.

*Q: Were you getting sort of the jet set coming in to take a look at things?*

SOUTHWICK: Very few. Dian Fossey I think published her first article in National Geographic in '71. That created some interest. I remember one American mega-millionaire that came out. He made a lot of money in the electronics business in California and his thing was the origin of man so he was interested in gorillas. He was a contributor. He found that Rwanda didn't have stamps with gorillas on them, so he had some printed on them with gorillas. If you are in Rwanda and you have gorillas, you should have gorillas on your stamps.

**ROBERT CORRIGAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Rwanda (1972-1973)**

*Ambassador Robert Corrigan was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1934. He spent part of his youth in Latin America. He received a bachelor's degree from Stanford*

*University and entered the Foreign Service in 1941 as part of the Auxiliary Foreign Service. His career included positions in Guatemala, Panama, Brazil, and an ambassadorship to Rwanda. Ambassador Corrigan was interviewed in January 1988 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: But it seems you were a Latin American specialist, and all of the sudden you were appointed as ambassador to Rwanda. How did this come about?*

CORRIGAN: Well, there again I just don't know how those things work, but I got a telephone call one day from Bill Rountree, who was then ambassador in Brasilia. And he said that he had heard from Cleo Noel, an officer in personnel, and they wanted the ambassador to ask me whether I was interested in being ambassador to Rwanda. He was to get back to Mr. Noel. And Bill Rountree telephoned me, and at first I thought it was a joke, except I knew that Bill Rountree was not a man given to levity. Anybody who knows him, he's a rather serious chap. A very fine man, serious however. And then when I realized he was serious I said, "Where is Rwanda?"

And then I got to thinking, and naturally I told him I'd call him back. He said to give him a ring the next day. Whereupon I went to the books and looked up Rwanda and so forth, and found out that the capital is a place called Kigali, credited with some 25,000 inhabitants. And then I looked at myself in Sao Paulo with about 12 to 15 million inhabitants, and I wondered whether I could take that cultural shock at my advanced age.

*Q: Are you married? I haven't asked about your wife and family. How have they found the Foreign Service?*

CORRIGAN: Oh, they thrived on it. My wife misses it. She misses the traveling from country to country. When she came back, however, she entered an entirely new profession. She studied and became a registered nurse, and worked at that in critical care nursing for a while, and then finally evolved into a management position out here at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, where she's Director of Quality Assurance, which is a very responsible job.

In any event, we have five children. One born in Chile, two born in Guatemala. One in 1960 when we went there, and the other one, the youngest, not too long before we left in 1964. So, of our five children, two were born in Guatemala, one in Chile, and two in the United States.

However, our oldest boy is about 34, learned Portuguese, of course, in Brazil, went to high school there, and later, after college and graduate school, was employed by Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, and went back to Brazil as their manager in Sao Paulo. So, that stood him in good stead.

But, in any event, that was a consideration, of course, going to this little place, what kind of education facilities. And, as I recall the situation, I called Bill Rountree back the next day and told him I'd thought it over and it was just too much of a switch at my stage of my career, approaching retirement, and I said I didn't think so. And he said, "Okay."

I said, "What would you do?" I still was uncertain.



And he said, "I can't give you an opinion, because it's too important. You've got to make up your own mind."

So that was my tentative feeling, and I told him in Brasilia, and he got back to Cleo and told him negative. And then I got to thinking what a fool I'd been to pass up the chance to be an ambassador. And I called my brother in New York, with whom I had a good relationship, and we kicked it around, as the saying goes, and finally it was the consensus yes, you're foolish to pass it up. It's a fantastic experience. You've already been in Sao Paulo for three years.

My wife was sort of like Bill Rountree. She was very careful not to try to sway me one way or the other. It had to be my decision.

So anyhow, after all this, and there were a lot of "ham" radio operators around Sao Paulo. And this was about a day later. Through one of my "ham" operator friends I got Cleo Noel on the telephone and I said "I know Bill Rountree has probably been back to you by now, Cleo. That thanks but no thanks." I said, "Is it too late to change my mind."

He said, "No, Bob. Delighted." Whereupon that was that.

*Q: Well, when you went there, looking again at the Foreign Service as a career pattern, and each area region sort of has its own cadre. And you very obviously were from the American Republic cadre. Did you find some resentment when you moved into Africa, taking a slot away from an Africanist or not?*

CORRIGAN: I wasn't aware of it in my period of orientation in the department with the people in Central African Affairs and so on. There might have been such resentment.

*Q: Well, there does seem to be a certain pattern to reward career officers. Those people who have had Far Eastern Affairs ended up also as ambassadors to Africa. But because of the political appointees that Africa seems to be at least then, probably not now, one of the few places where there were some openings to reward career people with ambassadorships. Did you feel this might be part of a pattern to that?*

CORRIGAN: That what? That Africa . . .

*Q: In Africa, that ambassadorial posts in Africa. Were you as part of the career ladder, despite ones expertise in other areas?*

CORRIGAN: Well, as I recall in Africa at that point there weren't very many political appointees. There were more political appointees in Latin America. Hence, more Latin American posts were foreclosed to Latin Americanists who were coming along and would be eligible for embassies. And, therefore, I suppose maybe that's one of the reasons that I got an African post, in that I was foreclosed from a Latin American post.

Since then, however, the man most recently in Rwanda was a political appointee, and I think he was the first one.

*Q: It shows the political appointees are getting hungrier. What were our principal concerns in Rwanda?*

CORRIGAN: Well, in Rwanda our principal concerns were ---- I suppose, the principal concern, other than hoping that this would remain a stable country not cause problems for the United States, was its voting in the United Nations and subsidiary bodies. So one of the main tasks of the ambassador was frequently to go to the Foreign Ministry and expound on the desirability of voting our way on one of the matters that were constantly coming up for votes in the U. N. General Assembly, etc.

*Q: Well now, Rwanda, in most cases would have very little concern one way or another in many of these actions and problems on the parts of the world. But how did they react to your persuasion?*

CORRIGAN: Well, Rwanda's main preoccupation at that time, and the message that they constantly gave me over and over again, and indeed the only message, was very simple. "We are the poorest country in the world, you are the richest country in the world. You should be giving us very much more aid than you are."

In point of fact, our aid was minimal. I mean almost nothing. There was a contingency fee of, I think it was something like \$50,000 . . .

*Q: Good God.*

CORRIGAN: . . . that the ambassador had at his disposal to promote self-help projects. I found from my colleague in neighboring Burundi, a very enterprising fellow, that he had had this amount increased many fold, or considerably in any event, I forget the exact amount, but he was way ahead of us in this regard.

So my main concern and an objective of mine was, therefore, to get as much more as I could. But you couldn't do that without finding projects. And often you would have to generate projects. So we went around and tried to identify projects, and in some cases generate them. And they were self-help projects, as you know. It was a matching contribution on our part to monies or contributions that were put up. So, we found a lot of those, and did a lot of those.

*Q: Did Belgium play much of a role there as far as aid went?*

CORRIGAN: The Belgium presence was the dominant foreign presence in the country, because in colonial days prior to 1960 they were running the place. So they had a large embassy and were easily the number one donor. And they had people scattered throughout the bureaucracy and civil servants as advisors and what not. The Belgians were easily the number one foreign power there.

Other aid programs fairly generous in relative terms were provided by the French, the West Germans, the Swiss and the Chinese Nationalists.

One of the sad things during my incumbency there was that one day the Chinese ambassador, this is Republic of China in Taiwan, was called to the Foreign Ministry and told that he had 48 hours to leave the country, because they were going to recognize the Peoples Republic of China. And this fellow literally was out of there within the 48 hours. This seemed terribly abrupt and cruel and without sufficient warning to the representative of a country that had provided them a great deal of assistance, particularly . . .

*Q: Why did this come about?*

CORRIGAN: Well, there again, in the strange, obscure ways of Africa, at least of Rwanda in those days, there was no prior indication of this, certainly on the part of the Chinese. He was the most surprised man in the world. We had no knowledge of this whatsoever. And as far as I know, even the Belgians, no foreigners. It just happened. And they had done it, they did it for their own reasons, which, well, for the same reasons, I guess, that a lot of countries have done that. They just felt it would be in their self-interest. Obviously they had been approached by the Peoples Republic of China representatives, no doubt, who had offered them assistance, this, that and the other, and they must have thought that this assistance would be greater than what they were getting from the Republic of China.

*Q: What type of government did Rwanda have?*

CORRIGAN: Rwanda had an authoritarian government. Gregoire Kayibanda was the president. He supposedly was elected in a democratic election closely watched by the Belgians at the time of independence. And he represented the majority Hutus.

Both Rwanda and Burundi were and are made up of a very large majority of Hutus, and a relatively small percentage of Tutsis. The Tutsis were the aristocrats, who for centuries, not only generations, but centuries, had treated the Hutus, the shorter people, the Tutsis being the tall ones . . .

*Q: The Tutsis are very, very tall?*

CORRIGAN: . . . the tall ones treated the Hutus as serfs. As a lower order of being. Absolute serfs.

Well, Belgium, of course, was running these places under United Nations authority, and for some reason prior to independence in Rwanda, the Hutu majority had gained power in an election supervised by the Belgians. So that when independence came, shortly thereafter, they were already in power. For some reason in neighboring Burundi, the same size, the same population, roughly the same percentage of Tutsis versus Hutu, that did not occur. Their elections had produced a Tutsi leader. In fact, he was a king. So that at the time of independence Burundi became a kingdom under a Tutsi king, with the mass of the Hutus in a subservient position. In

neighboring Rwanda the Hutus, the majority, were in power from the beginning, and Gregoire Kayibanda, the George Washington of Rwanda if you will, was the head man.

There was at independence time in Rwanda considerable fear on the part of the Tutsis that they would be persecuted and discriminated against, and indeed killed at the hands of the now-powerful Hutus. And a good deal of that happened. Several thousand of them were killed, I believe, and a greater number fled to neighboring Zaire and some, of course, to Burundi, and a lot of them to Uganda. So you had large colonies of Rwandan Tutsis in those countries.

However, that was nothing to what occurred in Burundi while I was ambassador to Rwanda in early 1973, when we started getting reports from our embassy in Burundi that literally thousands of Hutus were being slaughtered by the Tutsis who were in power. It was no longer a kingdom, by the way. After some years as a kingdom they did revert to a republic, but power remained in the hands of the Tutsis. And these Tutsis rulers, fearing, which they apparently do periodically, fearing that somehow the huge majority of Hutus will overthrow them, contrive to eliminate the "educated" ones. And I'm afraid in that instance in early '73 that an educated Hutu was almost anybody who had anything like a sixth grade education. Just to nip in the bud any possible emergence of a dissident leader.

It was estimated that in those first few months of 1973, upwards of 200,000 people in Burundi were slaughtered and dumped into mass graves. Something the world knows very little about, and seems to care about even less.

*Q: Was there anything our embassy there could have done?*

CORRIGAN: Not so far as I could see from my vantage point in Rwanda. They simply wrung their hands. They doubtless made representations.

*Q: How were relations with the Belgians in Rwanda?*

CORRIGAN: They were fine, absolutely fine. We had the same general objectives. We were delighted that the Belgians were in there to the extent they were, and helping economically to the extent they were. They made us feel cheap in a way in that they were so generous and were so interested and we weren't.

*Q: Well, was this a bit of spheres of influence? In other words, as long as the Belgians are doing their share, let's concentrate somewhere else with an American aid program, would you say?*

CORRIGAN: Well, I don't know. As a matter of fact, I don't know whether back in Washington they were thinking along those lines. I do know that in Tanzania there was, in relative terms, a fairly large aid program. I remember driving through Tanzania seeing large signs on a road project here, on some other housing project or whatever there. These signs would denote US AID. I was shaking my head and was quite unhappy about this disparity, particularly when I realized that Tanzania was voting against us in the United Nations on almost any issue; while Rwanda was voting on our side on every single one. When I got back to Rwanda I delivered myself of a report on this, how I thought this was a little bit out of balance, and couldn't we

redress that imbalance somehow. I remember the then American ambassador to Tanzania became quite upset with me for having reported in that fashion, because he feared a possible result could be to reduce his program in some fashion.

*Q: What sort of direction were you getting from Washington? Very little?*

CORRIGAN: Yes, very little really. The simple message was, you know, to just keep doing what you're doing, and if you can find more of these worthy self-help programs, go ahead and do so and ask for the money, and on our end we'll do everything we can to try to get a little more money for you. But these amounts were so trifling compared, for example, to what was going on in anti-American Tanzania that it wasn't even funny.

**PIERRE SHOSTAL**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Kigali (1972-1974)**

*Pierre Shostal was born in Paris in 1937. He graduated from Yale in 1956 and from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1958. His postings include Leopoldville, Kinshasa, Brussels, Lilongwe, Moscow, Kigali, Hamburg and Frankfurt. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 16, 1997.*

SHOSTAL: From there I went back to Africa to Rwanda as DCM.

*Q: You were in Rwanda from '72 until?*

SHOSTAL: To '74.

*Q: What was the situation in Rwanda during the '74 period?*

SHOSTAL: I arrived in what was quite a tense situation, because there had just been terrible massacres in next-door Burundi. This is the problem of the Hutu and Tutsis which we're all very familiar with. What had happened in Burundi was what appeared to be an incipient revolt by Hutus was put down very brutally by the Tutsi government of Burundi with mass slaughter with hundreds of thousands of people being killed. Of course this heightened tensions in Rwanda, which at that time had a Hutu majority government and a Tutsi minority. There was fear that somehow there would be a spill-over. Well, a direct spill-over didn't occur immediately, but in my judgement there was an indirect spill-over in that within less than a year the Hutu government of Rwanda, which was not a particularly strong one and was kind of flailing around with a lot of economic difficulties, decided that the best way to try to maintain itself in power and to re-establish a degree of support was to play the ethnic card and to whip up Hutu sentiment against the Tutsi minority.

In early '73 the Hutu government started to use the radio to whip up hysteria and antagonism toward the Tutsi, with pretty prompt results. There were several hundred Tutsis who were killed,

Tutsi houses burned, and there was a real unease about whether you could have a major explosion. That didn't happen, because a few months later there was a military coup that settled things down and a somewhat more competent military government came in. This was the government of Juvenal Habyarimana. You had at first relatively honest, hard working and efficient government that tried to do something about development and initially tried to play down ethnic tensions. You may recall in the Spring of '94, Habyarimana, the general who came to power in a coup when I was there, was assassinated as his plane was shot down and that touched off the genocidal slaughter in Rwanda in the Spring of '94.

*Q: In the analysis of the Embassy why did the Hutu and Tutsi seem to be going at each other?*

SHOSTAL: I think it has to do with both ancient history and modern history. Ancient history in a sense of the relationship between the Tutsi and the Hutu. The Tutsi arrived in Rwanda during what we consider our late middle ages. They came into that region and established domination over the Hutu and really ran the area under very tightly controlled kingdoms in which the Hutu were the serfs. Now, in more modern times, there was a certain amount of intermarriage and there was some blurring of the tribal lines, but still the fundamental problem of domination existed for centuries. In Rwanda you had a revolution in the early '60s in which the Tutsis were driven from power in a very brutal and violent way. Thousands of them were killed and many of them went to neighboring countries, particularly Uganda where they established themselves. Later there was the bloody episode that I mentioned in Burundi in '72. So, in addition to the violent revolution of throwing Tutsis out of Rwanda, there was then major genocide in Burundi in the early '70s and then periodic episodes of violence between the two tribes in Rwanda. In addition, there was, what I would call the Malthusian factor. Rwanda and Burundi are heavily populated in African terms. When I was in Rwanda, 25 years ago, there were probably four or five million people. Today there are about double that. So, what you're getting there is the doubling of the population every 20 or 25 years and land is getting divided up in ever small parcels. So, in addition to that resentment, there is the struggle over the control of land. I think that produced the ingredients for this powder keg that exploded in Rwanda in the Spring of '94.

In 1994, however, you had the attempt of Hutu extremists who used the assassination of President Habyarimana to try to settle the ethnic question in Rwanda on their own terms, by exterminating the Tutsis.

*Q: When you were in there who was the Ambassador?*

SHOSTAL: The first year that I was there was Bob Corrigan. He left in the summer of '73, shortly after the coup.

*Q: He was the Latin American one?*

SHOSTAL: He had served in Latin America. For the next nine or ten months I was Charge; and then in the Spring of '74, I think probably April, the new Ambassador, Bob Fritts arrived.

*Q: Was there any difference between the way both of, this is obviously a small Embassy, but how Bob Corrigan coming sort of from outside the area, Bob Fritts was more an African hand?*

SHOSTAL: No. I think that Fritts, although we worked together only briefly in Rwanda was much more knowledgeable about Africa and had a broader strategic view. I think Corrigan had a more parochial view. He had a small Embassy and in his first job in the Foreign Service he wanted to build up the Embassy. But I felt he wanted this without really linking it to anything like a strategic view. Fritts, I think, had a more realistic appreciation for the rather minor priority that Rwanda had in American interest, but was also interested in trying to promote sound development. I think he recognized that there was a time bomb in Rwanda and the only way that you could try to defuse it was through economic development, through trying to introduce population control programs, that kind of thing.

*Q: Were you Charge at the time of the coup?*

SHOSTAL: No. When the coup took place in the Summer of '73, Corrigan was still there and I happened to be on vacation in Kenya, but I came back a few days later.

*Q: Was there a feeling sort of a relief at the time?*

SHOSTAL: Yes, definitely. The relief in a sense that, it looked as if the potential for major ethnic violence was defused and also that the people in the new government were more competent, as well as more realistic in terms of economic policy. The old government had been one of the socialistic-leaning government. While not very radical, it still believed in a lot of central planning and generous aid programs from other countries, but really didn't have much of a clue on how to put it all together.

*Q: Were there any American interest there?*

SHOSTAL: At that time, our interest was principally trying to keep Rwanda as a favorable U.N. vote and we had quite a lot of success in lining up the Rwandans to vote with us on a few issues. We were also trying to blunt any expanding North Korean or Chinese influence. For example, there was a rather active South Korean Embassy there to try and block North Korea. The Chinese came in with a rather large presence and aid program, but at that same time we were also improving our own relations with China.

*Q: I get the feeling that the Communist Chinese aid missions, they would come in, but they didn't seem to be much of a spreading out effect. They'd stay in the compound, they'd do their job, but it just didn't seem to translate there. Did you get that feeling?*

SHOSTAL: I think so, yes. They had a rather large group of people, because they were building a road, but you're right, they were pretty much isolated and the concerns that some people had that the whole country would suddenly be carrying little red Mao books and that kind of thing were pretty much unfounded. For one thing, the culture was so different that it was hard to relate to each other. I think the Chinese had something of an attitude of cultural superiority, and it didn't go over very well.

*Q: Did any other country have a strong influence in that?*

SHOSTAL: Yes. One thing that was very interesting to watch in that respect was French policy. The French began at that time a buildup in their aid program, including military assistance. This continued in subsequent years up until the events of '94. They became the major backers of the Hutu government and its arm supplier. I remember once asking the French Ambassador at that time, "Why are you doing this?" And his answer was, "Because they speak our language." The French were seeing this very much as a kind of cultural strategic initiative to consolidate an area of Africa where French was spoken. On the frontier, as they saw it, with English-speaking Africa.

*Q: Were we during this time under any mandate to make sure that the Hutu and Tutsis didn't go after each other or was this a time when this just wasn't really part of our mandate?*

SHOSTAL: This was not really part of our mandate as I interpreted it. These were still the Nixon and Kissinger years. Washington was basically not interested in that part of Africa. It was later that they became very interested in Southern Africa, especially Angola, but at that point Rwanda and Burundi were far removed from most radar screens in Washington. There was some short-level concern about the Burundi massacres in early 1972. The desire to try to do something in Rwanda to avoid a repetition of the disasters in Burundi, helped create a climate that was favorable toward starting a modest AID program. This meant Peace Corps volunteers and an agricultural development scheme, which actually turned out to be quite successful, and also, encouragement of private American investment.

*Q: I know in some places there has been a tie to land grant colleges in the United States with countries abroad. Any contact with them?*

SHOSTAL: No, that wasn't a factor there. There was one university, but that had very tough close ties with Canadian Universities and with the Canadian government.

*Q: So, in a way we could safely just say, go ahead.*

SHOSTAL: That's right. There was certainly no sense of competition among aid programs.

*Q: When you left there in '74 how sanguine were you about the situation?*

SHOSTAL: In the short term, I felt pretty good. I felt that the government was doing quite a good job in the economic development field; had realistic policies. In the longer term, I was pessimistic and I remember writing a report in which I looked at the future of Rwanda in Malthusian terms and concluded that probably there were going to be future explosions. Unfortunately that's what happened.

*Q: From your experience there, do you think there's any way to bring about a certain peace without either one or the other dominating the other? Do you think that the agricultural idea would help?*

SHOSTAL: Well, I think the key to any kind of reconciliation has to be economic and give people a stake in working together, rather than trying to kill each other over land. But, the



environment for doing that is an awful tough one. The country is landlocked, has very poor communications to the outside world, no natural resources that anybody is interested in. It might have some potential for tourism, because it's a very lovely country and has a beautiful lake, but people are not going to want to swim there. Some of the best beach in that country is exactly where a Hutu refugee camp was for two years. Hundreds of thousands of people lived and died there. I have a hard time seeing that come back as a tourist area anytime soon.

*Q: I can't remember, was it in Rwanda or was it Burundi where the gorillas were?*

SHOSTAL: That was in Rwanda, and very surprisingly, the gorillas survived the fighting. But, they too are threatened by the demographic situation, because with the growing population, the fight over land is encroaching on their habitat. They live high up on mountainsides and they need a lot of space to roam; they need a lot of vegetation to eat, and that is gradually being destroyed. When you talk about tourism there is some potential. In fact, the Habyarimana government, I think skillfully tried to develop this potential after Diane Fossey's death. She was the person who studied the gorillas and tried to protect them. The government tried to develop a policy of balanced development. On the one hand, preserving the habitat of the gorillas; on the other hand, allowing a controlled amount of tourism so that the people in the area would benefit from the tourism and feel that they had something to defend in preserving the habitat. That, I'm afraid has probably been very badly set back, because the lack of tourists for the last couple of years destroyed the incentive to preserve the gorillas habitat.

**ROBERT E. FRITTS**  
**Ambassador**  
**Rwanda (1974-1976)**

*Ambassador Robert E. Fritts was born in Illinois in 1934. He received his B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1956 and served in the U.S. Navy overseas from 1956 to 1959 as a lieutenant. His postings abroad have included Luxembourg, Sudan, Rwanda, Indonesia, and Ghana. Ambassador Fritts was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy*

FRITTS: We arrived in Washington and went to a Foreign Service cocktail party at a friend's house. We hadn't been there more than five minutes when the FSO hostess gave me a squeeze and said, "Congratulations." I said, "Why?" She said, "Because - well, don't you know? You're becoming an ambassador." I said, "Where?" She said, "Rwanda." I said, "How do you know?" She said, "I saw it in Personnel." I said, "Beats me." That ruined the party and our night's sleep.

The next day I went to the African bureau executive director who said, "Welcome back, you did a great job," all that stuff, and I said, "What's this I hear about Rwanda?" "Oh," he said, "You're being nominated as ambassador to Rwanda." I said, "I don't want to be ambassador to Rwanda. I want to go back and be DCM in Khartoum." And he said, "Well, you'd better talk to David Newsom about that." David Newsom was the assistant secretary for African affairs. I had only met him to shake his hand during consultations. I couldn't get an appointment with him till the

next morning. He was one of the most respected and admired senior officers in the Foreign Service and later became undersecretary for political affairs. But I was angry, thought a transfer dumb, and that I was needed in Khartoum.

Audrey and I had another sleepless night.

Newsom is, by nature, calm, contained and poised. I went through my litany more-or-less professionally. "Well," he said, "You're being named ambassador because of your wonderful work in Khartoum." I said, "I don't want to be ambassador in Kigali. Khartoum needs me. I've put the embassy back together. There's a new ambassador there. Things are shaped up. I want to go back there and do my job as DCM." And he said slowly, "You're going to be ambassador to Rwanda." And I said, "What if I refuse it?" And he said very slowly, "If I were you, I would think rather hard about that before doing so." And I said, "Well, when does the request for *agrément* go out?" He said, "*Agrément* is back already." I think my jaw dropped. "*Agrément* is completed and I've never even been informed?" "Well," he said, "I guess there was some oversight."

Q: *God!*

FRITTS: So we went to Rwanda.

Q: *You've said how you felt about this. The whole idea in the Foreign Service is becoming an ambassador. It's a key career thing, but at the same time, this is not the way to get it.*

FRITTS: Well, I found out I was an experiment by Kissinger, who was in the process of shaking up the Foreign Service. One aspect was to assign so-called promising young officers as ambassadors of small embassies. I became the then-youngest FSO ambassador in Foreign Service history - briefly.

Q: *Bob Paganelli was another one, I think.*

FRITTS: That's right. My record lasted about a year until he or someone else younger was named. In my case, the *New York Times* had an article saying that Secretary Kissinger thought the Foreign Service too specialized regionally and that he would transfer a large number of FSOs to so-called "out of area" posts by the summer. Make them all more "global" and thus broaden expertise.

Further down in the article it said that the first example of his "unconventional approach" of younger more junior ambassadors was naming me to Rwanda. It also quoted some anonymous senior "fiftyish" FSO who said, "Who ever heard of a class three officer being picked as ambassador?". So that's how I went to Rwanda at age 39.

Q: *So did the Kissinger initiative on younger ambassadors last?*

FRITTS: No. The power structure of senior officers was opposed, in part, because it reduced the number of ambassadorships for them. Being the first appointed and thus the first assigned back

to the Department, I adopted a low profile on return. As an East Asian (EA) Bureau office director, I didn't use the "ambassador" title, didn't put it on the door, and didn't use it in memos. Just downplayed it all. After all, none of the EA Deputy Assistant Secretaries or Assistant Secretary Holbrooke had then been ambassadors. It was all in vain. The "young" ambassador program was wiped out - for all the bureaucratic, envy and system reasons you can assume.

One could tell from the beginning that it wouldn't last. I was not sworn in on the Eighth Floor, as was routine. Instead, I was sworn in on the Sixth Floor. "They" wouldn't give me access to the swish rooms. It was the system striking back. The only person I could get to swear me in was a deputy assistant chief of protocol. The Department wouldn't pay for any of the snacks and beverages. It was pretty much a third-class train. In reporting from Kigali, I was careful about when to use the first-person pronoun. Everybody knew these cables were from an unprecedented "junior" ambassador.

Another indication of lack of status was that I never met Secretary Kissinger, who had no real interest in Africa or in junior officers like me, despite his initiative. Indeed, two of my best-kept secrets during my tenure in Rwanda were that I only met President Nixon once (in a Japan Desk context) and I never met the then-Secretary of State. When I was in Washington on consultations, of course, the Rwandans thought I was doing wonderful things at the "highest levels." Well, I wasn't. For me, the decision-makers and resource-givers were at the deputy assistant secretary and office director levels.

*Q: Again, this is not exactly a place that you'd spent a lot of time brooding or contemplating about - Rwanda. Did you know anything about it before?*

FRITTS: Not at all, but I began reading, although materials were limited. But I will comment, Stu, on your implication. Sure, Rwanda was small, but my mind sort of comparable to a Navy destroyer. A small command far away. Terrific!

*Q: When did you go out?*

FRITTS: In March 1974, exactly a year after arriving in Khartoum..

*Q: I can't remember which of those twin countries is at the bottom and which is at on top?*

FRITTS: Burundi is at the bottom, Rwanda is on top.

*Q: All right. What were you getting about American interests, I mean, when you went to the Desk and all that?*

FRITTS: Our overall mission was to support a moderate government in a Francophone African country. Our interests were the standard ones for Africa at that time. The U.S. had - and still has - an embassy in virtually every African country of whatever size and importance. We are the only country to have such a presence. The "universality" policy was initiated in the Kennedy Administration as UK Prime Minister's MacMillan's "winds of change" blew independence into some forty new countries. We pursued favorable votes in the UN, the protection and welfare of

American citizens, human rights and plural governance, American private investment, and ecological conservation. Politically, we were a window on Idi Amin's Uganda, a peephole on Zaire, and a wary observer of Libya. Within the Cold War, we were a mutually competitive local nuisance for the PRC, the Soviets, the North Koreans - all of whom had embassies - and, occasionally, the Cubans who were activists in Africa. The Cold War was the rationale for much of our diplomatic activity throughout Africa. We ran a small AID program and began a Peace Corps program.

*Q: So when you out there, what was the country like?*

FRITTS: Rwanda is the size of Maryland, but with a then-population of about five million. It was one of the most densely populated countries in the world and also one of the poorest. The country had been colonized late by the Germans - only in the 1880s.

Like its southern Burundi neighbor, the population was composed of Tutsis in the minority and Hutus in the majority. Historically, the Tutsis had been dominant, but shortly before independence had been overthrown and slaughtered by the Hutus who subsequently controlled its post-independence governments. There were occasional tensions and murders, but the government pursued a policy of national reconciliation and a number of Tutsis had top jobs. Both groups shared the same culture and language with much intermarriage. Still, everyone knew who was what, even though it wasn't physically apparent. There was the stereotype of the tall thin Tutsis and short squat Hutus, but most, as one French journalist noted, were "people of medium height."

The major foreign power, in practice, was Belgium as Rwanda became a Belgian colony under a League of Nations and subsequent UN mandates following WWI and WWII. One of the unusual and welcome aspects for me was to become a small power. When Rwandan Government officials asked me for this or that, I could say, "Well, that's not really in my line, go see the big power. Ask the Belgians." I was thus absolved from some of the issues that normally come America's way - such as military assistance.

*Q: Was there any American community?*

FRITTS: Yes, about 200 spread around the country – missionaries, business and holdovers from the colonial period who had made a life in Africa. Several were remarkable.

One was Joe Wertheim, a tea entrepreneur and expert, who created a tea plantation and, subsequently, a tea factory as well. He was the first American direct investor in Rwanda and received the first USG overseas investment insurance guarantee for a project in Rwanda. His operation still runs almost thirty years later after a continual series of crises, including Rwandan bad faith, government corruption, fires, theft and genocide. The tale of his smarts, persistence and integrity should be a novel.

Another was Rosamond Carr, now in her eighties, who has lived virtually her entire adult life in Africa and Rwanda and is the closest to a living saint most people will ever know. Living up-country in genteel poverty, her love of the people, Tutsi and Hutu, has been her only protection

through recurrent revolution, destruction and bloodletting. She now runs an orphanage for nearly a hundred kids whose parents have been murdered in ethnic strife. She was played by Julie Harris in the film "Gorillas in the Mist" on the life of Diane Fossey. (Rosamond Carr's story is in her autobiography "Land of A Thousand Hills" 1999). Diane was played by American actress Sigourney Weaver, who is now a major donor to Rosamond's orphanage.

*Q: Did you know Fossey well?*

FRITTS: Yes, quite well. Diane was one of the woman primate behavioralists whom the naturalist Louis Leakey chose personally. The other two were Jane Goodall, who focused on chimpanzees in Tanzania and a third, whose name I forget, covered orangutans in Borneo. Diane's life and focus were on Rwanda's remnant population of endangered mountain gorillas.

She and a British or American student assistant or two, lived amidst gorilla habitat in a small camp, the Karisoke Research Center, at 10,000 feet on the slope of Mount Visoke, an extinct volcano. We could theoretically reach her by embassy radio, but she seldom had it on and it was unreliable. Communication was often by happenstance courier which wasn't easy. Although only ninety miles away, it was a four-hour trip by vehicle and then a two-hour climb up the trail on the volcano.

She was unique - a legend in her own time and obsessive over the gorillas, which she protected fiercely. The mountain and gorillas were "hers." I spent a good deal of time trying to facilitate her work, in part by keeping her from being expelled. She would, for example, chasten poachers by kidnapping their children. The kids, by the way, loved it – three meals a day, small animals to play with, soft camp beds etc. They'd sometimes refuse to return to their parents.

Other incidents were more serious, such as leading retaliation raids against poachers to capture their possessions and equipment or driving off cattle, which impinged illegally and were destructive of gorilla habitat. The cattle were an important issue as they and their horns are the basis of Rwandan culture, prestige and male status. She also had her Rwandan assistants, who were known as trackers and devoted to her, alarm the gorillas, if the trackers were sighted by them. Her rationale was that as all the poachers were African, she wanted the gorillas to associate that Africans were dangerous and whites observers were not. It was not politically correct, of course, but her means to an end.

One time she was about to be kicked out, but I wangled a temporary stay and sent word to her that I had arranged an informal "last resort court" at a regular weekly informal get-together of President Habyarimana and his cabinet held at a guest house in Kigali. I sent a note and vehicle to alert her a couple of days ahead, not knowing if she would respond. She arrived in our vehicle at the last moment unkempt in her usual bush outfit. We gave her our guest room and an hour later she came out clothed in an attractive long white dress with golden belt, earrings and her hair arranged, etc. She looked gangbusters. We went over and she gave a presentation in fractured French and Swahili with a faded National Geographic documentary on the gorillas, using our embassy projector. The viewers were fascinated. I don't think any of them had seen a gorilla before. She was not only not expelled, but the government made additional concessions to

protect the gorillas. A book, "Gorillas In The Mist" was published in 1983 and later became the movie. That story was not included.

Despite her brittle exterior, Diane had a soft spot for children. Audrey, our daughters and I were at Karisoke for several days once and she took the kids out to track a gorilla group while her assistant, Kelly Stewart, daughter of the actor, James Stewart, took my wife and me. We were antsy about that, but Diane was adamant, saying that human parents were primates and any misperceived protective reactions to close encounters could be dangerous. It worked out fine, of course. We learned from the kids that Diane, at one point, sat on a log with the girls while Digit, her favorite gorilla, came up behind and touched, stroked and smelled the girls' long hair. Diane told them gorillas have color vision and it was the first time Digit had seen blond hair. Quite an experience.

She and I had a policy disagreement as I (and her supporters such as the National Geographic Society and the African Wildlife Foundation) supported projects designed to prove to the villagers and poachers that tourism could make gorillas more valuable alive than dead and thus lessen poaching and infringement. Diane wanted none of it, but eventually came around.

Well after my time, she was murdered at her camp. The Rwandan Government said it was by a jealous British assistant. Almost everyone else, including me, believes it was by a poacher Diane had punished by taking his amulet - a very personal and magical item for Rwandans. She was an amazing American who did wonderful work in her very own way. She's buried at Karisoke.

*Q: How many people in the embassy? What was the staff like?*

FRITTS: It was quite small, of course. The chancery was a converted butcher shop. There was still a meat hook attached to a ceiling, but the building was functional. We had seven or eight Americans, half a dozen third-country nationals, and maybe twenty-five Rwandans and African FSNs. Ethnically, we had difficulties at times in our African work force, not only because of the Hutu-Tutsi issue, but also because of a mix of Zairois and Ugandans as well as Rwandans. The Motor Pool "downed tools" once for a day because a Zairois mechanic from a tribe with a history of cannibalism threatened to eat his Rwandan supervisor.

We also had a more serious strike when the DCM, Peter Higgins, uncovered the fact that the embassy apparently had never given out any performance awards to our African employees. Naturally, I was aghast and we rectified what we thought was the oversight at our next general awards ceremony. Following the awards, I was pleased to see several of our younger - and better - employees returning from lunch downtown wearing new shirts and showing off their shoes.

But the next morning was a different story. My periodic walk through the general services area of motorpool and crafts was met, not with jovial talk, but sullenness and turned backs. Later in the morning, a strike was announced. What had happened? Peter got some insights, but a leadership group wanted to meet with me personally.

When we met, the group emphasized in great detail that I, as the ambassador and hence "Father of the embassy family" had violated Rwandan chief and family customs by not treating "all of

my children equally" and, particularly, by not ensuring that the older got stuff before the younger. The leadership group, of course, were all older.

*Q: What did you do?*

FRITTS: Temporized. I listened, asked questions, used elliptical French, and said I would need to commune with Washington etc. which, of course, I never did. The group decided to go back to work, but sullenly, while we pondered what to do. Fortunately, Peter later "discovered" that every one of the leadership group had been overlooked in previous years for length-of-service salary step increases or similar causes for financial esteem. At our next awards ceremony several months later, we made everybody whole. I never asked Peter any probing questions about his "discoveries." I also learned the helpful lesson that what we Americans may think as enlightened management practices are not universal nor are our definitions of discrimination.

*Q: Did you have any protection problems or anything like that?*

FRITTS: No, not really, other than keeping Diane Fossey in-country. There was some petty crime, but American tourism was small.

As for the embassy homes, our guard force was so unskilled and illiterate that we couldn't trust them with any weapons or equipment. The administrative officer wryly wrote and published a local Request-to-Bid for spears, bows and arrows. Lo and behold, one morning in the motor pool there were about six purveyors demonstrating the manufacture of their wares and test firing them. Some of the arrows wove back and forth 30 degrees from the horizontal. A bidder won the contract and our house guards thence went armed, in a sense. I saw some irony in asking the government to vote on UN nuclear Armageddon issues, while negotiating locally for superiority in pre-industrial weaponry.

*Q: What was life like in Rwanda? Were you able to educate your kids?*

FRITTS: Yes, the usual Foreign Service approach of making the best of what exists. The only school was a Belgian school and our daughters, Susan and Robin, at first knew only a few words in French. Near the end of our tour they won prizes for the best pupils in the school, for which we applaud them to this day. They were young tykes, nine and twelve, whatever it was. They came home one day and said, "We're teased because we're Americans and don't speak French very well, we can't ask questions in class, we don't have many friends, there are no extra-curricular activities, there's no dancing and no boy-girl stuff. So we're just going to study and prove them all wrong." And, of course, they wound up with lots of friends and really enjoyed the school. Coping and excelling are not bad things to learn overseas.

*Q: No, not at all.*

FRITTS: Rwanda was stable and travel, while inconvenient, was safe. Rwanda was not very big and we traveled around a good bit by van, always with a 50 gal. gasoline drum in the rearmost seat. The roads were awful - sixty to seventy miles in three hours or so was a good pace.

Rwandans are dignified with a somewhat isolated mountain mentality - very stoic. They had been colonized late by the Germans, only in the 1880s. But they could also be conspiratorial and untrusting, particularly within their culture which set great store upon cloaking one's thoughts. And this impacted occasionally upon us.

I recall having a local issue which I thought could be resolved if I could get a better handle on what the real problem might be. But my government sources were evasive. I thus went to a retired older government official whom I had found a useful sounding board. He listened to my tale, said he would help (and did), and then explained a bit of intriguing Rwandan cultural behavior. He said that children in the West are punished if they tell lies. In Rwanda, they were punished if they tell the truth. A Rwandan, Tutsi or Hutu, one clan or another, one neighbor or another, he explained, must always guard against unwittingly giving information to a potential enemy. Thus, Westerners, being open, are considered childlike. I, of course, continued to be professionally American in how I did things, but I wonder how the international trials of those responsible for the recent genocide in Rwanda can ever be completed successfully under Western rules of evidence.

*Q: Were any other agencies or departments trying to put people into Rwanda or were you pretty well out of that?*

FRITTS: We were quite self-contained - pure State Department, no AID, USIA, Commerce, and Defense Attaché, etc. People liked visiting us, but no agency wanted to be there. It was wonderful. Our agency support came mainly from Nairobi, particularly USAID, which had a large regional office there. I thus flew to Nairobi three or four times a year on consultation and the family as well, where we could go to real restaurants. We also weren't on Congressional itineraries. We were pretty much left alone to do our thing the way we wanted to do it. That was fine by me.

Speaking of the Congress reminds me that at one point the country was in severe drought and we arranged for emergency shipments of PL-480 sorghum grain, which was the principal Rwandan food commodity. Logistically, it was difficult, but we were the first country to respond, the Rwandan government let us bypass its own system, so we could distribute directly and fairly through Rwandan church and foreign missionary groups. The embassy staff and I monitored many distributions and it was very gratifying. We saved hundreds if not thousands of lives.

We knew that sorghum beer was also the Rwandan beverage of choice and began to hear that the Rwandans had discovered American sorghum grain produced beer of a remarkably high alcohol content compared to the locally grown. Thus, a considerable portion of our sorghum was going into beer production. Including for babies! Rwandans routinely gave babies sorghum beer that, I learned, has a very high protein content. We tried to prevent diversion, but not very effectively, and, and after all, the beer was being produced by individuals in small quantities and consumed on site. Nevertheless, I learned that we might have a CODEL to observe our emergency food aid. I could visualize the headlines in the U.S. to the effect that I was using taxpayer's dollars to produce infant alcoholics! No CODEL came, thankfully.



I also used AID funding to support conservation, such as saving a residual herd of elephants by sedating and transporting the younger ones to a newly protected isthmus in Rwanda's Kagera National Park. Unfortunately, the older ones had to be killed as they could not be moved. As it was, an American wildlife photographer, Lee Lyon, was killed by one of the elephants on its release. She had a premonition of death and, to meet her reported wishes, I expended some hoarded good will with the foreign minister and she was buried by the park. Again, as most Americans don't know, every embassy has caskets that come in handy. The consular officer, David Rawson who later became ambassador there, helped prepare the body. I sometimes felt sorry for colleagues in Europe - glitzy, sure, but exotic? Or challenging? Each day in Africa was different.

*Q: Was the Tutsi-Hutu problem very prominent then?*

FRITTS: I'm often asked these days whether I foresaw or whether the USG should have foreseen the recent Hutu massacre of Tutsis. During my time, we were well aware of tensions and the prior Hutu slaughter of Tutsis which, as I mentioned, had occurred in 1962. We knew that occasionally huts were burned and cattle stolen, that scores were settled and reopened, and we even had occasional ethnic problems within the FSN staff, which affected our hiring decisions. But the problems were local and not national.

In that regard, I found the president, Juvenal Habyarimana, a former Army Chief-of-Staff and Hutu, a very decent man. He was a practicing Roman Catholic of imposing physical stature. He had come to power two years previously after returning from the embassy's July 4th reception to find assassins waiting for him. He was very much imbued with trying to overcome the Hutu-Tutsi past and integrate things together. There were Tutsi ministers in the government and a lot of slogans to the effect "We're all Rwandans", downplaying clan and other ethnic loyalties. Indeed, I noted in my farewell-from-post analysis that if Habyarimana could stay in office for several years on the path he was on, he could become a credible mediator of African conflicts. It was thus a surprise to me two decades later to learn of the mass ethnic polarization and his alleged role. However, there is some evidence that he and his plane were blown up as a pretext for the genocide, at least, in part, because he had signed a power-sharing agreement with the former Tutsi refugee army that had invaded from Uganda several years before and is now the government.

*Q: How about American missionaries?*

FRITTS: There were American and other missionary groups hither and thither. We visited them frequently and their mission stations were often the only available stopovers with food, beds and fuel (which we prestaged or replaced). They had useful insights into their communities as to what the problems were and helped to guide some of our aid decisions. They loved the opportunity of talking with people with outside news, beyond the BBC, VOA or Deutsche Welle.

I had great respect for the missionaries and their commitment and devotion. I was also concerned by the expectation of many of them, who were second or third generation, to have their children follow in their footsteps. I felt there was no future for white foreign missionaries in Africa - and there wasn't.

Rwanda was nominally Catholic and Rwandan bishops and priests had great influence in the prefectures. It was useful to attend religious events, of which there were many. For Protestants, Audrey and I became well versed in Catholic Masses, the large ones were held outdoors with congregations on the hillsides. Very colorful.

*Q: On the missionaries, it's one of the great problems. It's sort of a Christian colonialism, in a way. The same trouble in Korea when I was there, too. I mean third, fourth generation of missionaries.*

FRITTS: It's a way of life.

*Q: Was there much of a diplomatic community?*

FRITTS: To a degree. A handful of African states, plus the Belgians, Brits, French, Chinese, Russians, the two Koreas, the Vatican and a few others.

*Q: And the Cold War intruded there, did it?*

FRITTS: Sure. We did the usual Cold War reporting and demarches. And tried to break through the Soviet isolation. The Russian ambassador's residence was just behind mine with only a wood and bamboo fence between us. Every Wednesday night they would show an outdoor movie of the Great Patriotic War to their guests and staff. So every Wednesday night we had tanks, bazookas and bombs going off. As was normal then, we and the Soviets had little to do with each other - by their preference. I invited the Soviet Ambassador one night to a movie, *Nicholas and Alexandra*, and said in a hand-written note that it was favorable to the Revolution, but, of course, he didn't come. We exchanged the traditional calls and courtesies, but he didn't speak much French. He did opine to me once that he didn't like "these African peoples" very much, but hoped to complete six years in Rwanda to qualify for a Rwandan Government decoration.

*Q: How about the UN votes? How did that work?*

FRITTS: Well, as with all my colleagues in Africa, we were expected to "improve" the UN voting patterns of our host country. Rwanda was better than some and worse than others. It was sort of in the middle, bearing in mind that hardly any country was over 40%, with the possible exception of Liberia. But we made our demarches and presentations along with personal diplomacy. I remember telling the Foreign Minister once that since the last UN General Assembly, I had done a, b and c for him and Rwanda and now it was their turn to show something for me. Rather than voting against us on some key vote, they abstained, which counted as an "improvement" in Washington. With the Soviet Union now gone, one can look upon all this much more dispassionately.

*Q: What about Zaire?*

FRITTS: Zaire under Mobutu was quite stable, relatively speaking. The Rwandans were wary of Zaire and its capacity for mischief toward its much smaller neighbor, which had been a virtual

appendage during the colonial period. One positive initiative was the formation at this time of the Great Lakes Convention, encompassing Zaire, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and, I think, Tanzania. There was a lot of talk about economic integration, none of which had much substance, but the psychology was good.

I made several trips to the adjoining Kivu provinces in Zaire and was surprised to find that people there spoke a variety of Kinyarwanda. The area was a vestige of the pre-colonial Rwandan and Burundi Tutsi kingdoms.

As it turned out, it that swath of territory, much larger than Rwanda itself, which the current Rwandan Government occupies as part of its military intervention into what is now again the Congo.

*Q: Uganda?*

FRITTS: Uganda was under Idi Amin. He complicated Rwanda's life and our life, because he had a throttlehold hold on Rwanda's transport lifeline - the road from Mombasa and Nairobi in Kenya to Kigali, about 800 miles or so. Truck convoys to and from Rwanda were started and stopped by Ugandan policy whim and corruption. Rwanda was thus often in short supply and/or its exports and foreign exchange on hold. In the embassy, we would be thrown back on our own resources for periods of time.

A small anecdote about that was the delayed arrival of my new official car from Mombasa due in Kigali by truck. Weeks went by as it became "lost" somewhere en route. Finally, I heard it was in town, but Peter Higgins said it needed fixing up in another location and to be patient. Each time I asked, he said it needed a little more time. Two weeks or so went by. It was still being "fixed up". So I finally said, "Peter, what's the story?" He took me to a warehouse by an open field outside of town. There was the brand-new official Chevrolet with its interior completely gutted. All the seats out, carpets and pieces of upholstery draped over bushes, side panels off. Everything. I asked, "What happened?" "Well," he said, "The car was on a truck from Mombasa to Kigali and the truck driver decided to make a little extra money, so he used it as a chicken coop - buying and selling chickens along the way."

*Q: My God! Tanzania, did that play any role?*

FRITTS: No, there were no Rwandan bilateral issues and no Tanzanian embassy. There was also virtually no trade with an also-impooverished Tanzania. It would have been different if the proposed railroad from Dar Es Salaam to Kigali had been built by the Germans, but WW I stopped it, literally, in its tracks.

At the border, the bridge over the river was used in the 1960s, and more recently, as a place to count massacred bodies going down river and provide some numerical estimate of the numbers killed. I went across the bridge several times, just to step foot into Tanzania.

*Q: Who was ambassador to Burundi?*

FRITTS: David Mark, I think. David and I had some common issues as his government was Tutsi, rather than Hutu controlled, and each government was suspicious of the other, although both professed "renewed" friendship. He and I thus visited back and forth a bit.

*Q: You said there were two Peace Corps Volunteers. What were they doing?*

FRITTS: We had just begun the program and their arrival was experimental for the government and for us. They were involved with education at the University of Rwanda in Butare, which is an easier starting point than community development. After I left, the program became reasonably large.

*Q: In retrospect, was Rwanda worth it?*

FRITTS: Sure. We did everything a large embassy did, but on a smaller scale. I was in up to my ears. I was working nights with all the sorts of things one does in the Foreign Service when you think you have a mandate, are trying to do good, and represent the U.S. in a foreign land. Did we have any crises? Yes, but none that concerned the Seventh Floor, the Congress, or the American media of the time. We had to be self-reliant.

It was special. We had the gratification and chagrin of seeing quite quickly when we did well or poorly. Small embassies are microcosms. They were challenging training grounds. And especially valuable for younger officers.

Professionally, it also worked out well. I had a good corridor reputation and tried to build on and trade whatever goodwill I had accumulated in only fourteen years in the Service. When I did bark, I was sustained. I had no more than the usual complaints about the "home office".

**LAWRENCE LESSER**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Kigali (1977-1979)**

*Lawrence Lesser was born in New York in 1940. He received his BA from Cornell University and his MA from the University of Minnesota. He was in the Peace Corps in Enugu, Nigeria in 1964 and 1965. His foreign assignments included New Delhi, Ouagadougou, Brussels, Kigali, and Dhaka. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 12, 2002.*

*Q: Larry you were in Rwanda from 1977 to when?*

LESSER: To '79.

*Q: Put me in since, Rwanda and Burundi, which is below and which is above?*

LESSER: Rwanda is the northern one which borders on Uganda; both of course are landlocked and, interestingly, both don't have any railroads. Commercially, Burundi could only be reached by going overland, by truck, or by rail and truck through three other countries. If your goods landed in Kenya, they went through Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda before reaching Burundi. Okay, it only needed to go through two to get to landlocked Rwanda, but this is the very definition of remote. Rwanda is the more mountainous of the two and so it's remote and in addition it's kind of difficult to get around the country. It's called the land of a thousand hills, and the land of eternal spring, which is also the name of the luxury hotel in Kigali, the capital, and that means that road building is extremely complicating. It also means that if people, the people are often referred to by outsiders as being kind of mountaineers, like West Virginians in our own country, with a kind of close, not easy to get to know, personality, but what's even more striking is that there are no major population centers. The society is organized by hillsides and even on the hillsides they don't join together, but families have their own compounds and they farm there as best they can. Very difficult kind of farming because the land is all up and down. These are not just a thousand hills; they are really extremely steep. It's a very beautiful place, but a place that would be a developer's nightmare, whether you're talking about economic development or real estate development or developing population centers. It means that even at the time I was there they were very few markets. I'm talking about traditional markets where people trade, you know, fruits and vegetables, foodstuffs, beans - which is the staple there.

So, this was in those literal senses a remote and backwards country. That doesn't mean necessarily that the people were out of touch with the rest of the world, although this was the late '70s. There was no Internet. They were out of touch, but they were not unsophisticated people. I guess for the final background point, the question of the ethnic makeup of the people. Almost everybody is Hutu or Tutsi with conventional numbers that Hutu are 85% of the population, Tutsi 15% in Rwanda and this is pretty well known now, but at the time almost nobody knew the difference between Rwanda and Burundi. Rwanda and Burundi had the same ethnic makeup: 85% Hutu, 15% Tutsi. Traditionally the Tutsis were landowners and cattle raisers and the Hutu were cultivators and laborers and more of them in a serf-like status, relative to the Tutsi minority. After independence around the late '60s Burundi stayed fixed in the traditional relationship so that Tutsis comprised all of the ruling class and all of the military officers and almost all of the military and ran the country. There was a not bloodless but a relatively neat revolution in Rwanda. The Hutu came to power and put into power a regime, which was not highly repressive to the Tutsi minority - the former elites - but was somewhat discriminatory. The first civilian government was corrupt and incompetent and fell, and when I got there in '77 the country was being run with a relatively light hand by a military government lead by the senior military officer, General Juvenal Habyarimana, the same leader who was killed or who died in an airplane accident, sorry, an airplane sabotage that precipitated the terrible events in the '90s. At the time I was there our impression was that Habyarimana and his government was relatively progressive, relatively humane and relatively clean. Fifteen years later undoubtedly that was no longer the case. The old idea that power corrupts would be proven out once again. (End of tape)

Okay, the people in Rwanda were not subjugated, but the basic point was that there was nothing going on there that was relevant to the rest of the world. Subsistence farming is a very noble occupation, but by definition it stays in place, it doesn't extend its influence. There were no, very little that was grown was commercialized. There was very little travel through Rwanda and there

was very little international commerce between Rwanda and the outside except if they were to modernize at all, since they couldn't produce industrial goods themselves, they had to bring them in from the outside and so had to figure out some way to pay for it. Those were the most interesting kinds of issues there.

*Q: In the first place, let's talk a bit about the embassy. Who was the ambassador and the background of the ambassador and what were you doing?*

LESSER: The ambassador was Frank Crigler, a career Foreign Service officer, naturally in his first embassy (it was a very small embassy, a good place to learn the skills). The embassy was located in a little storefront type of building; a single story building which didn't extend very far. The tradition was that it had formerly been a butcher store. That was actually not true, it was the building around the corner that was the butcher store, but since there were some rather large hooks on the wall, it was fun to be able to tell people that was where the meat was hung. It was - I already told you this in connection with serving in Ouagadougou - the answer to the question well, what are the American interests to justify having a full embassy. It was U.S. policy set in the Kennedy administration that there would be an embassy in all of the newly independent countries. This was consistent with that policy, but it was for the time a minimum embassy with only four or five officers including an admin officer, two or three or four staff people, two secretaries and two communicators; you can't do it with less, in a way. The only other agency that was present was USIS and even they abandoned the post and left their position unmanned, they left the American library so we ran it with one or two Foreign Service Nationals who were paid by USIA Washington. There was no American officer there to supervise and no other American government presence at all.

*Q: No Peace Corps, no AID?*

LESSER: No, well, the Peace Corps is an interesting case because we actually had Peace Corps volunteers. They were serving mostly as teachers at the little university, which was located several hours away by car, but there was no Peace Corps office or staff in Rwanda. The volunteers were nominally supported by Peace Corps Zaire, but it was at that time and I think remains, extremely difficult to travel internally between these African countries. So, for these purposes Zaire would have to be called remote, too because it's own infrastructure was breaking down. As a matter of practical sense there was no real support available from Peace Corps Zaire, which had problems of its own anyway. These Peace Corps volunteers worked pretty autonomously. I should mention there was an AID affairs officer and he had a small program there and that was it. Let me mention because this fits right in with the question of what was our mission there. When I first arrived Frank Crigler had been, I was the deputy chief of mission, but it was pretty nominal to call me DCM because if we have an ambassador and a DCM what else are we supervising? Well, we had a political officer and we had a consular officer and we had an admin officer and that was the whole story. When I first arrived Crigler had been there for some time, close to a year and he asked me - I just came from DCM training here at FSI, a wonderful course - he asked me as we were making our "psychological contract," what do I think my work requirements should be. I went through a couple of things that were kind of standard and I said I'm real interested in economic affairs and I'm interested in development affairs. I'd be very glad to be the coordinator with the AID program. Until that point, Ambassador Crigler was sort of

going along with me saying, okay, fine, blah. He suddenly looked up and took issue with me and said well, wait a minute here, if you're going to coordinate the AID program, then there's nothing left for me to do because AID is the only thing we're got going here and I'm going to tell you right now, Larry, that's mine. Point taken.

*Q: During the two years you were there, what were you doing?*

LESSER: You know, I was afraid you were going to ask that question. You know, the traditional definition of what DCMs do is that they're the inside people and the ambassador is the outside person and also secondarily you're the ambassador's *alter ego*, which means you're ready to do all the outside stuff and you're in circulation enough so that you can step in. Day to day you're the one who is supervising the operation in-house. Okay, there's a lot to do supervising. We had two very good admin officers; that is the first one and then his successor. (We've never had two at the same time, but admin was a very difficult thing to do.) We were at the end of the supply line, we're in a country where cars break down all the time and you never know where and so you're constantly - it's always difficult to move people or goods around. It's always difficult to keep body and soul together. You need generators to be sure that you're going to have electricity. You need to keep your supply lines open. But quite frankly I didn't know much about those things and the admin officer I was supervising did and for the most part those things ran pretty well. All I can tell you, Stu, is that we were very busy all the time.

I'll give you an illustration of one of an intellectual conflict, philosophical conflict, that I had with Frank Crigler, my boss; a man just a few years older than I am and with a lot of similar interests, kind of an athletic guy and a guy who enjoyed getting out and meeting people and liked vigorous debate, etc. and was very hardworking, an ambitious guy. He said, I'm going to give you some assignments to do and that's what your highest priority is. One of the projects, and it was a very successful one, was that we would send a monthly report to Washington on a subject of our choice. These were theme reports, not a "weeka," not a summary of the month in Rwanda, so we did a report on the role of the military in Rwanda. We did a report on the role of the French or the Belgians because the colonial power, kind of post-colonial because they had been under a League of Nations mandate. They didn't rule Rwanda the way they did the Belgian Congo.

We did a report on agriculture. We did a report on higher education, or unemployment. We did a report on ethnic differences. On that by the way it was our feeling and I believe a lot of local observers would agree with this that for an outside observer, if you were Jonathan Swift, as Gulliver, and you were looking at the Liliputians ... this isn't very, I wish I was more subtle: there's no difference between Hutus and Tutsis. They look alike. They speak the same language. They have the same religion. They have the same names. They work in the same businesses especially in Kigali, the capital way there off the hillside so you can't tell who's a landowner or cattle raiser and who is a bean planter. They intermarry, so the distinction if they started as purely one or the other, that distinction disappeared. And they aren't identified with any particular area. They always were in a feudal kind of arrangement. They were not in the traditional tribal arrangement typical of most of Africa. Hutus and Tutsis are to all intents and purposes the same people and our working assumption at the time was that they were coming to know that and had succeeded at a very important social task, where Burundi - with the same

ethnic mixture and a similar history - had not succeeded. Burundi was a seething place where more interethnic trouble was anticipated.

We did monthly reports. Martin Brennan, who is now our ambassador in Zambia and just finished as ambassador to Uganda, was the political officer and he and I jointly worked on most of those reports and we jointly got nominated for the director general's reporting award. We had plenty of what the traditional Foreign Service likes to call substantive work to do since we were there and without reference to the question, well, why does the U.S. government need to do these things, because once you're doing them, they're fascinating and they're very worthwhile in themselves. They're as much like an academic exercise as they are an exercise in pursuit of our national interests.

Oh, I'm sorry, to finish where I started. Frank Crigler, said so I'm going to give you assignments, that's your highest priority and I would say and here's the philosophical difference, I said, well, what about answering the phone and opening the mail and you know, getting the car that fell off the road back on the road. He said, well, we'll take care of that of course, but when I set a deadline for the report, you'll have to, I intend for that deadline to be met. I would say, well, keeping body and soul together in this storefront embassy sometimes will overwhelm these kinds of discretionary reports. We don't always have the same amount of discretionary time. We worked it out. We did all the reporting. Occasionally we did miss an internally imposed deadline. We never had Washington saying where's your report on the role of the church in Rwanda.

*Q: How about, what was the role of the Belgians and French? I mean was this one of these places where we kind of kept to one side and said that this was your baby and it still is your baby?*

LESSER: To a considerable degree the answer to that is yes. If you show the degree of your interest by how much resources - mostly it can be converted to money terms - you're prepared to put into a place, then clearly we left it to the Europeans to take the lead and the Europeans meant mostly the Belgians and the French, but it also meant the EC which brings the Germans into it and Germany had a hand in Rwanda before World War I. The League of Nations mandate took Rwanda and the territory of Ruanda-Urundi at that time from Germany and turned them over to Belgium. So, the Europeans had the primary interest and the primary external cultural influence and we were more than content for them to do that. We didn't have any strategic interests there and we've got plenty of places to pour our resources, so that is definitely the case. However, the Cold War was still on at that time and the U.S. to the extent it had discreet interests they were of a political nature and a humanitarian interest in contributing to development and to reaching at least a subsistence level for the hard-pressed Rwandan people. That role wasn't very hard for us to play and it was valued by the Rwandans because they also wanted to use us to some extent as a window on the world and a little bit of an alternative to the colonial powers from Europe.

*Q: Did you get involved with gorillas there?*

LESSER: Mountain gorillas.

*Q: Yes, mountain gorillas.*



LESSER: Yes, not guerrilla fighters. Yes, Diane Fossey was, actually when I said, when Frank Crigler said that AID was the only thing we had going there, actually we had two things going and I believe he told me the other one as well. That was Diane Fossey and National Geographic, the project in the Volcanoes National Park at Karisoke Camp in the Virunga mountains, tracking and defending the 200 or so mountain guerrillas in the world, and that was indeed the most glamorous thing imaginable. It was a marvelous thing going on. By the nature of it, unlike game parks in the African veldt, the guerrillas were inaccessible. They lived high up on these volcanic mountains and the mountains were almost constantly being rained on, so they were mud mountains, mud and thick sometimes jungly forest, very steep hills. And mountain gorillas are not show animals. They don't come out and play for you. They're shy and can be threatening when they're approached too abruptly unless they've been habituated, that was the term we used, habituated to people coming by. Even then you have to do it according to the rules, according to the ways that Diane Fossey and other researchers developed. In light of that it was a rare privilege for members of the mission to have an opportunity to go out and actually see the gorillas in their place, and to my everlasting gratitude. Frank Crigler was kind of the gatekeeper with Diane Fossey. He made it possible for me and my family, including my children who were then 10 and 12 years old respectively, to visit there and to sit among one of the groups of mountain gorillas one time. That was a highlight.

*Q: Was it sort of I would imagine that Diane Fossey would be a difficult person to deal with. I mean very protective, I mean it was unfortunate she was killed, but just by the very nature of what she was doing, meant she really had to make sure that people didn't mess around on her turf.*

LESSER: That's right. Well, she had a kind of monomania. She knew that about herself and she had a good sense of humor, so she made jokes about herself and about how difficult she was. She also used questionable methods for defending the gorillas particularly from poachers. There's a third ethnic group in Rwanda the Twa, who number less than 1% of the people. They're pygmy-like people and they're more backward. They don't have schools. They don't have any; they haven't come into the modern world the way the more sophisticated Hutus and Tutsis had. Some lived by poaching and to some extent by poaching gorillas. You can eat gorilla meat. (I guess you can eat human meat, too, right?) But the reason for poaching them was because there was a market in Europe and Asia for their heads, hands and feet and people would pay high prices. Occasionally, a gorilla would be killed and you would find a body, but missing those parts. Diane had, let us say, had her own methods for dealing with poachers. Then of course, she lived there. Poachers aren't people who come in for the weekend. They're people from the area, so if you develop a network, it's sort of like police work, you work out arrangements and so the poachers, it's okay for them to kill deer in the woods, but they'd better stay away from gorillas. Some of the traps they set aren't, don't discriminate, so they would catch gorillas in these traps which were rather ingeniously put together traps with strings that are triggered by walking through a particular place and it would catch whatever animal happened to go into that. Sometimes the animals were severely wounded, but not killed. Anyway, Diane had her ways. She was a difficult person. She knew that. She was also physically not in good condition in those days. She had no doubt the beginnings of emphysema. She drank heavily. She had an incorrectly healed couple of broken ribs that kept her in almost constant pain. Her endurance was not high. She actually, this was sort of the dirty little secret at Karisoke, she very seldom saw gorillas. The

graduate students who were working there with her were the ones who actually went out and observed the gorillas most of the time. The gorillas make two nests a day and so they circulate through a fairly extensive range and occasionally they would be very close to the camp and those times she would go out and see them. There were only two habituated groups at that time and so there were only two groups that were being regularly observed.

*Q: Were there any pressures while you were there by the neighbors? I'm thinking of Uganda or Tanzania? What are some of the other places?*

LESSER: Well, Zaire and Burundi.

*Q: Zaire and Burundi.*

LESSER: Well, Uganda was under Idi Amin's rule at that time. I'll tell you quickly we had closed our embassy so Uganda was off limits and was unsafe. I had at that time a secretary (as I said there were two secretaries in the embassy). She was a very competent, very intelligent woman who had had a Canadian businessman boyfriend who was operating through the area, and that included Uganda. Not long before I arrived at post he disappeared in Uganda and it was understood that he had been taken and held imprisoned by Idi Amin's security people. My secretary was very concerned and wanted us to do whatever we could on a humanitarian basis to try to get him liberated. Now this is extremely complicated because there was no acknowledgment that he was even in Uganda, no acknowledgment by the Ugandans. We had no diplomatic communication with them except directly through the - I can't remember now who had charge of the U.S. interests; it might have been the Swiss, who would be more than happy to pass messages, but we didn't ask the Ugandans for favors diplomatically. Furthermore, he wasn't an American, furthermore, he didn't have any formal relationship, and one final furthermore, the boyfriend was actually legally married to somebody else who was also not American. You ask, what did we do there? Well, this wasn't official, it was in a way off the books, but I felt that we ought to try to do something and we did, but it wasn't very much of a something. We sent a message to our interests section in Kampala asking if they could make inquiries and express some interest in trying to locate this man. It was unavailing. We didn't get a response. There were reports from time to time that people knew what had happened to him, but some of those were extremely suspect from people who, you had an idea that they were working a scam, they were trying to get our secretary to pay money for information to kind of spring him and that the money would disappear and nothing more would occur. It was a very sinister situation and we did eventually come to believe, but I don't think we ever got definitive proof that he died under imprisonment and torture in Uganda and that was the end of that story. So, Uganda was kind of a black hole from the standpoint of our embassy in Rwanda.

There were uneasy relations with Burundi because of the odd historical circumstances that in Burundi the Tutsis were in charge and in Rwanda the Hutus were now in charge; uneasy relations, but no serious problems. We were at the extreme eastern edge of Zaire, which is after all if you look at the map, an enormous presence in that part of the world, but the map is misleading because Zaire was breaking down. It wasn't a nation in many respects and there was practically no communication between Eastern Zaire and the center in Kinshasa. Bukavu was the most important city there and it ran as if it was in a country of its own, and of course not a very

wealthy one. The border with Tanzania was in a relatively unpopulated part of Tanzania and so there was no very close relationship there either. So, Rwanda is remote and isolated even within its region.

*Q: How did you find dealing with the Rwandan government?*

LESSER: I loved dealing with the Rwandan government. Mountaineers they may be, but I'll pat myself on the back a little bit here and Frank Crigler and Martin Brennan can do it, too. We were all kind of outgoing. To people in a lot of the Third World, Americans come across as different from Europeans. We are much less buttoned up. I venture to say we're more fun to talk to. We give them a straighter story. We have less of a, we don't come with a point of view in nearly the same way that the Europeans do. We had I would say excellent contacts up and down through the Rwandan government which included at the top the military, and the Rwandan bureaucracy, small as it might be. You know, it did include a lot of people who were educated in Europe and they were intellectually certainly a good match for us. I found that for the most part it was a lot of fun and it was very interesting talking to them. I'll give you one counter example, however, and that is we had no military attache of course, but in our role as representing the whole U.S. government, the embassy would get occasional requests from the Defense Department to do the kind of reporting that attaches do. So, now I can't remember the term, oh, the order of battle, a technical term, and I couldn't even give you a good definition for it.

*Q: Well, who reports to who, I mean, it's in other words how the military is organized.*

LESSER: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Stu Kennedy. We got a request that we give a report on the order of battle of the Rwandan army. (There is no navy, it's a landlocked country, and there's no air force because they can't afford to have an air force.) So, I went to the chief of staff of the Rwandan army, a colonel and he already knew me and I said, "I've been asked to ask you some questions about the order of battle so that we can report back. This is routine reporting that we're asked to do in countries all around the world." He said, "Why are you asking me? Why don't you just take it from your satellites?" It occurred to me to say, but it would have been insulting, it's not interesting enough for us to focus our satellites on Rwanda. As a matter of fact it isn't the kind of information you can get from satellites. He said, "I don't think I can give you that information." We had a very nice conversation, but I didn't have very much to report back because there was this sense that if we wanted to know it then there must be some importance to it and therefore, he shouldn't tell us unless he was getting something for it, unless he knew what the whole deal was, and he didn't. The American point of view is transparency, maximum, you can read all of this information, it's freely available from us about us. We'd be more than happy to give it all to you and if we don't get it from you it's not going to make any difference either, but it means it's going to be a little blank spot in some briefing book and that's that. From the Rwandan perspective, though, there was a kind of suspicion. What do the Americans want to know it for? The Rwandans don't understand the whole system and so they kind of shut down and say I'm sorry, I can't do that for you. I once asked that same military officer for a personal favor. I said I'm a long distance runner. This isn't an easy place for a long distance runner because of all the hills and I don't like to run on roads and you can't run in the bush because you'll break your ankle, but you have a track at your military cantonment, could I train there? He said, no, I could never explain that to other people. Then, what would I tell the Russians? So, I

didn't go running very much when I was at Kigali because I could understand it from his point of view.

*Q: Were the Libyans or the Soviets messing around there at all?*

LESSER: Well, you know, Stu, the Libyans weren't there. That was before they were projected much, at least by my recollection. There were only six or eight full embassies in Kigali. The North Koreans had one and they built an athletic facility, a big building that reminded you that they were there. The Chinese built a very fine road, one of the very few paved roads in Rwanda. It was so beautifully graded that Frank Crigler used to say that this is the only road in the world that no matter which direction you rode on it, you were always going downhill. It did actually give that feeling. It was a wonderful road. So, there was a tiny, tiny, little bit of Cold War competition going on there for Rwandan votes on key issues. I don't recall that it was an ongoing thing. My predecessor as DCM told me that he had been spat on by his North Korean counterpart and I'm sure that must have happened, but that's more exciting than anything that happened to me while I was there, vis-à-vis the representatives of the communist countries.

**DOROTHY A EARDLEY**  
**Secretary to the Ambassador**  
**Kigali (1977-1980)**

*Mrs. Eardley was born in Wisconsin and raised in Wisconsin and Illinois. She attended Rubican Business School before entering the State Department, where in 1951 she was assigned as Clerk-Stenographer at Djakarta, Indonesia. She subsequently was posted to Berlin, Chengmai, Paris, Libreville, Colombo, Ankara, Ottawa, Jeddah and Kigali. She also had temporary duty assignments in Djibouti, Reunion, and Johannesburg. She retired in 1980. Mrs. Eardley was interviewed by T. Frank Crigler in 2008.*

*Q: I think it's time now to make that leap to Kigali.*

EARDLEY: Oh, yes! Yes, indeed. . . . Were you afraid of my arrival in Kigali?

*Q: I don't recall being afraid of your arrival. Why?*

EARDLEY: You seemed a little bit edgy.

*Q: Well, sure. You had come from working for all the top ambassadors in the hemisphere, and I was at the bottom. No, I don't think I was fearful, but I was fearful about embarrassing myself dictating and that sort of thing. Because I'd never dictated, not really.*

EARDLEY: I'll never forget your remark on the telephone. In Eugene, Oregon. You said that you had looked at my personnel record, and I had worked for so many high-ranking, important

ambassadors that you couldn't figure out why I'd be willing to come to Kigali. I don't remember whether I said, "Mr. Ambassador, because they won't give me a job."

No, they really wanted desperately for me to resign because they could have hired three secretaries for my salary. And I couldn't get a raise. I was at the top. Do you know, two weeks before I retired, I got the eighth step on a Three? They waited that long. Instead of giving me a Two. They could be nasty sometimes. I earned every bit of that.

*Q: Let's see, that was just as President Carter was getting started, after Gerald Ford.*

EARDLEY: Seventy-seven. Well, fortunately for this girl, an old Africa hand stationed in Washington at that time, saw what they were trying to do to me. They were shafting me. And she took me under her wing.

*Q: What was her name?*

EARDLEY: Mary . . . not Rosemary. Nice person. Young.

*Q: It wasn't Mary Ryan, was it?*

EARDLEY: No. But she saved my life. Because the next time I got a telephone call from Washington, it said they had news for me. They had Kigali, Rwanda or Conakry. I said, I'll take Kigali. And there was utter silence. Couldn't believe it.

*Q: Why? Because it was so remote and unimportant?*

EARDLEY: No, not many people wanted to go to either of those places. I did not want Conakry, so I chose the right one. And that's when she said, "That's interesting, because our ambassador to Rwanda happens to be in the department right now." So they had you call me, after you had read my record. I don't know if you had all my record at that time. Did you have the Carl Sommerlatte stuff?

*Q: I don't think so.*

EARDLEY: What a bitch he was!

*Q: Well, you could have worked for Bill Harrop in Conakry or Oliver Crosby.*

EARDLEY: Well, I didn't need it.

*Q: Harrop was one of my great friends.*

EARDLEY: Yeah, I liked Harrop, what little I know of him. I think I chose the right one. And then they threw in that TDY. It was one of the good points about being assigned to Rwanda because the TDY included Johannesburg, South Africa. I would never have got to South Africa otherwise, and I loved it.

*Q: That was before you arrived in Kigali.*

EARDLEY: Yeah. And the principal officer there was Mac [*William McKinley*] Johnson. We had sort of parted Canada on not too friendly terms. He felt I had done him dirt when I was on the selection boards [*about?*] his secretary. I wasn't there. I was out on the beach with Ambassador Handley. And the other members of the selection board wrote that he had not written a very good, substantive report on Mary Keim. Do you know Mary Keim? She was very well known in our Foreign Service. A very good secretary.

*Q: Is that K-i-m-e?*

EARDLEY: K-E-I-M, I think. And he took exception to that. But anyway, we cleared things up. I was there for six weeks. Loved it.

*Q: You got along well with him after you cleared the air?*

EARDLEY: Oh, yes. He was a nice guy. Anyway, that's all about Johannesburg I can remember.

*Q: Then we go back to Kigali and the volleyball games, and the DCM.*

EARDLEY: Well, I loved Kigali. That's one reason why I retired from there. I could leave with a very good taste in my mouth after 30 years in the Foreign Service. And that's the way to do it.

*Q: What did you enjoy about Kigali?*

EARDLEY: The people.

*Q: The embassy people or the Rwandan people?*

EARDLEY: Embassy people. Both. Especially the Tutsis.

*Q: You had Tutsi staff in your apartment?*

EARDLEY: Yes. Our guard, our main guard, was a Tutsi. And I liked all the Tutsis in the embassy too.

*Q: Who was the administrative officer when you were there? Was that Rick Kramer or was that Joe Sikes?*

EARDLEY: Rick Kramer. But I know Joe Sikes. How do I know him?

*Q: Well, he preceded Rick in Kigali.*

EARDLEY: Was he there when I arrived?

*Q: I'm not sure.*

EARDLEY: Oh yes, Kramer came after.

*Q: Now, did you travel outside Kigali? Did you get up to Dian Fossey's camp?*

EARDLEY: No. I deliberately stayed away because I did not want to do anything to alienate her. And it could happen just so easily. She stayed at my apartment when she stopped staying at the ambassador's residence.

*Q: Why did she stop staying at the ambassador's residence?*

EARDLEY: I think she found she was more comfortable in my funny little place. She would come down, she would be filthy dirty. Unkempt. She'd go in the bathroom and stay at least two hours, come out looking like a fashion model. I loved her. I think what happened to her is so tragic.

*Q: Did you get to know Rosamond Carr?*

EARDLEY: Oh sure, very well.

*Q: Did you ever visit her home?*

EARDLEY: Oh, yes, many times.

*Q: She had such a pretty place.*

EARDLEY: I ran across a picture of her place the other day and I couldn't believe my eyes. It was all overgrown with . . . I don't know what it was . . . ivy? All across the front.

*Q: How much did you have to do with government people?*

EARDLEY: I'm afraid not enough.

*Q: The ambassador didn't have you making appointments for him?*

EARDLEY: Yeah, calling on the other ambassadors.

*Q: Do you remember dealing with the Russians, for example?*

EARDLEY: I can't remember Russians there.

*Q: You don't recall that they had a residence right behind our residence, separated by just a fence? We played volleyball a couple of times.*

EARDLEY: Did they come over? I don't recall that.

*Q: Maybe that's my imagination.*

EARDLEY: No . . .

*Q: Were there others in the diplomatic community that you were in touch with?*

EARDLEY: I don't think we had a very active community, did we?

*Q: The diplomatic community as a whole, not very. The Germans were there, the Brits and the French were there, and of course the Belgians.*

EARDLEY: Yeah. I wish the Belgians had managed to speak proper French. I couldn't understand them. And especially Ruth Median [*Mrs. Eardley's predecessor as secretary*].

*Q: When did you encounter Ruth?*

EARDLEY: She was there when I arrived.

*Q: So there was some overlap?*

EARDLEY: Yeah. I didn't appreciate it. I didn't need her.

*Q: Well, the nervous one about your coming was Ruth.*

EARDLEY: Oh, really??

*Q: Sure. She knew that she was going to have a successor who was very accomplished.*

EARDLEY: I'm sorry.

*Q: She was a very fine person. But she had something to worry about, because she was outranked!*

EARDLEY: We had some good times, I'll tell you. I wouldn't give that up for anything.

*Q: Any more of those good times you want to recall here?*

EARDLEY: Well, I spent quite a bit of time talking to other secretaries who were miserable. I said, "Look, you're guests in that country. Act like it. Learn the language. Get acquainted with them, and then you will reap the benefits." I guess a lot of people thought I took it too seriously, but it was my life and my livelihood. And I loved it. Sometimes it was tough.

*Q: But you never got shot at?*

EARDLEY: Oh, yes! In Chengmai. I also drove over a python in Chengmai.



*Q: I did that in Kinshasa too. It was the scariest thing! [Both laugh.] Well, do you have more to say about Kigali? Oh, you didn't talk about Ambassador Melone!*

EARDLEY: I liked him. I thought he was a nice guy.

*Q: Was he a competent guy? Did he get along well with the Rwandans?*

EARDLEY: Yes. And of course he was fluent in French. I liked Dominique [*Mrs. Melone*] also, except she did him wrong.

*Q: How so?*

EARDLEY: She left him!

*Q: From Kigali?*

EARDLEY: Well, she never did come to live there. I felt sorry for him.

*Q: I don't know how an ambassador could live there as a bachelor.*

EARDLEY: Yeah, tough. But he had all of us, Judy Chidester [*code clerk*] — Also, Melone played bridge, and he enjoyed our company. You know, the swimming pool was at my apartment. He came over almost every day and swam.

*Q: Good for him! Did he have children who came to post?*

EARDLEY: They had a daughter. I felt sorry for her too, because of this. Dominique just wanted to live in France, that's all.

*Q: Do you remember Martin Brennan?*

EARDLEY: Ah, yes indeed. I liked him and I liked his wife Efron [*sic, phon.*] What was her name?

*Q: Her name was Giovanna.*

EARDLEY: I called her Efron.

*Q: She didn't object?*

EARDLEY: I didn't think so. I thought that was her name.

*Q: [joking] Maybe he changed wives after I left.*

EARDLEY: No. But he did something that he shouldn't have. He took a picture, or several pictures, of her giving birth. And showed them to everyone. I don't think he should have done that. Well, it's all right for their own privacy, but not to show around the embassy.

*Q: A little bit indiscreet.*

EARDLEY: . . . But I say, "Chacun à son goût." (Each to his own taste.) *[laughs]* I've pulled some awful things too, I guess.

**ROBERT E. GRIBBIN**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Kigali (1979-1981)**

*Ambassador Gribbin was born in 1946 in North Carolina and graduated from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee and SAIS. He served in numerous posts including Bangui, Kigali, Mombasa and Kampala. He was named ambassador to the Central African Republic in 1993 and ambassador to Rwanda in 1996. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

GRIBBIN: In 1979 I went out to be the DCM in Kigali, Rwanda.

*Q: All right, I forget my Rwanda-Burundi. Which is north and which is south?*

GRIBBIN: Rwanda is to the north. Burundi is the southern one.

*Q: So you were in Rwanda from when to when?*

GRIBBIN: From 1979 to 1981 this time.

*Q: How did the job come about?*

GRIBBIN: I was the Desk officer for Rwanda, Burundi, and the Central African Republic. Frank Crigler was the ambassador in Kigali and looking for a DCM. He suggested that I put in for it. I did, and was selected. Frank was leaving, though, and in fact I did not overlap with him at all.

*Q: You were there from 1979 to 1981. Well, you arrived, then, more or less chargé.*

GRIBBIN: When I arrived Larry Lesser was the chargé. Frank had left the week before, and Larry was leaving that week, and so we had a very quick handover. Bob Melone, who was to come out as ambassador the next month, got delayed by a medical problem of some sort, and didn't show up for another four months, so I spent my first four months as chargé.

*Q: 1979 - what was the situation in Rwanda?*

GRIBBIN: It was very interesting for me to go from the desk to Rwanda. Subsequently, as this chronology progresses, I went back as ambassador after the genocide. Rwanda in 1979 was under a Hutu majority government. It was ruled by an army general named Juvenal Habyarimana, who was a fairly conservative, reasonable man. The government was stable. There weren't any internal political tensions to speak of, or at least any that were outwardly or easily visible. A quota system was in effect, wherein the Tutsis, who were 15 percent of the population, got about 10 percent of the places in higher school, about 10 percent of the jobs in government and so forth. There was lingering fear or concern about Tutsi arrogance on the part of the Hutu majority, but nonetheless, there were a couple of Tutsi ministers. There were even some Tutsis in the army.

Quiet discontent, expressed cautiously by both sides, was ever present. Embassies like ours were criticized by some people in government, usually behind our backs, to the effect that we employed more Tutsis than the percentages permitted. Embassies and other foreign entities were the only organizations that weren't bound by quotas, so we could employ people on the basis of qualifications alone. We had a mixed staff ethnically including several excellent Tutsi employees.

*Q: This often is the way that American embassies all over the world operate. We often pick up a staff that is not representative of the workforce, one case in point being, we usually employ far more women than most other places in positions that would be held by men within the country.*

GRIBBIN: That's correct. But back to an overall look at the government, Rwanda had good relations with its neighbors. Habyarimana had particularly close ties with Mobutu, who in the late 1970s was an important political force in the region. Mobutu was to lose some of that stature in the years to come. Relations with Burundi were correct. Burundi was ruled by a Tutsi government throughout this whole period, but then relations with Uganda and Tanzania and Kenya were proper. They were English-speaking and rather distant in terms of political relationships. Zaire was the most important friend and neighbor, and of course, Belgium was the dominant international power present in Kigali.

*Q: As we saw it when you were there in 1979, what was the role of Belgium? One always thinks of how they pulled out of the Congo in the early 1960s without having done anything. Was Belgian rule a little more benign?*

GRIBBIN: Historically, Belgian rule in Rwanda was more indirect. Rwanda was never a colony, as such, of Belgium, but was a mandate under the League of Nations and then a trust territory under the United Nations, so Belgium had to answer to the United Nations Trusteeship Council for its stewardship of Rwanda. Belgium had not carefully nurtured Rwanda. It let local institutions run the country, and the Church was the most important local institution. The traditional Tutsi king, the *mwami* was in power up until 1959, when the Belgians did a flip-flop in Rwanda, compared to Burundi, when it sponsored a referendum, a popular election, in which political power shifted to the Hutu majority. The Belgian governor of Rwanda made this happen. This was in contrast to the situation in Burundi, where the *mwami* assumed power as the head of state in the independent nation. So you had this disruption or social revolution as it was called in 1959 when the party headed by Grégoire Kayibanda came to power. His political party was called *Palipehutu*, which means "up with the Hutus." Obviously, up with one group meant down with the other. Essentially, the change of ethnic power in Rwanda was a continuation of politics

started in Rwanda earlier under the Belgian administration and under the Catholic Church and a reflection of inflamed and politicized ethnic divisions.

The rallying cry that Kayibanda used and that Habyarimana used was to be anti-Tutsi. If either had a political problem with so-and-so inside the party, it could be papered over by hollering "Let's watch out for the Tutsis, they're sneaking back in." Part of the seeds of the genocide, of course, were laid at this time in 1959. Election turmoil led to "hut burning," where Tutsis were burnt out of their houses on the hillsides and persecuted. Because of this, maybe as many as 300,000 to half a million Tutsis fled Rwanda in 1959 and 1960 and took refuge, some in Burundi because it was Tutsi-ruled and French-speaking, others in Zaire because it was French-speaking, but many from the eastern part of the country went to Uganda where they stayed in refugee camps for the rest of their lives. Their descendants became the core group that returned in 1990 and ultimately took over the government after the genocide.

*Q: When you arrived there in 1979, you had been the Desk officer so you didn't need instructions. Were we carefully taking the Tutsi-Hutu temperature all the time in both places, or was it sort of considered, well, that's passé or something?*

GRIBBIN: We were much more concerned with the Hutu-Tutsi tensions in Burundi because in Burundi in 1972 there had been this massacre of 100,000 Hutu. Essentially the Hutu elite were wiped out by the Tutsi military in Burundi in 1972. Therefore, we felt that Burundi was much more volatile and that its Tutsi government would be quite prepared to do anything to stay in power. In Rwanda it looked like any election would bring a Hutu government to power. Hutus had 85 percent of the people, and since votes in Africa closely follow ethnic and tribal lines, they would get 85 percent of the vote. We hoped to see greater respect for the minority, but there wasn't the obvious threat of ethnic violence in Rwanda. Habyarimana came power in 1973 and put a stop to some of the virulent anti-Tutsi sentiment that was found among Kayibanda's partisans.

*Q: And the Rwandan military, was that pretty solidly Hutu?*

GRIBBIN: It was pretty solidly Hutu - there were some Tutsis in it - but more importantly it was pretty solidly pro-Habyarimana Hutu. The Hutus were also divided in Rwanda between the central/southerners, which were Kayibanda and his supporters, and the northerners, who were Habyarimana's kith and kin. In fact, by the time of the genocide, the army was almost 90 percent from two or three of Rwanda's 147 communes.

*Q: This is the genocide we're talking about in the 1990's.*

GRIBBIN: 1994.

*Q: Well, at that point, when you arrived, what were our interests in Rwanda?*

GRIBBIN: They were fairly minimal. We had one or two dozen American residents, one American investor in the tea business. We had Dian Fossey, the gorilla lady, who was studying mountain gorillas, and she attracted quite a bit of attention. In fact, if one mentioned Rwanda in

the 1970s, most people would say, "Oh, Dian Fossey and gorillas." Rwanda was a stable little country in what was still a turbulent part of the world. Zaire had only recently coalesced into a more stable entity. Burundi was chaotic. Uganda, of course, was in flames in the 1970s. Tanzania was still undergoing its openly unsuccessful experiment in *Ujama* or socialism, and so Rwanda was there all by itself. We were interested in helping it stay stable. We had a very small assistance program. We started with an even smaller military assistance program, which mostly consisted of Caterpillar tractors. That was pretty much it.

*Q: What was the rôle of the Belgians at that time?*

GRIBBIN: The Belgians were still the colonial power. They provided the greatest amount of military assistance. They provided the training and support for the army and support for the university. They had quite an extensive range of developmental and governmental interest in the country, and there were a number of Belgian citizens there, not only in the private sector but also as priests and nuns throughout the country in the school system.

*Q: How about the Catholic Church? What sort of influence did it have?*

GRIBBIN: Outside of government, the Church was by far the most powerful institution in the country, and again when you go back and look at the roots of genocide, which happened later, and the roots of ethnic division, the Catholic Church had a certain responsibility for fostering that, even though it was mostly unintentional - the reason being that when they first got there, the missionaries were first attracted to the ruling elite, who were the Tutsis. When schools began, missionaries enrolled the sons of the aristocrats - the daughters, of course, didn't go - the sons of the aristocrats into school. Consequently they became the educated ones who went into the administration or went into private sector jobs as the economy modernized in the '20s and '30s and '40s. Thus the Tutsis had a monopoly, if you will, on education. Early on, racial theories were prevalent in European society, and one of the Belgian missionaries, one of the early bishops, in fact, decided that the Tutsis were descendants of Cain. He judged they were more European in outlook and culture and looks, and they went back in history differently racially than the "sons of Ham." The bishop fostered division based on European racial theory that really was not applicable to the people of the area. But it was accepted, though, within the church. In the Catholic Church in Rwanda, most of the missionaries, but not all, were from Belgium, but those that were from Belgium reflected the political, linguistic and religious divisions of Belgium. Remember, Belgium is a tribal society itself.

*Q: The Walloons and so forth.*

GRIBBIN: In the '50s, finally, a number of social democrats who were Flemish fathers rebelled. They concluded, "We are the oppressed in Belgium. We need to help the oppressed in Rwanda, and the oppressed in Rwanda are the Hutus." So they promoted Hutu education. Always in Rwanda were these complicating reflections of Belgian society. Every Belgian ambassador, for example, if he were Walloon, he had a Flemish DCM and vice-versa.

*Q: Were you getting any reflections of Tanzania? Nyerere was doing his thing, which turned out to be really as close to a social and economic disaster as you can have, taking a prosperous country and playing around with it. You were involved, I guess, or certainly around, weren't you?*

*Had you seen any reflections of what was happening in Tanzania in Rwanda?*

GRIBBIN: There weren't many connections across that border. The part of Tanzania that borders Rwanda was virtually empty, and there was very little cross-fertilization of ideas. The problem with Tanzania when I was there was that it was involved in the war to oust Idi Amin, so there was a Tanzanian army in Uganda.

*Q: Well, obviously, at that time we had no diplomatic mission in Uganda.*

GRIBBIN: That's correct.

*Q: We sort of had to slip out of there very quietly, get the hell out before Idi Amin is considered sort of a crazy man. But were we doing anything to sort of monitor what the Tutsi refugees and all were doing in Uganda?*

GRIBBIN: In the 1970s? No.

*Q: That turned out to be a major source of coming back and -*

GRIBBIN: Oh, it did, but once we got back into Uganda in 1984 or 85 - I'm not sure when we went back - but when Museveni took power in 1986, it became obvious as he came to power in Uganda that he was a loyal Ugandan. Remember that he had gone to the bush with 26 colleagues, and among these 26 colleagues were half a dozen or more Rwandans from the refugee camps in the south who became key people in his effort to take power in Uganda. Then once he did get power, they remained central players in the Ugandan military. However, once the U.S. was back in Uganda, the embassy in Kampala did monitor the refugee problem in southern Uganda. However, it was not an issue that we thought about much when I was in Rwanda in 1979 and 1980.

*Q: 1979-81, when you were there, we saw the takeover of our embassy in Teheran, the attack and burning of our embassy in Islamabad, and other things. Were world events, terrorists, or anything else, reflected down where you were?*

GRIBBIN: We were very much out of the mainstream. I remember once in February our telecommunications went down, and we didn't get a telegram for a month. And we probably didn't miss not having telegrams for a month. International mail took two to three weeks. The telephone didn't work externally except under very unusual circumstances. Of course, there were no satellite telephones or Internet or anything like that. So we were fairly isolated. We listened to the BBC and the Voice of America. In Rwanda itself, there was no newspaper. The radio was government controlled. There was no television at all. So we were really fairly isolated, and Rwandans liked it that way. They were not an outward-looking society. They were a mountain people. They were an inward-looking society. The language that everybody spoke was

Kinyarwanda. The language of the educated people was French. Virtually no one spoke English, and only a few spoke Swahili. So it was a very isolated, inward-looking place.

*Q: Did you find yourself occupied with Dian Fossey a lot?*

GRIBBIN: Yes, I did. In fact, before I went out to Rwanda I had several sessions with leaders of the National Geographic Society, which was her sponsor. They felt that Dian had been doing gorilla research for, I think, about 10 years at that time. She had copious notes. She lived high on a mountain in a camp called Karisoke, which was about 10,000 feet in altitude. Dian smoked several packs of cigarettes a day. She developed emphysema. She always had been a somewhat difficult person to work with. She had very strong opinions about how things should be done, and she developed very strong opinions about people. .

The National Geographic thought it was time for Dian to come home, first of all, to put all of her notes into usable form so what she knew about gorillas could be known by the world, by the research community. She could write a book, organize her notes, and regain her health. The assignment given to me by the National Geographic Society was to convince Dian to do this. She didn't want to. She didn't want to leave her gorilla research group. She felt that they would be subverted by other researchers or killed by poachers or destroyed by human visitation. She firmly believed her mission was not only to learn about gorillas but also to save them from extinction. Some of Dian's tactics in that regard were counterproductive. In more than one case she took the law into her own hands. She apprehended poachers and had them beaten or confined. In once case, she kidnaped a poacher's children in order to get him to stop poaching. She skated very thinly on the law, and would irritate Rwandan officialdom to no end. In a way it became almost a race to see if we could convince Dian to leave before the Rwandans threw her out. If they threw her out, that would mean she couldn't come back or that coming back would be very difficult.

Ultimately the strength of all these arguments prevailed, and we convinced Dian to go home to the U.S. She went to Cornell where she wrote a book, *Gorillas in the Mist*, left all her notes in the library and regained her health. I had thought and hoped that this would be a process that would take several years. But Dian only stayed away for about 10 months. She came back. Meanwhile, some changes had been made in the gorilla protection mechanisms. The responsibility to protect gorillas was vested in the park authorities. Donors provided them the wherewithal - training, uniforms, guns, radios, etc. - to do that. Dian's research groups, as they were called, were safeguarded for her use and the use of her students, but other groups were habituated for tourists to visit. A consortium of U.S. conservation organizations sponsored a program to convince the villagers around the park of the monetary value of the gorillas to them. This was one of the first programs for conservation education and revenue sharing designed so that people would see gorillas as assets rather than as trophies or liabilities.

*Q: How did she take to this new régime when she came back?*

GRIBBIN: Dian was very irritated at it and at me for having been part of it. However, once she went back to her camp and resumed her work with "her" gorillas, she had some contact with researchers and other people who were involved in the changes. She gradually settled in. In fact,

she began to actively cooperate with the conservationist who directed the anti-poaching operation. However, I don't think she ever spoke to several of the researchers who, she felt, even thought they had not destroyed her work, had subverted it.

*Q: Did you get involved at all, I mean, were there American Protestant missionaries spilling over from Zaire into Rwanda, and then you had your Catholic Church doing its thing? I wonder if you got involved in any of that.*

GRIBBIN: We had only a few American missionaries in Rwanda and most of them were Seventh Day Adventists or Methodists. Other English-speaking missionaries were British Anglican missionaries. We did provide the sorts of support that one would normally provide to missionaries, and we used to visit them. Missionaries in Rwanda, as was true in my other African posts, were always good sources for self-help projects. Through the ambassador's self-help fund the embassy would make a couple of thousand dollars available for putting a roof on a maternity unit or digging a well or whatever a local community wanted to do. Missionaries often proposed and supervised such projects. We knew the money would be spent for the designated purpose and that the project would be completed. I remember visiting missionaries at hospitals and schools around the country during this period of time.

Rwanda hosted a small Peace Corps program, and I was the Peace Corps director as well as being the DCM. Technically we were adjunct to Peace Corps Zaire. Zaire had several hundred volunteers, and we had five, all of whom were initially assigned to be English professors at the university, where the U.S. Government had posted two Fulbright professors. Together they comprised the English faculty at the university. Under my direction, we branched out a little. I shifted one PCV into a maternal health job and recruited another for an environmental education program that was being put together up around the *Parc des Volcans* concerning the gorillas. Undoubtedly the Peace Corps was a source of interaction and a great deal of confidence building between Americans and Rwandans, particularly at the university. Most Peace Corps volunteers, as I was myself in Kenya many years before, have contact with local people, which is very, very satisfying, but most local people don't go on to be heads of government and leaders of society. However, if you teach in an African university, you almost certainly come in contact with the leaders of tomorrow.

*Q: Who became the ambassador after you had been there for some time?*

GRIBBIN: Bob Melone.

*Q: What was his background?*

GRIBBIN: Bob had been the African watcher in Paris. He was a French expert. He had had other African experiences. I think he had been in Niger at one point. He was a very polished and cosmopolitan ambassador and became a very good friend. Of course, by the time he got there, I had been serving as chargé for four months, and I was convinced we didn't need an ambassador. Nonetheless, he came in and showed how useful it was to have an ambassador. There were things, of course, that he could do as ambassador that a chargé couldn't do, including particularly dealing much more forthrightly with the Rwandan Government.



*Q: In some places where the French had been the colonial power, they took a rather proprietary regard later at the former colony - I'm thinking of Mali and Niger and what-have-you - and looked on Americans as interlopers and kept a wary eye on them. How did the Belgians do there?*

GRIBBIN: I don't think the Belgians saw the Americans in Rwanda in those same terms. We had more of a collaborative relationship. The Belgians certainly had more irons in the fire and were more involved, but I didn't detect the sort of competition that you described. The French, however, were there as well, and the competition was between the French and the Belgians. The French were continually trying to pull Rwanda into the *Francophone* circle - and did so very successfully. Mitterand, who was the president at the time, and Habyarimana became close friends. Danielle Mitterand came to visit Madame Habyarimana on one occasion. There was a close personal relationship between the French president and President Habyarimana. The French were also involved in the Gendarmerie. This gave them an entrée into the security and the political side of government that the French are fond of knowing about.

*Q: Well, the Cold War was still in full bloom. Did that reflect itself at all, either with Eastern Bloc embassies or other things in Rwanda?*

GRIBBIN: We had three Eastern countries represented in Kigali. The Soviet Embassy backed right up to the American ambassador's residence, but the Soviets were not very active. They would just stay inside and drink vodka. We played them once or twice in volley ball. I think they beat us soundly just once.

The Chinese had a more active operation. They were especially interested in keeping Taiwan out. That was one of their principal goals. Additionally China put some money in a rice project and a cement factory. The Chinese were cautiously friendly to us, but soon became deeply suspicious because one of our Fulbright professors from the university, the one in charge of the English Department, also spoke fluent Mandarin Chinese. He picked it up earlier when studying China. However, embassy officials were absolutely certain that this guy was a plant. Other than that, we got along fairly well with the Chinese. The North Koreans were also present, and of course, we had almost no contact with them.

*Q: The North Koreans were making these efforts. Were they doing anything there, or were they just there?*

GRIBBIN: They were just there. To the extent that the North Koreans and the Soviets did anything, it was to sell arms, but even at that the Belgians sold arms on better terms, so the Belgians were the preferred supplier.

*Q: How big was our embassy? What did it consist of?*

GRIBBIN: On the American side we had an ambassador and a DCM, a junior officer, and admin officer, two secretaries, one communicator, and a PAO.

*Q: So it was not exactly a major establishment.*

GRIBBIN: No, it wasn't.

*Q: Did you find yourself courting Rwandans on UN votes and things like this?*

GRIBBIN: Oh, yes, we held regular conversations with Rwandans on UN votes, but since their major partners, France and Belgium and the U.S., all saw the UN in the same way, whenever they could be helpful the Rwandans would. The problem in Rwanda, as in all of Africa, was that most of the African countries were bound together in the nonaligned movement grouping and tended to want to vote monolithically in that respect, which often meant that they did not vote the way we urged at the UN.

*Q: Were there any events during this time that stand out, or was it just as you say, a quiet time?*

GRIBBIN: It was a quiet time. I helped an American investor get his tea factory off the ground. In fact, it was already up and running, but the Rwandan Government agency that was his partner kept moving the goal posts and changing the rules. So the embassy, myself and my predecessors and my successors, even when I went back again fifteen years later, all were involved in helping this American businessman convince his local partners that the rules were there for a purpose. Rules were designed to provide some stability to relationships and some common measures for expectations, and they should be used for that.

**JOHN PROPST BLANE**  
**Ambassador**  
**Rwanda (1982-1985)**

*Ambassador Blane was born and raised in Alabama and was educated at the University of Tennessee and at the University of Vienna, Austria as a Fulbright Scholar. Following a tour of duty with the US Army during the Korean War, he entered the Foreign Service in 1956. A specialist in African Affairs, Ambassador Blane held several positions at the State Department in Washington and served in a number of African countries including Somalia, Ethiopia (Asmara), Cameroon and Kenya. From 1982 to 1985 he served as United States Ambassador to Rwanda and from 1985 to 1988 as Ambassador to Chad. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.*

*Q: You came back for your appointment as ambassador to Rwanda. This is always one of the countries considered sort of a nice place to go.*

BLANE: Oh, it is an awfully nice place to go.

*Q: I'm surprised, particularly during a rather partisan administration, as partisan as they come, that they didn't pass this off to a safari-loving buddy of somebody in the Republican Party.*

BLANE: My replacement, his replacement, and his replacement have all been political appointees. The next three. One is not quite there yet, but there have been two political appointees and another one is going. It's a nice sweet little country. Spent three very happy years there.

*Q: What was the political situation there? You were there from '82 to '85.*

BLANE: Again, peaceful, stable. It was during a relatively prosperous time. Coffee and tea prices were pretty good. Rwanda is another coffee and tea exporter; that's all they export. And market prices were pretty good.

The only real problem we had during these years was an influx of refugees from Uganda. We had lots and lots of refugees come in from Uganda, and camps were established for them at various places in the country. We were involved in all sorts of ways: providing foodstuffs, medicines, one thing or another. We did a lot of work with volunteer agencies.

*Q: Is Belgium considered sort of a major power for giving out assistance there?*

BLANE: Oh, yes.

*Q: So, again, this was one of these places where we, with a certain amount of relief, were able to say, "Well, if there's going to be a guardian power, this is Belgium," was that it?*

BLANE: That's correct, although we wanted to help out financially, and did. Especially, as I said, with the refugee situation. Rwanda was one of the first four countries to be chosen for an economic reform program, financed by the United States. That was, I suspect, my major achievement there, fighting and dying against an awful lot of competition from around the world for a piece of that money. And we managed.

*Q: Just to give an idea for somebody who's not involved in foreign affairs, how do you fight for it? I mean, here you're the ambassador, and people, I'm sure, in Indonesia and...*

BLANE: Everywhere else in the world.

*Q: Ecuador, Liechtenstein, I mean, they're all looking for a way to get this. How do you fight for it?*

BLANE: First there was the announcement that the program was going into effect. Then there was the announcement that a pot of money had been set aside. The criteria were discussed, sort of the general criteria of eligibility.

And so what you do then is sit down and start writing long descriptive pieces explaining why your country fits all of the criteria: They're brave little people. They're doing their best to stabilize their economy. They are self-sufficient in foodstuffs. They are not ostentatious at all, there's no conspicuous consumption, no corruption. These are good little people and deserving of our help.

*Q: You know, this sounds almost exactly like the same abilities that are required to get a grant from various corporations. It's grantsmanship.*

BLANE: That's right, that's right. And so, through a series of exchanges and meetings, we made our case and we got the money. And I think it has been well used.

*Q: How did you deal with the government? I mean, you're the ambassador. Again, looking for somebody, I mean, at your, how does one...?*

BLANE: In Rwanda, I dealt with all the ministers, but my principal point of contact was the foreign minister. On important things, or things that either Washington felt were terribly important or the Rwandan president felt were terribly important, I would then be called into the presidency and discuss these things directly with the president.

*Q: Was the Rwandan government following world events in the UN and things like this?*

BLANE: Oh, yes, very much, very much.

*Q: So would this be the sort of thing that you would get involved in?*

BLANE: Oh, we always had consultations before the General Assembly every year. We have had, in every country I worked in, I might add. But certainly. And, very fortunately, the Rwandans were almost always with us on everything, being of a very conservative government and we had a very conservative government. The international policies of the two governments were largely identical, and so we didn't get into any pushing matches at all.

*Q: How about your embassy staff? It was obviously relatively small.*

BLANE: Oh, very small, very small. I had a deputy chief of mission; an admin. officer, a GSO; a consular/economic officer; and a secretary. Two communicators.

*Q: Was this about right?*

BLANE: Absolutely. We really couldn't have done our job with fewer; we didn't need any more.

*Q: Did you have any problem in avoiding having more bodies put in from other places? Sometimes this happens, you know. I'm sure in, say, Kenya that... Was this a problem, that too many people were based there from other agencies, aviation and all? If you're in a nice place, people tend to end up there.*

BLANE: Well, certainly Bill Harrop, who followed LeMelle as ambassador, felt very strongly that the American presence in Kenya was too big. He was signally unsuccessful in reducing it. He fought hard. I read cable after cable he would send back explaining why he needed to get rid of X, Y, or Z organization. You can't do it.

*Q: It's one of those battles one learns.*

BLANE: On the other hand, when I was there I didn't really feel that it made any difference. We had a huge American community in Nairobi. Probably had 7,000 Americans living in Nairobi, mostly private business people. So another five or six hundred government people--I don't think it bothered the Kenyans in the least, and it was no particular burden to us.

*Q: It was much more of a multicultural society anyway, so it probably made less difference.*

BLANE: There were a lot of people. But the residents didn't bother us, those who lived there, nearly as much as the visitors. Because if you live in a nice place that has lots of pretty wild animals, your visitor stream is immense. In Nairobi we had a section that did nothing but take care of visitors--and there were lots of them.

*Q: I want to ask you about the social life of Nairobi. There used to be a saying: "Are you married or are you from Kenya?"*

BLANE: Yes, yes, well. Those days are, I think, long gone. Those were the Happy Valley days during the colonial period. There was a lot of social life certainly, but we had a steady stream of visitors through. Just immense numbers.

This was not true in Rwanda. We had a few, but not many. One of the things I set out to do, and did, was to host the annual AID mission directors meeting for Africa. It's held in some African capital each year. All the AID mission directors come together and spend a week chatting about their problems. And normally these confabs are held in Nairobi or Dakar or Abidjan or someplace like that. And I decided oh, hell, let 'em come out to a little post. So we struggled, and, again, gamesmanship or grantsmanship or what have you, we got it, and we hosted the AID mission directors conference very successfully.

**HELEN WEINLAND**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Kigali (1984-1986)**

*Ms. Weinland was born and raised in New York and educated at Mount Holyoke College and Ohio State University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1974, she served in Zurich, Berlin and Prague and at a number of African posts, including Lagos, Nigeria; Kigali, Rwanda as Deputy Chief of Mission and Kaduna, Nigeria, where she served as Consul General. She also served in Washington as Desk Officer for the Philippines, Nigeria and Zimbabwe as well as Officer for United Nations Affairs. Ms. Weinland was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.*

WEINLAND: I went straight to Kigali, Rwanda.

*Q: That brings you to an interesting place. You are off to Kigali?*

WEINLAND: I am off to Kigali.

*Q: And you were in Kigali from when to when?*

WEINLAND: I arrived in July of 1984 and I left in February of 1986.

*Q: Who was the ambassador there?*

WEINLAND: The ambassador was John Blane. It was a very small embassy in those days; five officers, one American secretary and two communicators.

*Q: What was your job?*

WEINLAND: I was the deputy chief of mission.

*Q: Were you aware that this was a period of time when the Foreign Service was beginning to put a great deal of emphasis on getting women into positions of authority, particularly in DCM jobs and all or not?*

WEINLAND: I do not believe the Department at that time was very interested in that because there were only three female DCMs worldwide. There were more female ambassadors. The other two DCMs were April Glaspie and Arlene Render.

I went to see John Blane personally. I was back in the Department the previous summer, when I was on leave, and was putting my bid list together and I learned he was in town and so I went down to talk to him. He, of course, was given a short list of people from whom to choose a DCM, and I was the one with whom he had had a personal encounter so he picked me.

He was a very good person on women's issues. He was married to a woman named Diane Blane. They had met when they were both in Cameroon, and she was with USAID and he was on the State side, and they met and married there. According to what the Department did in those days, they told her that if she married, she would have to resign. John said to her, "Don't resign, make them throw you out." So she did not resign and eventually she got a letter separating her from the service. A few years after that, the Department lost that lawsuit and they had to allow married women to serve in the Foreign Service, and Deedee was reinstated almost without any to-do because she had never resigned. She was, by the way, one of the Mount Holyoke political science department people, so she came in from being at Mount Holyoke.

*Q: Kigali is the capital of?*

WEINLAND: Rwanda.

*Q: You arrived there when?*

WEINLAND: I arrived in July of 1984. At that time there was a one-party government in power; the MRND (Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement), which was headed by Juvenal Habyarimana. He had led a military coup that put him in as head of government. I am trying to think if he had actually resigned from the army by the time I arrived, but I think he was still actually a general in the army. The army was the power behind the throne, although the country had all the trappings of a civilian government; I think they even had an assembly of some kind, but it was a one-party assembly so it was not particularly democratic.

*Q: What had been the recent history? Had there been a Hutu-Tutsi clash in recent times there or not?*

WEINLAND: Well, there had been, from time to time, since well before independence really. And I will now get into hot water, because my thoughts on these subjects are not necessarily universally adopted by academics who have studied the place.

Rwanda and Burundi had originally been part of German East Africa, so after the First World War, when the German possessions were divided up, the responsibility of the League of Nations Protectorates over those two countries was given to Belgium, which of course, was the colonizing power of the entire Belgian Congo, right next door. The Belgians didn't do any favors for either Rwanda or Burundi.

*Q: Or for the Congo, either.*

WEINLAND: Or for the Congo. They kept them pretty backward. But of course, they were under League of Nations' and then UN authority, so they had to be somewhat less violent than they were in the Congo.

In my view, this whole Hutu-Tutsi thing really was exacerbated under the Belgians, who encouraged the Tutsis -- the King of Rwanda at the time was a Tutsi -- and they encouraged the Tutsis who were only about 10 to 15 % of the population to think of themselves as a more highly developed kind of African than the Hutu. This was partly because they were tall, they had high foreheads, they had narrow noses, and you know all this specious, social Darwinism stuff. So the Belgians ruled indirectly through the Tutsi kingdom.

Coming in underneath that level was a whole group of Belgian priests and missionaries, many of whom were from the minority area of Belgium -- and I always get mixed up whether they were the Flamands or the other ones -- but anyway who did not come from the same class as the governors.

*Q: Probably the Flamands because now they are kind of on top, but for a long time French speaking group ran things.*

WEINLAND: OK, so it was the non-French speaking, although they did speak French. They began to encourage the Hutu to read the gospel and to think about things like all men are equal in the eyes of God and so as things were beginning to build toward independence, there seems to be some argument at least that these missionary fathers encouraged the Hutu to challenge the

political authority of the Tutsi. There was an incident in which a young boy was attacked and the whole place went up in flames.

So from the time of independence, that I think was 1961, there was already great tension. There had been a lot of violence; many, many Tutsi had already gone into exile, either in Tanzania or in Uganda. The king took refuge in Kenya and so on. So there was already a very large diaspora of Tutsi, even at the time of independence.

So Rwanda became independent and not too long after independence -- here my facts begin to get a little fuzzy -- there was a man, Grégoire Kayibanda, who came into power who was a very rabid Hutu power kind of person. The other problem was always this mirror thing that went on between Burundi and Rwanda. Whenever the Tutsi in Burundi were massacring Hutu, then Hutu in Rwanda would massacre Tutsi. There was this very nasty kind of stuff that would play off against itself.

Somewhere in the middle of all this, in 1973, Kayibanda was displaced by a military coup. The Hutus remained in power, but not so much this very rigid, right wing group of Hutu. The new head of state, Habyarimana, had a wife, Agathe, who had a big family and she and her family were operators behind the scenes, very much pushing their clans to the front, people who came from the northwest. So there was a lot of tension in the country.

In '84 when I got there, all of this was totally below the surface. After the excitement and energy of Nigeria, it just seemed like the most placid place; you could drive anywhere you wanted in your private car, never be molested, everybody seemed to be doing OK. That was what the situation was when I arrived. It appeared that there was some effort to bring the warring groups together but I think probably under the surface there was tension. You know, it is a very mountainous country, very hilly. It is called "the land of a thousand hills" and like a lot of mountainous peoples, they are very closed in. It was much harder to get to know Rwandans than to get to know Nigerians. I have a feeling a lot was going on that they never, ever told us about. You know, it would have been just like telling somebody outside the family. I just have the feeling that we really didn't have a way of getting a handle on it. I think even the people who worked for us in the embassy didn't speak of it much. We had quite a number of Tutsi who worked for us in the embassy because there were these very strict quotas everywhere else and so it was easier for them to be employed by us than by banks and insurance companies and other concerns. I don't remember ever having a really open conversation about these particular issues with any of them.

*Q: At that point, what were American interests there?*

WEINLAND: Mostly USAID. We had a pretty big USAID operation and so did a lot of other countries because Rwanda was considered to be relatively free of corruption. The needs were pretty obvious and pretty severe, so it was a wonderful place for people who were interested in development to be active. We had probably a bigger USAID office than we had embassy office. We had a very small Peace Corps program that I, in fact, had to direct because there was no Peace Corps director. We had very few American citizens in the country. I think our largest export to Rwanda was used clothing. We did not import a huge amount from there. Their major



exports were tea, coffee and cassiterite. What is that? Some other mineral is made from cassiterite ore. Tin.

*Q: How did you find the government there?*

WEINLAND: Some of the ministers. . . I am trying to think which ministers were government agencies I worked with the most; I worked with the foreign ministry, I worked with the justice ministry because I had to write the human rights report, I worked with one man in the defense department because I also had to administer the foreign military assistance program which was quite small. So there I was; the Peace Corps director, the director of military assistance and the DCM.

The justice minister was a very friendly, nice guy. I think he had his own interests in presenting his government in the best light, and so he was eager to show us around prisons and things like that.

The foreign ministry. There was a rather difficult foreign minister and a nice, but not particularly effective deputy minister, and then the number three guy in foreign ministry was one of these go-to guys, you know, if you needed something done, he was the one you went to. He was one of the leading *génocidaires*. He has just been tried in Tanzania and found guilty of genocide.

*Q: Were we monitoring the Hutu-Tutsi business there?*

WEINLAND: Not in any constant way. I think we probably accepted too easily the propaganda the government was putting out that they had all these programs that were designed to overcome that kind of division and they were not, I don't think that they were really even allowed to discuss it. I think it was sort of all done under the rug. Certainly, they weren't going to talk to us about it.

We were aware of course, there had occasionally -- I guess I should back up. Occasionally, this Tutsi diaspora would mount an invasion back into Rwanda. I think they did that twice before the time I got there after independence and were repulsed by the Rwandan army. So there was always that threat on the border. While I was there, we had a combined political/consular officer, and she tracked the whole question of Tutsi refugees because there was some effort to resettle them and the UN was anxious that there should be some kind of policy that would permit people to return.

The real problem from the point of view of the Habyarimana government was that Rwanda was probably one of the one or two most densely populated countries in the world. It is very hilly, very few towns and the towns were very small; even Kigali was quite small. Almost everybody lived in family compounds out on the hills and they made their living by agriculture. The number of children in any family was usually between six and eight. They usually had between one and two hectares of land.

So you are talking about bringing 60,000 Tutsis with their cows back into the country and where is the land to resettle these people? Even though there was some effort to do this, it just never got

off the ground. Occasionally, there would be an effort to bring some in and then it would get out of hand. They would put them back over the border. It just really was a mess.

*Q: The border with Zaire?*

WEINLAND: No, the border with Uganda.

*Q: These were Tutsi forces that were there?*

WEINLAND: Yes. This was during the last push when Museveni was making a bid to topple the government of Uganda. I think there had been a successor government to Obote in Uganda, and Museveni, who is now the president in Uganda, had a rebellion going that was gaining force. Many of his soldiers were actually Tutsi Rwandan refugees, including the present president of Rwanda. He was in Uganda. So they were fighting alongside Museveni getting military training, learning how to fight a war and they ultimately did take over the capital of Uganda in 1985 or '86. It would have been just before I left. They managed to move in and take over the capital.

But at this same time there was all this uncertainty along that border because you know, if the government of Uganda at that time had prevailed, then what was going to happen to these Tutsis who had been living there for a generation? It was really a pretty complicated business.

We were keeping a very close eye on the whole refugee issue and the political/consular officer was liaising very tightly with the UN people who were in Rwanda and also with some of the other embassies that were keeping an eye on things.

*Q: Did we have much contact with what was happening over in Zaire?*

WEINLAND: I don't recall that a great deal was going on in Zaire right at that particular time. There was a regional organization that didn't do a great deal but had multi-country projects called CEPGL (Confédération des Pays des Grands Lacs), so all the countries that surrounded the big Rift lakes that go down that central spine of Africa, Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Uganda and Tanzania, were all members of CEPGL. We were monitoring that, but in terms of any cross-border violence in Congo, I don't think that was a time when much of that was happening.

*Q: In the two years you were there, any major developments?*

WEINLAND: I was only there a year and a half. I think we made some breakthrough on family planning through USAID. I was quite intent on building up the Peace Corps a bit more, and so I was working hard, not only to get another volunteer or two into the country, but also to get a director out there. I think there was a time when a whole bunch of refugees came into the country and then had to leave, and that was a pretty difficult business. We signed a number of development agreements with the country. You know, some millions here and some millions there for agricultural development and things like that.

*Q: It sounds like you may have had a small Peace Corps but I would imagine that they found it a good place to work, didn't they?*

WEINLAND: I don't know. As I say, it was difficult to get to know Rwandans. We had I think seven volunteers when I left. We had two at each of the university campuses and in one case it was a married couple. They did their thing and they got to know some of the other faculty members so I think they had a fairly good time.

The two who were at the other campus, I think particularly the man, felt somewhat isolated. It just was hard for him to get to know people. We had two guys who were working on two different forestry projects and so they weren't living in the same place; they were in two different parts of the country and I think they found it also somewhat isolating. The final volunteer was a physical therapist who was working in a rehab hospital for polio victims, mostly polio kids, I think, and for her, I think she had a good experience because there were a couple of other expatriate workers, missionaries, volunteers, so there was a community. I mean, it was a hospital community and a friendlier sort of place.

The two foresters, and also to some extent the people who were at the universities, often came into Kigali and would stay at my house and would watch TV all night just to get a little relief.

*Q: What was the gorilla situation?*

WEINLAND: Gorillas, I forgot to mention the gorillas.

There were two or three different organizations that were working on the gorillas. One was led by the American citizen, Dian Fossey, and another was headed at that time by a Belgian guy and there was an American who worked in that group too. There was a great deal of friction between the two because Dian Fossey wanted to do research. She wanted to do her own thing, she didn't want anyone else to come and look at the gorillas. She didn't want to use them as a commodity for tourism. She was a very prickly character.

The other group felt that they should protect the gorillas and protect their habitat, get the government of Rwanda behind the idea of keeping the national park intact. With all this land hunger, there was a great deal of pressure to continually take farmland away from the edges of the park that was on the peaks of the volcanoes in the north. They felt the thing to do was to convince the communities that were on the border of the park that they would benefit if the gorillas to some extent could become a tourist commodity, controlled, and that using the money that could be developed from charging people money to go look at the gorillas, they could help to develop their communities. People who were living on these family compounds all through this area could get work at the park headquarters as guides and other workers.

And so there was tension between the two approaches, which I think you find in almost any wildlife preservation situation. At the very end of my tour there, and in fact, when I was in the United States having some medical work done that ultimately led to the curtailment of my posting, that was the time when Dian Fossey was murdered.

There are always different theories about who did it; the Rwandans tried in absentia the other American who was at the camp at the time she was murdered, who discovered her body. They

found him guilty. I think probably he did not do it. I have asked other people who were assigned there at the time, and they felt he was a somewhat emotional and strange guy but they felt that on balance he had not done it. I think maybe the conclusion is that it was someone Fossey had run afoul of, who had some kind of economic interest in selling gorillas to zoos, who knows? I mean, there was a lot of that going on too. People would go and grab some young gorillas and sell them to some zoo somewhere.

Anyway, the murder was a real consular challenge because you know, she was 10,000 feet up the mountain and to try to keep the body OK until there could be directions about what to do -- she didn't really have much family in the United States -- and where to bury her. It really was a challenge for the consular officer and a little bit for me when I went back for a short while. It took a long time to play out.

*Q: This was basically a relatively tranquil time, wasn't it?*

WEINLAND: Yes, I would say it was. It was a very comfortable existence for expatriates there because things generally worked. There were relatively simple ways to get good supplies of food. There were international supermarkets that had regular import privileges, so the absence of any commissary wasn't a problem for us. We could get good, nourishing food.

As I said, it was very safe; you could drive all over the place and it seemed on the surface to be tranquil. But I don't think it was.

*Q: You finally left there, you say you had to go back for medical treatment but when did you finally leave?*

WEINLAND: I had left for the medical treatment in December of '85 and I was allowed to return to post for something like two or three weeks in January and I left finally about the 15<sup>th</sup> of February. I was still the chargé; John Blane had left in July and the State Department had dilly-dallied around trying to appoint a new ambassador and so I was chargé. I had to get special permission to go back to the States for these medical tests. I just insisted that I be able to go back. They finally had a new ambassador and I could go back and get him properly credentialed and instated and so on and so forth.

*Q: Who was the new ambassador?*

WEINLAND: The new ambassador was a political appointee named John Upston.

*Q: Why would a political appointee want that job?*

WEINLAND: That is a very good question. He was a person who had been in and out of the State Department depending on the current makeup of the administration. He had specialized in Caribbean affairs, so with Reagan he had come back into the Department and had worked on something called the Caribbean Basin Initiative with, I think, the vision to be appointed ambassador to one of the Caribbean nations but that didn't work out for him so he got Rwanda.

*Q: Well, so you left him there?*

WEINLAND: I left him there, the day after he presented his credentials to President Habyarimana.

**JOHN EDWIN UPSTON**  
**Ambassador**  
**Rwanda (1985-1987)**

*John Edwin Upston was born in Virginia and graduated from Stanford University in 1958. He began to work for the State Department in 1964. He served as Coordinator of Caribbean Affairs and served as an ambassador to Rwanda. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988.*

*Q: Mr. Ambassador, We'd better move to your time as appointment to Rwanda. How did this come about?*

UPSTON: To be perfectly frank with you, I had always hoped that I could close out my State Department career as a United States Ambassador to one of the Caribbean countries which I knew so well. So it was a bit of a surprise when I received a telephone call and asked to come over to White House personnel and offered the job of United States Ambassador to Rwanda. I made the point that I was not an African expert, although early in my career as I had mentioned to you, I had covered West Africa on the Management Planning Staff. But my name was well known as a architect of the Reagan administration Caribbean Basin initiative. I had worked throughout the Caribbean with my private organization, the Caribbeana Council, and I don't speak French and going to a Francophone country in the middle of Africa didn't seem to make any sense to me. I have worked actively with commonwealth countries, and I said that if I was going to go to Africa it seemed to me to make the most sense to go to a former commonwealth country where English is the language and where I could use my knowledge of independent former members of the British Commonwealth.

But they took the position that, you know, this was something they'd been able to get the State Department to agree to and that this was it and that maybe down the road there might be other opportunities but they couldn't promise anything. I remember going back and talking to Bill Middendorf, Ambassador Middendorf, who was then the U.S. representative to the Organization of American States. And he said, "John, there's one bit of advice I can give you having been in this business for a long time." He said, "On these ambassadorial appointments, they are all very competitive and the elevator only stops once."

Now, I was in a bit of a difficult kind of a position because the White House and the political people didn't view me as a--as they call it--a pol. They viewed me as a State Department type. They looked at my resume and they said, "This isn't a politician. We don't really owe him anything. He hasn't delivered any precincts or votes. He's not a major contributor. There's no

payoff here. And look at his resume. He's a State Department type. They've given him the Superior Honor Award." And so that was the general way in which I was perceived.

The State Department said, "Well, he's been around here since 1964 off and on, but he's a political. Jesse Helms takes his telephone calls." And there was a very real resistance. So I took the position which I continue to take, not for myself anymore because I'm retired from this process but for others, is we need to have a cadre of people with in and out experience, who can not be a threat to the Foreign Service but who can strengthen the Foreign Service. And rather than bringing in people who are really neophytes in the international field, we need more people who have a combination of experience in the private sector as well as within the State Department.

*Q: There's a sort of a feeling of looking back with some nostalgia to the 40s, the 50s--*

UPSTON: That's correct.

*Q: --early 60s when people were coming in and out and their political coloration was not really very important.*

UPSTON: That's true, and this has all changed. This has all changed dramatically.

So I analyzed the whole situation and came to the conclusion that if I wanted to end my State Department experience with the rank and title of Ambassador that I'd better grab this thing while I could. So that's an honest answer to how I became--

*Q: I wanted to see how this appointment process works. But now when you went out there, did you go out with any goal, instructions? All of a sudden Rwanda appears on your radar. What are you going to do about Rwanda before, sort of your mind set before you went out?*

UPSTON: First of all, Rwanda is a very, very friendly country as far as the United States is concerned. There are no big political issues. Rwanda is strategically important to the United States because it is right next to Zaire. It's right next to Uganda where there has been a war going on. It's next to Tanzania, and it is also a neighbor of Burundi. The President of Rwanda, Habyarimana, is a very moderate person with a great deal of influence within Francophone Africa and the Organization of African Unity. As you know there is tribal tension between the Hutu and the Tutsi. In Burundi this could be a real problem with a Tutsi government and a Hutu majority. In Rwanda - Habyarimana has worked successfully toward tribal reconciliation.

So even though there aren't any really burning political issues there, it is strategically important because of its location and because of the influence of the Chief of State with other Francophone countries and in general within Africa. There are a number of Ambassadors there I think for the same reason. The Soviets have a substantial embassy. The Libyans, Cubans, North Koreans, and then, of course, as one would suspect the Federal Republic of Germany and Belgium. There's a Canadian Ambassador and then, of course, the African countries, Kenya and Uganda and Tanzania. So there is a substantial diplomatic community.

My objectives were, number one, to maintain the good relations that have traditionally existed between our two countries, to use this rather large diplomatic community to try to get a feeling of how other countries viewed that part of Africa, not just Rwanda but a regional nature. I wanted, which I did, to strengthen the USAID program and private voluntary organizations, particularly AFRICARE which is there and also CARE and appropriate technology, international and other private sector development-oriented things.

I had as an objective when I first got there to establish a viable Peace Corps program, which I did. But it was a bit constrained and confining, because there was just so much that one could do. It's the type of a posting really which should be no more than a year and a half or two years because you simply run out of things that you can accomplish in an innovative way.

*Q: How big was your staff?*

UPSTON: Staff was very good. I recruited my own DCM, which is something that I think all ambassadors should do. I was given a whole list of people and I basically rejected them all and then went out and found Jan DeWilde, who interestingly enough had been in charge of the UNESCO liaison office at the American Embassy in Paris. And I had a very fine young economic-political officer, Karl Hoffman, who I built up and moved along.

It was a very, very small embassy which didn't provide many management challenges, but on the other hand in an isolated hardship post everybody pulls together and sort of functions as a team and as a family. And then there was a substantial AID mission with an AID mission director named Emerson Maleuan who was of the old school in terms of the country team in that he did everything through the Ambassador and wasn't going off independently and doing things on his own. And then, of course, as ambassadors do in developing countries, I had the ambassador's fund which enabled me to do some creative things to help at the community level.

*Q: How did you deal with the government of Rwanda? I mean you as the Ambassador. How would you--*

UPSTON: The President is a rather aloof person in some respects, and so most of the work of ambassadors was through the foreign ministry. We did see the President frequently at ceremonial events. He invited my wife Christina and me for cocktails a couple of times. He invited us to attend a family, a private family celebration marking their 20th wedding anniversary. And we were invited really not as the American Ambassador and his wife but in our personal capacity.

But most of the day to day work was through the Foreign Minister or a former Rwandan ambassador and sort of the foreign policy person within the presidency. He would be analogous to the head of the National Security Council staff. So even though it was a small country, there was not the day to day kind of communication with the President. We did have a very good, in addition to some of the things I have mentioned, we did have a very good military assistance program which was largely in the area of military education and training, which we did in cooperation with the European command in Stuttgart. And they came down with some frequency for educational types of training exercise.

*Q: Did we leave matters pretty much in the hands of the Belgians for many of the--give them the initiative because of their role there for so long?*

UPSTON: Yes, and I think that's still the case, because with the problems that the United States has had in recent years and the cut backs in terms of USAID programs the emphasis has been on countries of a very real strategic nature so that you see a lot of attention being given to places like Chad where there has actually been a war, where there's been some Libyan influence. You see a great deal of attention given to countries like Liberia where we have the Voice of America facility and where there are some national security interests and then, of course, the countries down toward the south that are closer to South Africa. But countries in Africa where everything is going along fairly well there has not been a desire to raise expectations because there just is not the strategic justification for heavy expenditures of money.

So for a country like Rwanda we really have done pretty well in attracting private voluntary organizations and have a good AID program, a good USIA program and holding the line. It's a place to practice what I've always called preventive diplomacy.

*Q: Finally, Mr. Ambassador, what was the most unusual thing that happened to you in Rwanda?*

UPSTON: One Sunday night the bells went off and we knew an immediate urgent communication had come in from the Department. Jan DeWilde woke up the communications officer and they went to the Embassy to find out what it was. While they were gone the Operations Center called from the Department. In those day it was hard to get overseas calls in or out. The Ops Center asked me to "take the matter seriously" and keep in close touch. I had been targeted to be kidnapped by a Libyan terrorist group. In fact the U.S. Ambassador in Africa who was to be kidnapped mentioned by President Reagan as one of the justifications for the raid on Libya. That was me. It was an exciting week and a saga of intrigue. I'm here to tell the story. This is a job not without danger. My great friend Cleo Noel did not come back from Khartoum, Sudan. Believe me, I thought about that a lot.

Also the whole Dian Fossey (American naturalist who lived with the mountain gorillas in Rwanda) - her life and murder is a story unto itself.

*Q: What was your greatest memory you would like to forget?*

UPSTON: The trouble - beyond solution - health problems. Aids - polio - malaria - TB; giving burial money to members of the Residence staff for young children who had died from malaria and other illnesses. Going as I did so many times to schools in isolated - upcountry - parts of Rwanda and seeing smiling faces of young people who will not live to maturity.

*Q: Positive memory?*

UPSTON: The physical beauty of the country of Rwanda and its people. The dignity in poverty. Hard work. Effective subsistence farming. The effectiveness of the Government in a national spirit and development. The way these people and government cope with problems with great grace.



Q: *Greatest satisfaction?*

UPSTON: Holding the line. Establishing a Peace Corps. Hopefully strengthening the U.S. programs and influence. Meeting with people at all levels all over the country in even the most remote areas. Helping to advance the careers of those who worked with me. Pride in the great work my wife Cristina did. Coming home!

Q: *You left after a relatively short time there. Was this just enough was enough of--*

UPSTON: It was enough is enough, over a year and a half is a long time to be in a hardship post away from children and family. I had done everything that I could do. I'm not interested in basically biding my time. I could have stayed there another six months or another year and not really done anything more than I had already accomplished. I'd achieved my goals. I frankly was not comfortable in a Francophone country. It was just not my bailiwick. It's very isolated, insulated, and I just felt that I looked upon my career as culminating with being Ambassador to Rwanda but I felt that after a total of 16, 17, or whatever it was, years that now was the time for me to get back into private life and to really start doing things for my family and for my future. It wasn't simply Rwanda. I just felt that this was a time for me to leave government service, and I felt and I am finding this to be true that as an Ambassador there are opportunities to serve in a private capacity perhaps more creatively than one can within the constraints of a bureaucracy.

**LEONARD SPEARMAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Rwanda (1988-1990)**

*Ambassador Spearman was professor at a number of colleges and universities in the US before becoming President of Southern University and, subsequently, President of Texas Southern University. Following a number presidential appointments to several international organizations and conferences, he was named Ambassador to Rwanda, where he served from 1988 to 1990. The following year he was named Ambassador to Lesotho, where he served until 1993. He continued his academic career as Distinguished Professor at Coppin State College. Ambassador Spearman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.*

Q: *Anyway, so you were sworn in as Ambassador to Rwanda when, in 1981?*

SPEARMAN: No, 1988, spring of 1988.

Q: *And when did you get there?*

SPEARMAN: April. Prior to going now, the entire family went to the White House. One of our colleagues said to me, the only advantage that we non-career ambassadors have is that we get an

invitation to visit with the President and get cuff links while you guys spend all of your time studying to be ambassadors and you have to go straight to post. But the non-career ambassadors are invited, and so my wife and my three children all walked in, and President Reagan greeted us. An absolutely fantastic memory, the man's abilities and training from the movies, plus his own natural instincts are unbelievable. He greeted us as if we all went to college together, and with individual names and the warmth that was so evident of Reagan. But, yes, I arrived at post and I left -- departed for Kigali and arrived in early April 1988.

*Q: This is 1988?*

SPEARMAN: Yes.

*Q: Had the troubles in Rwanda begun by then?*

SPEARMAN: No. They started shortly afterwards. For the first year and a half or so, outside of some conflicts that had occurred between the Burundi Tutsi and Hutu, which left -- shortly after I arrived, there was an insurrection in Burundi, and that put about 100,000 people in refugee camps, and we had to address that matter immediately. And now this experience in the Foreign Service Institute becomes very important because the Germans, the French, the British, all of us were working together to try to address some very critical problems that occurred.

Well, actually they began in September of '89. An interesting anecdote on that, without boring you, is that President Habyarimana and I were both in Washington at the Grand Hotel, and there was a reception in his honor by the Rwandan citizens and the embassy here. During the course of the evening, Irving Hicks, who had served as ambassador on two different occasions and was Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, walked up to me and quietly passed me a note and said, "Go home, your country is at war."

I was absolutely flabbergasted. While there were many telltale signs that the conflict was brewing, I don't think any of us expected it at this point. The next morning, of course, I departed on Air France, we kind of bypassed the Fly American rule, and I flew Air France to get the connection and go straight to Kigali.

But it didn't work out that way. When we got in Paris, we were joined by of course the Libyan ambassador, the foreign minister, the French ambassador. All of us were trying to speedily return to troubled Rwanda. We got to Nairobi, and Air France took us to Bujumbura, and I had to spend the night with Ambassador Cynthia Perry.

The next morning the Belgians flew a flight over and picked about 15 of us up who were virtually stranded. I mean, here we were generals without troops, separated from our troops and our families. So after a path was cleared, we were able to land successfully in Rwanda to discover that the Tutsi rebellion had marched into Rwanda from Uganda.

*Q: You spoke of telltale signs, what were the telltale signs?*

SPEARMAN: Well, there was a considerable amount of unrest among the Tutsis. The Tutsis in Rwanda are indeed, were at that time indeed well trained, well educated, but were really afforded second class citizenship.

There were two major telltale signs. The first, the Soviet ambassador, Ambassador Sakharov, asked me to come to his residence one day where he presented me with photographs of the unloading of semi-armored vehicles at Entebbe which were all pointed south. The Ugandan explanation for this was that it was in preparation of the summer bivouac. The Rwandan government under Habyarimana had very little confidence in the Ugandan government, so Foreign Minister Bizimungu approached me and told me that there was really evidence that there was going to be an attack.

*Q: When was this approximately?*

SPEARMAN: Oh, these events were occurring from February through September of '89.

*Q: This is of '89?*

SPEARMAN: Of 1989. I can recall vividly him asking me whether I would intercede on his behalf to ask President Bush if we would send a Stealth plane over to monitor. And I said while there is a very strong Texas connection between President Bush and Leonard Spearman, it is unlikely that I would be able to do that.

But what he was doing was appealing for help at that point. They were aware of the military power of the --

*Q: "He" is the --*

SPEARMAN: He, meaning Foreign Minister Bizimungu.

A third signal was my wife and I were invited to a private party at one of the President's homes away from Kigali. There were only three people present, the President, the Foreign Minister, and me, and our wives, of course. During the course of that evening, the President expressed grave concern about several things: one, the brewing pressure of democratization on him to create a multi-party system; two, the growing concern about the Tutsi rebellion which was stirring in southern Uganda; and, three, a very real concern that the United Nations had not responded positively to eliminate much of the pressure and suffering of the Tutsis who were in refugee status in Uganda.

It was interesting because -- let's take the first one, the growing pressure of democratization. President Habyarimana was reeling under very real pressure on both sides. The West was saying create multi-party systems, create democracy, eliminate the green cards, and open the society.

*Q: Green cards?*

SPEARMAN: I use green cards here to mean identification cards. "I am a Tutsi and I carry my card" kind of thing.

On the other hand, his hardliners were saying, can't you remember? Don't you know who these Tutsis are? These are the same people who 50 years ago kept us in bondage and kept us suppressed and kept us on our knees and told us that we were farmers and told us that we were nothing, if anything, and they were the sons and daughters of kings and queens. So here was this dynamic president saying, I really want to respond to the West because I need your bilateral support in the sense of aid to our country, but on the other hand, I do know that these hardliners are telling me that the Tutsis are going to take us over. Well, he was nervous, he was not sure even of Museveni's role.

*Q: Museveni?*

SPEARMAN: The President of Uganda. President Habyarimana was a man on a hot wire. Every move he made to accommodate the West and democracy was interpreted as a weakness on the part of his own hardliners. So the Arusha Conference became an absolute disaster for him because he was thinking, "I don't know where to go."

I think this is the part of the thing, Ambassador Palmer, that fuels the speculation of who killed him. I mean, who shot the plane down? Was it his hardliners who said he's going too far, he's giving away the store? Was it the Tutsis who said we have got to do something? I think I grew up diplomatically during these discussions and during these crises that occurred as to the kind of philosophical, moral pressures that were operating in the society.

So there are those who say that Habyarimana was a benign military, not the --

*Q: Benign authoritarian?*

SPEARMAN: Benign authoritarian is the more appropriate expression. Well, surely enough, the conflict did surface. The Soviets had alerted me, the Soviets were -- I don't think that they thought that they would be involved in it. I felt that they were simply saying, this is a western problem, and I don't know how to go to the Belgians and the French on this, and in a sense, I thought Sakharov was reading us as his closet ally to say something is going on over there and you guys are better equipped to get into it because our role here is limited. We train mathematicians and physicists and engineers, but we don't want to get involved in the dirty linen of armed rebellion.

*Q: That's worth reflecting on just for a second, the fact that by the late '80s, the Russians had had their fingers burned here and there in many places in Africa, and I just don't recall that they had a particular policy. They were dragged into Angola, as it were, by the Cubans.*

*In any event, I think history would welcome your insights on how this boiling anger erupted. What was behind it? You said before that the Tutsis had this memory of being kings and queens and the Hutus of being serfs, of being servants.*

SPEARMAN: Well, without pretending to be a Rwandan scholar, there are certain -- there were certain exposures and certain information that I was privy to. If you look at the society prior to 1900, the Germans were present. The hierarchy -- there was a balance here. The Tutsis said, we will provide cattle and military support, and you provide us with grain, and we'll try to get along.

*Q: "You" being the Hutu?*

SPEARMAN: Yes, you meaning the Hutu, and we'll try and get along. The Germans, of course, came in, and stayed until roughly 1915, and they began to paint the Tutsi as a superior group. Anthropologically, they had the thin lips, tall, the thin noses, as opposed to the squatty, short anthropological or anthropometrical types.

*Q: The Bantu?*

SPEARMAN: The Bantu groups. And so the Germans orchestrated this in a way in which there was this three-tier caste system. We're at the top, the Tutsis are here. And so the Belgians, who reluctantly accepted this trust territory, said, hey, if it's working for the Germans, let's maintain the same system. So the Hutus worked their backs to the bone to provide corn and vegetables and fresh fruit which were really taken off the top through their Tutsi representatives.

*Q: Was it a feudal system?*

SPEARMAN: It was clearly a feudal system. Some people claimed that the introduction of money contaminated the system completely, that it was a feudal system, but it was a feudal system based on mutual jobs rather than the presence of wealth per se. But when wealth and dollars, when francs got into the picture, the system of course became more and more corrupted.

In 1955, '56, '57, the Hutus appealed to the Belgians for equality and equal treatment. The Tutsis rejected their request and said that they were the sons of kings and queens and these were squatters and peasants and were condemned forever to toil the soil. After two or three years of attempted negotiation, the Hutus struck back.

*Q: This is 1960?*

SPEARMAN: This is 1957 through 1960, and please forgive me on my times, but this is in the late '50s. They struck back with machetes, and because they constitute 85 percent of the population, they virtually decimated the Tutsi population, driving them into Tanzania, to southern Uganda, to Zaire, and some fled into Burundi. At this particular point, the military role of the Hutu became more and more confident and ultimately took over the government.

*Q: This is the early '60s?*

SPEARMAN: This is the early '60s. Habyarimana, I believe, was the second elected president of Rwanda. Kayibanda was the first one, the airport in Kigali is named after him. And so there was always this uneasy peace. "We in Uganda are truly Rwandans, we are coming home one day. We want to come home."

On the other hand, Rwanda, the size of the State of Maryland, 7.4 million people, growing at an extraordinary rate of 5 to 6 percent a year --

*Q: Five to 6 percent a year?*

SPEARMAN: Yes. -- is saying what are they coming home to, what are they coming home for? Why doesn't the Ugandan government... Well, at first the Ugandans had welcomed them because Idi Amin and the others had capitalized on this tremendous brain power and prowess of the Tutsi warriors and military leaders. They were excellent teachers, they were good businessmen, and things of that sort. But now the Ugandans --

*Q: What is the period here, is it the 1960s?*

SPEARMAN: We're in the '70s now. The Ugandans apparently were growing a little weary that their refugees had remained a long period of time. So they probably were under great pressure to rid themselves. I would not be surprised that they were under some pressure to say that these people are taking our jobs, we want them to go home. They are really Rwandans. And Habyarimana is saying, no, I don't want you back because we are fearful of the retribution and the skill that the Tutsis have, and we are doing pretty well here, we've got a nice peaceful society, and everybody is in place.

*Q: I just find that note, a nice peaceful society, what is very difficult to make sense of is the violence, is the hatred, is the extent to which the Hutus really apparently tried to eliminate, took genocidal action against the Tutsis. How do you explain that?*

SPEARMAN: Well, I think you have to put both countries together. I think you have to put Burundi and Rwanda together. I think you have to ask yourself, here are two mirror countries, Burundi at the south, Rwanda to the north. In the south, the Tutsis were the dominant military power and the dominant power. Even though they were only 15 percent of the population, they controlled 85 percent of the Hutus in Burundi. Now, right across the border, this is a split territory, here is Rwanda, it's 85 percent Hutu, but now we are on top and the 15 percent --

*Q: "We" being the Hutus?*

SPEARMAN: We being the Hutus. We do not want that to occur to us. We are refusing to go back to a system in which 15 percent of the people up here will control us again. So there was this fierceness, there is this hatred, even though there had been intermarriages, and anthropologically you could not tell in many instances the Hutu from the Tutsi, but they knew.

Now secondly, it's very difficult for us to see as Americans the closeness with which seven million people live in an area the size of the State of Maryland, which means that there is no place that you can turn that there are not people, even though as you travel along the highway you say to yourself, there is nobody here, stop, just stop, get out of your car, and then 50 people will be there before you know it.

I turned over in a vehicle on my way to a golf course on a slick, sandy road. It appeared that before the roof could touch the ground, they had turned the car back over. It didn't occur that rapidly, but the point is, it was almost as if a wrecker, but it was a human group of men who said, ah, and I knew just enough Kinyarwanda to say I'm in trouble, and the car was flipped over. But there was no one as I turned that curve. That's the point I'm making.

*Q: Well, this is an important point. The effect of demographic pressure, population density, and that thing where sometimes as in animal experiments you have species biting, fighting, killing each other.*

SPEARMAN: Well, listen, here in the United States, an increase in violence occurs as you decrease the amount of space. What we have got here are people who are here together, who are afraid. The radio is the primary means of communication. Now a few zealots get on the line and say these Tutsis are coming back, you must destroy them. These cockroaches -- is the proper term for which they used to refer to them -- these cockroaches will take us over, they will maim our children and so forth. You must destroy them. If I repeat this on the radio village by village by village, and I have got this tremendous, as you point out, demographic issue of population density, how long does it take a group of 25 Hutu to destroy with machetes and stones an entire village of helpless people? The answer is it doesn't take very long.

*Q: Well, we're going to pass on now to your next post. But I want to just reflect on the fact that we have just seen, as it were, tribal violence in Kosovo, we saw it earlier in Bosnia, and it's useful to remember that these types of killings have taken place here in North America, specifically vis-à-vis the Indians. Unfortunately it is a part of our inheritance, not to mention the 30 Years War and what happened in that period.*

*So you left Rwanda in December 1990?*

SPEARMAN: I left Rwanda in December. I came back for confirmation hearings.

**JOYCE E. LEADER**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Kigali (1991-1994)**

*Ambassador Leader was born in Pennsylvania and raised in Ohio. He was educated at Dennison University, the University of Chicago, and the Columbia University School of Journalism. After work in the private sector and with the US Department of Education, he joined the Peace Corps, serving in Kinshasa and at headquarters in Washington. Joining the State Department in 1982 he began his career in which he was to deal primarily with African concerns, both in Washington and abroad. His foreign postings include Kinshasa, Ouagadougou, Lagos and Marseilles. In 1999 he was appointed Ambassador to Guinea, where he served until 2000. Ambassador Leader was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003*

*Q: What was the situation in Rwanda when you got there in 1991?*

LEADER: Rwanda was at a very exciting point in its history. The president had been in absolute control of the country since 1973 when he made a coup against the first president. This would be nearly 20 years later. He had declared that the political process would be open, parties could form, there would be a new constitution, a prime minister would be appointed, and there would be power sharing in the government. It was a very exciting time. It was all in the context of the French President Mitterrand's declaration at Baulay, where they had a Francophone summit and he had urged the Francophone governments in Africa to turn toward democracy. This was a kind of response to that more than it was to any of our interests in democratization, but we certainly were supportive of this move. Shortly after I arrived in Rwanda, the ambassador asked me to join him at lunch with two of the leaders of one of the political parties. He was very involved in this whole political process, advising the parties, responding to them when they had questions, trying to keep everybody moving forward when they felt they were getting blocked or bad things were happening between them and the government or there were disagreements. He kept trying to push them to resolve differences and to keep moving forward in this process toward elections to create an elected government. But in the meantime there was to be a multiparty government formed, bringing the opposition into the government. This opening was happening in the political front. Human rights organizations were being formed which we supported. On the journalism front, we were involved through then USIS in supporting journalists to be responsible in their opposition or in their criticism, not just to simply throw around critique but to have a basis to report what was really happening. U.S. policy supported all of these different openings in the society and as an embassy we were very supportive.

*Q: How stood Hutu-Tutsi relations?*

LEADER: About 15% of the population was Tutsi. But the government, what military, what police there were, the security services were all monopolized by the Hutu. There were quota systems for access to education. If you were a Tutsi, only 15% of the Tutsi were going to get to go to university, or have access to primary school. So the main avenues open to Tutsi were either business – and there were some very successful Tutsi businessmen – or the church. The church had a larger percentage of Tutsi than was reflected by the size of the population. They were about 40% of the church, the priests and so forth. People got along. Rwanda doesn't have a lot of towns or villages. It's called the Land of a Thousand Hills. People live on hills. Your community is your hill. But on these hills, there were both Hutu and Tutsi living together. In the towns there were Hutu and Tutsi living together. There weren't visible animosities but there were under the surface suspicions. The Hutus in positions of power would say to me, "The Tutsi are smarter than we are. We can't trust them. They will take over." They didn't feel comfortable. People told me that their parents told them they should never take food from a stranger or from even their neighbors because it might be poisoned. There was a lot of suspicion. Even the language had a lot of this... I never learned to speak Kinyarwanda. It's a very difficult language. But the translation of the phrase to express "Have a good night" or "Sleep well" was something like "Sleep well and make sure that your enemies don't attack you." It's built into the society that there are enemies. Then the government did use the radio to build up the idea that the Tutsis who were attacking the country were evil people and that the Tutsis who lived inside the country were



obviously supportive of them. This was not necessarily the case. The Tutsis inside the country didn't necessarily support a war against the government, and especially now that there was this opening of the political process, they had a sense that they could achieve some of their goals in the political transformation of the country by peaceful means and they weren't necessarily supportive of the RPF. But they were all lumped together. In the year before I got there, 8,000 Tutsis had been simply rounded up and arrested and held in prison for up to six months because they were considered to be accomplices of the rebels. It was just assumed that if they were Tutsi then they were part of the rebel network. This wasn't the case. Part of that is evident now in Rwanda where there is a kind of a split between the Tutsis who have returned from exile after they took control of the government and those who stayed throughout and never were in exile. They don't see eye to eye and they don't trust each other. There is a lot of mistrust.

*Q: Where stood the military side? Were the rebels inside Rwanda?*

LEADER: Most of the fighting was at the border. It didn't have a big impact on life in Kigali at all. Most of the cities and the towns of the country were not particularly affected by the war. It was taking place in rural areas along the northern border between Uganda and Rwanda. The military pushed back the initial thrust and the rebels had to cross back into Uganda. Then they sent mortars across the border and troops into the country and they would attack some of the social services like hospitals, schools, things like this. They were reputedly taking some people captive and pressing them into service. It was somewhat reminiscent of what was going on in Mozambique and RENAMO (Mozambican National resistance). That was another big refugee situation when I was in Geneva, the Mozambican one. So there was fighting going on and there were wounded soldiers being brought back from the front. We knew this because helicopters would bring them back at night and you would hear stories about that. There was real fighting going on. And there was a considerable number of displaced people. The government cleared out everybody within five miles of the border, just took them out of that area. There were others who were subject to attacks. There were camps set up in a certain part of the north. ICRC was helping to provide food and shelter and water for these people. I was able to visit some of these camps. It was mostly ICRC. UNHCR was not particularly in there at that time. UNHCR was in the country and had been working out a solution to return the refugees which the government accepted. All of this plays into what was the timing of this rebel effort. It seemed that the democratization process was going to give the Tutsis a role but not necessarily the role that they wanted. If you're a minority, then you're not going to necessarily be in control. So there was some speculation that because the refugees were now allowed to come back and the democratization was going to give them a bigger role in the government, they had to make their move because otherwise they would not have the kind of bargaining position they wanted.

*Q: What were we doing? How were you being used?*

LEADER: Well, in addition to being the DCM and seconding the ambassador in what he was doing and managing the embassy and trying to liaison with USIS and with AID and so forth, I was particularly following the human rights situation and the other civil society development that was going on.

*Q: Were you able to get out and around?*

LEADER: I didn't get out much, but I had a good friend who was with CARE who would periodically invite me to come along with her. I did go out with her to a number of places to see the problems that the war was posing – the refugee camps, the impact that they had on the environment. They just stripped forests bare to build their huts. I got around the country mostly to see refugee situations.

*Q: Was there much interest in Washington?*

LEADER: The interest went as far as the Assistant Secretary for Africa. Ambassador Cohen had come to Burundi when I was still in Geneva in the spring. He came out and had a conference with ambassadors from those countries to talk about what a solution might look like. I had been called down from Geneva to attend that conference as well and provide the refugee perspective. So he was interested in it from the start. His thrust was conflict resolution in a number of places on the continent. Washington was a bit more involved in some of the conflict resolution aspects of it where it was actually dealing with the rebels. We in the embassy at this time didn't have contact with the RPF. The RPF was up in Uganda and so people would go from Washington to Uganda and talk to them or they would meet in some secret meetings in Zimbabwe or something. Oftentimes, I wasn't even aware that some of these meetings were going on. We didn't see highly classified intelligence in Rwanda because we had no Marines. We didn't see highly classified communications of the Department. In some ways, we weren't holding all the cards in the embassy.

*Q: Were the Libyans messing around there?*

LEADER: Not in Rwanda. There was a small Muslim community in Rwanda and they did have pretensions of an Islamic political party but their connections were predominantly with Saudi Arabia, not with Libya. There was some Libyan activity in Uganda at the time but the RPF was predominantly Christian. Christianity was very strong in Rwanda. It was strong among the refugees as well. Islam was not a big force.

*Q: How about missionaries? Did you get involved with them?*

LEADER: The American missionaries were definitely part of our constituency. I myself didn't have that much contact with them. Their contact with the embassy was more through either the ambassador or a consular officer who was keeping track. He initially – she later – ran the network of American citizens. We had a radio network inside the embassy community and then we had one for Americans who were outside the official community. We had to keep the same information flowing in both networks. But we did have contact with the missionaries quite considerably. We kept in touch with some of the particularly sensitive places.

*Q: I was wondering if they were a good source to let you know what was happening.*

LEADER: Maybe they were in that kind of contact with the ambassador. Once the genocide started, I was definitely talking with some of the ones who were calling in and telling us what

was going on around the country. They did from time to time let us know what was happening. They were a good source.

*Q: Did you sense when you got there there was concern that you all might go through another Hutu-Tutsi genocide?*

LEADER: Throughout the three years that I was there, mini massacres were happening. No massacre should be minimized by the word “mini,” but I say that because in comparison to what happened in 1994, these were killings that went on that were geographically isolated or restricted. They didn’t spread. Maybe 300 people would be killed. It was always 300 people. Then it would stop. Nobody would ever know quite why it started, who started it, what was the impetus, and so on. These things would flare up in different places. Then they would go away. The government would blame it on the RPF, who would blame it on the government. There was a lot of insecurity at the time, too, because bombs were exploding in marketplaces and on busses. Land mines were run over by trucks on roads. So, who was doing all of this was never quite clear. There was never any accountability. Nobody was ever found responsible for this insecurity and for these massacres. In some of the massacres, I have to say that it didn’t seem all that unclear to us that the government or people close to the government were serving as agents provocateurs. The first massacre that happened when I was there was south of the capital in an area where there were a good number of Tutsis who had been resettled from other parts of the country some years back. There were indications that people were going around and saying that the Tutsis were going to kill them, so they had to defend themselves and act before the Tutsis did that. That was usually the line that was taken, that if you don’t kill the Tutsis, they’re going to kill you. It was this kind of fear that prompted people to pick up their machetes and execute their neighbors.

But did we think that this was going to escalate into something worse? I guess we were maybe naive but I don’t think my mind could imagine such a thing. It just couldn’t fathom that that would take place. We did at the embassy keep our focus on the positive developments, what we thought were positive developments, in terms of the peace process and democratization, strengthening the political parties, helping to facilitate the negotiations between the rebels and the government when that got started. I was actually sent as one of the U.S. observers to Arusha. I was expecting to go and be there for a short time and sort of oversee the negotiations on the refugee situation. As it happened, I got there when they were still discussing the military integration of the army, integration of the gendarmerie, and that went on and on and on. So I was there from April through June. The refugee matter was taken up in the middle of that and took about five days.

*Q: How did the explosion happen?*

LEADER: The peace negotiations had come up with agreements that did not satisfy the hardliners in the president’s entourage. Some of the hardliners broke away and formed a hardline party. But that party was not necessarily the only center of right-wing hardline opposition to the president’s position. There was some of this opposition around him. They blamed the negotiated settlements of political power sharing for reducing the Hutu who had been in power to a minority position. In the settlement, the Hutu in power were getting the same amount of representation as the rebel Tutsis. Between those two blocks, there were the opposition parties who were getting

positions in the government. So, the assumption was that all of the opposition parties would join with the rebel Tutsis and make a bloc which would be able to outvote, outmaneuver, outdo anything that the majority would want to implement. They would not be able to influence the decision-making. The positions were assigned by political parties and most of the political parties were opposition political parties. So, the strategy of the government was to split those political parties so that they wouldn't all go toward the Tutsi side and eliminate the opposition and try to woo them back to the government's Hutu majority side. They were being quite successful at that. As the peace process concluded and the agreement was finally signed by the president, the political parties were in shambles. They could not identify people to take seats in the new legislative assembly, to take positions in the government, because they were split and this faction would want these people and that faction would want other people. So implementation of the peace accord was delayed and delayed and delayed because of this.

Meantime, plans were underway for a more radical solution that was totally outside this process. The more the obstacles to implementation were overcome, the more the violence increased in the society. The peace accord was signed in August. The UN peacekeepers arrived in October/November. There was considerable violence around that time.

I should just back up a little bit. There was something else that happened not even in Rwanda. It happened in Burundi. Burundi was always run by the Tutsi minority. What happened in June when the peace negotiations were still going on was that Burundi had an election and the first Hutu president was elected. So a Hutu president takes over in Burundi. This scares the Tutsis a little bit because they see this kind of an alliance between these two countries as being detrimental to their cause. But then in October, six months later, after the peace accord was signed-

*Q: This was when?*

LEADER: 1993. The Hutu president of Burundi is assassinated by the Tutsi military. So the Rwandans who have been seeing this chaos in the political parties in Rwanda have more ammunition. They say, "Look what happens when... The Tutsis can't be trusted to participate in power sharing. They have killed the president." And massacres were also occurring. Bodies were floating down the river into Rwanda. It was most gruesome. So this provided more ammunition to try to woo Rwandan Hutus who had been in the opposition to Habyarimana and his government back into the fold and the fold was getting stronger and more radical and more "Hutu power" they called it. They called it the "power wings of the parties." Hutu power was getting stronger and stronger and stronger. The moderates who had been in these opposition political parties were being forced to choose. Were you going over to the RPF side or were you going to be with the Hutu power? The polarization of the society was increasing. Violence was increasing. Weapons were getting distributed to communities on the grounds that they needed to be able to defend themselves. Even though there was a political solution, a negotiated peace settlement, the radio was still talking about the enemy, who were the Tutsis, and they weren't just the ones coming back from outside, they were still linking those who were inside to those who had come in from the outside. They were getting close to feeling that they were going to be able to name this new multiparty integrated government and there were even 600 rebel troops that came into Kigali and the Counsel for National Development, the legislature, became their

barracks. They had a hotel attached to the counsel room. This hotel, which was empty, was given over to them. It was on one of the highest hills in Kigali and everybody felt very nervous about this, all the Hutus. So, instead of leading to better relations between the ethnic groups, it seems as if the peace settlement was exacerbating the conflict and polarizing the society. The moderates that the embassy had been counting on to be able to bring sanity and reason to this kind of mistrust and so forth was disintegrating. They had never had a strong leader and they were just disintegrating. So, then some group or another made the decision to shoot down the president's plane when he was returning from a conference in Tanzania where the Tanzanians were putting a lot of pressure on the president to resolve the last remaining hurdle and get on with implementing this new government and the peace accord. He had agreed at the conference to do that. I think the people who did not want that to ever happen made sure that he wasn't going to be able to lead that implementation.

*Q: Who shot him down?*

LEADER: That's never been determined.

*Q: What were we doing at the time? Were we watching this build up?*

LEADER: The ambassador was involved on a 24-hour seven-day basis in trying to get all sides to the point where they could implement the peace process. We were supporting implementation with all our effort and all of our resources. That was our major goal at the time. I was continuing to keep contact with the civil society folks and the human rights folks and journalists and other people in the society and participants in the political parties and so forth.

At this time also, an independent radio station started up. It was called RTL, or the Radio Television Libre Mille Collines, Free Thousand Hills. It was started up by Hutu hardliners. It was broadcasting a lot of propaganda against the journalists, against the human rights advocates, against the people who had negotiated the settlement, and against the enemy (the Tutsis). We were talking to the government about trying to rein this group in, which we now called hate radio. They simply said, "Well, it's a free country and it's a free radio and the government has nothing to do with it and we have no control over it." It was a very, very difficult situation. A few weeks before the president's plane was shot down, a political party leader was assassinated outside of his home. For the first time, one of these "mini massacres" happened in Kigali. The people who brought the fear and the terror to the people of the capital for the second time (a year earlier the Tutsis had broken the cease-fire and almost captured the capital), at this point, they were very scared about massacres spreading.

*Q: Was the embassy at this point or for some time on the alert that all hell might break loose and we'd better make plans?*

LEADER: We had gone to evacuation a year earlier when the rebels had almost captured Kigali but for the intervention of the French. People had come back three months later. We continued our weekly security briefings of the community. We were keeping people very well informed about what was going on and what the risks were. But at that particular point in time, we weren't anticipating having to flee or there being a big eruption. Between the time that this political party

leader was assassinated in February and April when the plane of the president was shot down, we had several high level visitors from Washington again putting pressure on the government to resolve the obstacles to implementing the peace process. So we were still looking to the positive, looking to the solution, looking to the resolution, believing that once this framework for a new government was put in place, that this violence could be controlled, the dissidents would be brought in, they would see this was the only game in town and so they would come into the process. It just didn't work like that. We were totally mistaken. Of course, we knew very quickly after the plane was shot down. The next morning, I awoke to gunfire. I think others did as well. I was getting calls from 7:00 AM telling me that the political moderates who were in the opposition to President Juvenal Habyarimana and who favored the peace accord were being systematically killed. I knew there were forces going house to house in some of the Kigali neighborhoods killing Tutsis. Right off the bat we had the killing of the Hutu moderates, not just Tutsis, and also ordinary Tutsi citizens were being slaughtered. That was evident before 10:00 AM. By that afternoon, we were hearing that the RPF might start to move its forces down from the north. There were rumors that forces already in the area were breaking out of the compound they were in, but I don't know to this day if that was true. But forces did start moving down from the north. By the next day, it was clear that Kigali could become the venue not only for killing Tutsis and killing Hutu moderates, but also renewed civil war, which had not happened in Kigali up to that time. So, we decided, and Washington decided, that it would be best if we evacuated.

*Q: How about the French? They had come in before. Were we hoping for them to appear again?*

LEADER: The French had from the very beginning...

*Q: Now we're back to Rwanda. The president's plane was shot down when?*

LEADER: April 6, about 8:30 PM, 1994.

*Q: So we've reached that point before. You mentioned that there was some hope that the French might intervene. They had done so before.*

LEADER: I don't think we thought there was hope that the French would intervene. It was not our policy to support French intervention in Rwanda. There were agreements between the Rwandan government and the French and we more or less stayed clear of pronouncing one way or the other. It's true that the French had come to the rescue of the government throughout this crisis with the Tutsi RPF invaders from Uganda. This started right away after the invasion in October 1990. Both the French and the Belgians sent troops. The Belgians withdrew their troops after 30 days. It was very controversial in Belgium about coming to the aid of that government. But the French never left. Of course, they were there ostensibly to protect their citizens. There were about 600 French citizens in Rwanda, some engaged in business, others engaged with the government, and many with the military. The French had a great deal of military assistance going into Rwanda. One of the provisions of the peace accord reached between the rebels and the government that was signed in Rwanda in Arusha in August 1993 was that the French troops would withdraw. But in fact about six months prior to the agreement the French augmented their troops because the RPF broke the cease-fire and launched an assault toward Kigali that came within 20 miles of the capital. So, they augmented their forces and were manning roadblocks on

the access routes into Kigali. Yet, part of the peace agreement was that they would leave. They did this finally in December 1993. This was just weeks before the RPF brought a battalion into Kigali which was scheduled to provide protection for the Tutsi RPF members who were going to participate in the government when it got set up. But of course it never got set up, not at that point in time. So, at the time the president's plane was shot down the French had very few troops, if any, left in Rwanda. At that time, they had a base in the Central African Republic and they sent some troops down explicitly for evacuating their citizens. They provide armed escort for French people who were going from their assembly points to the airport to pick up planes that would take them to France. It was subsequent to this evacuation when the RPF had made considerable advances toward Kigali and the Hutu government that was committing the genocide was on the run that the French got permission from the UN Security Council to launch what was called Operation Turquoise. Operation Turquoise was a plan to rope off a portion of southern Rwanda which the RPF had not yet reached and use troops from Francophone African countries to provide protection for people in that zone. Of course, that made the zone a magnet for all what were subsequently called "genocidaires," the people who were committing the genocide. The French essentially became protectors of the killers. This was a contribution aimed at protecting the people from the killing that was going on, both the genocide and the civil war.

*Q: How did we view the French intervention both times? Were they playing a game that we weren't happy with?*

LEADER: The French were very hardline with the government against the RPF and against the invasion. The question is always asked, why did the French take such an interest in this small African country? After all, it wasn't a French colony; it was a Belgian colony. And how did it happen that they more or less supplanted the Belgians in terms of support for the government in place. A lot of theories have been launched. The one that's simplest and the one that seems to be most accepted is that they did not like the prospect of Rwanda possibly falling into the Anglophone orbit. The Tutsis who grew up in Uganda spoke English and they grew up in an Anglophone setting. They saw the U.S. behind the RPF. Whether or not that was true didn't seem to matter. I don't think we were providing any support to the RPF for its activities at that time. We were talking to them, but we weren't providing them any support. But the French were very suspicious of U.S. motivations, of Anglophone motivations, so they kept a very strong hold there. They were very partisan to the Habyarimana government and to many of the people who were instrumental in not only keeping it going but also to some extent promoting the concept that the Tutsis were the enemy, people like that, the anti-human rights people. The people who didn't like the prospect of the democratic change that was coming found support from the French.

*Q: Did our embassy there have many dealings with the French during this time?*

LEADER: I'm sure that in Washington there were frequent meetings between the French officials for Africa and the American Assistant Secretary for Africa. There were established periodic meetings. So that contact was consistently used. I'm sure that Rwanda was on the agenda, although we didn't necessarily see the reports of these kinds of meetings. When we were in Rwanda, we didn't have Marines and so we were unable to receive anything that was highly classified – NODIS or something like that – we would never see. But in Rwanda itself, the ambassador had very good relations with the French ambassador. I had very good relations with

the number two, the deputy. I met periodically, almost monthly, with the DCMs from both the French and the Belgian embassies. We had very cordial relations but we weren't always on the same wavelength.

*Q: As this developed, were we looking toward the government and saying, "They are promoting a genocide?" What was this doing to us?*

LEADER: We didn't see that they were promoting a genocide. We knew there was resistance to implementing the peace accord. In the six months before the genocide which came after the signing of the peace accord, our primary focus diplomatically was on removing the obstacles to implementing the peace accord. We were working very closely with the entire diplomatic community and there was a substantial African diplomatic community there. The leadership fell to the representative of the Vatican. He was the head of the diplomatic community, the nuncio. He would call the meetings and get people together. We worked with not only the French and the Belgians - the English were not there - but also with the Africans and the Tanzanians. The Tanzanians played such an important role in facilitating the peace accord and had a very prominent role in the diplomatic community. They were working with the two sides to try and bring the peace accord to fruition. Through this group we did call the government on its distribution of weapons. I was in a meeting where this happened. The nuncio said to the president, "Mr. President, this is just not odd, this distribution of weapons." The president basically avoided the question by going back to the issue of security for people in villages. He recalled that initially when the RPF had invaded, they passed out weapons to villages in the border areas but those weapons had since been retrieved. He just totally sidestepped the issue of what was happening at the moment, which was substantial. So, we never saw a genocide coming. That was just beyond our comprehension.

*Q: The genocide really blew up after the president's plane was shot down?*

LEADER: The genocide was launched after that, yes. The shooting down of the plane was the trigger that started the actions of the groups who were trained in the capital to do a very rapid and brutal killing with what they called "les armes blanche," not even guns, but machetes. In fact, in one of the stories which I don't think is a story, people were actually paying to be killed by a bullet rather than to be killed by a machete. It was horrendous. Whether the violence would have been launched by some other trigger, my feeling is, yes, it could have been a different trigger. But it just so happened that the president's plane became the trigger for launching the genocide and killing the opposition and renewing the civil war.

*Q: Were we calling for intervention? Did it happen so fast that it was really too late for intervention?*

LEADER: No, it was not too late for intervention. Immediately after the killing started our policy was to call for the killing to stop. Once the civil war was renewed we urged renewal of the cease-fire and an end to the fighting. So, it was stop the killing, stop the fighting, let's get back to talking. But at the same time, there was the issue of the UN force that was already in the capital. There were approximately 2,500 troops under the aegis of the United Nations headed by a Canadian general, General Romeo Dallaire. His rules of engagement forbade him to initiate any



kind of action against the people who were committing the killing. He could only respond if his troops were directly threatened like if somebody raised a gun and pointed it at them. Otherwise, they could be standing right beside a checkpoint and people would be committing crimes, killing people, but they couldn't do anything to stop it.

*Q: Who set up the rules of engagement?*

LEADER: The Security Council set up the rules of engagement. And at this time, the Security Council was under pressure from the Belgians, who had had 10 of their peacekeeping troops slaughtered the first morning after the plane went down. These were troops who were going to the prime minister's house to provide her protection. They never got there. They were instead kidnapped and taken to a military camp where they were brutally killed within hours. So the Belgian response was to withdraw all of its forces from the Rwandan peacekeeping mission, known as UNAMIR. They urged the other governments to do the same. So there was pressure on the U.S. not to enlarge the peacekeeping mission. This was the issue that was before the Security Council: to enlarge or not to enlarge the peacekeeping mission or to give it different rules of engagement. Madeleine Albright was our UN ambassador at that time. She was instructed by Washington to say that we were not in favor of enlarging; we were in favor of reducing. In fact, General Dallaire got left with 500 troops.

*Q: Was your mission playing any role in this?*

LEADER: Our mission was gone. The embassy was closed. The French were gone, the Belgians were gone, the U.S. was gone, the Africans, everybody was gone. All of the diplomats had evacuated. I believe that a couple of Tanzanians actually stayed at least for a while to try to get things back on track. But pretty much everybody left. So it was really Washington that was operating now. There was very little intelligence coming out of the country because nobody was there to provide it. We were in touch with people who were in the country and certainly our Deputy Assistant Secretary was talking by telephone regularly with the people who were running things.

*Q: Who was that?*

LEADER: There was this military guy, Bagosora, who had been the chief of the defense staff. He was one of the key people in terms of organizing and implementing the genocide. But there was also a new president named and a new prime minister. So from Washington the Assistant Secretary was talking to those people. I was initially talking to some of the humanitarian types. The International Committee for the Red Cross stayed. There were Swiss people who stayed to help with the aftermath of the killing. But the diplomatic action was at the UN and it was over this question of whether there would be more troops or not.

*Q: It really does sound like a matter of washing our hands of the whole thing and saying, "Let the slaughter go on. It's not our business." I'm talking about the UN, too.*

LEADER: It was a very emotional time and it was very divisive within the government. I personally do not believe based on some things that some people who were at the UN have told

me that Madeleine Albright favored that solution, but she was instructed and that was what she had to do. There was also the issue of whether or not this constituted genocide and if we called it “genocide,” whether we would be obligated to act under the Genocide Convention. Our legal people said that we had to say this was not genocide, that there were acts of genocide that had been committed but whether or not it was genocide hadn’t been determined. I think one of the first people in our government to use the term “genocide” was Geraldine Ferraro, who headed the U.S. delegation to a special session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. That was at the end of May and she used the word “genocide.” She called it like it was. It was a little difficult to walk the cat back after that happened. She was representing the U.S. government. Then George Moose, the Assistant Secretary, went before Congress in June. The term at that point was “the acts of genocide” had been committed. That was as far as we would officially go even though Geraldine Ferraro had gone a little farther.

*Q: Later, didn’t President Clinton go there and apologize? It was felt it was a mistake.*

LEADER: That was much later.

*Q: How did you feel at the time? Where were you and what were you doing?*

LEADER: For the six weeks after I got back, I was working in the Department in the Central Africa Office, mostly writing SITREPs, daily situation reports, for the office and bureau leadership. There was already a desk officer and a chain of command, so we were just adjuncts. Mind you, it’s important to remember that the embassy consisted of a total of eight Americans: the ambassador, myself, and one substantive officer, who was an econ/consular officer. The other people were admin or communications. So we’re not talking about a lot of people. The substantive officer and myself were in AF/C (Office of Central African Affairs). I was also focused on the humanitarian aspect. I was asked to head up an interagency meeting to look at what was happening in the humanitarian situation. We participated in several of the policy debate sessions that were headed by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Pru Bushnell. I did that for six weeks. At that point, that was the end of my tour. I had another assignment. I took some vacation and then started in July in a new assignment in West Africa.

*Q: When you got back to Washington, what was the mood/thought process? Was it, “This is a mess, but the Tutsis and the Hutus have been after each other and it’s just not our business?”*

LEADER: Rwanda had not really been on the radar screen of people unless they were involved with Africa. There was a DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) guy who said it sort of happened and he had to learn real fast where Rwanda was and what it was all about. Probably the CIA analysts, the INR analysts, and the State Department Africa Bureau were about the only ones interested. The killing did come a little bit out of the blue to other people. They didn’t really have the history of what were the roots of this conflict. So it did look like it was just a bunch of Africans killing each other. It was very difficult for us. The government didn’t know what to do. I would also recall that this was the time when Presidential Decision Directive (PPD) 25 went into effect. That was a White House decision, a policy decision directive, about peacekeeping. For some time now, the U.S. government has been very wary of becoming involved in peacekeeping actions, particularly in Africa but elsewhere as well.

*Q: Somalia comes very much to mind.*

LEADER: Somalia pushed the antagonism toward peacekeeping operations further and I think precipitated this particular directive becoming institutionalized. It said that if you went in, you had to see an endpoint and it had to be for some very specific reasons. And so the whole atmosphere in the U.S. government was very antithetical toward getting involved and doing anything. Later, I read a conference report that indicated that a few thousand troops or less, a few hundred troops, might have been able to turn the tide because the killers were amateurs. They were motivated and they were organized, but they might have been stopped. It was the assessment of this conference that looked at the killing from the military perspective that it probably could have been stopped if there had been some intervention in the first 10 days or so after the onset of the killing. If the truth be known, there were 300 U.S. marines were moved from a ship off of Somalia up to Burundi poised to come in to help us evacuate if necessary. We did not need them to come into Rwanda as it turned out, but they were in Burundi poised to help if we asked. There were also French and Belgian troops who came to make it safe for their people to leave. So there was pretty much firepower around to draw on if there had been any instructions or will to do it.

*Q: How did you get out?*

LEADER: The Belgians and the French brought troops into the country and had airplanes landing at the airport, to evacuate their people. I actually spoke with the French. They said, "We can look at your situation after we take care of ours." So, those folks were focused on their own citizens. There were about 600 French and about double that number of Belgians. So they weren't going to get around to us anytime soon and we realized that we had to rely on ourselves. It seemed that without some kind of military assistance, we couldn't get to the airport because we would be crossing battle lines. If we went with the French, they were considered pro-Habyarimana government. If we went with the Belgians, they were considered pro-RPF. So we thought that maybe we had a better chance of being independent. We finally assessed that our best shot was to take the road south to Burundi. At that time, the killing had not spread south of Kigali. There were reports of killings north and east but not really south. We had already identified assembly points. Because we had been having security briefings regularly with our community, other Americans knew where those assembly points were. We couldn't discuss anything without involving everybody because we were using our two-way radios. Everybody could listen in if the ambassador and I were discussing something. If the embassy people were discussing, everybody was listening. So they all had a say from their perspective about what looked best to them. They all agreed that it was best to just go by road. We spent a lot of time trying to get some sort of authorization from the government side to give us safe passage and we succeeded. It just so happened that our defense attaché was there. He and our consular officer made it to the embassy on Friday, two days after the plane was shot down. They managed to get a commitment of safe passage and a couple of gendarmes to accompany any convoys out of town. The decision was made on Friday morning that we would evacuate and we only had that day to organize. By that time, most of the people in the mission – AID, us, missionaries – had lost power. We could only have electricity if we put our generators on. That meant that to recharge the radios, we all had to have the generator on. Some Americans were caught in a crossfire on

Thursday night, so they really did feel that it was time to get out. We think this particular crossfire, by the way, was internal fighting between branches of the military inside Kigali at that point. We sent two convoys on Saturday and two on Sunday and they all made it safely to Burundi. Some of them had some stories and it took them quite a long time past midnight to make it all the way there, but they did. On Monday the first convoy went. The ambassador's wife was in that convoy with their car and there was some concern that they wouldn't be able to get across the bridge out of town, that it might have been blown up or something. They went anyway because how could we get any intelligence unless we went? So, they went down there and they found that it had not been blown up and it was still passable, so they went across and then about 1:00 PM, our convoy, the last convoy, went. I closed the door of the embassy and we left. The ambassador and I were in the last car of the last convoy until we got to the bridge and they told us we had to be the first car. We had a 107 car convoy. I counted them when we got to the border. Of those 107 cars, there were only nine Americans. There were Omanis, there were all of the African diplomats, there were a number of Germans, some other European governments that weren't Belgian or French. It was slow going, but we made it with no serious incidents.

*Q: Were there attempts by Hutus to get on board?*

LEADER: Hutus?

*Q: It was basically Tutsis killing Hutus, wasn't it?*

LEADER: No, no, Hutus killing Tutsis.

*Q: Okay. Then Tutsis trying to...*

LEADER: No, we didn't really have that happen. When we got to the bridge in my convoy, there was one incident in which the military guards accused one woman of being Tutsi and said she would have to get out of the convoy. She happened to be the wife of a Tanzanian diplomat. I think she probably was a Tutsi. As you know, there were a lot of Tutsis who were in refugee camps in Tanzania. It was quite possible that they had met somehow in Tanzania. But anyway, it was our ambassador who kind of saved the day. He spoke Kirundi, very close to Kinyarwanda. When he saw that they weren't getting anywhere, he went over to see what was the problem because we wanted to get the convoy moving again. He told me later that the military said, "Well, she's a Tutsi. We know she's a Tutsi because she speaks Kinyarwanda." And the ambassador looked at them and said, "But I speak Kirundi and you're not going to say that I'm Rwandan, are you?" They sort of looked blank and had to agree that he had a point and that just because she spoke Kinyarwanda didn't necessarily mean that she was a Rwandan. We did get her out of that scrape. We moved on. Most people who were threatened by that time were in hiding. As a matter of fact, I had been in contact with a friend who was a lawyer and a human rights advocate. We'd been in touch up until Saturday morning. By Saturday morning, all contact with him stopped. He went into hiding. I later heard his story because he did survive. But most people were in hiding by that time. Mille Collines was already beginning to be a rendezvous point. People were fleeing to that hotel or to churches to try to save themselves.

*Q: I'm surprised that there weren't more people coming to the American embassy and saying, "Get us out of here."*

LEADER: Well, we were in touch with some of our Foreign Service nationals who worked for us and told them what we were doing and what arrangements we were making for them to continue to be paid and that we would be coming back as soon as possible. But they were mostly in their homes or in hiding. We had no way of taking them with us. It was very distressing, but we didn't. It was something that we didn't like having to do, but we did have to do it. There were a number of Rwandans who were part of the government who went to the French embassy and were evacuated by the French to France. I heard that story from a Rwandan who was a human rights advocate. He was more than just a human rights advocate. He founded the first human rights organization. He lived very close to the French embassy, so he went there as soon as things started because he knew he would be marked. In fact, he was marked. The people who lived in the house that he had lived in before he had moved were killed. His house had been marked, but it wasn't his house anymore. They just killed the people who were in it – Hutus. He went to the French embassy and he was appalled because all of these pro-Habyarimana, pro-genocide perpetrators and so forth were in the French embassy. They didn't want him to get on the plane. They did not want him to be evacuated with them. As a matter of fact, the plane stopped in Bujumbura before it went on to France and he got off because he wasn't going to be evacuated to France with all those people and be associated with all them. So that was a big issue and it caused a lot of Americans anguish, because they had to leave behind people who worked for them in their homes, people that they worked with in their places of work whether they were in UN organizations or in the embassy or in AID or whatever. We all think about that a lot.

*Q: You moved where? You went to another place.*

LEADER: We went to Bujumbura, Burundi, which was usually a five hour drive but in fact took us 10 hours to get there. And from there, we were evacuated by one of the military planes that was in Burundi to Kenya. Then from Nairobi, we flew commercially home. People were then in evacuation status. Most were reassigned.

*Q: You were reassigned after about six weeks?*

LEADER: Yes. I started my work as a deputy director in AF/W (Office of West African Affairs) in July. But at the beginning of August our ambassador, David Rawson, went back to do an assessment of whether we should be reopening our embassy. This was after the killing, the genocide had stopped, the RPF Tutsis had captured Kigali, they had won the war militarily, the Hutu government was defeated, and had actually run into exile and taken a million people with them into Zaire. In the refugee camps in Zaire, cholera broke out and so now we are ready to respond. Now we have a humanitarian situation and we respond by sending in the military to set up some kind of safe water to stop the cholera from spreading. The embassy flag was raised and the military set up its headquarters at the airport in Kigali. But the ambassador had to come home because he didn't expect to just start work out there, he was only on a reconnaissance mission. So they asked me to go back and I went from the middle until the end of August. I would say that has to be one of the hardest two weeks of my life, going back and finding a city that was totally emptied of most of the people I knew. They had all fled and hadn't come back yet for the most

part. There were new people there, Tutsis coming up from Burundi, for example, and they were identifiable walking on the streets. Of course, all the cars had license plates from Burundi. So it was like the city had been turned inside out. But my marching orders were to try to convince the government - and this was now the Tutsi-led government but the prime minister was a Hutu who had been prominent in the political party's formation. He had led one of the political parties and we knew him very well. He was named in the peace accord to be the prime minister and now he was the prime minister in this RPF-led government. Both the president and the prime minister were Hutus. My job was to convince them to allow the French to continue Operation Turquoise until things stabilized. The French were supposed to leave. Of course, I failed in my mission because the RPF totally rejected the idea that the French continue to stay in part of the country and protect these genocidaires from their just desserts. But I did find some people that I knew, including a journalist. I was trying to find a way to contact the prime minister to have a meeting with him and of course the telephones didn't work. You had to drive around and try to find people. I had no secretary, so if I left the embassy there was nobody there to keep track of messages that were coming in for meetings with us and so forth. It was very complicated. We were playing with the radio and finding the government frequency because they were using radios, too. They didn't have telephones. Lo and behold, one of my friends comes on the radio and it turns out he had been named chief of staff for the prime minister. So, I was able to get a meeting with the prime minister. Everybody whom I knew had to tell their story and it was so difficult because of course you wanted to listen and you had to listen, but it was so depressing. It was just miraculous how some people had survived. Of course, I'm talking to both Hutus and Tutsis who had come back or who had stayed. It was a very difficult time.

*Q: Were you able to establish a presence then? Were any Americans or others... Did any of our FSNs survive?*

LEADER: A large number of our FSNs did and some were coming back to the embassy. Gradually the word was getting out that the embassy had started up again. Every day, more people were trickling in. I don't have numbers. Our GSO came back. He had been going around to all the houses and getting a team of FSNs to pack up what was left by those who evacuated. Most of the houses were totally ransacked. But he was able to salvage some things and get things ready for shipment. Then we had also an acting admin officer who was there. She was a gem, too. She just got right in there and was working with the FSNs trying to get things organized again. Of course, we were eating MREs. A satellite phone was our only way to communicate out of the country. The military had set up a van in embassy backyard to give us some communications. We were trying to get cable traffic going again. And we had this satellite phone which I did not know how to work. The military advisor to the AF bureau had gone out with Ambassador Rawson and he stayed, fortunately for me, because he knew how to operate the satellite phone. We tried to set it up in my house and it wouldn't work except in the middle of my yard, so that didn't help at night. I couldn't keep it next to me. I had a big wall and so it wouldn't work unless it was sitting in the middle of my yard. I think satellite communications have improved since then. It was a challenging and interesting time. There were a few journalists roaming around trying to get the story. I spent a lot of time talking to them about the background of the situation. We got through it. In fact, the last day that I was there, a presidential delegation arrived about 12 people strong for a day of meetings with the various new leaders. This included people from the State Department. The Central Africa Bureau director was on the plane. There were people from

non-governmental organizations. There were congressmen. There were congressional staffers. There was a whole array of people. Of course, part of my job was to set up all their meetings. The ambassador came back on that plane. A big problem was what was I was going to feed them for lunch? The military came to my rescue. They had large trays – not just individual MREs but large trays of MREs. The visitors all came to my house and I put out these MREs to feed them because I had nothing else. I had two people working in my house. All they had to do was heat up these things in the oven which was no problem. We used paper plates and so forth. Then I left on the military plane that they had come in on. Actually, I have to take that back. They came in on a C5, which is the biggest cargo plane that the American fleet has. And guess what? At the same time that they came in, the Russian equivalent of the C5 was also sitting there on the runway. So, I think that was probably the first time in history that the American and the Russian C5 equivalent were there. But we all did not go out in a C5. We went out in a C130 or a C141. I guess we went down to Burundi and the visitors did some stuff down there. Then we flew back to Frankfurt and then on to the States. I think I went all the way back to Andrews Air Force Base with them, taking as much of my own stuff as I could. I had my own stuff packed up. My stuff was not ransacked except by my gardener, who was selling it out the back door, I think – all my leather goods, my leather jacket, my leather briefcase, my leather backpack, all my tee shirts, all my socks, some of my shoes, and some of my clothes were missing. But my papers were all in order. Most of my clothes were still there. So I was one of the lucky ones.

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**Office of the Undersecretary of State**  
**Washington, DC (1993-1995)**

*Mr. Adams was born in Washington, DC and raised in Virginia and abroad. He was educated at John Carroll, William and Mary and George Washington Universities. Mr. Adams joined USAID in 1973 in Washington, DC. He served in Washington and abroad, dealing primarily with matters concerning Latin American countries and Kosovo. His foreign assignments include Bangladesh, Guatemala and Haiti, where he served as USAID Mission Director. Mr. Adams was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.*

ADAMS: I can't say that I was involved with Rwanda at all. I wrote a paper about Rwanda. I don't think it influenced anybody. It was about the hate radio in Rwanda, Mille Collines, and what a destructive force it was. It stoked the violence. I tried to link that with the sort of hate speech that influenced Timothy McVeigh who bombed the Murrah building in Oklahoma, and how hate speech can cause otherwise prompt volatile people to do terrible things. I had no influence, no direct involvement in Rwanda policy (until later).

**PRUDENCE BUSHNELL**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary, Sub-Sahara Africa**  
**Washington, DC (1993-1995)**

*Ambassador Bushnell was born in Washington, DC into a Foreign Service family. She was raised in Washington and at Foreign Service posts abroad and received degrees from Russell Sage College and the University of Maryland. After working as a clerk at Embassies Teheran and Rabat, she became a Foreign Service Officer in 1981 and subsequently served in several posts before serving as Ambassador to Kenya 1996 – 1999. There she experienced the bombing of the Embassy by al Qaeda. In 1999 she was named Ambassador to Guatemala, where she served until 2002. During her career, the Ambassador served in several senior positions in the Department in Washington. Ambassador Bushnell was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.*

*Q: Well, you've had a good run. Let's get back to Somalia. When we pulled out of there was there a palpable, boy we're not going to intervene in anything again or something like that? Was that a mantra in the African Bureau?*

BUSHNELL: It was an unspoken mantra by the White House. Africa issues, unless they turned into disasters, seldom made it to the seventh floor, where the top of the hierarchy worked. I think I mentioned that there were three of us in the AF front office for a time. George Moose, Ed Brynn and me. We all had portfolios that cut across the 48 countries of Sub-Sahara Africa. But, because some countries needed particular attention from the "sixth floor," the assistant secretary's office, we divided the hot spots among us. George got the most critical -- South Africa, which was then in transition, Sudan and Somalia. Ed got Nigeria and, I don't remember which other two. I took Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia. This was early summer of '93.

A good deal of my time was spent trying to get the interagency to agree to sending UN peacekeepers to Rwanda to implement peace accords that had put an end to a civil war between the government of Rwanda and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, or RPF. The RPF had fought the government to a standstill and the peace agreement, called the Arusha Accords, spelled out a political transition. UN peacekeepers were needed to ensure that it would be implemented peacefully. The members of the RPF and the Rwandan government came hand-in-hand to Washington and New York to ask for peace keeping troops. My colleagues and I had to make the case that it was in the interest of the United States to back the Rwanda request.

The Congress, meanwhile, wanted to reduce the percent the U.S. government was paying for UN peace keeping missions. The NSC was developing criteria to determine U.S. response to future requests. I learned that summer that when the bureaucracy doesn't want to say yes and lacks the guts to say no, it asks for more and more paperwork. To meet the newly developing policy, we essentially had to show that Rwanda peacekeeping would be swift, cheap, blood-free and successful. It was a terribly frustrating summer. Eventually, the U.S. government was strong-armed by the UN and the French to support the Rwandan peace. We wanted to get out of Somalia and further internationalize the peacekeepers there, the UN needed a peacekeeping success and the French wanted peacekeepers in Rwanda. As I observed from the sidelines, a deal was struck.



A small peacekeeping contingent made up of Belgians and African nations, under the command of Canadian General Romeo Dallaire would oversee the installation of an interim government that would hold democratic elections at some stated point in the future. They entered Rwanda under Chapter Six authority – i.e. to maintain rather than make peace. Weapons could be used only for self defense.

The transition got stuck and I went to Rwanda in March of '94 to tell all parties to the peace accords that they had to get on with it or risk the possible pull-out of peacekeepers. Little did I know at the time that this was precisely what the radical group of Hutus wanted.

Let me step back a minute for a thumbnail history lesson so that events to come make sense. Rwanda was a Belgium colony until the late 1950s. Belgians ruled indirectly through the government structures that were dominated by Tutsis, a minority ethnic group. At independence, the majority Hutus took over the government and threw out thousands of Tutsis in a bloody war. Most ended up as refugees in neighboring Burundi and Uganda. It was the sons and daughters of these refugees who created the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and invaded to regain their rightful place.

The transition government and the military created by the Peace Accords would include both members of the RPF and the government. Extremist Hutus felt they had been sold out and started making demands the RPF would not accept. Meanwhile, the country was becoming increasingly polarized as politicians exploited Hutu fears and targeted Tutsis as the cause of all evil. During my visit, I met with all of the parties counseling compromise. At the time we were aware of selected killings of Tutsis but we held to the belief that if we could get the Peace Accords implemented, the killings would stop.

*Q: This was not the major killing?*

BUSHNELL: No, these were individual deaths, not the mass slaughter we saw later. There were lists on both sides, but we were particularly aware of Tutsi deaths. When I met with the heads of the RPF, I was told that Hutus wanted to exterminate all Tutsis but there was absolutely no evidence, or even hint of that – at least that we saw. We were proven tragically wrong.

In point of fact, we were distracted by concerns for violence in Burundi, where there was also a Tutsi-Hutu split. Here, the Tutsis had retained power over the majority Hutu population through terrible killings. There were rumors of a coup d'état when I was in Rwanda, so my travel companion and I rushed to Bujumbura. We sat on the veranda of the Ambassador's residence over-looking a beautiful, green city and hearing gun shots. People were terribly concerned about possible return of wide scale violence so we decided that I would speak publicly on radio and television to call for an end to the bloodshed. Our embassy had seen cease fires work when outsiders came to town.

*Q: Your French of course came into?*

BUSHNELL: Right. After five years in Senegal, my French came back, so this was easy for me to do. I went on TV and radio and called for a halt to the killing. The next day when I went

downtown, a couple of people came up and said, “Are you the woman who was on television, thank you, the killing stopped last night.” I was very moved.

A couple of weeks after that March trip, back in Washington, I was Acting Assistant Secretary -- both George and Ed were out of town -- when the plane carrying both the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot out of the sky as it was landing in Kigali, Rwanda. Within hours, barricades went up in the streets, moderate Hutu and Tutsi politicians were sought out and killed, and the slaughter of Tutsis began.

Had my husband, Dick, been given a medical clearance, I would have been in Kigali dealing with disaster. Instead, I was in Washington dealing with disaster. As I said earlier, it was the first time I began to believe in destiny.

The first order of business was the welfare of American citizens. Kigali was in chaos. The parts of the military were going door to door with lists to kill the people inside. The RPF troops came out of their barricades; fire fights began in the streets. We advised all Americans to stay home and stay down so our information was limited.

*Q: This obviously had been planned.*

BUSHNELL: Yes, although we had no idea at the time to what extent the killing would continue.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

BUSHNELL: David Rawson, who was unable to get to the embassy for a couple of days. Remember, the President of Burundi had also been killed, so we were very nervous about what would happen there, as well. We set up an emergency 24 hour task force, which I was to head, and I called Ed, who was on vacation, to ask him to come home!

The French were concerned about their nationals; there were many more of them than Americans. While they began to make plans to evacuate French citizens from the Kigali airport, we made the daring decision to send Americans out overland to neighboring countries. This was David Rawson’s idea and a good one. Kigali was a killing zone. It made no sense to ask Americans around the country -- many of them, missionaries -- to come into the city and wait to be rescued by the French when they could more easily go over the nearest border to Tanzania, Burundi or Zaire (now Congo), whichever was closest.

*Q: Were other embassies, for example, calling us, saying, “What are you doing”?*

BUSHNELL: Oh, yes. We were coordinating with a number of governments, particularly the French and the Belgians.

*Q: Was there a problem with the missionaries, because often I’ve talked to people who have said that missionaries tend to hang on to the last.*

BUSHNELL: No, they were pretty solid folks; they understood the danger.

*Q: Been around for a long time.*

BUSHNELL: One group caused a great deal of anxiety because they had taken refuge in a compound that was overrun by Hutu militia. They bribed the men into leaving but were concerned they would come back. This was not an easy evacuation.

*Q: What about local employees, Rwandans, particularly Tutsi? Were they coming going out with us or not?*

BUSHNELL: No. This will forever scar our reputation among Foreign Service Nationals. The agreement brokered with Rwandan government and military was that the overland convoys would contain ex-patriots only. We left everyone else behind. To be fair, we had no idea what was to come. Still....

*Q: Well, there had been a record of several of these Hutu - Tutsi conflicts which had not reached the proportions that this one did. So that, you know, based on past experience, you could say, this is terrible, but we'll get out, we'll come back and it will settle down.*

BUSHNELL: That was the rationale.

*Q: Were you able to get any help in making decisions by getting background from the CIA or INR?*

BUSHNELL: Remember I told you about the AID pulling out of Africa? Well, AID wasn't the only one pulling out of Africa. The CIA was pulling out of Africa. We had no intelligence capability except for a roving Defense Intelligence officer stationed elsewhere.

INR and CIA in Washington were giving us as much as they had, but it was pretty difficult. Once we pulled out officially we had no eyes or ears, with the exception of one American ex-pat who stayed.

*Q: What were you getting from the French, the Belgium and the Canadian embassies as this thing started to develop?*

BUSHNELL: I think the Canadians may have gone with us. Anyway, the discussions about the evacuations were taking place among the militaries. So, I was talking to the U.S. military who were talking to the Belgium and the French militaries. I didn't engage directly.

*Q: The French usually had a fairly substantial force in Africa but their response time wouldn't be that great, right?*

BUSHNELL: The extremists had taken over the airport. The Belgium peacekeepers who were guarding the woman who was to become interim Prime Minister were taken, killed and mutilated. The Prime Minister was killed in front of her children and mutilated. Before the French or anyone could come in, they needed to secure the airport.

*Q: You were in charge because you were acting secretary for African affairs. How much of a part did the seventh floor or the National Security Council play?*

BUSHNELL: Other than concern for a prominent human rights advocate who had met President Clinton, the NSC didn't play much of a role. The seventh floor did. I came to the operation center very early one morning, about day two after the crisis started, and three senior people stopped me to say "Pru, the President called Secretary Christopher and the Secretary of Defense to say that he wants every American out alive. Good luck." As if I needed an order from the President to bring people out safely. Anyway, I felt that the waters had parted and there I was. Fortunately, not alone. I had a great team.

It soon became clear, however, that decisions had to be made swiftly, much faster than our bureaucracy would allow. For example, the order to evacuate took more than a day to get through the clearance process. So, Beth Jones, the Secretary's Executive Assistant, and I worked an arrangement. Any time I needed a decision from Secretary Christopher, I would contact her. She would get immediate access and a verbal response to whatever it was. On the basis of that response, I was authorized to take action. The clearance papers would follow a parallel track. It worked well. While the overland evacuations were pretty nerve-wracking because we had no radio contact once the last convoy left the embassy, we got all Americans out alive.

*Q: The Americans are out, but all hell was breaking loose. I mean it was one of the great catastrophes of our time. What did you do?*

BUSHNELL: It was awful, one of the worse periods of my life. As awful as the bombing of the embassy in Nairobi was.

*Q: The bombing was finite period, but this, I mean to have a rolling genocide going on.*

BUSHNELL: And not being able to do anything. I will never forget the look in the eyes of Kevin Aiston, the Rwanda/Burundi desk officer when I told him that the NSC and Secretary Christopher had made the decision to call for the withdrawal of the UN peacekeepers. I mean, everybody knew, or at least suspected what was going to happen.

There were already two dynamics occurring in Rwanda--a civil war between the Rwandan government military and the RPF, and the wholesale slaughter of civilians – mainly Tutsis – by militias and other civilians. Tens of thousands used machetes and farm instruments to kill their neighbors. This was a government controlled, systematic and well planned effort to use as many Hutus as possible to kill all Tutsis. The authors of the genocide deliberately induced an entire society to murder so that everybody would have life on his or her hands. The government structure was highly centralized, the infrastructure was excellent – thanks to the U.S. and other donors – and people were used to doing what they were told. Instructions would come from Kigali. The parts of the military that were not fighting the civil war took part. They used the radio, which was the primary means of mass communication as in many African countries, to exhort people to slaughter. Tutsis were taking refuge in stadiums, in schools, and in churches. In the past when Tutsis had taken refuge to the churches, they had been saved. This time, the Hutus

used priests and ministers to call people into so-called safe havens. They'd pack them in, hurl a couple of grenades, then go in to hack survivors to death.

*Q: Well, it sounds like almost a dramatic going back to the Holocaust planning of this thing.*

BUSHNELL: It was.

*Q: Lists, implicate people. In other words, this was not in a way of or in any way a spontaneous thing. This was a carefully thought out sort of almost physiological way of how we're going to handle this thing.*

BUSHNELL: Yes it was. It was planned by Hutu extremists as they participated in peace talks. And I will go to my grave wondering why we didn't see it coming. Nor did we ever do an after-action review or anything like that to figure out what blinded us and what needs to change so it doesn't happen again. Sometimes I think we don't want to learn from mistakes so we will have the flexibility to employ them again.

*Q: Had this sort of thing occurred or seeing glimmers of this in past? I mean, there had been this Hutu Tutsi thing both there and in Burundi. Had you seen this almost methodical way of dealing with this?*

BUSHNELL: Yeah, but not like this. There had been paroxysms of killings in both countries, but never to this extent.

*Q: Because one doesn't think of Africa as being caught up in sort of the philosophy that the German anti-Semitism was. But, this is great parallel.*

BUSHNELL: On the surface.

*Q: While this was going on, did you have the feeling that we were looking over our shoulder at the government at developments in the Balkans and the whole idea was, boy this isn't our business, we don't want to get involved. Was this a factor or was this not a factor in what we would do or not do?*

BUSHNELL: Oh, there was every reason in the book why we weren't doing what we could have or should have. Tony Lake, Clinton National Security Advisor, later said that the phones weren't ringing. He was right but I wonder why we should adopt that as a criteria for intervening in the mass slaughter of civilians. The Washington Post editorials were saying this sort of ethnic violence in an African country in which we had no interests was none of our business. Now mind you, the slaughter was taking place at an un-precedented rate. I mean hundreds of thousands of people a day. In a hundred days, I think eight to nine hundred thousand people were killed. And in the mean time we were listing reasons why we couldn't do anything. That's incredible!

*Q: And most of it by machetes.*

BUSHNELL: Up close and personal, right. I remember meeting with my team one day and asking how people could physically sustain the energy to keep hacking up human beings.

The policy garlic and crucifixes were up all around the Department -- and Washington, for that matter. I'd sometimes report what was happening at Strobe Talbott's morning staff meetings and get looks of horror around the table but nothing else. My team and I were free to do whatever we wanted as long as we didn't use any American resources, ask anyone to use theirs, or augment the tiny peacekeeping unit left behind when the UN pulled the bulk of them out.

*Q: Well, even after the slaughter of the Belgium's at the airport, was the UN saying hey, we can't do this?*

BUSHNELL: Well, General Dallaire was furiously sending messages and was, I think, dumbstruck at the decision to withdraw the peacekeepers. The only reason a few were left behind is that thousands of Tutsis had taken refuge in a stadiums in Kigali -- as they had all over the country -- and to withdraw the limited protection they had would really be over the top. It was amazing the effectiveness of a very few. There were too few of them to save the hundreds of thousands of lives lost, but those who stayed were unharmed.

It was just so bizarre and horrible a period. A massive slaughter going on; a civil war going on; an international community sitting on its hands and watching in horror; and a tiny group of mid level people at State frantically trying to think of ways to stop the killing.

*Q: I take it the Pentagon was adamant.*

BUSHNELL: I called the men in the Joint Chief Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense the "no way, no how, and not with our toys boys," because they stoned-walled every effort. I chaired these God awful interagency video conferences. We'd sit in this tiny airless room looking at four TV monitors -- NSC, CIA, and two for DOD --and talk with clenched jaws about what could be done. I at least wanted the hate radio that was encouraging people to continue the genocide to be jammed.

*Q: There was a movie called Hotel Rwanda with excerpts of talking about killing the cockroaches. There was a fairly good representation, was it or not, did you feel?*

BUSHNELL: I have chosen not to see the movie, but, yes, the part about the radio was accurate.

*Q: I can understand why you wouldn't want to.*

BUSHNELL: The discussion about jamming the radios was pretty reflective of the other conversations we'd have. The first thing I was told is that jamming is against international law. Then I was told it would be too expensive, then that DOD didn't have the planes, and finally, that all of the jamming equipment was being used in Haiti. One excuse after another. At one point, a JCS colleagues leaned forward to admonish me: "Pru, radios don't kill people, people kill people." I told him that I would quote him on that and actually did. When Debra Winger played me in the movie *Sometimes in April* I had them put it in the script.

Out of total desperation, I got on every international radio network broadcasting to Africa that I could. I remembered what had happened in Burundi and thought I'd give it a try. What a pathetic thing to do. I kept wondering where were the voices of the international community – and especially the Pope. Rwanda was predominantly Catholic. Why we heard nothing from the Vatican is another question I think deserves an answer.

*Q: Did you have problems with young officers or mid career officers presiding over something like this? Any resignations?*

BUSHNELL: No resignations or even any thoughts – we were in the thick of it and didn't have time to think about much else. We were trying to keep abreast of information – remember, we had lost our eyes and ears with the closing of the embassy – and come up with plans of what we could do.

One of the things I did was to contact the Chief of Staff of the Rwanda military to let him know that we knew what was going on and wanted an end of it immediately. My talking points were to call for a cease fire and return to the Peace Accords. Under the circumstances that was pretty ridiculous, but there you go. I would set the alarm for 2 am because it would be 8:00 a.m. in Kigali. I'd go downstairs so I wouldn't wake Dick and use the wall phone in the kitchen. We'd have these bizarre conversations. I'd tell him to stop killing people and he'd respond "Oh, but Madame, there's a civil war going on. I don't have the troops to stop this spontaneous uprising." When I advised him to at least stop the hate radio, he said "But, madame, we are a democracy. We have freedom of the press." I mean he was really ridiculous.

I'd also telephone Paul Kagame, the commander of the Rwanda Patriotic Front. These were equally strange but very different conversations. I had the same talking points -- urging cease fire and return to Peace Accords. His reaction was astonishment: "Excuse me Madam, there's a genocide going on. At least we're keeping the military occupied. You want me to stop fighting?? A cease fire would only make it easier for them." We will never know if that would have been the case, but I understood his position.

*Q: Was there any thought of supporting the RPF because of the enormity of what was happening to the Tutsis?*

BUSHNELL: No.

*Q: Did anybody raise this and say, "You know, these are in a way the good guys" or was the feeling that it could have been Tutsis killing Hutus? Was it always Hutus killing Tutsis?*

BUSHNELL: In Rwanda, since independence, the Tutsis were the persecuted ones. In Burundi, although Hutus are a majority there as well, the Tutsis have retained power often through large scale violence. We did not favor one or the other.

*Q: What was happening in Burundi during this?*

BUSHNELL: We were keeping a very close eye on Burundi and were thankful “IT” did not happen there. I remember all of a sudden one day, I had a flash of insight: “IT” was already happening but in a different way. In Burundi, killings had been going on for years there, but not at the ferocious level you saw in Rwanda during the genocide. As unacceptable as killings were, they were not dire enough to attract international attention.

*Q: How was news of all of this getting out? I mean, if all the foreigners had left and you had no embassy.-*

BUSHNELL: Journalists were there. Initially we thought that if we could get cameras to film what was going on, people would stop killing. They didn’t.

*Q: Yeah. Was Congress doing anything on this?*

BUSHNELL: No.

*Q: This was just something nobody wanted to touch?*

BUSHNELL: Nobody wanted to touch this thing. I remember going to a congressional hearing and being scolded by Donald Payne, a member of the Black Caucus. “You’re not doing enough in Rwanda.” I was so indignant. I wasn’t doing enough? I’m the one who is supposed to do more?! He finally had to say, “Not you! Not you personally, I mean you the Clinton administration!” I can’t recall any other gesture made by the Congress.

The genocide finally came to an end when the RPF under Kagame’s command soundly walloped the Rwandan military. At that point, the Rwandan government ordered a massive evacuation of the country. I mean the entire country! In Washington we went from watching in horror, a genocide, to witnessing in shock the exit of literally tens of thousands of people, streaming across borders – especially to Zaire – with everything they could take. Communities stayed together as they installed themselves on the other side of the border. Everything remained highly organized.

It was as this was going on that the French decided to intervene with Operation Turquoise. They claimed they were sick of watching the genocide and decided to take unilateral action. However, they waited until the government they had supported was fleeing across the border before implementing their “noble” aspiration. Essentially, they put themselves between the fleeing government and military, which they had supported for years, and the RPF, whom they despised and mistrusted. I remember phone conversations between George Moose and Paul Kagame, who was absolutely incensed at the French. “You do not want to kill the French,” George would argue, ultimately successfully. Meanwhile, people with their household effects on their heads or in carts continued streaming across the border toward another humanitarian catastrophe..

*Q: These were mainly Hutu?*

BUSHNELL: These were Hutus. They emptied the countryside. Our interagency meeting took an abrupt turn to focus on what in the world we were going to do with thousands and thousands



of people camped along volcanoes in Zaire – hardly a country known for its stability or government effectiveness.

Once the RPF took over Rwanda, I was sent to check things out. It was yet another surreal experience. The country side of one of the most populous countries in the world was literally deadly quiet. Berries ready to harvest were rotting on the coffee trees; houses stood vacant. The man who served as the ambassador's driver drove us. When we were stopped by child soldiers at checkpoints, I learned never to look them in the eye. As we drove we heard the story of how the driver had hidden and what happened to some of the other embassy employees. Many were dead.

I participated in a memorial service for the FSNs who were killed. I will never forget looking into the stony faces of employees who had been abandoned by the US government. American officers who came up to speak would weep, to a person. The Rwandans just looked at us. I can only imagine what they were thinking and the trauma that was still with them.

Kigali was a mess. The government had taken everything, including the cash. What role does the international community play now? Here is a devastated country in which the victims of genocide became the victors of a civil war. That had never happened before. No one wanted to be associated with a government that may want to take revenge, but not helping meant punishing the victims even more. I sat on the sidelines of some of these Friends of Rwanda meetings watching one government representative after another asking: "What are you going to do?" "Don't know what are you going to do?" "For a while it just went in circles."

One of the greatest ironies to this was that during most of the genocide, the government that was perpetrating the killings held the presidency of the Security Council. They were not asked to leave until the very end.

*Q: Oh boy.*

BUSHNELL: It was a much easier and more straightforward to help the refugees who had fled to Zaire. That was something the international community was accustomed to. When cholera broke out, we rushed in. The Vice President's wife even went over, to our horror. I'm not at all sure that she recognized that many of the people showing up for photo ops could have been among those who had hacked their neighbors to death.

*Q: Well, it's easier to do something about humanitarian things than to stop people from killing people.*

BUSHNELL: By this point I was pretty miserable and getting burned out. The former government's military and militias began to control the refugee camps and claim the food that was to go to the people. The intimidation of humanitarian workers and refugees was whole scale. Then raids into Rwanda from these camps began. Paul Kagame, who was now the Vice President of Rwanda, said repeatedly, "If you, international community don't do something to stop these guys, I'm going to." We didn't; he did. And therein lay the beginning of the conflict in the Great Lakes area of Africa which continues to this day.

*Q: In other words, his troops went in?*

BUSHNELL: Yes. But first he had to get as many refugees as possible back in Rwanda. You can't have a country with that proportion of population sitting across the border. Initially, the militias tried to stop people from returning but Rwandans clearly understood there was no future for them on the volcanoes of Zaire. So many took the chance and returned. I think for the most part Kagame made good on his promise to create efforts of reconciliation, as well as to bring the perpetrators of the genocide to justice.

What an undertaking that was – bringing people to justice. Tens of thousands of people had participated; tens of thousands were in jail under deplorable conditions. I visited one of the prisons. All of the inmates, male and females – they were kept separately – were clothed in bright pink polyester. Some of the prisons were so crowded people had to sleep in shifts. How do you keep decent conditions in the jails when the country has no money? Should the international community help? I mean, we “don't do” jails as a rule.

The U.S. government did become very involved in establishing a tribunal in Arusha to hold accountable the authors of the genocide. Another irony here: under international law, the death penalty was off the table. In Rwanda, it was not. The people taking orders to kill could possibly be put to death, while those who gave the orders would not. Recently, I think Rwanda has done away with the death penalty.

Can we stop pretty soon? I'm sorry, I'm run down.

*Q: Yeah. I've got these two questions. This is not a fun interview, but it's vital. I'm told that during this crisis, not only the State Department, but the U.S. military wanted to bring the non governmental organizations into the planning earlier. Did you find that the case?*

BUSHNELL: Well, actually no, because the U.S. military successfully kept out Rwanda. I guess they were involved in some respect in bringing humanitarian assistance supplies in to Zaire. But, on the whole, the US military did not become very involved.

*Q: This could be the topic of another interview, because I think the portfolio of African peace keepers is part of your thing. We could talk about that on another interview. What about in this thing, what was the role of Madeline Albright who is our ambassador to the United Nations?*

BUSHNELL: I think she understood more clearly than other policy makers what would happen if the peacekeepers were withdrawn. I know she regrets what happened. President Clinton apologized, too. Fine, but as I said earlier, the U.S. government to my knowledge has still made no effort to find out what really happened and what we have to learn from the Rwanda debacle. General Romeo Dallaire was sending cables back to the UN warning them of the preparations for genocide three months before it started and I did not know about them. Why? Why didn't a small diplomatic community in country to facilitate peace know about the preparations as late as March, when I visited? If I had the guts or the stomach for it, I would think about doing the research myself, but I don't want to. I feel badly enough now.

*Q: Well, you're probably not the person to do it.*

BUSHNELL: No, actually I'm not.

*Q: Something like this needs somebody outside really. What about the NSC? This is the last question on this session. What about the role of the NSC during this whole thing?*

BUSHNELL: Richard Clark was the head of Global Affairs and Peace Keeping of the NSC. Susan Rice, his deputy was to take over in the second term of Clinton Administration as assistant secretary for African Affairs. Dick Clark is the one person to this day who will look you in the eye and say, "We did exactly the right thing in Rwanda." On the other hand, Tony Lake the National Security Advisor at the time talks at length about his regrets.

*Q: Do you have any of the rationale for that? Not to get involved was that it?*

BUSHNELL: "We had no interest in that country". "Look at what they did to Belgian peacekeepers." "It takes too long to put a peacekeeping operation together." "What would our exit strategy be?" "These things happen in Africa." "We couldn't have stopped it." I could go on.

*Q: Alright. Well, let's talk about Liberia. What years are we talking about again?*

BUSHNELL: I was Deputy Assistant Secretary from '93 to '95 and Principal DAS, '95 to '96.

There is one final issue about Rwanda and then we can move on. That's the issue of when and whether we should have called the slaughter a genocide. Like the decision to remove peacekeepers when the killings started, the discussion of genocide was not one in which my team and I were included. As far as I knew, those conversations were taking place at the White House, not within the Bureau of African Affairs. Reference to those discussions would come up in George Moose's staff meetings, but what I was focused on was figuring out ways to stop the killing. I know that using the term genocide would put us in a position of having to do something, hence the reluctance. Of course, we've learned from Darfur that we can call in genocide and still continue to wring our hands. In '94, however, we hadn't yet had that precedent. In my narrow and hellish world, whether we called the killing genocide or not was moot. We weren't going to do anything to stop it. I don't know what this contributes to history but from my perspective, the conversation about genocide was political, not actionable.

*Q: Yeah. I mean, so often Washington buzzes around, and this time we're talking about people getting killed.*

BUSHNELL: Right. It boils down to the following. Domestic policy considerations now dominate foreign affairs, no matter which administration we are under, and those policies are usually not advantageous to African people.

*Q: Well now, to look at it in perspective and to be fair, government, don't move quickly. This thing burst forth in such a hurry that there wasn't time to really crank up. I mean, eventually the*

*Bosnian one played out over a long time. It got worse and worse, but there's plenty of time to try this, try that and all that. But, Rwanda was sort of like a wild fire.*

BUSHNELL: In addition, you have the tension between national interest and moral imperative. I could and did make the argument that it was not in our national interest to intervene. Should we to send young Americans into a domestic fire fight, possibly to be killed on behalf of people we don't know in a country in which we have no particular interest? From the perspective of national interest, people like Richard Clarke will argue we did things right. In terms of moral imperative there is no doubt in my mind that we did not do the right thing. I could have a clear bureaucratic conscience from Washington's stand point and still have a soul filled with shame.

**ROBERT J. KOTT**  
**Rwanda-Burundi Task Force**  
**Washington, DC (1995)**

*Mr. Kott was born and raised in New York City. He earned degrees from St. John's University in New York City and from the University of Oregon. After service with the Peace Corps in India, Mr. Kott joined the Foreign Service in 1971. An African specialist, Mr. Kott served in, Togo and Cameroon as Economic and Political Officer and in Malawi and Senegal as Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in Indonesia and Canada. Mr. Kott was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

KOTT: In any case, I got back there and after a few weeks rustled up a job as Dick Bogosian's deputy. He headed up something called the Rwanda-Burundi Task Force, or something like that. In fact he was the point man on the post-genocide situation in Rwanda and the on-going civil war in Burundi, as our chief negotiator, if you will. And I became his deputy. It really wasn't much of the job, I don't want to say too much at this point, there wasn't much substance to it. And it was a short tour. It was considered a short tour so it wasn't going to be more than a year.

Towards the end of that year, I decided there was an opportunity in another agency, actually CIA, for at least one, possibly two-year stint out there, to work with Ambassador Montgomery in an office that works on intelligence sharing with other governments. So I accepted, it was an interagency office, State Department having, of course being in the intelligence community through INR, State Department having one slot in that office along with other intelligence agencies. So I went out there for a few years and that's where I retired from.

*Q: In this short tour Rwanda-Burundi, you didn't travel out to the region?*

KOTT: No.

*Q: That was just in Washington.*

KOTT: Yes. I might say that probably my major duty was as the interface especially when Ambassador Bogosian wasn't available to do it but increasingly turned it more over to me, interface with the NGO community. Which I must say was very influential in Washington under the Administration of the day. With Tim Wirth heading up the G, the Global Bureau and Tony Lake over at the White House, both of these people were very highly influenced by the NGO community, non-governmental organization community. As Dick Bogosian once said to me, "We ignore them at our own peril." They had the ear of Administration. There were certain NGOs that if they called up the White House, they'd get a call back from the President or Tony Lake.

*Q: This was a period after the genocide but before the things have really spread in Congo, Zaire...?*

KOTT: Yes. Right. The refugee Hutus from Rwanda, of course that's the genesis of so much of the problems that we are still experiencing in Congo, had spilled over into Congo of course. There were still many concerns. One was the concern on the part of the Tutsi led and dominated Rwandan government, post-genocide, their concerns about the armed Hutu militias that were basing, largely but not exclusively, out of the Congo. And the cross border raids, which were actually real. There were Rwandans being killed by this so-called Hutu militia. There was the issue of justice and judicial proceedings in Rwanda itself.

*Q: Had the tribunal been established, the special tribunal?*

KOTT: Not yet. We were working in providing aid and personnel to the Rwandans, working with the UN to get something launched. The entire elite, structure of the Rwandan government was decimated. The judges were killed. There were no judges. There were no police. There were no investigating magistrates, there was nothing. I guess there was the Arusha Tribunal was started up, now that I think back on it.

*Q: But it hadn't gone very far?*

KOTT: Not at all. They certainly hadn't any major trials at that point. They'd captured a few people and there were a few being held, four or five major alleged perpetrators. Some of whom were later convicted. And then the Burundi situation of course. There was a coup d'état. Actually Pierre Buyoya was in my office one day, asking for money to go back to Burundi. Not as the new head of state. He had already been president, he was on a sabbatical at Yale. He came down to visit with us and after the meeting with Dick Bogosian he came into my office and said, "I have a little problem, my payments aren't coming through." It was a bureaucratic issue. I knew Foltz, professor Foltz was up in Yale so I gave Bill a call and I said "Bill, Pierre Buyoya is in my office, or was in my office a few minutes ago and was asking me for help." And I explained it all to Bill and Bill helped me get in touch with the right people and get it all straightened out. So I sort of take indirect credit for Pierre Buyoya now being president once again of Burundi. Because of the money we were able to get him he went back and staged a come-back, through another coup. So he was the once and future president. And he's still there. Burundi is still of course undergoing a lower level but intense civil war situation, which is still ongoing, Hutu and Tutsi. Tragic situation. Anyway, it was not a fun year.

*Q: Anything else we should say about either that short tour or the time at detail to CIA?*

KOTT: No, I don't think it would be too appropriate to say too much about the tour at CIA at this point. It was, I can't say it was rewarding. It was somewhat eye opening. More from a bureaucratic point of view than substantive. It makes one coming from the State Department appreciate how well we do with so little, if you take my point. Coming from a building where the joke used to be that we were so broke that the Ambassador in London was burning the Benjamin Franklin furniture to keep warm in the winter. Bit of hyperbole of course. But we all know what the budget situation has been and how it has deteriorated over the years at State. And when you are used to that and you come face to face with this behemoth juggernaut called the CIA, and their resources. I remember, part of my time out there they were talking about a one billion dollar cut in the intelligence budget, so down from whatever 30 billion, it was eventually admitted that was the budget, down to 29 billion, people were gnashing their teeth and flailing themselves, and all we State Department people could do was laugh. The redundancy is just tremendous out there. Any issue, any country, doesn't have one analyst, it has 10, falling all over themselves. I don't know how they keep busy. That's on the DI (Directorate of Intelligence) side of the house. The DO (Directorate of Operations) side is another matter and I didn't get, I had some dealings with them but I didn't get involved very heavily, I was not covert out there, I was overt.

**RICHARD W. BOGOSIAN**  
**Coordinator for Rwanda and Burundi**  
**Washington, DC (1996-1997)**

*Ambassador Richard Bogosian was born on July 18, 1937, in Boston, Massachusetts. He studied history at Tufts University and graduated from University of Chicago Law School. In 1962 he entered the Foreign Service and his career has included positions in Niger Republic, Chad, Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda. Ambassador Bogosian was interviewed by Vladimir Lehovitch in 1998.*

*Q: No, I just wanted posterity to know what the Senior Seminar was. So you stayed with it for one year as the coordinator.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, as the dean. And of course, that was also in our new National Foreign Affairs Training Center, which is quite an interesting place. I had been a student at the old FSI, but that experience was new for me. It was the first time I was in a part of the system that was part of the management group, as distinct from a functional or geographic office. It was certainly a pleasant place, in that campus atmosphere, and it was perhaps the most... Well, it was just a very nice assignment for a year, and indeed, the Director General of the Foreign Service said to me, "This is your reward for going to Somalia."

Now the interesting thing was that it was a two-year assignment, and in June of 1995, by which time that class that I had been with had graduated and moved on and we were getting ready for the next year, a friend from Chad had phoned with some juicy gossip that she told my wife. And

so I wanted to go see the Chad Desk officer the next day to ask about this gossip, and that's in the Office of Central African Affairs, and the head of that Office was Arlene Render, who at present is our ambassador to Zambia. She said, "Is that Bogosian?" She said, "I need you." And she said, "We want you to be the coordinator for Rwanda, and we're going to add Burundi to it, too."

Now Ambassador Townsend Friedman, sometime earlier, had been coordinator for Rwanda, and in the spring of 1995, he had a heart attack while cycling along the Canal and fell in and drowned. So that's why they needed a coordinator. And I told you that when I was in Chad I was glad I didn't have to be in Somalia; but when I was in Somalia I was glad I didn't have to be in Rwanda. Well, they asked me to take on that coordinator job, and I said to myself, you know, the seminar was great, but I thought the next year would be more of the same; and I guess, like some old war horse, I couldn't resist the temptation to get back into what looked like it could be an interesting job. Now keep in mind that I knew virtually nothing about Rwanda and Burundi, but I agreed to become coordinator. And that's what I did as my final assignment as a Foreign Service officer, and that lasted until December 31, 1997.

The thing about Rwanda was that in 1994 there was one of the most horrible tragedies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the genocide of Rwanda, where several hundred thousand people were killed. But the thing that gave it its special quality as a subject for us to deal with was that there was a broad perception that the international community failed to respond. Now the principal deputy assistant secretary in the African Bureau at that time was Prudence Bushnell, now our ambassador in Kenya, and shortly after I started working we were having lunch together one day, and I said, "What is it about the Great Lakes of Africa?" which is the way one refers to that set of countries and what's gone on there. She said, "It's two things." She says, "It's guilt and frustration - guilt over what we failed to do and frustration that we don't really know what to do." And that, indeed, is the underpinning of what makes that job what it is because there are many places in the world that have serious crises; but either we don't get involved, like Tajikistan, or we do get involved, like the Middle East. But in the Great Lakes, the magnitude of what happened in Rwanda in 1994 gives it a moral dimension that not all political crises have, particularly since it's occurring around the same time as what's happening in Yugoslavia, where there's also a moral element to it and where we also weren't sure of whether to get in and how to get in and so forth.

The other thing about the Rwanda crisis is that it has generated new institutions. And I said to the new Rwanda Desk officer, who came on board about the time I did, "You're getting into cutting-edge diplomacy. There are things about the way we deal with Rwanda and Burundi and the other elements of that that are different." There was a UN peacekeeping force there. Now that wasn't the first UN peacekeeping force, but that's still a relatively new way of doing business, and we're not sure what we want to do about it. It was called UNAMIR. And at one point UNAMIR ended, but since then, from time to time, we've had to determine whether to have other peacekeeping forces, and it's a dilemma for the United States. And there's what I call the "Somalia Syndrome" and the "Rwanda Syndrome": the Somalia Syndrome says don't get involved because you're going to get hurt, and the Rwanda Syndrome says if you try to stay out you'll be damaged politically, you can't avoid these issues.

Q: *Do you think there was a political damage in the case of Rwanda?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, certainly in the views of the Rwandans - and many others. There is a sense that we were too timid; we were unwilling to admit that a genocide was taking place; and by the time we reacted to it... There are other things afterwards that -

Q: *Dick, let me just pursue this. If it had been perceived differently, what realistic reactions could one have taken?*

BOGOSIAN: Oh, I think we could have had a much more vigorous military action by UNAMIR. You wouldn't have gotten to the root of the problem, for sure, but you might have prevented the magnitude of the bloodshed, because, you see, that's part of it. The present régime in Rwanda feels that because UNAMIR existed before the genocide, but what happened was when the genocide began they pulled the troops out, and to a Rwandan this is immoral, the very reason you were there, you left when the going got tough. The other part of this, though, is that the people who committed the genocide, the radicals of the Habyarimana régime-

Q: *The radicals of which régime?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, the previous régime in Rwanda.

Q: *The Javier Romano.*

BOGOSIAN: Habyarimana - that's the president's name. They're referred to as *génocidaires*. They dominated, in terms of political organization, the refugees who were just across the border in Zaire. They continued their military engagements -

Q: *We're talking about Tutsi refugees.*

BOGOSIAN: No, no. Hutu.

Q: *Hutu refugees.*

BOGOSIAN: Not all Hutus were refugees, but those refugees were Hutus, and not all of them were *génocidaires*, but the *génocidaires* effectively ran that operation and they basically were financed by the Western countries that provided hundreds of millions of dollars of aid. So to a Rwandan survivor of the genocide, he says, first of all you pulled your troops out. They were actually there, and you pulled them out at the very time they were needed most because you were too timid to admit that a genocide was going on. But then you provided hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of aid to refugees who were essentially criminals. And so there's a kind of an international guilt that overhangs this whole Rwandan account.

Q: *I can't debate that, but I'm not aware that that's a widely felt guilt in the United States.*

BOGOSIAN: You may be right. It's a widely felt guilt in Rwanda. And I think, Vlad, it really does underlie our policy, because maybe the public at large doesn't feel it, but surely the people



that deal with these issues - the NGO community, political commentators - are well aware of it, and indeed President Clinton, when he was in Rwanda, essentially acknowledged it.

*Q: He did, and raised a lot of eyebrows over why he had to make one more apology on a trip full of apologies, in a way. Let me-*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I can only speak for Rwanda.

*Q: Absolutely. No, because I . . . and this is not a . . . this is not to get in the way of a train of thought, but one of the terrible dilemmas, to me, of Rwanda is that there isn't a good action there, there isn't a good or a winning or an intelligent action that one can take in the face of it, looking back on it. It's a terrible dilemma.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, that may be, and we're faced with it right today in Congo, but in terms of my own job, this is the situation with which I was presented. And the other thing I need to say is that by the time I got involved in this - first of all there was great concern about what was going to happen in Burundi, where there was great tension, and the same elements exist there, and as a result, there was a fear that there could be that. But however it's articulated, in fact, what drives our policy in that region of the world is that there should be no more genocides. So we support the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda. We support a close relationship with Rwanda itself, even though it's become somewhat controversial. There's a Uganda angle to this. And so forth.

Now in terms of my own job, from the summer of 1995 until the summer of 1996, I was the coordinator for Rwanda and Burundi, and there was no one else doing anything like that. After that '96 period we also had Howard Wolpe as the special envoy, and I'll talk about that later. Around the time I got involved, there were two or three things going on. One was a round table - the UNDP round table on Rwanda and the international community beginning to figure out how it should aid Rwanda. This gets complicated, because in the aftermath of the genocide, Rwanda, which is essentially a Francophone country and had been very close to France and that part of Francophonie and all that, the present régime is bitterly opposed to the French because they see them as having helped the previous régime. And so since we and the French are allies, sometimes that gets very complicated. And when I got going they were bitterly opposed to Zaire and Mobutu, who they felt was abetting all of this, and that was part of the general landscape. As I said, we were concerned about the situation in Burundi. You'd had some very violent ethnic cleansing going on in Bujumbura, the capital, where it was the Tutsis pushing the Hutus around, so this goes in both directions. And there was fear that it was getting out of control.

What I did was, on the one hand, to travel frequently to the region and have high-level meetings with the people involved and then to try to coordinate and manage the account back in Washington. And that got to be rather difficult at times. I crossed the Atlantic 18 times in the first six months of 1996, and we got into the issue of whether UNAMIR should be extended, and I would meet with Paul Kagame, the key leader in Rwanda, and find that they were tough people to deal with. And then all the usual things. We had an embassy in Kigali that people criticized for being uncritical of the régime there. The embassy in Kigali, which was physically the closest to the refugee camps, even though they were in Zaire, was well aware of some of the scandalous

development, and they reported it, and there were a lot of people that didn't want to hear this. It was a very emotional subject, I found.

The other thing that was new for me was that the non-governmental organizations, the NGO's, were somewhat more structured than in any other subject I had dealt with, and so they actually had what they referred to as the Burundi Policy Forum. Later it became the Great Lakes Policy Forum. And indeed, just today I was with them again, and they meet regularly. And the humanitarian aid community has kind of a big stake in that, and in '95, they were on both sides of the border because they were still trying to bring Rwanda back from its near collapse, plus the refugees in Zaire. And sometimes they became advocates or partisans for one side or the other.

*Q: Dick, we're in the thick of things right now in the very difficult business of being special coordinator for Rwanda and Burundi.*

BOGOSIAN: There's several things to think about when one talks about this subject, and I'll try to see if I can remember.

By the way, when I refer to the Great Lakes, the lakes they are referring to are essentially Lake Kivu, which is between Rwanda and Zaire (Congo), and also Lake Tanganyika, which is between Burundi and Tanzania on one side and Zaire (Congo) on the other side. And then there are some other lakes, Lake Victoria, Lake Edward, and so forth. The main countries involved are Congo, as it's now called, on the west, and Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania on the East. Now then what happens is that as political developments get underway involving one or the other of these countries, then other countries like Zambia, which is at the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, or Kenya or one of the other neighboring countries gets involved. In fact, now, in the Congo, you have seven or eight or nine countries involved. But when they say the Great Lakes, that's what they mean.

When in 1995, as Rwanda was emerging from the events of 1994, there was a lot of talk about a Great Lakes Conference, and the notion was if we could have some large political conference that would deal with all the related problems, particularly the refugee problem, that would be the thing to do. And so a certain amount of my time and effort at that stage of the game was on that issue, and in that connection I went to New York from time to time. And at that point, Lansana Kouyate, who had been in Somalia, was the senior person in the Africa part of the DPA, the Department of Political Affairs. And of course, Kofi Annan was in charge of peacekeeping operations and they also had a humanitarian office. I should note that the UN reputation is very bad in the Great Lakes region, and that comes up from time to time now, and there is a general perception among the countries in the region that the UN has dropped the ball. So that's just something to know. Now at the time, there was a diplomat from Cape Verde, and his last name was Jesus, and he was asked to take a look at whether or not one of these Great Lakes Conferences could be put together. And what he found was that the Rwandans didn't want one, and neither did the Ugandans. So while diplomatically we were pushing to have it, in effect, the Rwandans and the Ugandans scuttled it. So then the question was, well, what could be done? And that was the year of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, and of course, all the world leaders came to New York for that, among them President Museveni of Uganda and President Mobutu of Zaire, who were considered arch-rivals. What emerged was their request that Jimmy

Carter play a role in this, so for a good portion of the next year or so, we worked with Jimmy Carter and his people on what might be done in the Great Lakes. Carter had close links with Mobutu in particular, and he was able to get in touch with Mobutu in one way or another, and so off-and-on we would talk to Carter about whatever his latest meeting was, and his staff, in turn, would consult with us about what the latest developments were. And at times it got a little tense. I myself had meetings with him in Atlanta on two or three occasions, and also saw him in Washington, and on one of those occasions he was quite upset over what he thought was not adequate recognition by the Clinton Administration.

*Q: Of his contribution?*

BOGOSIAN: I think it was almost more a human thing: I'm a former President; I'm a Democrat; I deserve a little respect. I forget what he had done, but some letter that was written that he should have gotten was hung up in the Secretariat.

*Q: Was his involvement warmly welcomed by the White House?*

BOGOSIAN: The way I would characterize it was the U.S. government in general and the White House in particular was ambivalent. There was a feeling that he probably could make a contribution. My sense was that they also saw it as something of a complication. It certainly wasn't negative, but it was not undiluted positive either.

*Q: Do you remember, was this before or after his famous mission to Haiti?*

BOGOSIAN: It was sort of during. I mean, there was also Sudan, there was Korea, there was any number of things going on, and my impression was that there was a kind of grudging willingness to admit that maybe he had done something; but there was also this kind of freelancer who was inserting himself on any number of high-profile issues.

But what Carter did do was he helped organize two conferences, one in Cairo in December of 1995 and one in Tunis in, I think it was, March of '96. And the idea was to get these half dozen leaders together and hope that some form of conflict mitigation could occur. In the event, he really was not able to get much done, but one of the things he did do was to name Julius Nyerere to mediate the Burundi crisis, and that has continued to this day. In that sense, Carter did make a difference. And I think the other thing to say about Carter is once Ambassador Jesus concluded there was no hope for a Great Lakes Conference sponsored by the UN, there was a kind of a void, and what Carter did was to keep the diplomatic ball in the air for a while; and you know, in that part of the world, that's better than people shooting at each other.

*Q: It sure is.*

BOGOSIAN: Now the problem is that at that point in time, keep in mind that I was not responsible for our relationship with Congo, with Zaire, but they were very much part of this, and indeed, at one point I went between Kigali and Kinshasa in an effort to try to improve communications between them because each side was totally misinterpreting at least what the other side's stated position was. But in the long sweep of things I don't think that made much

difference. But we were very worried about the situation in Burundi. There were these youth gangs that were, as I say, committing ethnic cleansing in Bujumbura, including at the university.

Q: *These were Tutsi gangs.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, Tutsi gangs. And indeed, as I said, we were very concerned. I mean, the phrase they used was “Burundi might blow up,” and there was this fear that they were going to see what happened in Rwanda happen all over again. And one day I said to Kouyate in New York, I said, “We’re very worried about Burundi.” He said, “Dick, as long as you have a million Rwandan refugees in Zaire, that’s the real issue, that’s the real area of danger.” I mention that because the thing to keep in mind is that these things were going along at the same time. It isn’t as though Rwanda happened and then Burundi happened, but they also were somewhat separate as well. Mind you, when I started there were still tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees in Burundi. There were half a million in Tanzania, but there were over a million in Zaire. And one of the issues was whether the refugees could return, and the Rwandans kept telling us that they can come back, but the leaders of the refugees intimidated them and would not permit them, and they tried to frighten them, saying you’ll all be killed and everything. And we were very frustrated because we didn’t know what to do, in the sense that military action was not seen as feasible, and the government of Zaire was simply not able to meet its own responsibilities. There was talk of moving the refugees deeper into the interior. That was financially impossible, and so in a sense, we were kind of - what’s the phrase? - we were paralyzed, if you will.

Now something happened in the early spring of 1996 that I think in the long run was very important. The two provinces that border Rwanda and Burundi are North Kivu and South Kivu, and in North Kivu there’s the so-called Masisi Plain. And in the Masisi region there was a community of Tutsis, Zairean Tutsis; and in the local lingo they refer to them as *Banya Masisi*, ‘people of the Masisi.’

Q: *Can you say that again, Banya Masisi?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, Banya Masisi. What we refer to as the “Ex-FAR Interahamwe,” that is the remnants of the military and the militia of the old Habyarimana régime, was doing its own ethnic cleansing inside Kivu. And so they started pushing these Tutsis out, and they came into Rwanda. And the people who deal with refugee affairs said we’re not permitted to help them because they’re too close to the border. Now if I was a comic strip wearing a hat, my hat would go off my head, because this was *astounding*. The refugee camps in Zaire were within sight of the Rwandan border. Now they’re not supposed to be that close. It was common knowledge that the rules were being abused, and yet they were unwilling to help the Masisi, the theory being we’re not going to make the same mistake twice. The problem was that this was proof to Kagame that the international community would not help. You see, every time he thought the chips were down, the international community, he felt, would not do the right thing. And the reason that’s important I’ll get to later, but that problem existed in the spring. And in the meantime, the remnants of the old régime were attacking across Lake Kivu or incursions into the border and so forth, so that in the summer of 1996 Kagame came to Washington, and he said, “Look, if you’re not able to help me, I’m prepared to do something myself.” Now one way to interpret that is “if

you don't do it I will"; another way to interpret is "if you're not willing to do it, maybe I can help and I'll do it." And that becomes important later on.

But the scene shifted in the summer of 1996 to Burundi because what happened in Burundi in 1996 was - and here I need to stop for a moment. The thing about Burundi that made it different was that in 1992 they adopted a modern constitution that permitted democracy. And in 1993, when Buyoya was the dictator-president, there was an election. He ran, he got 35 percent of the vote, which isn't bad for a Tutsi (which comprise about 15 percent of the population), but it wasn't enough to win, so a fellow named Ndadaye won, but then he was murdered, and there was a coup attempt by the Tutsi soldiers. The point is that the Tutsis claim that the Hutus tried to commit genocide, and the Hutus claim that the military overthrew a democratically elected president. So there was this turmoil in Burundi.

By the time I came on the scene, there was something in place called the "Convention of Government," which had been worked out by a UN special representative named Ahmadou Ould Abdallah, who is a Mauritanian and presently heads up the Global Coalition for Africa here in Washington, another superb diplomat. Now the critics say that Abdallah's package favored the Tutsis, but on the other hand, at a time when Rwanda was blowing up, he kept that Burundi situation under control. Admittedly, there had been a bit of a bloodletting in Burundi in '93, and as one of our former ambassadors said to me, "I think that'll hold them for a while." But still, Abdallah put together a structure that kept the situation under control and essentially under the Convention of Government. You had a democratically elected parliament that was dominated by the principal Hutu party, although the principal Tutsi party was represented. You had a Hutu president and you had a Tutsi prime minister, but the military was essentially Tutsi, and the power structure was Tutsi.

What was happening in '95 and '96 was that it wasn't working. And as I pointed out, there was ethnic cleansing, there was violence and all the rest.

*Q: Ethnic cleansing here means moving people.*

BOGOSIAN: Killing a couple, kicking them out of the university, kicking them out of their neighborhoods, lots of violence, lots of killing. Now in the meantime, Hutu militias were conducting insurgency in Burundi as well, so everybody is fighting everybody, and lots of refugees, lots of internally displaced, all that kind of stuff.

In the summer of 1996, Buyoya, in effect, mounted a coup, more or less bloodless. In fact, what had happened was Tanzania and Uganda began to make noises of putting a military force in Burundi, with the agreement of the Burundians, in an effort to stabilize the situation. They thought this was all agreed to at Arusha in June of 1996, and in fact, I was in Bujumbura with Howard Wolpe to introduce him. By then he was our special envoy, and we had made numerous trips. Tony Lake, who was the National Security Advisor, George Moose, and I - I mean we had made numerous trips there trying to keep this Burundi thing under control.

*Q: George Moose, who was the assistant secretary for Africa.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, I should note that the day I agreed to take this job, our ambassador in Bujumbura was shot at in his car. So that was the level of danger that existed there.

I should say that I was in the stadium on National Day when the president announced this plan, and the prime minister said to us, "He blew it." And not within a week or two he was overthrown. In fact, he sought refuge in our ambassador's residence and he stayed there for a year.

Q: *So you were in the stadium in which country, Dick?*

BOGOSIAN: Bujumbura, in Burundi.

Q: *When the President -*

BOGOSIAN: - announced that a deal had been worked out with Uganda and Tanzania. Anyway, Buyoya took over in the summer of 1996.

Q: *How do we spell Buyoya?*

BOGOSIAN: B-u-y-o-y-a.

Q: *Thank you.*

BOGOSIAN: In fact, prior to that he was at Yale. He was looked upon as one of the most admirable African leaders, who had permitted democracy, and he was running some conflict resolution group, and someone came up with a fellowship for him at Yale University. In fact, he was on the same plane that Wolpe and I were on going to Bujumbura. Two weeks later he pulled a coup.

The thing about the coup in Bujumbura was... A couple of things that should be mentioned. First of all, Tony Lake was extremely concerned about what this meant. He was very worried about what might happen, the perpetual fear of massive bloodletting, and in August of 1996, there was a meeting of principals that I happened to attend, where the issue was raised about what do we do about some kind of military force? And there were questions raised about American troops, and as you can imagine, nobody wanted to send American troops there. But in that meeting, following that meeting, Secretary Christopher turned to Peter Tarnoff and me - we were getting ready to ride back to the Department - and said in so many words, "Isn't there anything that can be done?" And one thing led to another, and we began to lay the groundwork for what initially was called the African Crisis Response Force and has since come to be called the African Crisis Response Initiative. And this is a U.S. effort that now is international in character that is meant to develop an African capability to send troops on these humanitarian military operations.

So my point is simply that arising out of the events in Burundi in the summer of 1996 and the dilemma we faced... I had spoken earlier to Congressman Lee Hamilton, where he was expressing concern at this situation, and I said, "Do you want American troops to go?" He said

no. I said, "Would you be willing to help train African troops?" He said yes. So with that in mind, those of us who were familiar with this general notion began to propose it somewhat more formally; and indeed, over the next few months, including the participation of Leon Panetta, who was chief of staff, this idea was essentially born. Now later, other people dealt with it. I didn't. I didn't get into it, although I made a couple of trips in connection with that.

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*Q: Today is October 22, 1998, and this is a continuing interview with Richard Bogosian. Dick, we were getting into the business of being the coordinator for Rwanda last time, and we'd love to hear your thoughts on that subject.*

BOGOSIAN: The day I was asked to be coordinator for Rwanda and Burundi, which I think was June 14, 1995, it happened that our ambassador in Burundi was on the road and some unidentified people shot at him, and in a way, that was emblematic of the kind of instability that existed in Burundi in the summer of 1995. Our ambassador was Bob Krueger, and he had been a congressman and a senator from Texas, also a professor in English specializing in Shakespeare at Duke. When Krueger was shot, there was some concern over his safety. He had become a controversial figure in Burundi, where the power was in the hands of the Tutsis, particularly the military, and where Krueger, in what I think one would have to say was a very courageous way, was unwilling to simply ignore what the various elements of the Tutsi power structure were doing. He said to me that he thought that 90 percent of the killing in Burundi was at the hands of Tutsis, and 90 percent of that was done by the army. Now this was just the reverse of what the problem was in Rwanda, where the Hutus were beating up on the Tutsis. Krueger had become controversial. I visited Burundi shortly after I took over, and I was there on July 9. And essentially I was there overnight because Krueger was leaving the next day to come home on some kind of leave, and he really never went back. I think he may have gone back very briefly to close out, but there was a general sense that it was not safe for him to return.

*Q: Excuse me, was he hit when he was shot?*

BOGOSIAN: No. The vehicle he was in was hit. He had a couple of American security people with him who managed to get him out of there very successfully. He was on some kind of mountain road. They later were rewarded for their ingenuity and so forth. It took some really skillful driving to back up and get him out of the dangerous situation he was in. It was never quite clear whether they realized what they were doing (i.e., the people who fired the shots), whether they were trying to get him or the Burundian who was with him.

*Q: Do we know who it was?*

BOGOSIAN: No, no, we don't - not for sure, anyway; in fact, I don't know if we know who did it. In the background of what I was doing over the next six months was Krueger constantly pressing to get back to Burundi, and the powers that be in the State Department finding one reason or another not to let him get back. And at the one meeting I attended between Krueger and Deputy Secretary Talbott, Talbott made it quite clear that we were worried that he might get

killed, and that, of course, would be an incident. In fact, our whole embassy was in a dangerous situation.

On another visit to Burundi, I was sitting at Krueger's desk, and like many congressmen he had pictures all over the place. He has a wonderful picture of Senator Tower refusing to shake his hand and various other memories.

Q: *Why, he voted against Tower?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, Tower, I think, was a Republican and Krueger was a Democrat, I guess something like that. But among the pictures on Krueger's desk... You know, Krueger married a much younger woman, and he was in his 50s and she was, I think, still in her 20s. He told me that he saw her when she was about 15, and about seven or eight years later he finally married her, but whatever it was he knew that's who he wanted. But he had these very young children. In fact, one reason he went home was his wife was going to have a baby, and they knew the exact day and everything. But there was a picture of this gorgeous little blond child peeking out a doorway, and I said to him, "Don't you feel an obligation to her? Why would you want to return and put yourself in that risk?" He said, "Dick" - now this is a man who was a senator, congressman - "I've never done anything as fulfilling as being ambassador to Burundi." So the Foreign Service bug, I guess, hits even political appointees. As you know, he's now ambassador to Botswana.

So that's really just an anecdote. The other thing I would mention just as a kind of initial point to make is that upon becoming coordinator for Rwanda and Burundi, I found that what I was doing was juggling the coordinating function among numerous offices in the Department, numerous agencies that could be very fractions. It was not unusual to find that there was great controversy, either among U.S. government agencies or, say, between non-governmental organizations that were involved, the NGO community, and so forth. But I also had to travel. I traveled over that first year at least once a month. I visited a dozen different countries and a dozen different cities, and including in the United States, so that it was one of the most intense periods of my career. I went to Rwanda and Burundi both fairly often, also Brussels and Nairobi and so forth, for one reason or another. During this time I made one trip to Kinshasa as well, Cairo, Addis, Tunis, Atlanta, New York - it was an extremely intense period. So that's another background element.

When I took over, our principal immediate concern was Burundi, but I need to mention that at any given time, Burundi may be the focus, Rwanda may be the focus. If this week we were worried about Burundi, Rwanda was really on our minds, and vice versa, so that the two, in one way or another, required independent attention, but at any given moment the two issues were at the forefront of our concerns. What was going on in Burundi in that summer of 1995, and one reason that we were so concerned, was that not only was there an insurgency led by Hutu rebel groups that had a rear area - there's a word I can't think of it right now, but a sanctuary in eastern Zaire - with the *de facto* cooperation of the Mobutu régime, and therefore they could attack the northwest of Burundi at will and conduct other operations, also from Tanzania but particularly from Zaire. There were these gangs of Tutsi youth, mainly in Bujumbura, that were allied to one or another political leader. They were gangs. They were called militias, but they were



essentially gangs. And what they were doing, they were going into neighborhoods and beating up Hutus and, in effect, conducting ethnic cleansing. There were incidents at the university, which was dominated by the Tutsis. In fact, one form of discrimination was to permit only Tutsis to have higher education. And so it was a period of considerable tension.

*Q: That's a devastating form of discrimination.*

BOGOSIAN: It is indeed, because then, for example, another form of discrimination was in the military. And when we talked about this with the military, they'd say, well, we'd like to let the Hutus in, but they can't pass the test. And in a sense, that was true, but it was true because they were denied the same educational opportunities. So there was considerable tension in Burundi, and the overall atmosphere consisted of several elements. At one end, people like Tony Lake, who was very much concerned about the Burundi issue, who had a deep emotional attachment - as you may remember, he was assigned to Stanleyville, I think, or maybe Bukavu, to be our consul, and then Kissinger said, no, I want him in Vietnam - but for one reason or another Tony had a deep emotional attachment to this part of Africa.

*Q: He's a serious Africanist.*

BOGOSIAN: Evidently, yes.

*Q: He's written on it, he did his Ph.D. in that area, as I recall.*

BOGOSIAN: I see. I was not aware of that, but what I did know, of course, he was a National Security Advisor at this time, and Susan Rice was the senior Africanist on his staff, and they brought a great deal of intense emotion to this issue. You just mentioned there that his academic links and so on, but the other thing, of course, was the memory of the Rwandan genocide, and they were very much concerned that something like that might happen in Burundi.

*Q: As it has before.*

BOGOSIAN: Indeed. And on the other side of it were Krueger's concerns over the depredations of the Tutsis, his desire to stand up and say so publicly, to be seen to be supporting the Hutus. And as a result, in Washington, there were people who felt that he had committed the cardinal sin of not being objective. I think this presented one of the real dilemmas of trying to deal with this issue, because I admired Krueger's courage in stepping up and saying, look, this is the truth: the people who are running this country, in effect, are committing atrocities. The problem is, once you do that, it's virtually impossible to conduct the kind of diplomacy that is necessary to move the issue along. And so Krueger, as some people said, coming out of the Congress, acted as though he were in the Congress, where the most important thing to do is to take a public stance. And there were people who found this unhelpful. So in a sense, one of the issues we dealt with was Krueger, what do you do with Krueger? And because of the genuine concern over his safety, in effect, shortly after I took over he left Burundi and he was not really there, although he continued to play a role in commenting on the affairs, but our ambassador was not there. And so the task that fell to me, in the absence of an ambassador, on more than one occasion, was to go to Burundi and to try to urge the leaders of the country to keep talking with

each other. I had one meeting in Addis Ababa, where I was to meet the prime minister, who was a Tutsi, and the day before, the foreign minister asked to see me privately, and under their so-called Convention of Government, which was the arrangement that a man named Ahmadou Ould Abdallah, the Secretary General's special representative, had worked out to kind of keep peace in the aftermath of the assassination. Well I think I mentioned last time that the democratically elected president had been assassinated, but then his replacement was in that plane that Habyarimana was in that crashed, so the way they worked that out was to come up with something they referred to as the Convention of Government, which was essentially a power-sharing arrangement. And the president, as the constitution dictated, was a Hutu, whose name was Ntibantunganya.

Q: *Can you say that again, Dick?*

BOGOSIAN: The president's name was Ntibantunganya.

Q: *Phonetically?*

BOGOSIAN: It's spelled just the way it sounds. You don't want me to write it down, do you?

Q: *For posterity. Someone has to transcribe it.*

BOGOSIAN: N-t-u-b-a-n-t-u-n-g-a-n-y-a. I think that's right. Some of these names are really not very easy. Anyway, the foreign minister said to me, "I want you to know that in the meeting tomorrow I'll have to keep quiet, but I don't agree with anything the prime minister's going to tell you." So that was the kind of environment that existed. And the prime ministers was considered a moderate. There was a whole range of opinion and numerous political parties that existed, and so there was not only tension in Burundi over these issues, but there was enough, if not freedom of expression, at least enough public awareness of the positions that it fed that environment.

So I would go to Burundi from time to time and see all the leaders, and my message was you've got to keep talking and not fighting. And others went as well, including Tony Lake. In the spring of 1996, when it was getting particularly tense, he made a trip out there. George Moose made a trip that I accompanied him on.

Q: *George Moose was the assistant secretary for Africa.*

BOGOSIAN: The assistant secretary. Madeleine Albright, our ambassador to the UN, traveled there in February of 1996. So here's little Burundi, in that first year, not only did I make three or four trips, but a number of senior officials. Now that's while at the same time there was a general feeling that the so-called Seventh Floor, Secretary Christopher and Peter Tarnoff, frankly were not too interested in Burundi, so it was not the clearest-cut set of issues in Washington. Now I would say that from July of 1995, when I took the job, until July of 1996, that was what we were dealing with in Burundi, which is to say an effort to keep the two sides talking. And the tension between the Hutus and the Tutsis and the related political parties... These were the moderates. There were more radical people on either end of the equation.

And now while that was going on with Burundi, the situation with Rwanda was different at this particular time. The principal problem in Rwanda was the refugees. Now Rwanda itself was trying to get back on its feet after the events of 1994, and in '95-96, that process was underway. By and large, the country was, if you will, at peace, but clearly there was terrible trauma and suspicion, you know. The survivors suspected those who were linked to the Hutu community. The refugees were frightened of going back. There was certainly in the refugee community an effort by their leaders to heighten that fear and to demonize the régime in Kigali. In the meantime, thousands and thousands of people were being jailed. At that time it was about 30,000, and even that was terribly overcrowded. At one point it got up to about 120,000, and the prison conditions in Rwanda were just unspeakable. I visited a number of prisons in Rwanda during my time, and some of them were like black holes, particularly the local jails, as distinct from the prisons. In some cases, they literally were in boxes on top of each other, if you can imagine big packing boxes on top of each other. So that was one of the problems, and yet the government pointed out that these people were guilty of genocide, and they asked for help; and most of the donors were unwilling to help build jails. So there was a tension between the Rwandans, who felt that the international community let them down by looking the other way while the genocide was taking place, so they were upset that the international community was not helping the survivors while pouring money into the refugee camps, which in turn was misappropriated by the old *génocidaires*. The international community was concerned about the human rights situation in Rwanda, such things as the jails, a judicial system that essentially was dysfunctional. And this atmosphere has continued up to the present. There was an international peacekeeping operation called UNAMIR, but from a Rwandan point of view it didn't do anything worthwhile, and one of my first tasks in December of '95, was to ask Paul Kagame, the leader, the vice president/minister of defense, to permit UNAMIR to stay for three more months. In fact, they did permit it, but they did it in a way that was chilling. I found in that first meeting Kagame to be kind of a cold fish. In fact, over time, I've developed more respect and admiration for him as a leader, and he has become a little more warm in our meetings, but I discovered that dealing with Rwanda they were in an extreme sense a no-nonsense group, and some of their people were utterly humorless.

Q: *The UN crowd.*

BOGOSIAN: No, no, no, the Rwandans themselves. And the fundamental problem in Rwanda, in that sense, was this deep distrust over the United Nations for one reason or another, while the international community was seen as excessively sympathetic and accommodating to the refugees, who in turn were linked to the *génocidaires*. And to a Rwandan this is terribly unfair and illogical. But just to note that that was a part of this.

And for me as a diplomat, this was all new. Mind you, I had dealt with a peacekeeping operation in Somalia, but in Rwanda we were doing things that were new. I don't think anybody had ever faced a genocide like this. No one had faced the kind of problems that went with the prison situation, where we were unwilling to help them, and yet we complained that they weren't doing more. And yet no one denied that these people probably were guilty of crimes. It's still an issue in Rwanda, and nobody's come up with an answer. The International Criminal Tribunal was a

mess, and nothing much was happening at that stage, and yet it presumably was the symbol of international concern over genocide.

For the first time there was a human rights field operation in Rwanda, but it was ineffectual as well. So we were trying to do new and innovative things that were not immediately successful, and the government in the mean time wanted traditional aid, some of which they got, but they weren't satisfied with it. So there was a generally sour atmosphere.

Now that said, the U.S. was among the most accommodating to the Rwandans, and we were increasingly seen as Rwanda's patron. There was a recognition that Kagame, who for a time was in the Command General Staff College, had links to the United States, and it was an open secret that many people in the United States, including the U.S. military had great admiration for him as a soldier; and combined with the deep antipathy between France and Rwanda, over time, including later in 1977, people like Emma Bonino, the head of the European Community Humanitarian Organization, were openly critical of the United States, and all kinds of allegations about our military assistance and all the rest - most of which is wrong. Our assistance is quite modest, but it became quite a symbol (and I'll mention this again a little later).

Now at the time when we were very worried about the Burundi situation, I had a meeting with Lansana Kouyate, who you remember was a colleague of mine in Somalia, and at this point he headed up the African part of the Department of Political Affairs in New York, and I would see him from time to time, and at one time I said we are worried about the Burundi situation. He said, "Dick, as long as there are a million refugees on the border of Rwanda, that's your most urgent problem."

Q: *Meaning? What does that mean?*

BOGOSIAN: What he meant was -

Q: *You can't do two things at once?*

BOGOSIAN: No, what he meant was that one way or the other there could be a war, and in that part of the world when you talk about war, you talk about the possibility of genocide. In effect, what the situation was was that, although the so-called RPA, the Rwanda Patriotic Army, had defeated the Habyarimana régime, they did so only in the sense that they got him out of Rwanda. But they still existed in the refugee camps, and therefore, in their point of view, the civil war continued; it was just that they were in the refugee camps and Kagame and company were in Kigali. So the threat of war and the threat of genocide continued. As a result, there was a feeling among many, including many in the United States, that some kind of international conference was needed; and the United Nations, in the latter part of 1995 - I think I mentioned this previously - took a look at this and, in a word, concluded that it wasn't going to work. Then at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, Yoweri Museveni, the president of Uganda, and Mobutu, the president of Zaire, although enemies of each other, asked Jimmy Carter to take the lead in putting together a summit.

And so there was a summit meeting in Cairo in December of 1995, after which I went to Kigali, where I made the démarche on UNAMIR, and then on to Kinshasa, where I tried to urge the Zaireans to be more forthcoming with the Rwandans, having made the same démarche with the Rwandans. There was another summit meeting in Tunis, in March of 1996. The main thing that emerged in the end from these summits was to name Julius Nyerere to be the facilitator of Burundi peace talk.

Q: *Could you tell us who was at these summits?*

BOGOSIAN: The summits were attended by the presidents of Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Uganda, and Tanzania, plus Jimmy Carter and there probably was someone there from the UN - I can't remember now whether they were represented or not.

Now as we got into 1996, I mentioned the high level U.S. visitors, I mentioned the strains in Burundi, and I mentioned that the Convention of Government was under great strain; and around that time Abdallah left Burundi, which meant that one of the most important diplomats, the man who probably had an ability to keep things moving, was no longer present in Burundi, and his role has never really been repeated by anyone in Bujumbura. And gradually, Nyerere began to figure out how he would work some kind of mediation. In the spring of 1996, something happened that in the event had profound implications for the region. The Tutsis in North Kivu, in the Masisi Plain, were the victims of ethnic cleansing there.

Q: *Ethnic cleansing? You mean they were moved out.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, essentially by Rwandan Hutus who had done the genocide in Rwanda. They had become a military force in that part of Zaire.

Q: *And moved the Tutsis out.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, pushed. *Pushed* is the word. And they went to Rwanda to seek sanctuary. And the international refugee establishment decided that they could not be given assistance because they were too close to the border. Now this outraged the Rwandans, who had seen hundreds of millions of dollars given to the Hutu refugees within sight of the border. The thinking by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and those in the United States responsible for refugee policy was, we don't want to make the same mistake twice; but in the context it was absurd. This occurred at a time when there were beginning to be incursions by insurgents across lake Kivu into Rwanda for the purpose of committing what amounted to guerilla attacks.

On our side, during the spring of 1996, many of us were beginning to conclude that the refugee situation was becoming intolerable. The under secretary for global affairs, Tim Wirth, who had some responsibilities, among other things felt that the cost, the financial cost, was unsustainable. He also worried about the food that had to be provided. We therefore attempted to see if there was any way we could get around the problem. Now the thing to keep in mind was, as Mrs. Ogata, the UN high commissioner for refugees, has pointed out, no political entity, nor the United Nations as such, was willing to undertake the security aspect of this. The UNHCR paid

some Zaireans to perform police functions, and in fact, it worked reasonably well, but the kind of going in there and disarming the refugees nobody was willing to do. Nor was anybody willing to come up with the money to move the refugees farther away from the border. And the international community had somehow gotten in to a case of suspended animation where these refugees were concerned. They were willing to put up the money to feed them and run the camps, but the camps as they existed violated most of the rules. There was political activity, there was military activity, it was an open secret they were too close to the borders. But whenever anybody tried to think of what to do, nothing happened.

So in the spring of 1996, we thought something had to be done, and we began to examine what might be done, and we developed some ideas of our own. We consulted with the European Union, who had a special envoy named Aldo Ajello-

Q: *Would you repeat that, Aldo Ajello?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, A-j-e-l-l-o. That's how you spell Ajello, an Italian politician who had done very good work in Mozambique and was the EU special envoy for the Great Lakes.

Q: *Dick, can you just share for a minute, when you say, "We did this," can you explain-*

BOGOSIAN: We the U.S. government.

Q: *-who the we was?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, it was an interagency group. It was the African Bureau, the Refugee Bureau, the National Security Council, AID - the different people who tried to develop. . . and it was nothing heroic. It was almost like a work to rule, in other words, start applying some of the UN rules, do a census. There was a feeling that there was an exaggeration of the number of refugees. Our embassy in Kigali was reporting that a number of abuses and violations of refugee rules, and not everybody wanted to pay attention to the reporting. And in fact, the embassy was being criticized for being overly supporting of the Rwandan position. Of course, the embassy in Congo was in Kinshasa, which was very far away, and they really weren't able to provide the sort of close-up view that one might have wanted. We, as I say, consulted with the UNHCR as well. In short, during this period where in the spring there was lots of work going on and consultations with a view toward trying to get this refugee situation off dead center, in fact, nothing happened, but I'll explain later what did happen, but at least there was an effort underway to do this.

Now I'll just note, going ahead a little bit, that in May there were three meetings in Geneva. There was something that we put together called the Rwanda Operational Support Group, which was essentially all the governments and international agencies that were involved coming together at our request to discuss what to do. There was a UNDP roundtable on Rwanda, and there was also another meeting on Burundi; and at that meeting we explained that we felt something had to be done on the refugee issue and we intended to move a little more vigorously. And indeed, some people were rather upset that we were pushing that issue. I think the most significant event, though, in the context of which I'm speaking, was in the August of 1996, when

Kagame came to the United States and said, in effect, as he later said publicly, “You need to do something about this refugee situation. We cannot tolerate it.” It was a direct threat to the national security of Rwanda. And we gave an answer that was, from his point of view, equivocal. And then he said something that can be interpreted, too, as... “He said, in effect, “If you don’t want to do it, we will.” Now what he may have meant was, “If you don’t care to do it, maybe you’d like to have us do it.” Or he may have said, “If you don’t do it, damn it, I’m gonna do it.”

But I’ll leave that there for the moment, because what happened after the May meeting was that the situation in Burundi began to unravel. There was increasing tension, and the new development in the Burundi context was that Uganda and Tanzania, and to some extent Kenya, began to talk about putting their own troops in Burundi, not as an invasion force but as an effort to help the Burundians pull themselves together. And they met at Arusha and put forward a plan. And the Burundians, at first blush, appeared to accept it, both the Tutsis and the Hutus, that is to say, both Ntibantunganya, the president, and the Tutsis prime minister. And around that time, Howard Wolpe, who by then had been named our special envoy for Burundi negotiations, and I visited Bujumbura.

Q: *Wolpe with a W.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, the former congressman. We were at the stadium in Bujumbura, where the president, on a National Day (I think it was July 1, but I may have the dates wrong), said in effect that they had just been in Arusha and they accepted the Ugandan-Tanzanian plan. Now traditionally it has been anathema to the Tutsis that any foreign military will set foot in Burundi. You know, the crowd basically didn’t respond much one way or the other, but later, we talked to the prime minister, and he said to us that the president had blown it, and he was very worried about what would happen. And in fact, shortly thereafter, he (the president) was threatened physically in a provincial town, and that was the signal for a change of government. And Ntibantunganya sought refuge at the U.S. ambassador’s residence, where he stayed for nearly a year.

Q: *Who was the U.S. ambassador at that time?*

BOGOSIAN: His name is Morris Hughes, “Rusty,” as everybody -

Q: *Morris N. Hughes.*

BOGOSIAN: I don’t know if there’s an *N* there.

Q: *Rusty Hughes.*

BOGOSIAN: Rusty Hughes. In fact, he had just gotten there very shortly before this.

Q: *So he had a guest.*

BOGOSIAN: He had a guest. But Buyoya, who been the president that permitted the democratic takeover, in effect, mounted a bloodless coup, and that caused great concern in

Washington, because what happened then were two things. The neighbors of Burundi - Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zaire - met at Arusha and decided to impose economic sanctions on Burundi. They said they could not tolerate a military takeover of a democratically elected government, or at least the legitimate successor of a democratically elected government - which in the context of African development is an amazing development, that the Africans themselves, on their own, made that statement, which was later endorsed by the OAU.

The other thing that happened, though, was that again in Washington, particularly Tony Lake became very concerned about the Burundi situation. No one quite knew what was going to happen in the aftermath of the coup in Burundi. Everybody worried that there might be military activity of one kind or another, and Lake, at a meeting in August at the White House, raised the issue of some kind of peacekeeping presence, and he made the point that if no one else did it maybe the Americans should do it. It became quite clear that other principals had no desire to do that.

**ROBERT E. GRIBBIN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Rwanda (1996-1999)**

*Ambassador Gribbin was born in 1946 in North Carolina and graduated from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee and SAIS. He served in numerous posts including Bangui, Kigali, Mombasa and Kampala. He was named ambassador to the Central African Republic in 1993 and ambassador to Rwanda in 1996. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

GRIBBIN: I'd been asked to be the ambassador in Rwanda, a place where I'd served before. I spoke the languages. I knew a lot of the players in the new government from the time that they were in exile in Uganda. I felt I was well placed to be able to make a positive contribution to solving some of the enormous problems that had been visited upon Rwanda. Despite expressed sympathy from peers and colleagues about being named ambassador to Rwanda, I was very excited by the prospect.

*Q: Let's put it in context. What had happened? Before you get out there, let's talk about what the situation was.*

GRIBBIN: Rwanda's genocide occurred in April of 1994. This genocide was a political crime. That is, it was a conscious decision by some of the ruling elite who were Hutu to solve their political problem, personal power problem and their economic problem by killing the opposition, and by this they meant not only the Tutsis, who were a minority in the country, about 15 percent of the population, but also political opponents who were Hutu.

*Q: It wasn't just a racial thing.*



GRIBBIN: Not just racial. Certainly, ethnic animosity generated the hatred necessary for this. There is a long history here, which I'll briefly recount. Prior to independence Tutsis were on the top of the social and economic pyramid. They had ruled and, in some ways, oppressed the Hutus for generations. At independence the tables were turned, the majority Hutus came to power and began a systematic repression of Tutsis, expelling some and killing others. Hutu leaders learned that they could make political hay by going after Tutsis. Before long this became an institutionalized part of politics in Rwanda. In 1990, a Tutsi exile army invaded from Uganda and tried to reclaim a national role. The invasion was thwarted by a combination of French, Belgian, and Rwandan troops. Ultimately the matter ended up in Arusha, Tanzania where a series of negotiations ensued designed to create power-sharing arrangements, which would give everybody a piece of the action. Well, most everybody - new internal political parties, the Tutsi exiles, and certainly the government in power - were scheduled to get a role. However, there were no provisions for the "kitchen cabinet," the insiders, the men around President Habyarimana, who stood to lose everything - lose their position, lose their power and lose their ability to steal from public coffers, direct contracts their way, etc. They began to see, we think, that Habyarimana was selling them out in order to secure his position so that he might continue as president in the new power-sharing government.

Q: *Well, what had happened to the kitchen cabinet?*

GRIBBIN: This group was called the *Akuzu*, and they were essentially his brothers-in-law and other relations of Habyarimana's wife. They began then to think in terms of genocide. Actually they took a couple of practice runs at it. In 1991, and again in 1993 they organized pogroms aimed at Tutsi residents in particular areas. Those deaths did not generate much of an international reaction and no internal sanction. From there plans expanded.

Q: *How did they do this? I mean, would they go out and stir up the people, use troops?*

GRIBBIN: They used some militia in these practice runs, and then began the creation of a large secretive militia called the *Interahamwe*, which means in Kinyarwanda "those who fight together." The *Interahamwe* was composed of unemployed youths and so forth who were susceptible to the message of ethnic hatred. Army resources were diverted to this militia for the purchase of weapons.. Secret training camps were established. It appears that the French had some knowledge that training was going on, although they apparently did not know for what purpose these men were being trained.

In any case, by January and February 1994, Habyarimana was under intense international and internal pressure to implement power sharing decisions that had been negotiated and accepted at Arusha a year earlier. The president went to Tanzania in April of 1994 where he, in fact, agreed to implement the remaining provisions that would permit this power-sharing to go forward. Elements of it were already in place. There was already an RPA (Rwandan Patriotic Army) battalion in Kigali protecting the Parliament, where there were RPM (Rwandan Patriotic Movement) members of parliament. So some of the elements of the power-sharing were already in place. But in any case, Habyarimana agreed to complete the process. On the evening of April 6 as his plane was landing again in Kigali, it was shot down. The president and all aboard, including the president of Burundi, who was hitching a ride, were killed.

Q: *Who shot them?*

GRIBBIN: Who shot them down has remained somewhat of a mystery even today. There are allegations that the RPA shot them down. There are allegations that a Belgian mercenary unit shot them down as well as allegations that a French military unit shot them down. There's not a lot of compelling evidence in any respect, but the people who seemed to have, in hindsight, the best agenda for shooting down the president were in fact the *Akuzu*, his kitchen cabinet, who felt that he had betrayed them. Obviously the shooting down of the airplane became the signal for the genocide to burst forth. It started that night. The plane was shot down about 9 PM. *Interahamwe* militiamen were on the streets shortly thereafter with their lists, looking for in the first instance for Tutsi and Hutu opposition politicians who were in town - they were the most accessible - to kill. The killing started that night and as the Hutu opposition politicians were eliminated, the genocide expanded and took on a much more racist tone. Exhortations to kill Tutsis were broadcast over Radio Mille Collines, which was a popular "hate radio" station. The well-organized militia began systematically to slaughter Tutsi not just in town but also in rural areas. In face of the violence Tutsis began to gather at places of refuge such as churches or local government headquarters, where traditionally they gained protection of the priests in the case of the church or burgomaster, who was in charge of the district, or the *préfet*.

However, this time refuge did not work. Instead, local militia would ensure that a firm ring was set up to contain the Tutsis. Then they would call for the *Interahamwe* who would come, throw a few hand grenades into the church to panic and terrify everyone. Then the killers would wade in with machetes and clubs and kill everyone. Those who survived these terrible massacres were generally people who were wounded but who fell and stayed under the bodies of the dead that lay on top of them.

The genocide was organized to involve as many people from the Hutu community as possible in the crime. Thereafter, everybody would be implicated so no one would be able to call others to justice. By and large, this theory worked fairly well. It worked well because Rwandan culture had a strong tradition of discipline. People did what they were told. When leaders told them to take up arms and kill their Tutsi neighbors or turn them in or point out where they were hiding, promising in many cases their land or their goods or their women if they did this, they complied. There was enormous peer pressure to participate. Sanctions – even one's own death for refusing – cowed all but the most resistant. Estimates are that maybe as many as half a million Rwandans participated in some fashion or another in the killings. The upshot was that this was a very efficient genocide - if you can use the term - more Rwandans died in a shorter space of time than the Germans had ever managed to kill during the Holocaust. In about six weeks or seven weeks, almost a million people were killed, and almost all of them at close quarters. When I looked at Rwanda after the fact, I saw intact buildings and intact houses - it didn't resemble a war zone whatsoever. However, plentiful evidence of genocide was found in the killing places where thousands of skeletons, desiccating bodies, skulls, and bones were stacked in profusion. A number of these gruesome sites have been preserved as memorials to the horror.

Q: *Who was our ambassador at the time, and what was our reaction - I'm talking about the American reaction? And then let's talk about the international community.*

GRIBBIN: David Rawson was our ambassador in Kigali. David was an experienced African hand and an experienced Rwandan hand. In fact, he's the only American diplomat who speaks Kinyarwanda fluently because he grew up in a missionary family in neighboring Burundi.

Q: *How do you spell that?*

GRIBBIN: R-a-w-s-o-n. You ought to talk to him.

Q: *Where is he?*

GRIBBIN: He is retired and teaching in Michigan.

Undoubtedly David had inklings, as did other diplomats, that something was afoot, but something always was afoot in rumor rife Rwanda. The first Washington reaction to the violence was that this was a continuation of the civil war. The fact that the violence was directed at civilians was just another sad aspect of the civil war. When strife occurs and law and order breaks down, our first inclination is to evacuate, and so essentially over that first weekend, virtually all of the foreigners in Rwanda left, with the exception of a few United Nations peacekeeping personnel, which I'll talk about in a minute. Americans evacuated overland to Bujumbura on Sunday, April 9. French and Belgian troops arrived to escort their nationals to the airports. Belgians troops that were part of UNAMIR, the UN force, departed as well. In short, everybody was gone by Sunday or Monday.

Q: *You mentioned Belgian or French mercenaries. Who were these?*

GRIBBIN: There weren't really any formal mercenary units that I knew about. When I talked about shooting down the aircraft, it was more to show the rumor mill at work.

There was, however, in compliance with the Arusha process, a United Nations peacekeeping force in Rwanda called UNAMIR (United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda), which was composed of about two thousand five hundred men under the command of a Canadian general, whose name was Dallaire. The force was there to implement the peace accords, to supervise the cease-fire, to oversee the integration of the RPA into the Rwandan Army, and to ensure nationwide stability so the peace process could go forward. UNAMIR had a Chapter VI mandate, which made it a peacekeeping operation, with specific limitations on its use of force. The heart of UNAMIR was composed of about a thousand Belgian troops. Bangladeshis, Ghanians and others filled out the ranks. An incident on the first morning of the genocide affected UNAMIR quite strongly. The prime minister selected by the Arusha process was a woman named Agathe Uwinlingiyimana. She happened to live, in fact, in the house next door to our DCM, Joyce Leader. Mme. Agathe was targeted, obviously, as an opposition politician by the *génocidaires*. They came to her house. I understand that she tried to get over the wall to our DCM's house, but was not successful. Her bodyguard of 10 or 11 Belgian soldiers from UNAMIR were not able to protect her. She was killed, and her family along with her. The Belgian troops, who surrendered on orders from their commander to the militia, were taken to the nearby army camp, where they were tortured and killed. When Belgium heard about that on Friday, the 7<sup>th</sup>, the initial Belgian

reaction was to unleash its troops, take control of the city and bring the Rwandan violence to an end, punish the guilty and so forth. But within several hours the Belgian position changed - and it has never been clear to me exactly why it changed - instead Belgium decided to withdraw from UNAMIR and leave Rwanda.

*Q: So often in these cases, and particularly we have been going through some of the same thing in Bosnia at this time, the hand of the United Nations was one of essentially passivity or doing nothing. It sounds like -*

GRIBBIN: Well, part of the problem was that-

*Q: It sounds more like the United Nations at the spirit of the time than a military decision on the part of the Belgians.*

GRIBBIN: No, the Belgian decision was not made by the Belgian commander on the spot, the United Nations commander or the Security Council. It was made in Brussels. In fact, UNAMIR chief General Dallaire argued throughout that he wanted an expanded mandate that would permit protection of civilians, including the use force to do so. He wanted more troops and a revised mandate. He didn't get either. He didn't get support from the Security Council in part because the United States was among the members of the council that didn't want to expand the mandate. The perception in foreign capitals, including Washington, was that this was a civil war; this was not something that merited greater UN involvement. Belgian destroyed Dallaire's ability to do anything on the ground such as unilaterally reinterpreting his orders. With the Belgian contingent gone, UNAMIR had no capable armed infantry, because its other troops were mostly support troops or not reliable enough to operate in that environment.

So UNAMIR became toothless. Without a full compliment of troops UNAMIR was not able to pacify the city, create points of refuge or protect civilians in the city. Notable exceptions were the Mille Collines Hotel, one of the hospitals, a church and one of the stadiums, where UNAMIR held off the rabble for a while. The strain of not being able to help was a terrible psychological burden for General Dallaire. Subsequently, he had a nervous breakdown. The question remains unanswered whether or not, if Belgian troops had remained, would they have been able to make a difference. My view is that they probably would have. I think that's the view of most people who studied the issue. 2,500 troops would have made a difference.

*Q: Well-disciplined troops up against militias usually do.*

GRIBBIN: Exactly, although they may not have been able to take the battle to the militia, they would certainly have been able to defend key positions and probably pacify the city of Kigali.

*Q: The feeling is that this came from the Belgian Government.*

GRIBBIN: Yes.

*Q: Because they would imagine, particularly having your troops tortured and killed, the Belgians must have been rip-roaring mad.*

GRIBBIN: Yes, that's why I found the decision puzzling. The Belgian Parliament has looked at it, but they haven't, to my satisfaction, investigated that point sufficiently.

Q: *Maybe they don't want to.*

GRIBBIN: Maybe they don't want to. In any case, with the Belgian withdrawal, UNAMIR was gutted. Thereafter it was able essentially only to preserve itself and a few people. Nonetheless there were many heroic deeds done by remaining personnel, particularly in protecting the Mille Collines Hotel. Meanwhile, genocide swept the eastern part of the country but in the south the *préfet*, to show the power of officials, the *préfet* of Butare opposed the genocide, even though he and his team had been instructed to do it. There was no genocide in Butare Prefecture, or very little, despite exhortations from the center. However, the new central government that formed after Habyarimana's death was the pro-genocide government. It replaced the *préfet* and killed him. Immediately thereafter genocide started in that prefecture. Within the course of six or seven weeks even though genocide had not run its course, most easily available targets were dead. Killings happened at roadblocks. Rwandans carried identity cards, and if your card said you were a Tutsi, you were killed, but if you were a Hutu, you passed through. There are several books - Human Rights Watch, in particular, did an excellent summary of individual stories that chronicle both the heroics and the horror of all of this.

The RPA immediately engaged again because they recognized genocide and accepted the obligation to stop it. However, with the RPA moving out of its northern enclave and, with no western world eyes and ears left in Kigali, and with the genocide government decrying RPA perfidy even as it issued propaganda that all Tutsi were fifth columnists and needed to be killed, the explanation that the killings were civil war related made some sense. Remember also that the RPA was secretive revolutionary army that didn't have good public relations or make an effort to explain itself well to the outside world. In face of this uncertainty, the Western world paused while the genocide took place. Meanwhile, the RPA began to move through the eastern part of the country where it stopped the genocide, but its troops were too late, almost always too late. They came upon stadiums and churches that were full of corpses. Many Hutus, fearing the RPA advance, fled before them into Tanzania. Subsequently, the RPA army pivoted south of the city of Kigali and moved into the southwestern part of the country before finally closing in on Kigali itself. They took the city on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1994.

Q: *The militia was pretty good at killing unarmed people and not very good at war fighting.* -

GRIBBIN: The militia did not put up much resistance to RPA soldiers, although there were elements of the Rwandan army that fought the RPA throughout. By July 4<sup>th</sup> the city had fallen; by July 17<sup>th</sup> the RPA had occupied most of Rwanda. Just prior to that the French Government - I can only characterize my views of the French Government action here - the French Government concluded that something needed to be done in Rwanda. If the United Nations were not going to respond, France would lead a coalition to respond. France mounted an intervention called *Opération Turquoise*, whereby French and French speaking African troops were inserted into the western part of Rwanda from Zaire. The idea was to halt genocide in that area. These troops secured the southwestern portion of the country, about a sixth of the country. The French

operated under the presumption that reasonable people could come to reasonable solutions. France judged the violence to result from civil war, which required resolution via power-sharing, rather than reciprocal violence. Nonetheless, while France did provide some protection to Tutsis in its zone, some genocide continued there as well. Most importantly, the French occupation permitted the leadership of the *Interahamwe* and the leadership of the genocide government to regroup and to exit in a rather orderly manner into Zaire, from whence they would pose problems that I had to deal with during my tenure.

The French withdrew from Rwanda towards the end of August, and the RPA took over completely. Ambassador Rawson returned and reopened the embassy and began to deal with the new authorities. The country was devastated. Not only had a million people been killed, but two or three million had taken flight and sought refuge in Tanzania, Congo and Burundi. Another several million were displaced internally. Some of them returned home rather quickly, particularly from the Congo, but there was an overhang of well over a million refugees for the next several years. That also was a problem that I had to deal with during my tenure.

The situation when I arrived in January 1996 was that a very fragile government ruled with the political wing of the RPA in control. The RPM government implemented the Arusha Agreements in their entirety, with the exception of denying seats to President Habyarimana's party, the MNRD and its extremist right wing the CDC. They were all in exile in any case. The remnants of whatever political parties were left as well as the RPM constituted the parliament. So initially, from July of 1994, what you had in Rwanda - although certainly without question the government was controlled by the largely Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Army - was a Hutu president, a majority Hutu cabinet, and a majority Hutu National Assembly. Suspicion on the part of outside observers throughout the next months, was that the Tutsis, coming as conquerors, would visit the same devastation on the Hutus. That suspicion drove or influenced policy decisions and perspectives in the West, including in the United States. There was no question that the new government wanted to be secure in its belief that genocide would not recur. It that regard it maintained a military machine capable of meeting any challenge, but there was never any public indication from the RPA that Rwanda would deviate from announced intentions to implement the Arusha plan. Even so, some Tutsi individuals didn't agree with the power sharing formula. Within the Tutsi there were differences of opinion, and also differences of experience. One group known as *rescapés*, which means 'survivors' in French, were those who survived the massacres. Typically their families didn't, and often one man or one woman or one small nuclear family would have lost dozens of relatives. *Rescapé* families bore the brunt of genocide. On the other side were new arrivals, that is those who came along with the Rwandan Patriotic Army. Remember that army came from exile. Their families came from exile too. Even though these Tutsis had many distant cousins who died in the genocide, their immediate families did not. These folks were the ones who assumed the leadership, and they were shortly joined by more returnees, exiles from places like Congo, the U.S., Belgium, Uganda, and Burundi - all of whom saw the chance to come back to their homeland and make an new start. So there were different groups.

When I arrived, the rump UNAMIR, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force was doing useful work around the countryside. UNAMIR had been beefed up again by the Security Council in June 1994, too late to intervene in the genocide. The United States provided armored vehicles

later that year and additional troops - not Belgians but Ethiopians, Zimbabweans, and Gurkas arrived. UNAMIR had the country under supervision. Local institutions of government completely collapsed. The people who had manned them before were either dead or in exile. There were no courts. There were no police. There were no health services. There were no schoolteachers. All of those people were gone.

*Q: Let's talk a bit before we get you actually in place about what you were picking up in Washington and perhaps the influence of Bosnia, because this was going on at the same time, was it not?*

GRIBBIN: By my time lessons learned in Rwanda were being applied in the Balkans, not the other way around. The U.S. was being more active in the Balkans, I think, in recognizing the need for immediate action, the need to act in terms of larger-scale forces with a broader political agenda. These were all lessons learned from Rwanda. They were lessons that should have been learned in Somalia. However, the Somalia lesson that was applied to Rwanda was to beware of involvement in a situation that you didn't understand because when it grew, there could be disastrous consequences. Consequently, the new administration was determined not to have that happen. This was a powerful consideration when U.S. policy makers first confronted the Rwandan crisis. So consequently after the fact, when the situation in Rwanda revealed itself for what it was, that is genocide, a number of people in the Clinton Administration - Secretary Albright who was the UN ambassador at the time, Susan Rice who was in the NSC, George Moose the Assistant Secretary for Africa, Tony Lake the NSC advisor - all felt, certainly in retrospect, that more could have been done and perhaps should have been done. I found when I prepared for post that there was an element of guilt driving policy towards Rwanda. We, the United States, had not accurately recognized or responded appropriately to the genocide, but afterwards we accepted the responsibility to help put things right, politically, economically, and socially. That was part of the mandate I felt when I went to post.

*Q: There was also the Clinton Administration, being a Democratic administration with much more affinity, you might think, to its black constituency in the United States - as I recall it, it was the whites moved troops into Bosnia and tried to stop that genocide there, but when there's even greater genocide in Africa you don't do it.*

GRIBBIN: I believe that one of the reasons we were more active in Bosnia was because of lessons learned in Rwanda. Now clearly, some of the lessons were even more fully applied in Kosovo. But people who want to find a racist theme can usually find one, because in fact there was - I would hesitate to call it racist, as such - but certainly a ranking of priorities of what was important to the United States. Frankly, Africa doesn't rank as high on the scale as Eastern Europe.

*Q: I agree with you, but it's hard... When you want to play the race card, you can make a case.*

GRIBBIN: As an ambassador in the field, I had to answer this sort of accusation from my African friends and colleagues over the years. Indeed, the charge made me squirm.

*Q: Before you went out, could you talk a little about what you were getting from the normal consultation from the non-governmental organizations involved and from Congress and from the African Bureau and all? What were you getting?*

GRIBBIN: There was enormous concern that we needed to help Rwanda. There was astonishing pressure on the administration from non-governmental organizations. They rallied to the humanitarian cause by the hundreds. In fact, when I got to Kigali there were 120 different NGOs on the ground, not all of them American. Clearly there were at least that many back here pushing the administration and pushing Congress to do more. Virtually nobody said, no, let's leave this issue alone. All assumed the U.S. had a leadership role to play, and that the resources to play that role would be made available. We had already made progress. We had rectified some of the problems of UNAMIR by expanding its mandate and force numbers. The unresolved issue at the time was the huge refugee populations in Tanzania and Zaire. Those in what I came to call the "humanitarian-industrial complex" had a vested interest in seeing that funds were available to support their work. On the other hand, I was more interested in seeing that attention focused inside Rwanda on problems there, not necessarily on refugees. At the same time, there was a hesitancy on the part of some in Washington that we not get too closely identified with the new government. This reflected acceptance of the argument that it was the Tutsi quest for power that, in fact, kicked off the whole round of violence. Therefore, they had brought genocide down upon themselves. Additionally those adhering to this line of thinking suspected that Tutsi hands were not clean in the aftermath. They credited accusations, particularly emanating from Hutu refugee organizations, to the effect that the Tutsi army engaged in reprisals, even reciprocal genocide. The argument put forward by Hutu refugee organizations was astonishing in its premise. While acknowledging genocide of Tutsis by Hutus, it then asserted a reciprocal genocide perpetrated by the Tutsis against the Hutus. The conclusion was that one genocide cancelled out the other; so return to the *status quo ante* was the solution.

*Q: Was this sort of a matter of the refugees were mostly Hutu by the south and that this was the people who were feeding them, taking care of them, began to identify - I'm talking about non-government - began to identify with the Hutu?*

GRIBBIN: Some NGO personnel in the refugee camps adopted the view that their charges were nothing but peaceful farmers who were rousted from their homes and unwittingly involved in genocide. Those simple peasants really had not been supportive of genocide, but they risked now being murdered if they returned home or were left abandoned by the international community. There was certainly a pro-refugee constituency in the private sector, but also within the State Department. We have a Refugee Bureau, which focused exclusively on those sorts of issues. On the other hand, several NGOs judged that *genocidaires* controlled the refugees. Those organizations either refused to become involved or withdrew from the Zairian camps. I heard a variety of views in Washington.

One complication in Washington, if you recall the fall of 1995, was that the government stopped operating. I had already had my hearing and was confirmed by the Senate, but then the government stopped.

*Q: Any problems there, any questions?*



GRIBBIN: No, it was a very perfunctory hearing, as I recall. I was prepared to talk rather extensively about Rwanda, but it was one of those hearings where maybe one or two questions were asked. The confirmation came very quickly thereafter.

In the last month or so that I was in Washington, the U.S. government essentially didn't function. However, I was sworn in. I almost had to come in through the back door of the State Department to have that done. Tony Quainton, the DG, was gracious enough to do the honors.

*Q: Not by candlelight, was it?*

GRIBBIN: Almost by candlelight. I went out to post immediately after.

*Q: The shutdown we're talking about there was a confrontation between President Clinton and a Republican Congress. Congress shut down the government, and thought it would be a splendid idea, which turned out to backfire very badly. But anyway, this was one of the most peculiar times in American politics.*

GRIBBIN: As I went out, my mandate from Assistant Secretary Susan Rice and the higher-ups in the Department was to build good relationships with the new government, promote reconciliation, promote justice, rebuild, see to the welfare of the refugees and get the refugees safely back into the country. That was essentially what I set out to do.

*Q: You were there from 1995 to when?*

GRIBBIN: Well, I actually got to Kigali in early January, 1996.

*Q: 1996 to when?*

GRIBBIN: To the end of January, 1999.

*Q: Okay, let's talk about it.*

GRIBBIN: Okay. Let me talk about UNAMIR first.

*Q: Sure.*

GRIBBIN: UNAMIR came to the end of its mandate in December of 1995, just before I got to post, but had been extended for a month. The burning issue when I got to post was what to do with UNAMIR. The Security Council wanted to extend operations for another six months or a year. However, the Rwandan Government was adamant that UNAMIR played no useful role in Rwanda, so wanted the mandate terminated. This was, indeed, an enormous face-off between the Security Council, including the United States, and the Government of Rwanda. The Rwandan view was that UNAMIR had been there for the genocide, but had not stopped it. UNAMIR had only regrouped and come into a more prominent role in the countryside after the genocide was over, after the genocide had been stopped by the Rwandan Patriotic Army. The government

conceded that during the latter half of 1994, when there was little administration in the country, UNAMIR played a useful role, but the government would never concede that UNAMIR helped secure the nation. By early 1996 the government felt that UNAMIR no longer had a mission so it was time for UNAMIR to close down and go home. The Security Council argued that UNAMIR represented an international presence in Rwanda that it provided needed stability and most importantly that UNAMIR's presence was conducive to the orderly return of refugees to Rwanda. The Council was interested in getting refugees home and off the international dole.

Rwandan leaders countered that refugees wouldn't come home as long as UNAMIR was there, because refugees would see the situation in Rwanda as artificial. It would not be until UNAMIR left that the refugees would see the situation as normal and then come home prepared to accept the rule and security provided by the new government. I went round and round on these issues with interlocutors. I held many conversations with the president, with the vice-president, with others in authority in Rwanda. I tried to find compromises such as limiting the mandate, restricting operations, and otherwise trying to find wiggle room. But the Rwandans were very tough negotiators. Ultimately they decided that they would just refuse.

*Q: Was this a political calculation, or was there contempt for it? Where was this coming from?*

GRIBBIN: It was both political and contempt. It was contempt in that initially the RPA had been supportive of establishing UNAMIR, because the RPA thought a peacekeeping force would help implement the Arusha accords. However, when the genocide intervened and UNAMIR proved impotent, the RPA concluded that UNAMIR was worthless. That point of view came forward quite strongly. There was also the political calculus that the Rwandan Government, the new government, which had already gained a certain amount of stature, was ready to operate solely on its own. Leaders feared they could never step into their mandate to run their country and to move ahead on their program of reconciliation as long as the United Nations military was there. Leaders did recognize that this decision would antagonize some of the permanent members, especially France. However, being great conspiracy theorists, they judged French support for keeping UNAMIR to be part of a French effort to retain influence in the area and perhaps bring a power-sharing government to power that would involve not only Hutu refugees, but *génocidaires*. RPM leaders were adamant on the point that if there were no UN presence, then that sort of agreement could not be struck. They wanted to be masters in their own house. That was the bottom line.

We managed to get the UNAMIR mandate extended for another two months, so that it could wind up and leave in an orderly fashion, but it left. Lo and behold, the situation inside Rwanda did not change at all. People adjusted very quickly to UNAMIR's absence. I personally regretted UNAMIR's departure because the UN had a helicopter fleet, which ambassadors from Security Council countries were able to utilize from time to time. I went from having helicopters available back to travel by Land Rover. However, in terms of the political situation, the Rwandans proved their point. Peace in the wake of UNAMIR's departure did, in fact, strengthen the confidence of people in the government. The government did not engage in policies of revenge, retaliation or retribution.

*Q: Well, now, what was happening with these relief organizations? Were they pretty much in the surrounding countries?*

GRIBBIN: Recall that by the time refugees arrived in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi, the Rwandan genocide was on the world media map, but Rwanda itself was still very difficult to get to and difficult to travel within. All of a sudden in Goma, Zaire, right next to an international airport, there were a million refugees camping on volcanic rock. Then there was a massive cholera epidemic. All of this got on television, because the television crews could get there. Next western nations flew in water purification equipment, tankers and public health experts. The international humanitarian community organized and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) took over management of the camps and so forth. There was this enormous focus, both in humanitarian terms and in terms of media, on the refugees. This irritated the new government in Rwanda, survivors and the people who stayed behind - because after all, refugees were, if not perpetrators then clearly supporters of genocide. As it turned out, hundreds, even thousands of people who visited violence on their neighbors were hidden among the refugee population.

Even though refugees were taken care of by the international community, Tanzania in particular met its security responsibilities towards the camps, but Zaire did not. There was no security in Zairian camps. Remember, most of the *génocidaire* army and the *Interahamwe* went to Zaire rather than to Tanzania. In Zaire the former government, the ex-FAR, the ex Forces Armées de Rwanda - Habyarimana's army - and the *Interahamwe* took control of the camps. They had free run in the camps. Although several of the "big fish," the planners of the genocide, stayed in the camps, most of them fled to Kenya and to other places around Africa. Even discounting them, essentially the international community sustained the supporters, friends and relatives of those who conducted genocide. This was a difficult proposition to deal with. Humanitarian experts, however, looked at the immediate task at hand. UNHCR from Geneva let contracts to run the camps and NGO personnel obviously wanted to do a good job. They did enormously good humanitarian work. So much in fact, that living conditions in refugee camps surpassed circumstances people previously enjoyed at home. This was especially true with regard to health care and education for children. Childhood immunizations reached one hundred percent in the camps and many children who had not previously attended school, did.

*Q: I would imagine, too, with the genocide, as with any genocide, they must have destroyed a lot of political, educational, and other governmental infrastructure within Rwanda.*

GRIBBIN: In Rwanda itself the infrastructure of buildings was still present, but the systems for providing education and health services were gone. Most importantly, the people who staffed them had either been killed or were in refugee camps doing their same work there. So back in Rwanda - remember most people didn't leave Rwanda. Rwanda still had a population after the genocide of about five million or six million - the situation was grim. Additionally, Tutsi exiles returned from abroad and essentially replaced in numerical terms those who had been killed. Rwandans at home were not receiving the care that was being doled out in the refugee camps.

Because the refugee camps were controlled by the *génocidaires*, they began to clandestinely organize and train in order to sustain the insurgency - which was operating back in Rwanda -

with the objective of finishing the genocide. Inside Rwanda those insurgents mounted terrorist attacks aimed at Tutsi families, including a refugee camp containing Zairian Tutsis. There were roadside ambushes, where insurgents would stop a bus and order everybody out. They would have the Tutsis line up on one side to be shot. Hutus would be released unharmed. Insurgents raided boarding schools and ordered the schoolchildren to line up by ethnicity, so they could kill the Tutsis. The schoolchildren, though, to their credit, on more than one occasion refused to separate according to ethnicity, so in that case the raiders indiscriminately killed either all or some of the children. Insurgents also targeted Hutus, local officials and government employees who were deemed to be collaborating with the new government.

We in the U.S. establishment tried to ensure that the army's response to these provocations was measured and appropriate rather than out-of-hand. At least initially the RPA response was very heavy handed. The army conducted "search and clear" operations in which it would sweep through an area in order to identify everyone. In the course of such operations, people were mistreated, beat up and there were cases of summary executions. I stressed to the Rwandan leadership, which readily accepted the point, that the RPA was supposed to be different. To be different the leadership had to ensure that their troops exercised discipline so that these sorts of abuses did not happen. Whenever allegations of abuses arose, I made a point of sitting down with the vice-president or the military leadership to insist that the army's code of conduct be applied. And it was. The leaders wanted to apply it, but it was a dicey thing. These were their boys; these were the boys that had fought the genocide. Many of them had family members who had been killed or massacred. It was easy for them to fly off the handle. Military commanders understood their troops, but they also understood the need for strict discipline. In fact, the army record of convening courts martials to hold soldiers accountable for their actions improved dramatically during the course of my time. The United States went an extra mile to help the Rwandan Army. We brought in the Naval Justice School from Newport, which conducted courses for magistrates, army investigators and human rights leaders. We helped develop a curriculum to support instruction in the code of conduct so that soldiers would know their responsibilities. These positive developments helped offset continuing criticism, supported very much by the still functioning *génocidaire* propaganda machine, to the effect that the RPA government was engaged in policies of retribution.

*Q: You say you were doing this. What about the Belgian ambassador, the French ambassador, the British ambassador?*

GRIBBIN: The French in Rwanda were fairly well marginalized. They had two delightful men serve as ambassadors, but France was tainted by its previous close association with President Habyarimana. The French Ambassador's task was to maintain dignity in a situation when France was given the cold shoulder. The Belgians were also somewhat tainted in the eyes of the Rwandan Government, but nonetheless they had two very competent and capable ambassadors who overlapped with me. Belgium remained a key donor and enjoyed more latitude than France. The British ambassadors, again two while I was there, were much in the forefront, as were the two German ambassadors. There was good unanimity on the part of Western ambassadors on what the issues were and excellent cooperation in joint efforts to address them. We shared information and approaches, and often would try to ensure that our *démarches* were mutually supportive. Occasionally, as required by our capitals, we engaged in joint *démarches*.

The United States enjoyed special access to new government figures with whom we exercised an extra degree of influence. Our *entre* arose from our superpower status, our obvious concern for Rwanda - the U.S. was deemed to be a friend of democratic evolution in Rwanda - and our relationship with the RPA dating from the Arusha talks and even before. For example, I knew some of the RPA leaders from Ugandan days. The U.S. had a great deal of access, but that did not always translate into influence. Still, I was always able to put our points forward for consideration and was able to engage in dialogue and discussion with the most senior Rwandan officials – President Bizimungu, Vice President Kagame, their close advisors, cabinet ministers - even on a daily basis when that was needed.

In part because I was identified as a friend of the government, I was threatened by the insurgency. Although its focus was on Rwandans rather than expatriates, nonetheless, the insurgency also took an anti-foreigner tendency. Several foreigners were killed. Belgian nuns, who were schoolmistresses, were killed with their children. In an attack on a house in Ruhengeri, three Spanish medical personnel were assassinated and a young American was badly injured. His leg was amputated, and we had to evacuate him. An expatriate priest was murdered nearby several weeks later. In a terrible ambush in the southern part of the country, five United Nations human rights monitors (none of whom were Americans) and their Rwandan counterparts were killed.

The insurgent group that operated in the southern part of the country called PALIR put a price on my head, a public price. I never felt there was a chance the bounty would be paid, but it did keep me looking over my shoulder more frequently than had been the case before. I limited the travel of my staff as well as other Americans we could influence into dangerous areas. Generally, I let my defense attaché have more access than others. He always went with a military escort and was usually in the company of senior army commanders. I scrutinized other embassy travel and usually required escorts. It was clear that the insurgency was supported from the refugee camps across the way.

*Q: I would imagine that what media interest there was that you would find yourself trying to explain just what the real situation was, that this was an insurgency of the people who had been the "bad guys" trying to reassert themselves. But there would be a different story coming out of the refugee camps. Did you find yourself sort of trying to get the true picture across? How did this work?*

GRIBBIN: I did try to get the true picture across. Additionally, we attracted the international press which reported mostly accurately. We had many visitors from Washington as well. I actively encouraged the Rwandan government to put together a better public relations operation. We provided some USIS training for this. The government launched a regular round of consultations with the expanded diplomatic corps and made senior figures available to talk to the press and to answer questions. Gradually the Rwandan side of the story began to come out. Rwandans were, nonetheless, very sensitive to criticism, even from Western capitals or by the Western press, of their shortcomings. Senior officials were always willing to play what I called the genocide card, which went. "We were victims of genocide; whatever this is it is not as significant as that. You should remember our real trials and tribulations, rather than focus on these little problems." There was some validity in that point of view, but the card was overused.

The Government became irate when criticism was based on untrue allegations, rumor or hearsay. I investigated, at least one incident, along with Ambassador David Scheffer, who was left behind by Secretary Albright for the purpose, to check out an incident wherein hundreds, even a thousand, Hutu civilians were supposedly massacred in a cave in the northern part of the country, near Gisenyi, by Rwandan troops. Ambassador Scheffer and I went to the cave accompanied by the regional army commander. The cave opening was at the bottom of a big sinkhole. The stench of death arose from the sinkhole, and we could see two rotting bodies fifty feet below. The local RPA commander explained that an insurgent ambush occurred on the nearby main road when a group of from five to 15 men shot up a bus and killed a couple of people. A RPA patrol heard the commotion and responded. They engaged the enemy and chased them. The insurgents ducked into the sinkhole/cave. The firefight continued and several of the attackers were killed. The soldier said his men had not gone down into the mouth of cave because they feared that it was booby-trapped. What evidence we could see tended to support his explanation. Residents of the immediate area, i.e. Hutu farmers, also agreed with this recitation of events. They noted that the cave had several back doors, which we also checked out.

This incident had been taken and blown into a huge story by a Hutu dissident who had formerly worked for Amnesty International in Rwanda, but was then resident in Belgium. It came out over the Amnesty International network as true fact. Unfortunately, Amnesty International accepted the story at face value, because this man had worked for them at one point. That pro-Hutu power advocate proved to be an astonishing fount of disinformation, which, in my judgment, the story ultimately proved to be. There were certainly some dead people in the cave, but there were not a thousand dead civilians in the cave. Maybe by now, someone has gone down to see how many skeletons there are.

*Q: Was there concern that the refugee organization was feeding a Hutu army that was getting ready to come back?*

GRIBBIN: Indeed. The Rwandan Government made that accusation on several occasions. Leaders pointed out that problem to me and to others in the U.S. Government. They warned us, very directly, in the spring of 1996 that if the international community did not get a handle on it, Rwanda would have to. I distinctly remember that message was delivered to me by the vice-president in March 1996. It was re-enforced obliquely on several other occasions afterwards. It was reiterated very, very directly by Vice-President Kagame to Secretary of Defense Perry in Washington, in August of that year. We were still unprepared, however, when we learned in October that military operations, attacks, if you will, were occurring against refugee camps in South Kivu, across the way in Zaire.

Let me back up just a minute to talk about the situation in Zaire. At this time the inept Mobutu government was crumbling. It had never exercised total authority in the Kivu provinces of Zaire, but certainly in the past few years, its writ had further weakened. . The influx of Hutu refugees exacerbated local ethnic tensions between the Kinyarwanda-speaking people that had been living in Zaire for generations, for hundreds of years, and their neighbors. The new Hutu arrivals brought with them the creed of ethnic hatred along with weapons. In North Kivu, near Goma, back in what are called the Masisi Hills, ethnic cleansing began. The Tutsi people of that area were chased away by Hutus, the Hunde and the other residents of the area. These Zairian Tutsis,

in turn - and now we're getting complicated - came to Rwanda for refuge. They formed a refugee community in northern Rwanda at the same time you had these enormous Hutu encampments in Zaire.

Another group of Tutsis historically resident in Zaire, called the Banyamulenge, lived in South Kivu. The Banyamulenge began to be targeted by an enhanced hatred propaganda machine in Kivu, which included the deputy governor of South Kivu. That official issued an ultimatum to the effect that all Banyamulenge would have to go back to Rwanda and Burundi whence they had come. Now the fact that these people had been living in Zaire since well before independence was immaterial to the perception that they were interlopers. The combined reality of Banyamasisi ethnic cleansing and the expulsion threat erupted into preemptive violence. Banyamulenge troops attacked government installations in South Kivu and then began a more generalized attack on the refugee camps in South Kivu, south of Bukavu. It became evident that the Banyamulenge uprising was supported by the Government of Rwanda as a clandestine operation. It became clearer over time that Rwandan regular troops, which had been seconded to this rebel organization, were involved in the attacks. From the Rwandan government's perspective, all they were doing was what the vice-president had promised: solving the refugee situation. Critics suggested that Kigali's solution would be to kill them all, but instead the Rwandan leadership demanded that the refugees return to Rwanda. That was their solution. The Rwandan leaders themselves had all been refugees and knew what it was like to be excluded from their country. They believed in the right of all refugees to come home. From a security/political point of view, the new leaders knew from their own experience that refugees at home were easier to watch and control than groups abroad. Rwandan leaders also knew that there were *génocidaires* among the refugees and that the only way to break the power of the insurgency was to eliminate their source of recruitment, their audience for rhetoric, their source of supply and so forth. Although initially denied, there was definitely a Rwandan hand in the operation. In short order the refugee camps south of Bukavu were emptied. I thought those refugees would come right back into Rwanda, but they did not. They sort of disappeared to the east of Bukavu and were reported moving en masse up the western side of Lake Kivu. This was a tense time. There was enormous policy interest, but not much information from the scene of events. I was in Rwanda and my team was in Rwanda. We offered to send people into Zaire to find out what was going on. Dan Simpson our ambassador in Kinshasa completely refused, and he and I engaged - we're very good friends - but we engaged in a sometimes heated policy discussion via cable traffic about what was going on, how the U.S. ought to cover it and what we ought to do about it. I still get comments about our exchanges from that period. Dan was adamant that coverage of Zaire should come from Kinshasa and not from a neighboring country-

*Q: Was he able to put officers into the field?*

GRIBBIN: No. So the problem was, essentially, that we had almost no coverage of Kivu at all.

*Q: How about the CIA? Were they helpful in this type of thing, or not?*

GRIBBIN: The CIA was not very helpful in terms of internal African politics, never has been. It was not their mission and they weren't particularly interested in it. They got tasked with doing more as this process of ethnic conflagration continued. Apparently the CIA never had much

presence in Kivu. Its efforts had been focused in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. They didn't have anyone in the Great Lakes region.

Back to the rebellion. The missing refugees headed up the western side of Lake Kivu, which is on the border between Zaire and Rwanda, and almost disappeared. Then we heard reports of military activity in the refugee camps in North Kivu, near Goma, on the northern Rwandan border. In fact, the big camp of Kibumba right on the border just disappeared overnight. Refugees were all shifting to the major camp, which was known as Mugunga. There was then a fairly large fight around Mugunga camp.

*Q: Between whom and whom?*

GRIBBIN: It wasn't clear. It seemed to be between those who controlled the refugees and the rebels, but no Rwandan regular forces that we could see had moved across the border from Gisenyi, and we had pretty good monitoring capacity for that. However, there was this major battle. On a Friday afternoon, I had two journalists in my office when I got a phone call from my man in Gisenyi, Rick Orth my defense attaché whom I had sent to the border crossing to see what was going on. Magunga was about 20 miles from the border, and Rick was in sporadic contact with NGO personnel there. He told me that they were coming. I said, "What do you mean that they are coming?" He replied, "the refugees are coming home." Soon Rwandan Government sources confirmed this. By Friday evening the first of the refugees reached the border. They were walking. In the course of the next four days, about 700,000 people walked across that border.

*Q: Good God!*

GRIBBIN: It became a river of people, astonishingly wide and unstoppable. The UNHCR had plans for an orderly repatriation, but was completely overwhelmed by the flood of humanity. The Rwandan Government quickly threw the UNHCR aside when that agency sought to set up camps and rest sites. Ephraim Kabayji, the government's refugee czar, said, no, there was not to be any place for congregation. People would walk until they got home. They could stop and rest as needed. The government would provide some emergency health services along the way and some emergency rations. However, at the places where these things would be provided, people would not be permitted to stay. He didn't want internal refugee camps. Rwanda was a small enough place that good walkers, which Rwandans were, could get home within a couple of days. Most of the people lived within 60 to 150 miles of the border. As this stream of humanity poured across the border, Kabayji and Minister of Relief and Reconciliation Patrick Mazimpaka commandeered UN trucks (the U.S. provided the UN with a lot of trucks, so the parties had to get my assent to use them. I readily agreed.) Trucks picked up the weak, the small and the old and leapfrogged them to the front of the line or to their destination, while the rest of the people walked. That could only happen after the roads thinned out enough so that the trucks could move. For the first two days you simply could not move trucks.

*Q: Here you had a major feeding operation and medical operation sitting in Zaire.*



GRIBBIN: Much of it had been destroyed by the attacks on the camps and the destruction of the camps.

*Q: Did they sort of move up with them?*

GRIBBIN: No, only the refugees left. Humanitarian operations personnel stayed behind. The people came home because the control of the previous governmental authorities in the camps, the *Interahamwe*, ex-FAR, and the *génocidaires*, was broken, and the refugees saw both the opportunity to go home and the freedom to do so.

*Q: So they, actually, in a way had been sort of -*

GRIBBIN: They had been held hostages.

*Q: They had been hostages, but had this been clear?*

GRIBBIN: It had been clearer to some people than to others. There was an element of coercion in the camps, and again, like during the genocide, Rwandans were people who followed instructions. When their leadership told them to stay in the camps, they did. When that leadership was broken and destroyed and the new guys – the RPA - told them to go home, come home, they did. However, the refugees were fearful. They were traumatized by months of ethnic hatred brainwashing. Many believed they would be killed. Apparently some thought they were marching to their deaths. The Kigali government decided it would let everybody come across the border un-harassed and un-searched, even if this entailed the risk of weapons being smuggled in. However, officials watched the passing parade and did identify out of this first group - sometimes individuals were denounced by the crowd - about 40 people who were arrested, quote, "for their own safety." Those persons were obviously identified as leaders of the genocide.

In the course of these next days - this was November 1996 - all these people came home. They walked as far as Kigali and beyond. We encountered them trudging along the roadsides throughout the whole country. Now as they got home, the local government in the communes they came from took charge of them. They re-occupied their houses or stayed with neighbors. If they found somebody in their house, they often shared their house with whoever it was. Even if the occupants were Tutsi returnees who were called "old caseload" refugees. The terminology referred to the '59ers, or the old caseload Tutsi refugees, who went into exile in 1959, as distinct from the new caseload Hutus who fled after the genocide in 1994. In any event, the massive returns were remarkable. They went very smoothly, much to the dismay of some of the humanitarian organizations outside of Rwanda. Humanitarian organizations inside Rwanda built up their capacity to assist in resettlement – they provided a welcome home package of seeds and farm tools – and otherwise began to beef up health and education infrastructure in rural areas. The thrust of resettlement was to reintegrate returnees into their home communities. By and large, it was an enormously successful undertaking.

The Zairian refugees were the first part of it. We still had refugees in Tanzania, and the refugees in Tanzania, I think it was on December 1<sup>st</sup>, a Sunday-

Q: *Must be 1996.*

GRIBBIN: This was still 1996. The others had come back in October and November, fairly successfully. This caused the Tanzanian Government to look at its refugee camps. Tanzania had been a reluctant but responsible host. However, based on the Zairian precedent authorities put wheels into motion for the dismantling of the Tanzanian camps. I had seen the other returnees, but was not on the border when they first came. On that Sunday my wife and I went down to the border where we met President Bizimungu. He and I plus several members of his cabinet greeted and talked to refugees as they began to come down the hill and across the bridge into Rwanda. They were an eerily quiet crowd. Although not sullen, they were silent. I could see the apprehension in their faces. They carried all their worldly goods – blankets, pots and pans, a sack of food, a jerry can for water. Mostly the items were carried on heads or backs, but sometimes a heavily loaded bicycle was pushed. Children were often tethered via a rope or a string tied around his or her hand, and sort of dragged along behind parents, so that they wouldn't get lost. Having learned from the Zairian experience, sag wagons were readily available to leapfrog children and the elderly, but not parents, up the road to well marked holding areas. When the walkers got that far, they were reunited with their dependents. That Sunday morning it became clear to the president and me that we had better leave the border quickly or we would be engulfed. The flow of people became so dense that we were scarcely able to drive faster than people could walk.

These two massive returns ushered over a million people back into the country. They went to their homes, and reintegrated fairly easily - surprisingly easily, from what the humanitarian community had supposed - but the Rwandan leadership thought it would be easy all along. Donor nations rallied to support the reintegration effort. Housing was a priority. It was not that houses had been destroyed, but houses had been abandoned, and the abandoned houses had then been taken by the '59ers who came back. Therefore the new caseload returnees often found somebody living in their house. The government decided that the proper thing to do - there was some discussion about this, I must admit, that we were involved in as well - was to restore property to the most recent owner. Ergo, the new caseload returnees had rights to their houses and farms, and the old caseload people were supposed to move out. Where would they go? The donors and the international community began a program of village construction, essentially so that the old caseload refugees would have houses. The house construction program went on very successfully through the next couple of years.

It did, however generate controversy. The controversy revolved around whether the program was voluntary and whether it was being done for security purposes. In the wake of genocide, donors were reluctant to be involved in a program designed to improve the government's control of its people, i.e. Tutsi power over Hutus. Secondly, donors insisted that the program be voluntary. Well, the word *voluntary* was not a cultural concept that resonated with Rwandans. People were told that they were going to have new houses that they had to move to, and so they went. There was indeed a security dimension. Among the million people that came back from Zaire were insurgents - many more insurgents. *Genocidaires* were ready. They had weapons cached in various areas. So the insurgency became much more serious, much more difficult, particularly in the northern prefectures of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi. In those areas villagization was designed to

group people into secure hamlets and thus deny rebels the support they enjoyed or could easily coerce from scattered homesteads.

The government beefed up its anti-guerilla or anti-insurgency operation, and since the RPA played by better rules now, it did a better job. The government integrated a number of soldiers from the ex-FAR into the Rwandan Patriotic Army. They made a point of searching among the returned refugees for military men, not *Interahamwe*, but former army personnel in order to place them in reeducation camps. Some of my European colleagues, skeptics in Washington and the international press objected to the camps because of "brainwashing." The Rwandan minister responsible said, "Sure it's brainwashing, but what we're trying to do is the reciprocal brainwashing of the *génocidaires*. Wash that evil out and put in a new sense of responsibility. Let these people understand what the rules are that they are now going to have to live by."

*Q: It sounds like you or people on the government side were having to deal with real problems, and then a bunch of international nags were sitting there looking for faults and things like that.*

GRIBBIN: I think that's a fair characterization of some of the problems. The upshot then, of these reeducation camps for the military - the Rwandan military ran most of them - was that they judged which men they wanted in the army. Those who were reintegrated would often be assigned to positions of visibility and responsibility in the north. This process effectively undermined the insurgents' continued assertion that the Tutsi government was exterminating Hutus. Winning-the-hearts-and-minds began to make a difference. Captured insurgents revealed they operated on the belief that "we're near to victory" and "the genocide will resume" which was inculcated into them. In the field when they saw the reality of the situation, confidence in their leaders eroded and they began to ask why fight on? Resolution was not quickly done, in certain areas whole populations fled to the forests and there were some army - again, not unexpected - abuses, which complicated matters, but generally the situation improved.

The insurgency really dried up because the refugee camps were dismantled. There were no rear areas, no source of supplies or weaponry and no easy source of recruits. This took a while to work through, but the death knell of the insurgency sounded. In the most troubled communes of the north, the government first instituted its policy of "villagization," which also had some land reform elements to it, but as I noted earlier essentially was designed to permit easy identification of people who did not belong in the area. On my recommendation the U.S. went along with this. One, the Rwandans were going to do it anyway. Two, if properly done (and it mostly was), it would reduce civilian casualties inflicted by insurgents as well as army excesses against civilians. Three, it seemed to be one of the few plans that had a chance to work. And in fact, it did. So by and large now the insurgency is over.

To return to Zaire, not everybody came home. Some of the *Interahamwe* forces plus groups from the refugee camps from south of Bukavu, which remained under the control of the *génocidaire* forces moved west into the dense jungle. Rebel forces, which were initially mainly Banyamulenge and Rwandan, were joined by Zairian rebels, with Laurent Kabila at the helm. These rebels had their own beefs against Mobutu. This combined army pursued the *Interahamwe* and the refugees as they climbed the wall of the western Rift Valley and descended into the great forest of the Congo Basin. They chased them through the forest, fighting off and on along the

way, and finally herded them across the Zaire River, south of Kisangani. At that point the controllers of the hostage refugee population told the people they were on their own. Some of the *Interahamwe* disappeared further in to the forest. Others surrendered as did the bulk of the refugees. There were several incidents - at least one a fairly egregious incident - of massacres on the part of the pursuing rebel troops at the forest encampments south of Kisangani, and then later on another one near the town of Mbandaka. Once the refugees came under the authority or supervision of the humanitarian organizations, UNHCR in particular (and this was now in April of 1997), they were progressively flown home to Rwanda from Kisangani. Several thousand people, if not more, were repatriated in this fashion.

There was great apprehension during the chase across the Congo basin to the effect that the Tutsi government intended to exterminate these refugees, particularly since apparently by self-selection they were mostly *Interahamwe* and their families. When reports of killings at Biaro Camp surfaced and similar reports from Mbandaka shortly afterwards came to light, concerns seemed valid. Additionally part of the controversy revolved around the question of numbers; how many people were missing? The United Nations High Commission for Refugees had never done an actual census of the camps, at least not in Zaire. They had done estimates, but estimates were based on how many rations they thought they were providing. However, refugees tried to get as many rations as possible, and so there was clearly some double counting. The UNHCR carried on its rolls the number of 1.2 million people in the Zairian camps. If you subtracted the refugees who walked home - initially an estimate, but which later became quite accurate because they all went to their home communes where they were known and counted - and you subtracted the people that turned up at the end, either those who were repatriated from Kisangani or who marched on across Zaire, who went into Congo-Brazzaville, Central African Republic, or Angola, or who were still located somewhere and countable inside the depths of Zaire - according the UNHCR figure you were missing about 300,000 people. Charges were levied by Hutu refugee organizations in exile in Europe and by several humanitarian groups that the Tutsis had killed them all. I and my staff were clearly on record as thinking that the initial number was inflated, and in fact, if you counted up all the numbers, including a substantial number of people who died along the march and in the combat and in the massacres in Zaire, you came out fairly even with a more realistic initial estimate. In short, we weren't missing 300,000 people. It may be 30,000 had died during the course of this war in Zaire, but those numbers were known, and the circumstances were more or less documented. Even so, the United Nations subsequently demanded an investigation into what occurred in Zaire during that period of time. I supported such an inquest, but because of that first war in the Congo and subsequently because of the current war in the Congo, the investigation has not yet taken place. I suppose that by this time it would not turn up much to satisfy partisans of either view.

To back step a minute - before the refugees' massive returns when the specter of renewed ethnic bloodshed seemed imminent because of the clandestine Rwandan involvement in dismantling the refugee camps, uncertainties about Kigali's motives or intentions, and in light of the fact that the *genocidaire* government controlled the camps, western governments including the United States began the process of creating a multinational military force - not a UN, but a European-American task force called a Multinational Force- to assure the safe return of the refugees. Several hundred, if not 1,000, British, American and Canadian troops descended on Entebbe, Uganda which was to be center of operations and several dozen U.S. military personnel came to Kigali. However,

events on the ground outpaced military planning. Especially, the refugees walked home from Magunga Camp. Meanwhile, I made the argument that there was no military role in Rwanda in terms of supporting a return of the refugees since Rwandans had that in hand along with humanitarian organizations already on the ground. There was no special expertise that western militaries could bring to hasten repatriation and resettlement. I conceded that military force might prove useful in Zaire in the context of breaking the stranglehold that the Ex-FAR and the Interahamwe had on the people in the camps and providing safe corridors for their return, but this could not be done unless the Multinational Force had a mandate to use force. Since nations contributing troops to the multinational forces insisted that the authority to use force would not be included in the mandate, I said that sending troops would be useless and strongly recommended against it. Based on those considerations, and of course the change in circumstances wherein the refugees came home successfully, we stood down the multinational force.

*Q: Thing were really cranked up to get going. This was a big thing. I remember there was a conference here on multinationals.*

GRIBBIN: When the remnants of the refugees disappeared over the mountains along with Ex-FAR and *Interahamwe* regulars, the powers behind the multinational force were deemed remiss in not being present so as to stop the flight. Even though we never put active troops on the ground in Zaire, we did generate lots of overhead coverage. Satellites weren't much use, but the British had a surveillance aircraft that could get low enough to be under the clouds. It took pretty good pictures, even of people, in the dense forest. That was one of the ways we kept track of where the fleeing *Interahamwe* and their hostage refugees were.

*Q: It seems like all along you were dealing with a European-American sort of media- NGO-organizations that were looking, were in away trying to put the worst case on for the government that was dealing with the problems in Rwanda.*

GRIBBIN: That's correct. We also read the worst-case scenario often being advocated by our embassy in Kinshasa, which was part of Dan's and my lively discussions. This view held to the presumption that there was really no rebellion in Zaire. The conflict was between foreign armies fighting their war on Zairian territory. There was certainly some truth in that, but the Kabila rebellion was a real rebellion arising from long-festered grievances in Zaire. The surprising thing about the rebellion was the discovery that the Zairian political and military structure was a house of cards. All it took was a quick blow and it fell over. Nobody expected that. The Rwandans did not go into Zaire with the intent of overthrowing Mobutu. They went in with the intent of solving their internal security problem, which emanated from refugee camps. Then Kabila came along. He and his alliance provided a useful front for the Rwandan operation, but he proved to be much more than a stooge.

We in the embassy in Kigali became the point of contact for dealing with Kabila, not only when he was in Rwanda from time to time, but also one of my officers, Peter Whaley, was authorized to visit Kabila in Goma. We carried out instructions from Washington very correctly with regard to Kabila. We got him to agree to almost everything asked of him, the problem being, of course, that Kabila didn't have the command and control that he ought to have had. But nevertheless, we

got him to agree to several ceasefires in the course of this period so that humanitarian efforts could move forward. Rebel forces took those opportunities to rearm and regroup - there's no question about that. I paralleled every démarche made with Kabila with démarches to the Rwandan Government. I assured that they had exactly the same message because it was clear to us that command and control of rebel military operations was not flowing necessarily directly from Kabila. At the same time, this was not the sort of a war that was controlled by a war room anywhere. It was very much a war under the command of the frontline commanders, who themselves, particularly as they moved further into Zaire, had very poor communications with rear echelons.

*Q: What was the impression you were getting back and the reputation of Kabila during this time?*

GRIBBIN: Everybody outside of Africa seemed to think that Kabila was the embodiment of a great democratic patriot who had come to replace Mobutu and who would move Zaire into a new age. Furthermore, his association with leaders like Kagame and Museveni meant that he was one of that new breed of African leaders who was a real revolutionist, forged in battle, a populist and so on - when, in fact, Kabila was just another aspiring, corrupt Zairian politician. He never succumbed to Mobutu's charms, but instead was cunning enough to bide his time and seek to replace Mobutu. We piled expectations on Kabila; goals that he never professed. We expected respect for human rights, control of the judicial system, control of abuses by military troops, institution of democratic reforms and a move to popular constitutionalism. However, Kabila's response to "What is your program?" was, "We will oust Mobutu" then again "We will oust Mobutu." That was it. He never professed more than that, but he was, as I say, a man of some cleverness. He was a survivor in the Zairian political context, and he was determined. I did not find him to be particularly bright. He was stubborn, crafty, and stuck to his single issue, which was to take power, to get rid of Mobutu. Of course, he ultimately did get rid of Mobutu with the assistance of Rwanda, Uganda and Angola.

The tide turned with Kabila, if I can continue talking about him, after he took power. Others in the U.S. Government can talk more about the soft landing that we helped engineer so as to allow an orderly departure by Mobutu and his cronies. Those arrangements permitted Kabila to seize Kinshasa without a bloodbath. Kabila subsequently appointed James Kabarebe, the rebel military commander in the field, who was a Rwandan-Ugandan Tutsi, as his military chief of staff. Kabila put several Banyamulenge politicians in his government, including Bisima Karaha as foreign minister. The Banyamulenge played a prominent role because they had been at the forefront of the rebel movement, but also had the support of Rwanda.

Within a short period of time, Kabila became less enamored of his eastern support. He wanted to stand on his own feet, and so began to counter some of the deeply felt Zairian political concerns that he was a puppet of foreigners. He began the process of shedding contacts with outsiders, including with the Banyamulenge, who were Zairians. Kabila began to turn against them and to remove them from positions of power. Kabila was a very insecure man. Almost all his cabinet came from his home village, and so he didn't really reach out too much to the wider Zairian body politic. It soon became clear that he was just another incarnation of a Mobutu-like political leader. Kabila would not be the salvation of the country, which is what everyone had hoped.

Kabila turned against the easterners, especially the Banyamulenge, and reneged on his security commitments to Rwanda in terms of control of the *Interahamwe*, who were still in Zaire. In fact, he even began to recruit *Interahamwe* into forces that supported his government. He finally ordered all the Rwandan forces out of Kinshasa. The Banyamulenge knew that when the Rwandans and the Ugandans and the Angolans left they would be very vulnerable and again would be subjected to the sort of persecution that had started the conflict in the first place, but this time by Kabila, who had been their erstwhile colleague and leader. So, with support from Rwanda and Uganda, which were also disappointed with Kabila for lots of reasons, they organized a second attempt to take control of Zaire. They opted for a daring strategy. They flew dissident forces from the east and joined them up with ex-FAZ, the former Mobutu army, which they had retrained at the behest of Kabila, for the new Zairian army, but which had no loyalty to him. Rather than attack from the east and march all the way across the vast expanse of the Congo, the new rebels would attack from the west, from training bases on the lower Zaire River in order to take Kinshasa lickety-split. Kabila would be replaced with someone more pliant and problems would be solved. Initially, it looked like it would work.

Then Angola reversed what Kigali thought was acquiescence to the ouster of Kabila. It is not clear how this miscommunication came about. Angola earlier supported Kabila because Luanda felt he would be good for Angola. Angolan officials continued, apparently, to think that Kabila would be better for Angola than someone else. Therefore Angolan troops intervened and effectively stopped this new attack on Kinshasa. However, the rebels successfully extricated their forces from the west. They retreated to Goma in the east and began the hard push westwards. The new rebel movement enjoyed open support from Rwanda and Uganda whose regular troops were acknowledged to be involved in the fighting against Kabila's Congolese. On account of SADC connections Angolan, Zimbabwean and Namibian troops joined the battle on Kabila's side. Kabila also fielded several contingents of irregular forces – Mai Mai militia, *Interahamwe* and Burundian Hutu rebels. By the summer of 2000 the belligerents reached stalemate along a line drawn approximately halfway across the Congo.

I won't go into all the various efforts to sort this war out diplomatically, but from the Rwandan perspective it remained a national security issue. They were/are involved because they do not want the eastern Congo to be used to subvert Rwanda. They do not want the *Interahamwe* forces that are now in Kabila's service to be rearmed, be able to regroup, and to move back into the east whence they will be able to destabilize Rwanda. Until the issue of regional stability is addressed and until the issue of the *Interahamwe* presence in Kabila's forces is resolved, Rwanda has no interest and little incentive to do more than accept the stalemate that the war in the Congo has now become. It's not an economic drain on Rwanda. The war in the Congo is paid for by resources from the Congo. Now that is devastating to the Congo, but it's not bad for Rwanda or for Uganda. That's why pressures on them have not been particularly successful. Even so all the states involved in the conflict have agreed to a formula to end the war. The formula envisages a cease fire, disarming irregular militia and the withdrawal of foreign forces, including troops from Rwanda, Uganda, Angola and Zimbabwe. Concomitantly with the cessation of hostilities is a requirement that Congo adopt a new more inclusive political system. The formula is called the Lusaka Accords. Now (in the summer of 2000) we're in the process of putting together a UN observer operation to be followed by UN peacekeeping operations that will permit some of these

provisions to be implemented. Everyone hopes that that moves forward. Once issues are addressed to Rwanda's satisfaction, I believe it will call its troops home.

*Q: There's a word you haven't mentioned in this whole time we've been talking today, and that's Burundi. One always lumps the two together. Was there any Burundi role in this?*

GRIBBIN: Burundi is also involved in the war in the Congo. It was involved during the first war and it's involved in the second as well. Meanwhile Burundi is struggling with its internal ethnic problems. Rwanda casts a very careful eye on what goes on in Burundi. There was great disappointment in Rwanda, which they readily shared with their Burundian colleagues, that Burundi apparently did not learn the lesson of Rwanda. Burundi has not learned the genocide lesson. Burundians have not learned that arrogance of power, ethnic discrimination and hatred are the seeds of division and destruction rather than a way forward. It puzzled Rwandans as to how Burundians could be so obtuse so as not to see what this did to their country.

*Q: What about the assimilation of all these refugees back into Rwanda. There must have been an awful lot of people who had killed Tutsis in that group, more than you could absorb by pointing and saying, "He did it."*

GRIBBIN: I was much involved during my tenure in the issue of reconciliation. A key part of the reconciliation process, as seen by the Rwandans and accepted by the United States, was justice. After the genocide there was no court system. It collapsed. There were no magistrates, no lawyers, no police, no staff - no one. Even so immediately following the genocide, people identified as being involved in genocide were jailed. Over time others were identified and arrested. The process worked a little more properly as systems began to function again. Next there were among the returning refugees a number of people who were identified as *génocidaires*. In short order, the prisons of Rwanda, which were built to house about 17,000 people, contained almost 130,000 people. That number has come down a little bit now. The prisons were terrible places. There was no room to move not even enough room for everybody to sit down. Disease was rampant. The guards did not go inside the prison. The prisons were controlled from the inside by traditional authorities. Hutus from all walks of life were imprisoned. My cook's husband was jailed. Several spouses of embassy staff were in prison, including a doctor who was the director of medical services for the previous government. The papal nuncio told me once that he had stopped celebrating mass in the prisons, and I said, "Why, was it a security issue?" He said, "No, there are more priests in prison than there are outside." That was an overstatement, but there were certainly dozens of priests in prison. All of them, according to the prisoners I talked to, were innocent, unfairly accused, as is true of prisoners everywhere. But they were an enormous problem. The laws applicable to killings in Rwanda were the murder laws, and they were very explicit. They were drawn mostly from Belgian jurisprudence. Following those laws, individual murder trials would take a long time. Additionally, to prosecute cases under those statutes more evidence was needed than was generally available in terms of individual culpability in tying an act of murder to a specific victim. The evidence about genocidal acts that was available was less precise, but powerfully compelling. Therefore, the donor community, including the United States, stepped in and worked very closely with the Ministry of Justice to reconstitute the court system, retrain magistrates, educate lawyers, provide resources - even buy typewriters and typewriter paper, put desks back into courtrooms and things like that. In addition, we provided experts to



help consider what might be done in terms of a new law. Although it reflected some outside advice, an essentially Rwandan genocide law was drafted, which categorized *génocidaires* into four groups. The first group included leaders and major perpetrators of crimes, the second people who participated in a substantial fashion. The third included followers who were less notorious, and the fourth people who may not have killed but who identified Tutsis, seized assets or things like that. Even though a new, quicker judicial procedure was set forth for judging people under this law, there were 130,000 people in jail. The court system was capable, maybe, of trying 15 people a week throughout the whole country. Do the math. It was going to take forever. Nonetheless, a start was made via the genocide trials. The numbers when I left in January of 1999 were that about 500 of the category one prisoners had been tried. Most were found guilty. Most received a sentence of capital punishment. A few were acquitted, others given lesser sentences. Ministry of Justice officials estimated there were about 4000 people in category one in custody and another four to ten thousand people in category two. The immediate objective was to try to move through those categories of prisoners. In April 1998 22 *génocidaires* were executed in public. Although many more have subsequently received death sentences, there have been no more public spectacles. The Rwandan government understands that it cannot execute 10,000 people.

Apparently, leaders felt they needed to execute some *génocidaires* to convey to the populace and the world at large not only that justice was going to be done, but that it was going to be delivered. Impunity was at an end. That message came out very, very clearly. One of the provisions of the law that U.S. advisors suggested to the Rwandans was a plea-bargaining provision, but it was not until after the executions that prisoners lined up to confess and plea bargain. That aspect of the genocide law subsequently moved forward steadily. I am pleased to report that the United States contributed several million dollars over the course of the years to help rebuild, restructure, and support the justice system.

More recently, the government of Rwanda recognized that tens of thousands of formal trials are not doable. It cannot try everyone. Instead Rwanda looked to traditional justice system called *Gacaca*, which was used historically to resolve civil disputes involving land, cattle, marriage, etc. *Gacaca* consisted of a long palaver following which a local committee meted out justice. Rwanda decided to adapt this system so that people in categories three and four could be sent to their home areas and have their cases decided by local courts. Punishments would include time served, community service, reparations or whatever. That process is moving forward. I'm confident that even though we have a long way to go in terms of justice, the three-part process is progressing.

The third leg of this process is the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which is a creation of the Security Council. The ICTR was established to bring to justice violators of the genocide and war crimes treaties. The ICTR is something that hadn't existed before. It runs concurrently with the Bosnian war crimes tribunal, has the same chief prosecutor and the same appeals court. It took a long time to get the ICTR in operation. The number of people in custody has now risen to about 34. The Tribunal accepted a guilty plea from the post-Habyarimana regime prime minister, and several other major *génocidaires* have been convicted via trials and sentenced to life imprisonment. The ICTR cannot mete out capital punishment. Clearly delivering justice in Rwanda to the medium-sized fish caught there requires that the big fish, that

is those are truly responsible for the genocide, be held accountable for their crimes. When creating the ICTR, it was understood that those “big fish” would not be caught in Rwanda and would probably not be extradited by other nations back to Rwanda, but they might well be extradited to the international court. For example, the United States has extradited one individual to the ICTR for trial. When these planners; these masterminds, these conceivers of genocide are tried and convicted, it becomes easier for Rwanda to find other forms of punishment for the prisoners it holds. Justice is a big element in reconciliation.

I told Rwandans I'm from Alabama, where the key event in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the Civil War. It took my ancestors generations before they reconciled with northerners, and they didn't have to live next door to them while they were doing it. Reconciliation in Rwanda is an enormous psychological task for the people involved. Survivors see people who killed their family every day. Relatives of those who killed may still live next door. Victims of genocide live in an environment where everyone knows exactly what happened. Most Rwandans that I spoke to were fairly understanding about the need for overall forgiveness and reconciliation when talking in the abstract, but when it came down to specifics involving people who killed their relatives, they did not want anything abstract, they want the exaction of punishment. That remains troublesome.

The society rallied around orphans. There were many orphans of the genocide. There were many lost children in the subsequent massive population movements. Most of those children have been reunited in some fashion or another with a member of their family. That is an astonishing achievement in many respects. The international agencies did enormous good work in tracing children, and so now only a few thousand children remain in institutions. There are several fine such orphan homes, including one that's run by Mrs. Rosmund Carr, an elderly American lady. However, most orphanages were closed after their clients were placed in extended families.

Churches, survivors' organizations, widows' organizations - there are many groups involved in reconciliation, trying to get people to talk to each other, trying to get people to lay out their fears, worries and so forth. A thousand flowers are blooming. Some undertakings are successful, and some are not. Some people don't want to participate; others are very anxious to do so. One of the phenomena of present-day Rwanda is that the established churches - the Catholic Church, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Anglican Church - were tainted by the violence. People are going back to church, but often times they avoid those churches. Instead, they're going to a new group of Evangelical churches, perhaps because these churches permit the airing of emotions in a way that the traditional churches do not. Rwandans are reticent people, so worshipers at these churches find great release in such expressions. .

Regarding democracy, the government was set up as specified in the Arusha Accords, so the form for representative democracy exists. The political parties are not politicking on a national scale for the time being, but the 13 political parties represented in the government do caucus, meet and nominate members to the government. As ambassador I tried to push the envelope of democratic participation. I recognized that the survivors of genocide never want to be in the position where they think genocide will happen again. Nonetheless, there was a lot that could be done in terms of giving people a stake in their own society so they don't feel excluded. I felt the populace must harbor hopes for a better future, and indeed the hope that their children will live in

a better place, because without such hopes, people become dispirited. Despite the pall of death, Rwandans by and large regenerated those sorts of hopes. I particularly tried to strengthen parliament as a representative institution so that it might counter balance the strong executive. I pushed (unsuccessfully) for political parties to be able to organize again. The Rwandan Government, with some urging from us but also because of its own needs, began elections of local counselors. They had always been appointed before. The government judged that one of the ways to pacify the north was, rather than having appointed officials running local affairs, to have the local people elect their officials. That way they could not say, "They are imposed on us by a faraway government." Elections have been instrumental in empowering local people and bringing peace to the insurgent areas of the north.

Elections in grassroots communities convinced and assured the people that they did indeed have a voice in government. This was an important step in permitting reconciliation to move ahead. I tried to find ways to bring American resources and expertise to bear on some of these issues, and did.

*Q: We've talked about the problems you have had with Dan Simpson in Zaire and with the media and the non-governmental organizations. There are a lot of perceptions there which were different perceptions. You had your perception. How did this play in the African Bureau and above? Susan Rice, I guess, was the assistant secretary during that time?*

GRIBBIN: Yes.

*Q: Did this get involved with the State Department?*

GRIBBIN: No, one of the strengths of our Rwandan policy was that I had the full support, and *vice versa*, of my superiors back in Washington for our policies, from the President on down. President Clinton visited Rwanda while I was there. It was a very useful, very emotional, and very successful visit. The President apologized for not understanding the depths and the ramifications of genocide when it began. Madeleine Albright visited twice, first as UN ambassador, and then as Secretary of State. Susan Rice came on more than one occasion. I had various delegations of congressmen and senators, and Bill Richardson, when he was the UN ambassador, on two occasions. Dick McCall, the chief of staff of USAID, was a key supporter. Dick and Susan and the Secretary were staunch supporters of the sort of policies that we wanted to do in Rwanda in terms of reconciliation, in terms of justice, in terms of support for the return of refugees, in terms of support for the Government of Rwanda as it tried to implement policies of reconciliation and democracy. I never felt myself much in conflict with Washington over basic policy ideas. We had our disagreements certainly, but were able to work them out.

The U.S. disagreed on more than one occasion with positions taken with the Government of Rwanda, and it was my job as ambassador to go in and be very blunt with them about our differing perceptions. I pointed out how we thought this would rebound to their detriment or rebound to their advantage. They listened. They didn't always do what I asked, of course.

*Q: When the President came out, what was it one-day visit?*

GRIBBIN: It was almost a non-visit. The President was planning a trip to Africa, where the First Lady had been earlier. When she was in neighboring Uganda, we sent a delegation of Rwandan women to meet her. She was very impressed by them and promised to bring her husband to Rwanda next time around. Rwandans were very hopeful that the presidential safari would include Rwanda. Even though the idea was that the President would come to the region and talk about genocide, Rwanda didn't make the second cut because of the perception by presidential handlers in Washington of what the security situation was. Howard Wolpe who was the special envoy for the region, Gayle Smith, who became the Africa chief on the National Security Council staff, were in Kigali at the time on a jaunt to brief chiefs of state about Clinton's upcoming trip. They and I discussed President Clinton's plans with President Bizimungu. He flat out said no, the U.S couldn't do it that way. If President Clinton was going to come to Africa to talk about genocide, he couldn't do it in Uganda; he had to come to Rwanda. We Americans all agreed with his point, but did our utmost to convince Bizimungu that a Kigali stop was not necessary. But he was completely adamant. We passed that word back to Washington. People there, including Susan Rice and, I think, the Secretary, agreed that Clinton really couldn't make the political point he ought to make regarding genocide if he didn't go to Rwanda. Ultimately, I understood, the issue went to the President himself. He said, "Let's go to Rwanda."

So we set up a visit to Rwanda. It happened on March 28, 1998. The security people were insistent, however, that Clinton wouldn't leave the airport. Since we were glad enough to get our six hours, we programmed a visit at the airport which included a meeting with President Bizimungu and Vice-President Kagame, followed by a roundtable with survivors of the genocide - seven very articulate people, one with a missing arm and a woman who had been raped repeatedly, and another who had her children killed before her eyes and things like that. They related poignant tales of what happened. Then we moved on to a couple of ceremonial events, capped off by a major address by the President in a completely redecorated airport arrival-departure hall for several hundred people. It was a major event and a major success. President Clinton made an absolutely terrific speech.

*Q: How did that work there? Did you have any input into this?*

GRIBBIN: To the speech?

*Q: Yes.*

GRIBBIN: I sent back some themes and ideas, so I recognized some of my points, but none of my language.

*Q: Well, you left there, then, and retired, or what?*

GRIBBIN: Yes, I left in January of 1999, after a very fulfilling period of time, and I felt a great sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. I'm threatening still to write a book about it.

*End of reader*