

ACRONYMS

ADFL	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo
CDR	Coalition pour la Défense de la Republique. Extremist party during Habyarimana's regime that had a key role in the genocide
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (U.S.)
CNDD	Conseil National pour la Deféense de la Démocratie (Burundi)
DIP	Division of International Protection (UNHCR)
DoD	Department of Defense (U.S.)
DSP	Division Speciale Présidentielle. Elite force in the Zairian army
ex-FAR	Ex-Forces Armées Rwandaises. Former Rwandan Armed Forces under late President Habyarimana
FAZ	Forces Armées Zairoises
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
Interahamwe	Means "those who work together". Civilian militia of MRND, during Habyarimana's regime. Had a key role in the genocide. Another militia, called Impuzamugambi, was organised by the CDR
MNF	Multinational Force
MRND	Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour le Développement et la Démocratie. Habyarimana's party
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NSC	National Security Council (U.S.)
PRM	Population, Refugee, and Migration Bureau (U.S. State Department)
RDR	Rassemblement pour le Retour et la Démocratie
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RTLMC	Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (Rwanda)
SRS	Special Representative of the Secretary-General (U.N.)
SURB	Special Unit for Rwanda and Burundi. Set up within UNHCR Geneva as focal point for the crisis in the Great Lakes region
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
ZCSC	Zairian Camp Security Contingent. Deployed in eastern Zaire to improve security in refugee camps

**MISSED OPPORTUNITIES: THE ROLE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE RETURN OF THE RWANDAN
REFUGEES FROM EASTERN ZAIRE
JULY 1994 - DECEMBER 1996**

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“In any society the dominant groups are the ones with the most to hide about the way society works. Very often therefore truthful analyses are bound to have a critical ring, to seem like exposures rather than objective statements...For all students of human society, sympathy with the victims of historical processes and skepticism about the victors' claims provide essential safeguards against being taken in by the dominant mythology.”
Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon, 1966), 523.

INTRODUCTION

July 1994, the horror of the genocide in Rwanda was overtaken by pictures of an unprecedented exodus of Rwandan Hutus, led into Zaire by the iron and bloody hands of their leaders. The refugee emergency phase that started on 13 July 1994 was contained by the end of September. The two ensuing years witnessed a flurry of initiatives to find a way out of a refugee situation that, after the genocide, had all the ingredients to further poison the political and ethnic crises that had been brewing in the Great Lakes Region of Africa for some time. The stalemate eventually came to an end in October 1996, when a military offensive led by a coalition of rebel groups from eastern and southern Zaire resulted in a massive return of some refugees and the scattering of others. This offensive ultimately brought the rebel leader, Laurent Desire Kabila, to Kinshasa where he appointed himself President of the renamed Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

This paper has two purposes. First, it seeks to set out and explore the political dynamics that characterized the role of the international community² in the refugee crisis from July

¹ I wish to thank UNHCR, and Mrs. Sadako Ogata and Eric Morris in particular, for giving me the opportunity to go on study leave and undertake research in Cambridge, U.S. to complete this study. Professor Myron Weiner of MIT had the patience to guide me through my research and gave crucial advice during the painful writing process. Special thanks are due to Dr. Karen Jacobsen of Regis College and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, who was instrumental in clarifying my ideas, reviewing various drafts, and editing them. Without her assistance, this paper would have looked very different indeed, and would be far less readable. I received key support from friends who wish to remain anonymous. Still, their role is gratefully acknowledged here. I am also indebted to the numerous colleagues in UNHCR, at the various universities and colleges in Cambridge and Boston, and officials within the U.S. Government and in Congress, who took the time to see me and patiently answer my queries.

1994 to end 1996, and specifically the position of the main actors as regards the return of the refugees. We present their respective positions, fully aware that the actors interplayed and that their perceptions of one another affected these positions.

Our second purpose is to try to balance the popular perception, by outsiders and more knowledgeable observers alike, that the international community did little to solve the refugee crisis. Although it is a globally fair assessment as concerns political actors, we will show that humanitarian agencies on the whole, and UNHCR in particular, recognized that the situation was exceptional and needed untraditional treatment. However, realization that extraordinary measures were needed occurred several months after the massive influx into Goma, at a time when the refugee leadership had reorganized and made any initiative to erode their influence extremely difficult. The situation inside Rwanda had also solidified around conflicting views on the repatriation of Rwandans in exile. As extremists who had participated in the genocide asserted themselves in the refugee camps, extremists within the Rwandan government also gained strength. Further, humanitarian agencies had to rely almost entirely on their own limited power. In the absence of concrete actions on the political front, UNHCR launched initiatives that often went beyond its traditional mandate. The initiatives described below are not always known, contrary to the author's original perception, which might explain the popular perception that UNHCR was failing to act. It shows that steps to improve information sharing are still needed.

Although most of the main international actors agreed that peaceful repatriation of the Rwandan refugees was, by far, the best solution, they proved incapable of playing a positive role in facilitating such a movement. Beyond the rhetoric, few attempts were made at the political level to create conditions, both within Zaire and in Rwanda, that would have made possible a peaceful and organized refugee return. Initiatives within a multilateral framework were neutralized by an international environment characterized by rivalries and a relative indifference to events in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Failure of joint concerted actions left the door open to unilateral initiatives, favoring one party to the conflict over another, thereby sowing seeds for future outbreaks of violence. The fact that the parties to this conflict seemed to obey the same logic of a zero-sum confrontation made matters worse. One of the main findings of a recent evaluation of the international response to the Great Lakes crisis is that although "the international community cannot be held solely accountable for the non-return of refugees, nonetheless, many of its acts of omission and commission have contributed to the repatriation stalemate and political instability in the region where the camps are located."³

² The international community or "major players/actors," in the context of the Great Lakes crises, is understood as including the United States of America, France, the United Nations, and the countries of asylum (DRC) and of origin (Rwanda).

³ David Milwood (ed.), *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience*. Odense: Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, March 1996. Volume 4: "Rebuilding Post-War Rwanda," 92.

Not only did the genocide in Rwanda and the resulting refugee situation take a heavy toll on the Rwandan, and to a lesser extent Congolese, populations but it led to developments that very few persons would have predicted in 1994. Had the refugees returned sooner and the camps been dismantled, the profile of the regime in Rwanda and political developments in Zaire would have been radically different. It follows that, had the international community played a more constructive role in the return of the refugees than was the case, the situation in the whole of the central Africa region and beyond might have been dramatically different.

However, the political actors left it to humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR to “deal with the issue” without giving them the necessary political (and at times military) support. Beside “saving lives,” the crucial component of the refugee situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa was the initiatives, often by humanitarian actors, to find a way out of an intractable and open-ended refugee situation that was threatening a region already severely jeopardized by widespread ethnic conflicts. Most of the initiatives were geared towards prompting a return of the refugees. Some of them, detailed below, could have ended the stalemate—and almost did—but would have required more political will than existed at the time. Lack of interest translated into inertia, passive resistance, and reluctance to consider options that did not fit the international diplomatic “mold” or were considered out of proportion in regard to the limited strategic importance of the Great Lakes. The actors involved in creating conditions conducive to a return of the refugees⁴ might have overcome this inertia, but it would have required systematic and coherent pressure on Rwanda, the DRC, and western capitals. Conflicting views within many agencies and government departments also undermined their capacity to influence the decision-making process, or to be proactive. In particular, realization that the Rwandans were actually led into Zaire—as opposed to spontaneously fleeing civil disorder—was often belated and controversial. When it did happen, such realization generally failed to influence significantly humanitarian policy, and subsequently assistance, to the Rwandans in Zaire. The political world reacted to the crisis in eastern Zaire but it was alone in doing so. In its own way, the humanitarian world also responded, albeit generally in a traditional manner, to an exceptional situation.

This study is based on the author’s experience from the end of July 1994 to the end of August 1996, in eastern Zaire and in Goma, where he was head of UNHCR’s office,⁵ and on interviews and discussions with persons in the academic and professional world who have closely followed developments in the region. The study draws most heavily on

⁴ Those actors were mainly the U.S. State Department and USAID officials in Rwanda and the DRC, European Union officials there, the U.N. in Rwanda, UNHCR in eastern Zaire.

⁵ Although efforts are made to be as objective as possible, some bias may be discernable, for which we apologize in advance. One should also keep in mind that the extreme situation did not easily lend itself to an impartial and “healthily distant” perspective on the entire situation. In fact, a characteristic of the Great Lakes region tragedy has been the schizophrenia of most organizations involved, and their difficulty to reconcile the views of their personnel depending on whether they were based in ex-Zaire, in Rwanda, and even in Geneva, New York, or Washington. Clientelism is often considered an unavoidable component of diplomacy, or of any organization, but it reached a new dimension in the case of the Great Lakes region.

events and actions that took place in the North-Kivu (Goma) region and to a lesser extent in the South-Kivu (Bukavu-Uvira) region.

Excellent studies exist on the history and politics of Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, and these were most useful for this study. Extensive use was also made of the media coverage of the crisis, as thousands of articles in newspapers, journals, and so forth were written on the events of 1994 to 1996 in the DRC and Rwanda. Although there is ample literature dealing with the theory and practice of foreign policy, such literature is not so forthcoming in analyzing the relationship between the major powers and the U.N., and especially the dynamism of the Security Council, its voting procedures, or the interface between the missions to the U.N. and the capitals. As yet, few in-depth studies exist on the evolution of the refugee situation in eastern Zaire and this paper will attempt partially to fill this gap.

It has, yet again, become fashionable to go into a “humanitarian bashing” mode. We found some of these criticisms—not all of them—uncalled for, based on shaky evidence, or politically or personally motivated. It would seem that while it is taken for granted that the humanitarian world should change (which it should, post-Cold War), the role of political actors—the most important one—is often overlooked. For instance while most analysts did not question the reluctance of the U.S. administration to deploy troops in 1994, after the Somalia “fiasco,” they did not exhibit such understanding when considering the constraints on humanitarian organizations, like UNHCR, with a mandate based on international law.

Much more would need to be said to provide a comprehensive picture of the role of the international community in addressing the refugee issue. We hope that this study will be useful for further research on the subject, and that the description and analysis of the following chapters will also answer some of the major criticisms leveled against humanitarian organizations in the context of eastern Zaire. We hope to draw some lessons from the description and analysis of the role of the international community. These lessons should not (all) be lost since, as one senior USAID official put it in mid-1995 at a conference in Kigali, we run the risk of becoming irrelevant if we do not adapt. This applies not only to the United Nations agencies, but to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), as well as government agencies dealing with humanitarian, human rights, and development issues.

The attached chronology of events and statements illustrates the conflicting orientations of these actors. The concluding chapter will outline recommendations drawn from the case studies in the preceding chapters and will review the relevance of voluntary repatriation in the context of the Great Lakes region.

THE MAIN ACTORS AND THEIR POSITION VIS A VIS A RETURN

Overview

The Rwandan genocide touched a deep emotional chord, and consequently so did the refugee crisis that ensued. Few people remained indifferent or aloof while involved in the Great Lakes region, which was characterized by high media coverage, routine demonization of the parties to the conflict, and widely divergent views regarding the future of Rwanda. The differences in opinion had as much to do with personal interpretations as with the mandates of the many agencies that intervened in the refugee emergency. The dilemma that high officials talked about was reflected in a lack of clear directives to the field, which in turn gave field workers the latitude to direct their activities according to their personal interpretation of the situation and how to solve it.

Despite this, a consensus emerged by September/October 1994 that the majority of the refugees would need to return, *sooner or later*. The issue then became the timing of such a return. This, in turn, would determine the manner in which the repatriation would take place and, from there, the impact it would have on Rwanda's political future. There were two main schools of thought: on one side were the advocates of an early return, on the other were the proponents of a slower process to occur over an undetermined number of years.

Early Return

The advocates for such a return realized within one to three months after the exodus to eastern Zaire, that the camps poised on the border were likely to be highly destabilizing. When one considers the fragile equilibrium in the Kivu region, with its endemic ethnic feuds, and in the Great Lakes region as a whole, it did not take a seer to understand this.

Also, repatriation was seen as the only way to resume a dialogue between the refugee population proper and the population that had either stayed behind or already returned to Rwanda. The term dialogue here does not have political connotations, at least not initially. What seemed crucial was that the rumor mill be stopped before the demonization process created unbridgeable gaps in the perception of "those on the other side of the border."⁶ Hence, the longer the refugees remained in exile, the tougher the return would be, since the refugees would increasingly be viewed as aiding and abetting those responsible for the genocide. One point that UNHCR repeatedly made both to refugee

⁶ Such a dialogue did not include the power-sharing concept that some international actors tried to push very early after the genocide. See Gerard Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. Prunier makes a distinction between "innocent pressure" on the Rwandan government to resume a dialogue with the exile community, and pressure, especially by the French Government and rightist wing in Belgium, that had the political agenda of eventually restoring a friendly Hutu government.

leaders and to refugee gatherings was that it would be more difficult to reclaim one's property after someone else had cultivated it for several years, than to reclaim it after only a few months. The refugees were receptive to this argument and were fully aware of it. An early return was construed as an attempt at resumption of a semblance of normal life. Repatriation could stabilize the region. This had been tried elsewhere, for example in Tajikistan, with a good measure of success. The genocide made this return more complex, but it did not make it an impossibility, considering that the majority of the refugees were led into Zaire by a fairly well organized movement orchestrated by the former Rwandan leaders; the refugees had not really been forced out by the winning side. Further, the Rwandan authorities, at least in the earlier stages, seemed convinced of the necessity of a return, not least for economic reasons.

Discussions with refugee leaders, former Forces Armées Rwandaises (ex-FAR), and members of the self-proclaimed Rwandan government in exile revealed that exile was the continuation of the war by other means. Their intention was to remain temporarily in Zaire, gather strength, and return to regain power. The cholera outbreak of July-August 1994 played the indirect role of temporarily disorganizing this well-oiled set up, and it took several weeks for the refugee leadership to regain control of the population. In the meantime, from July to September 1994,⁷ some 200,000 persons returned, mostly to Ruhengeri and to a lesser extent Gisenyi prefectures, without being harassed. By then, the relief community realized that the camps were rapidly becoming controlled by the refugee leadership who would use the population as a protective shield against any attempt at having them arrested.

The leadership was made up of a motley group of people with one thing in common: their participation, to varying degrees, in the genocide. One must, however, differentiate between the "official" leaders—those "elected"⁸ by the refugees in the camps in 1995—and the real leaders, acting behind the scene, and rarely to be seen in public meetings. The official leaders were well known, their names were even "officially" communicated to us by the Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Retour (RDR) upon its creation in April 1995.⁹ The official leaders often were educated refugees, at the middle management level

⁷ In August 1994, UNHCR deployed local staff at official crossing points and along the border in the vicinity of Kibumba to count cross-border movements. An undetermined number of refugees may have crossed into Rwanda through other unauthorized areas in the forest. Some 19,300 Rwandese went back home in July 1994, 61,700 in August and 49,300 in September. UNHCR estimated that 30 to 50 percent should be added to reflect the actual number of returnees, hence the figure of 200,000 persons from July to September.

⁸ Electing someone generally consisted of queuing up behind candidates, and there were few, if any, competing candidates in camp elections.

⁹ Elections took place in most of the camps as of November-December 1994. They were organized by the Social Commission, which comprised a wide variety of Rwandan professionals, including journalists from the all-too-well-known RTLMC, and acted as a liaison between the so-called government in exile and the refugees. Although trying to appear as a conciliatory entity, the Social Commission had many extremists in its ranks who were the dominant voice. Further elections were organized following the creation of the RDR in April 1995. The list of "elected" leaders was forwarded by UNHCR Goma to Geneva (inter alia for follow up with the Centre for Human Rights), to the Zairian authorities, and to UNHCR Kigali. This

in the former Rwandan bureaucracy.¹⁰ The real power brokers were former high government officials and MRND/CDR militiamen and ex-FAR top officers. As concerns the armed branch of the leadership, the ex-FAR went through different phases and its strategy also adapted to the reality of the moment. The year 1994 was characterized by a relative isolation of the ex-FAR from the refugee situation. On several occasions it helped restore limited order in the camps, such as in October 1994 when the ex-FAR were requested by UNHCR Goma to clear the main road in Mugunga, which was becoming impassable because of encroaching huts and shops. By early 1995, the ex-FAR were involved in the politics of the camps and the entire region. It then became difficult to differentiate between them and the former militia, with which they closely cooperated. The top echelon of the armed forces seems, however, to have remained firmly in the hands of the ex-FAR. This prominent role coincided with the creation of the RDR, which in turn marked the marginalization of the self-proclaimed government in exile.¹¹

There is in fact a noticeable symmetry between the rise of the ex-FAR in the camps and the tightening grip of the RPF on all aspects of political life in Rwanda. A recurring theme in our study is that, notwithstanding the genocide and the high moral ground of the Rwandan government, extremists on both sides of the border obeyed the same logic of a zero-sum conflict. The vicious cycle of violence that emerged within a few months of the exodus was looming high on the horizon by late 1994, making it urgent to prompt a return before the eruption of a regional conflict.

Justice was also a crucial element in advocating for an early return: if a return could be triggered, the number of refugees who would stay behind, it was estimated, would not exceed some 200 to 300,000 persons in eastern Zaire, i.e., one-third of the refugee population of the time.¹² Once two-thirds of the refugees had returned, those who remained in Zaire could be the object of “closer scrutiny,” which could have involved individual status determination and eventual application of the exclusion clause. This aspect has often been overlooked, but it played an important role in favor of an early return. The longer over one million Rwandan refugees remained in eastern Zaire, the more difficult it would be to separate the “wolves from the sheep.”

The fact that any delayed return would widen the gap between the refugees and the communities in Rwanda; that the refugees would be used as a shield by their leadership; that the refugee leadership would initiate a cycle of violence; the need for justice to be

list had only limited interest when checked against that of the alleged main participants in the genocide, put forward by the Rwandan government.

¹⁰ Several of the elected leaders tried to do an “honest” job but they were few and their position was most delicate. The real leaders expected the elected ones to follow one common course of action: preventing a massive return that would have uncovered them. Hence, whether elected or real, the leaders’ task was to keep the refugees in the camps.

¹¹ The ex-FAR issued a statement that officially supported the RDR. Together they accused the members of the government in exile of lacking interest in the fate of the refugees and of being ineffectual and aloof.

¹² These estimates were based on rough estimates of the number of ex-FAR soldiers, militiamen, and ex-Government officials in the camps, estimates given through various documents on the number of persons likely to have participated in the genocide and their relatives.

done; and the complex ethnic problem already existing in the Kivu region all argued in favor of an early return.

Delayed/Gradual Return

Apart from the ICRC, which declared through its President that any return would be premature, few organizations officially took the position that a return would have to wait.¹³ The problem with advocating for a delay was to define the length of time. It was obvious that the wounds of the genocide would probably take at least one generation to heal. Did this mean that no return should be envisaged for several decades? This did not seem fair as concerns the majority of refugees who had not been involved in the genocide. At the very least, the advocates for a delay considered that for a return to be successful, the judicial system needed to be operational. It had been totally destroyed and needed time to be rebuilt. Most observers agreed that it would take years to reconstruct the judicial system and to deal with the situation in the Rwandan prisons. This logically would have meant that no return would be possible before an undetermined number of years. Few observers or international actors were ready to accept this.

As it became clear that time was reinforcing extremists within the refugee population, the debate shifted from a delay to the need to have a gradual, organized return over a necessarily substantial period of time. The “absorptive” capacity of Rwanda was also advanced as a consideration against a rapid return.¹⁴ Early reports of RPF and other Tutsi persecution and revenge killing of both Hutu residents and a trickle of Hutu returnees in some areas in Rwanda discouraged some from advocating an early return and strengthened the credibility of the “government in exile” and other Hutu leaders in the camps in eastern Zaire. The RPF’s exclusion of UNAMIR forces from such areas throughout the May to August 1994 period, and the continuous outflow from these areas during the same period of hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees, did little to allay concerns regarding the viability of an early return.

Giving time to the Rwandan authorities to establish themselves was an important consideration for advocates of a gradual return. This position characterized the supporters of the new Rwandan regime. Avoiding its destabilization took different forms

¹³ The ICRC President stated this clearly on December 14, 1994 in a speech to the Security Council. At field level in eastern Zaire and Goma in particular, cooperation with ICRC was excellent, and its delegates understood what UNHCR was trying to achieve and its rationale. We are not here going into the details of the position of all the actors. NGOs like Caritas and several local NGOs such as the Jeremy Group, and especially the Zairian Civil Society and the Rwandan Civil Society in exile (which had been present in Goma before the July exodus but effectively “took over” the role of the Social Commission in the camps during the last quarter of 1994) were advocating for concertation and dialogue between the refugee leaders and the new Rwandan regime prior to any repatriation. A study on the position of the numerous local actors and NGOs would be most interesting but is beyond the scope of the present study.

¹⁴ Absorptive capacity was not a clearly defined concept. It included economic absorption—although most of the returnees were in a non-monetary system of subsistence agriculture—and also the tolerance threshold of the survivors of the genocide.

that, directly or indirectly, undermined several initiatives aimed at triggering a return. For instance, attempts at resuming a dialogue were construed by the regime and its supporters as an effort to undermine the power base of the authorities. We have already noted that this may have been the goal of some international actors. It was, however, not the case when agencies like UNHCR called for a dialogue with the refugee population at a non-political level. Organizing meetings of teachers or of women's associations, between the refugee population and those in Rwanda was seen as a non-violent way to re-establish contacts. However, any dialogue with the refugees would have given legitimacy to their status and might have led to discussions on power sharing arrangements. To the new regime and its supporters, this was clearly a distasteful and dangerous idea, at least in the short term. Hence, the return of the refugees should preferably be in the form of an "unconditional surrender" of the refugees and their subsequent marginalization.

Favoring a gradual return reflected a perception of the present and future of Rwanda as a "zero-sum" power struggle between the Hutus and Tutsis. Any power sharing by the Tutsis would, if not strongly controlled, lead to an opening of the government. From there the "need" for democracy would have to be addressed, and Hutu leaders, including moderates, would certainly increase pressure that the international community might have found hard to disregard forever. This could have led to a "dictatorship" of the majority and, from there, yet again, a marginalization of the Tutsis, if not their annihilation.

Massive Versus Gradual Return

The debate between early and gradual return was fundamental for several reasons: the advocates of an early return were aware of the fact that prompting a return would probably lead to a sudden and massive movement. This point was raised on several occasions by UNHCR Goma, among others, with the European Union and U.S. officials. In 1994 and 1995 these officials were generally reluctant to envisage this, since a massive return would be likely to destabilize Rwanda with unpredictable consequences. Many argued that the refugee leadership might try to use a massive return to infiltrate Rwanda and launch repeated operations of sabotage.

On the other hand, the advocates for an early return considered that the refugee leadership was already infiltrating Rwanda. A massive return would therefore not significantly change an already existing trend. Second, a massive return might possibly have isolated the leadership that chose to stay behind. At the time, the leadership was in fact preparing for the creation of a "safe haven": the military operations carried out under the leadership of the ex-FAR in the Masisi area, west of Goma, as of 1995 reflected its strategy to carve a "Hutuland" out of this area at the expense of all the other ethnic groups there. The refugee leadership repeatedly stated that time was on its side, that the Tutsis had waited some thirty years to return, and that they themselves could wait for a while to regroup, retrain, and overthrow the Kigali regime. It is difficult to know if this was a genuine statement, and chances are that it was not. However, it was one option that the ex-FAR was envisaging, since they had the support and the open-ended hospitality of President

Mobutu. Third, a massive return would have enabled the international community to focus most of its resources inside Rwanda, which would have increased the potential for the country's recovery, thereby undermining the power base of the Hutu extremists.

Therefore, apart from a small minority clearly in favor of a delayed return, the debate revolved around an early *and* massive return versus a gradual repatriation. The "gradualist" approach, however, rested on one optimistic assumption: the belief that agencies such as UNHCR would be in a position to control the flow of returnees, should a return take place. The advocates of an early return were of the opinion that very little could be controlled and that the agencies and authorities in Rwanda would need to be prepared to receive and assist a massive, disorganized returnee population. Several regional meetings on repatriation were organized in 1995 by UNHCR, and the need for UNHCR Rwanda to be ready for a massive return movement was discussed at length. Whatever the circumstances that would trigger a return, the leadership would not give in that easily and would try to destabilize Rwanda by creating a "green march,"¹⁵ that is, by pushing back the bulk of the population. In other words, the partisans for an early return tended to be in favor of a repatriation, almost at any costs, while those supporting a gradual process were considering the stability and strengthening of the new Rwandan regime as the first priority.

There was a consensus that a gradual return was much preferable, provided it took place within a limited period of time. However the condition *sine qua non* for a gradual, organized, and peaceful return was the separation of the refugee leadership from its population, since the leadership was fiercely opposed to a return that would marginalize them and perhaps bring them to the gallows or the firing squads. We will see in subsequent chapters that in spite of repeated attempts, it became clear that the international community was not ready to pay the price necessary for a separation of the leadership to take place. This gradually reinforced the opinion of most players that indeed a return, even if massive, had to take place. In this regard, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Phyllis Oakley welcomed the emergence of a consensus among the main players involved in the Great Lakes concerning measures to be adopted to accelerate the repatriation of the refugees. However, by the time her statement was made on 10 October 1996, the situation in the Kivu region was already out of control.

The above categorization does not give justice to the debates and dissents in Rwanda, Zaire, within UNHCR, and between the U.S. government and other major partners. We will now briefly review these debates.

The Rwandan Government

The positions of the main Rwandan actors were determined by the way they considered the refugee population and how they related to the new regime. While Hutu ministers favored an "open door" policy and an early return of the refugees, the priority of the Tutsi

¹⁵ In reference to the Green March by the Sahraoui to western Sahara.

component of the regime was to consolidate the regime. The latter adopted a less flexible attitude vis a vis the refugee population, which they often considered guilty by association. We elaborate on this further below.

The return of the refugees was a stated priority for the Rwandan authorities from the beginning of its assuming power. The first declaration of Faustin Twagiramungu as Prime Minister, upon his arrival in Kigali on 7 July 1994, mentioned that his top priority was refugees, not least because Rwanda needed more manpower to help in the economic recovery. This position was reiterated on numerous occasions, be it by the Prime Minister, the President Pasteur Bizimungu, or the Vice-President and Minister of Defense Paul Kagame.¹⁶

We choose to focus on the position of two “heavyweights”: Faustin Twagiramungu and Paul Kagame. The former (a Hutu) resigned (or was fired, depending on who tells the story) from his post in August 1995. He believed, as he declared in an interview in December 1994, that 95 percent of the refugees were innocent. Without going into the details of the ethnic aspect of the power struggle within the Rwandan authorities, F. Twagiramungu would logically have at heart the return of the refugees who, potentially, could strengthen his constituency and his power base. As for P. Kagame (a Tutsi), the opposite could be said since a major return of the Hutu refugees would further decrease the ratio of Tutsis compared to the total population in Rwanda.¹⁷

Whatever the differences in opinion between F. Twagiramungu and P. Kagame, these were not immediately reflected in their speeches: both insisted on a return, while at the same time ensuring that justice be done. Twagiramungu declared on 3 August 1994 that Rwanda wanted to try more than 30,000 people for genocide under its own laws because an international tribunal would take too long. Similarly, and with a slightly increased emphasis, Kagame declared “we want the refugees to come back, but not at any cost...not at the price of an amnesty, as some seem to be suggesting. We have a moral obligation to enforce justice.”¹⁸ The amnesty that Kagame referred to was indeed mentioned in early October, including in government circles, for Hutu militias who were “used” by the masterminds of the genocide. Kagame’s statement was nonetheless stronger than that

¹⁶ In spite of this, Rwandan politicians were reluctant to visit the camps of eastern Zaire to address the refugees directly—which would have had a much greater impact than UNHCR or the Zairian authorities trying to convince the refugees to return. Although this was attempted with mixed success in 1995 and 1996 in Burundi, the impact of such visits could have been positive, especially in 1994 and when the camps were not completely under control of the leaders and tension on the borders had not created an unmendable gap between Kigali and the refugees. This reluctance was due to deep distrust of the Zairian authorities, who were considered to be incapable or unwilling to ensure the security of Rwandan officials, and also a certain apprehension of these sprawling camps.

¹⁷ Gerard Prunier, *op. cit.*, 356-372. Also exposé by G. Prunier on 1 October 1997 in Washington D.C. at the Rwanda-Burundi forum. Gerard Prunier points out that P. Kagame is not the strongman with absolute power that many people believe. He certainly is the *primus inter pares*, but he is not alone and he has to take into account his brothers in arms, especially those of the Directorate of Military Intelligence, with more radical views and far less inclined to share any power with the Hutus.

¹⁸ *Le Soir* December 5, 1994.

Twagiramungu made the following day: “We can only have true reconciliation in Rwanda if there is a return of all refugees.”¹⁹

P. Kagame acknowledged the gap between the Tutsis and the Hutus:

The recent establishment of the government—broad based government—in which we’re able to bring different political parties together to form a government, and which parties had both Hutus and Tutsis in them, has helped narrow the gap and especially the background of the fact that the results have shown that, after all, the killings have not been simply ethnic; they have also gone to killing any Hutus with different views from those of the dictatorship. I think this has helped more to narrow the gap between the ethnic groups than create differences. But still there is a difference—I mean there is a problem, a problem in a sense that some of the aggrieved parties look at it in an ethnic sense because some survivors—the Tutsis for example—know very well that these Hutus—the militias who carried out the killings, who are targeting on ethnic groups—I imagine this developed or widened again the differences in the minds of some people.²⁰

As the camps became fortresses of extremist Hutu power, both statesmen insisted that the international community reduce or discontinue its assistance to the camps so that the refugees could be “induced” to repatriate. “There has to be a combination of persuasion and pressure by scaling down or even cutting off aid to these people to force them to return,” Twagiramungu declared in late 1994.²¹

Similarly, both politicians forcefully stressed the need to separate the armed elements from the refugee population: “I have asked the United Nations to separate the soldiers from the real refugees. But this must not be done brutally as the reaction would be completely wrong in the camps. The people must be psychologically prepared,” Twagiramungu said in early December.²² This was echoed by a similar declaration by the Minister of Defense: “I do not see any justification for aid assistance to militiamen who still have arms and are killing people and to government forces in uniform who still have weapons...There is an overestimation of strength of these criminal groups. They can decisively be disarmed and relocated.”²³

Both admitted that, should a return take place, Rwanda would not be in a position to absorb a large number of refugees at once, hence the need for the return to be staggered. The Rwandan authorities were not ready to enter into any compromise to assist the return of the refugee population: a proposal made in October 1994 by the government of Zaire to create buffer-zones inside Rwanda was dropped by the Rwandan authorities, after being

¹⁹ *Reuters*, December 6, 1994.

²⁰ Interview at the National Press Club, *Federal News Service*, December 13, 1994.

²¹ *Reuters*, November 14, 1994.

²² *Reuters*, December 6, 1994.

²³ Security Council, statement, December 15, 1994.

initially accepted by them. These buffer zones, under the control of U.N. forces, would have ensured the security of the returnees there. Obviously, it strongly smacked of a trusteeship-type of arrangement for the new Rwandan regime, which was keen to assert its sovereignty. As such, the idea was watered down to reception centers in the repatriation agreement signed with Zaire and UNHCR on 24 October 1994. Besides, buffer zones may have required additional troops and, considering the position of the international community toward similar requests, it is far from certain that the U.N. would have responded positively to such a requirement.

Withdrawal of the U.N. peace-keeping forces was also important in relation to a refugee return. While Twagiramungu tried to find a compromise and stated that Rwanda was close to a deal with the U.N. regarding the extension of its peace-keeping forces, Paul Kagame urged them to leave Rwanda, focus on the refugee camps, and tackle the problem of the re-arming of the ex-FAR.²⁴ The refugee population did not have unwavering confidence in the U.N. in Rwanda (or in eastern Zaire for that matter), which was accused by its leaders of bias in favor of the new Rwandan authorities.²⁵ In spite of this, the U.N. presence inside Rwanda was still considered by the refugee population as better than no U.N. at all, and as a relative safeguard against reprisals by the RPA. The radical position taken by the Minister of Defense thus reinforced the position of the leadership, which had no difficulty in convincing a relatively submissive crowd that the new regime did not want any witness in Rwanda as an additional proof that revenge would take place upon return. The withdrawal of the U.N. from Rwanda served as a strong disincentive against a return. In spite of apparent agreement on key issues, Twagiramungu's declarations appeared more conciliatory than Kagame's. The difference in tone and the widening gap between the two statesmen were noted by the refugee population, who had no doubt as to who was the strongman of the new regime.

In a zero-sum situation, symbolic gestures or speeches given by high officials have far-reaching impact on communities that are deeply afraid of one another. For instance, the decision by the new regime in early April 1995 to block food convoys transiting through Rwanda towards the refugee camps was viewed by the refugees as one additional attempt by an inimical government to starve them. This decision was predictable, as it was difficult for the Rwandan authorities to let through convoys that were feeding a population amongst which was a minority of extremists. The decision did lead to several months of acute food shortages in the camps.²⁶

²⁴ *Reuters*, June 2, 1995.

²⁵ For his part the author was either rumored to be married to a Tutsi, or was believed to be plotting with the Zairian Prime Minister for a forced return. Other UNHCR staff involved in repatriation activities were also invariably married to ethnic Tutsis, so the rumor went in the camps. This attitude was partially born out of a unilateral initiative taken by UNAMIR in early October: leaflets were dropped from U.N. helicopters (originating from Rwanda and without the authorization of the Zairian authorities) over two refugee camps. The leaflets appealed to the refugees to flee the unhealthy camps and return home for a brighter future. This initiative was immediately used by the refugee leadership to turn the refugees against the U.N., and relief workers in the camps had to face a most hostile environment for a while.

²⁶ The period of acute food shortage coincided with the lowest rate of return from the camps. This contradicts statements and analyses by numerous observers of refugee affairs, that there is a direct

Similarly, the decision of the Rwandan authorities on 3 January 1995 to issue new notes of 5,000, 1,000, and 500 Rwandan francs (from about 22 to 2 U.S. dollars), was interpreted as yet another attempt at isolating the refugee population. This decision made economic sense, considering that the coffers of Rwanda had been emptied by the fleeing regime, and the old currency was present in the camps in large quantities. However, this move was announced only one day in advance and the government declared that the exchange had to start the day of the announcement and should be completed the following day in the morning. At that time, UNHCR Goma requested UNHCR Kigali to plead with the authorities not only for an extension of the period of implementation but also to increase the ceiling of importable old currency, placed at 5,000 Rwandan francs. UNHCR Goma assumed that such a gesture could be used as an incentive for refugees to return. A substantial portion of the refugee population, though poor, would have benefited from it, and a few thousand persons returning could set an example and start a more substantial return movement. If they were asked, the authorities do not seem to have been sensitive to the argument. It is true that some wealthy refugees would have benefited from it as well. However, Kigali's decision was known to them in advance. They were thus prepared, unlike the majority in exile.

The negotiations between the local authorities of Goma, Gisenyi, and UNHCR during the Technical Subcommittee of the Repatriation Committee, which took place on a regular basis in 1995, are symptomatic of the attitude of the new regime. While officially welcoming the refugees back, initiatives to push the door of Rwanda wide open were either blocked or referred to Kigali and postponed for an undetermined period of time. A proposal to multiply exit points was turned down. A proposal to let refugees return spontaneously, after normal customs procedures and body search, as was done during the first months of 1994, was also turned down. One additional exit border point, named Kabuye-Kabuhanga, was eventually opened next to Kibumba. However, the opening was accompanied by measures restricting to 150 the number of persons who could cross through this point on a daily basis. The reasons invoked were the limited transport capacity and security in the area.²⁷ Notwithstanding the scale of authorized daily entries compared to the size of the camp just a few miles away (some 200,000 refugees), it was difficult to understand the alleged security concerns: at the time (mid-1995), military cross-border operations were daily features of life on the border. The Hutu extremists would not have used new exit points, where they would have been searched, when they were already crossing the border almost at will. Such relative freedom of movement was not possible for genuine returnees who needed official documents to return to their communes of origin. These restrictions gave the impression that, beyond a certain understandable nervousness on the part of the authorities, there was a definite reluctance

correlation between the level of humanitarian assistance and the scale of voluntary return. At least such correlation does not work in extreme situations such as that of the Great Lakes region. More important was the grip of the leadership on the refugee population; this grip was all the more easy to maintain because of some of the initiatives and positions taken by the new Rwandan regime.

²⁷ A substantial number of Tutsi returnees had been settled in the area and were not eager to see a large number of Hutus return.

to make any gesture of good will towards the refugee population. It seemed to UNHCR Goma that the Rwandan authorities wanted the refugees to return exclusively on their terms.

Along with restrictions on the number of crossings per day, the authorities reiterated that, whether transiting through Gisenyi or through Kabuye, the returnees would still need to be transported to Nkamira transit center. Nkamira eventually proved a bottleneck, in spite of the assurances from Rwanda that it could absorb several thousand persons a day. The transit center often kept returnees there for several days and acted as a strong disincentive for a return, as rumors spread that the returnees were, among other things, inoculated with the AIDS virus there. The Rwandan authorities were aware of this fact. Although nothing could be done against the rumor mill, the insistence of the Rwandan authorities helped to strengthen the rumor. The screening that was done in Nkamira resulted in arrests in only a few cases as the real screening was done upon return to the commune of origin. One wonders then about the rationale behind the insistence of the authorities to have all returnees transit through Nkamira when they had already been thoroughly searched at the border point. One possible explanation is that the RPA was not ready to receive the refugees back and was buying time until it could reinforce its military capacity.²⁸ Although the refugees in Kibumba had originally welcomed the opening of a new border point that made the return home easier, the limitations imposed resulted in a daily return rate averaging only three or four individuals.

This particular example is worth explaining in detail as a return is often based on subjective parameters. The perception of “the other” is crucial in building confidence or destroying it. Considering the high level of mutual mistrust, it is remarkable that several dozen refugees decided to return on a daily basis from Goma. This indicates that the potential for a more substantial return was real. For it to materialize, a more positive attitude from the Rwandan authorities was imperative. This did not happen.

Even had the return of the refugees been a real priority for Kigali, the return of those from Zaire was not: first came the return of the refugees from Burundi, then from Tanzania, and only thereafter from Zaire. This was based on several factors: first relations with Tanzania and Burundi (even before the takeover by Buyoya) were substantially better than with Zaire, in view of Mobutu’s long relationship with late President Habyarimana. The old tension between Uganda and Zaire was also echoed by immediate tension with the new Rwandan authorities, who were considered by Kinshasa/Gbadolite as pawns of the Museveni regime. The nature of the refugee populations in Zaire, with its “government in exile” and its extremists, was also a complicating factor that did not exist to the same extent among the refugee population in Tanzania and Burundi. Finally, the government of Rwanda needed time to be able to integrate and control the massive refugee population in eastern Zaire, and the returns from Burundi and Tanzania could be used as “tests.” It was

²⁸ One close observer who had also been involved in the Great Lakes in 1994, especially in Rwanda, summarized the situation much more bluntly by stating to the author that no matter how perfect UNHCR or other actors may have been during the crisis, this would not have changed the fundamental fact that the new Rwandan regime did not want the refugees to return.

only later, probably in late 1995-early 1996, that the Rwandan government and the RPA in particular considered that the camps in Zaire presented an intolerable threat to their security that needed to be dealt with without delay.

Another initiative favored by UNHCR was the issuance of a government's list of alleged criminals or participants in the genocide. Such a list existed unofficially and included several hundred names.²⁹ UNHCR believed that an official distribution of this list by the Rwandan authorities would give legitimacy to it and consequently might relieve the majority of the refugees who feared they would be arrested. Understandably, the Rwandan authorities argued that the list was not exhaustive, but, after some hesitation, that in fact most of the people were known to them. Twagiramungu himself confirmed that publication of the list would reassure the refugees that the government did not consider all of them criminals.³⁰ This issue was complex but was fundamentally linked to the fact that an important segment of the Rwandan authorities found it difficult not to consider the entire Hutu population guilty. Alternatives could have been found, such as indicating that the list was not exhaustive and that additional names might have been omitted but that these cases would be dealt with by the International Tribunal (in spite of its lengthy procedures). A more systematic effort could have been made to set up a more comprehensive list. Once shared with the authorities in the countries of asylum, it would have increased pressure on these authorities to deal with it.³¹

Beyond the rhetoric, a reluctance to "make it easy" for the refugees was widespread within the Rwandan authorities, especially those linked to security issues and the RPA. The resignation (or dismissal) of Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu on 28 August 1995, who declared he was stepping down because of the killings by the RPA, served further to convince the refugee population that they were not welcome back home. In June, his director of cabinet Jean-Damascene Ntakirutimana had resigned for similar reasons.³² After Twagiramungu's resignation, the new Hutu members of the cabinet were widely believed to have been chosen because of their weakness and malleability by the RPA. Return and reconciliation seemed further down the road than ever before.

In 1996, the position of the Rwandan authorities leaned towards open exasperation over the focus of the international community on the refugees' predicament. Kagame declared:

²⁹ This list varied throughout the crisis but revolved around some 400 names.

³⁰ *Reuters*, January 26, 1995.

³¹ The Rwandan authorities seem to have evolved on this issue: the Rwandan Ambassador to the U.N. declared on September 18, 1995, that he would provide Security Council members a list of 400 persons who were the brains behind the genocide in his country, along with their addresses. Interestingly, he stated that if at least ten of these could be apprehended, there would be a major easing of tensions. This point was repeatedly stressed by UNHCR to the Zairian authorities and other international actors, as this would have been feasible with the Zairian military resources present in the camps, provided adequate pressure was put on President Mobutu.

³² "Some of us believed that the RPF victory would enable us to achieve a real change. But the RPF has simply installed a new form of Tutsi power....The radicals from the two sides reinforce each other and what the RPF is doing today boosts up the position of the Hutu extremists in the refugee camps." (*Le Monde*, June 15, 1995), quoted in Gerard Prunier, *op. cit.*, 367.

Personally, I think this question of refugees is being overplayed at the expense of all our other problems. We no longer talk about orphans, widows, victims. We're only talking about refugees, refugees, refugees....Zaire has been threatening to send the refugees back but nothing is being done. Zaire is not doing enough to bring the refugees back home....perhaps we are not talking to them (Zaire) in a language they understand.³³

The Minister of Defense made another statement a few days later that recognized the government as well was not doing enough: "We have been criticized for not doing our utmost to enable them (refugees) to return, when in fact the door is open....The responsibilities are threefold: our government, the international community, but also the refugees themselves, who must make up their minds."³⁴

In spite of growing impatience, the new regime did not seem to have envisaged, until late in 1996, that a massive return movement should take place. Emmanuel Ndahiro, senior aide to Paul Kagame declared that despite a recent agreement with Zaire, no time frame had been set for a repatriation operation. He dismissed as propaganda charges by the RDR that Zaire and Rwanda planned to start a forced repatriation. "Nobody (in Rwanda) is advocating an abrupt return of the refugees. The return should be orderly, decent and well-organized because not even powerful America can afford to take in one million people at once" Ndahiro added.³⁵

Torn between the need to consolidate its power, the deteriorating security situation on the border, and conflicting views of the refugee problem and how to solve it, the Rwandan regime was not able to give a consistent, positive message to the Hutu in exile. This was further noted, especially in programs broadcast by Radio Rwanda in Kinyarwanda, which on several occasions aired speeches by high level officials that directly threatened the refugees.³⁶ In fact, the RPA seemed to have been much more concerned by the threat of the camps on the border than by a return. These camps were reportedly an obsession with Paul Kagame, according to journalists who interviewed him.³⁷ During the joint ADFL/RPA military operations of late 1996, there was no attempt to circumvent the

³³ *Reuters*, April 6, 1996.

³⁴ *Reuters*, April 15, 1996. Kagame's acknowledgement may have sounded threatening to the refugees. On the other hand, refusal to admit the existence of any problem would have been similarly discarded by the refugee population; however it would have been consistent with the image the strongman of Kigali had. Admission from him that problems existed might have been interpreted that even more radical officials were present in the government.

³⁵ *Reuters*, October 23, 1996.

³⁶ The statement of Mr. Gerard Gahima, a justice ministry official, must have sent shivers down the spine of many a Hutu refugee when he declared: "There are still many criminals out there and we have no plans to stop arresting people...all the people in prisons were involved in the genocide. Ideally, we'd like to have one million people in jail because it took at least one person to kill another person." *Reuters*, March 1, 1996.

³⁷ Interview with Mr. Tomlinson, *Associated Press*, October 23, 1997.

camps and attack from the west in order to force the population back home. One reason invoked was lack of sufficient soldiers. It would seem however that the strategy applied in November corresponded to the first objective of the RPA, which was to get rid of the camps. The fact that the destruction of the camps might give refugees who wanted to return the opportunity to do so was an asset but not the strategic objective. As for those who chose not to return, they should be chased as far away from the border as possible or “dealt with” appropriately.³⁸

This strategy reflects the power game within the Rwandan regime: while return and reconciliation were the priorities for the Hutu ministers, the dominant faction within the government focused on consolidation of the regime and on getting rid of instability on the border. The fact that a majority of ministers were Hutu concealed the fact that the real power within the Rwandan authorities was in the hands of a few RPF members and increasingly in the hands of Tutsi hardliners.³⁹

The Zairian Authorities

There was a clear divergence of opinion on how to deal with the refugee problem between President Mobutu and the government headed by Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo. We see in the following paragraphs that while the latter seems to have genuinely tried to prompt a return, his initiatives were frustrated by the Head of State, who tried to derive short-term benefits from the presence of the refugees.

It is public knowledge that President Mobutu used the Rwandan refugees as a lever to gain renewed international recognition.⁴⁰ The presence of the refugees presented more

³⁸ Prof. J. Maton distinguishes two factors that indicate the RPA had not planned for a massive return of the refugees: First, transit facilities were inadequate to cope with such a return; second, refugees took the road to Walikale but were blocked at Sake by the Mai-Mai where the ex-FAR were defeated. Only then did the refugees return in large numbers. See Maton, J. and Van Bauwel, A., *Chronique d'une Catastrophe Annoncée: Le Probleme des Refugies au Kivu 1994-1996*. Universiteit Gent: Novembre 1996.

³⁹ Gerard Prunier differentiates between the attempts at a broad-based government of 1994 and the period starting in 1995 that sees a tightening grip of the inner circle of the RPA, exclusively Tutsi, on all the decision-making processes of the government. While the former period seems to have been marked by a certain moderation, with Paul Kagame trying to replicate Museveni's type of government, the second period witnessed the rise of hardliners within the government and especially in the Directorate of Military Intelligence of the RPA. See Gerard Prunier, *op. cit.* and debriefing on October 3, 1997 in Washington, D.C. On the convergence of factors that led to the military operations of late 1996, namely the situation in Burundi and its embargo, while Hutu hardliners (CNDD/FDD and PALIPEHUTU) were rearming and carrying out cross-border operations from the camps in Uvira, and on the increased harassment of Tutsis in the Kivu region and their need to defend themselves, see Peter Rosenblum, “Endgame in Zaire,” *Current History*, vol. 96, no. 610, May 1997, 200-205; Gerard Prunier, “The Great Lakes Crisis,” *ibid.*, 193-199; Gerard Prunier, “The Geopolitical situation in the Great Lakes area in light of the Kivu crisis,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 1, UNHCR, 1997.

⁴⁰ Discontinuation of international and bilateral assistance and cooperation with Zaire dated back to 1991; it dates to 1993 only as concerns suspension by the U.S. government of licenses for all private military sales to Zaire. Although the USAID mission in Kinshasa had been evacuated of staff in 1991, the mission

than one advantage for the President: beyond enhancing his international stature, it weakened the Kengo government—which was theoretically beyond his direct control—and enabled the President to continue a policy of divide and rule, which made him appear as the only person able to keep a united Zaire.⁴¹ Declarations of good intentions and commitments by the government and the Head of State were numerous throughout the refugee crisis. They concerned three main issues: separation of armed elements and their neutralization, acceleration of the return movement, and training/rearming of the ex-FAR.

These commitments, at times threats, were ineffectual. As early as 24 July 1994, the Zairian Prime Minister declared that armed elements in the refugee population would be disarmed and put into separate camps. The following day, President Mobutu and the Rwandan President met in Mauritius to discuss the same issue. On 15 August, P.M. Kengo asked the U.N. Secretary-General for a contribution to help in the transfer of 20,000 ex-FAR soldiers away from the border and temporarily to set up the former Rwandan authorities in Kinshasa.⁴² As explained in more detail in a subsequent chapter, nothing came of these measures.

Deadlines for the return of the refugees were given, then extended, then dropped. They gradually lost their credibility as no real measures were taken by the authorities to implement them, with a few notable exceptions that will be discussed in the following chapter. Among others, Justice Minister, Kamanda wa Kamanda declared: “Our wish is that all the Rwandan refugees should leave by September 30, 1994.” This declaration was made during the first ministerial meeting with the Rwandan government to set up a Repatriation Commission. The Minister of Justice reiterated that Zaire would encourage the refugees’ return by halting the activities of Rwandans hostile to the new Kigali government and disarming and encamping members of the former Rwandan government army.⁴³

The return of stolen property taken out of Rwanda by the refugee population became a bone of contention between Zaire and Rwanda and delayed the establishment of a Repatriation Commission, that is, of institutional mechanisms to discuss and coordinate the return of the refugees. Whereas the Rwandan authorities insisted that the return of property should be discussed first, Zaire insisted that this should be done only once the

was completely closed only in 1994. Until 1991, Zaire was consistently the largest recipient of US aid on the African continent.

⁴¹ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos? The United States and Zaire, 1960-1990*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Philadelphia, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1991. Mobutu always managed to appear as the “homme providentiel,” in spite of mounting criticisms from his main donors. One could venture to say that Mobutu believed that the tactic he had been using for some 30 years would be effective in the 1994 refugee crisis as well. This may explain some of the decisions he made that seemed recipes for disaster but that were giving him short-term gains, for example when he cancelled the deadline on the presence of the refugees imposed by his government, after a meeting with former President Carter. Also see Madeleine G. Kalb. *The Congo Cables: the Cold War in Africa from Eisenhower to Kennedy*. New York: Macmillan, 1982.

⁴² *The United Nations and Rwanda: 1993-1996*, New York: Department of Public Information, United Nations, 1996. 333, Document 85.

⁴³ *The Independent (London)*, September 2, 1994.

refugees had returned. While this may indicate where the priorities of the Rwandan government were, it also underscored the fact that most properties had already disappeared into “private” hands. Zaire ended up returning some military equipment as a token gesture (maybe also as a provocation): the equipment included a few containers of rusty ammunitions as well as two unusable helicopters and heavy artillery in equally irreparable condition.⁴⁴

Throughout the refugee crisis, President Mobutu kept a fairly low profile, and most initiatives were taken by the Prime Minister, despite the fact that Mobutu was known to hold the key to the refugee issue, being the supreme commander of the armed forces. Mobutu did take a few initiatives such as the meeting on 29 November 1994 of the presidents of Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi in Gbadolite, which called for internationally supervised security zones to be set up in Rwanda to encourage the return of the refugees. The statement of the Heads of State also reiterated that refugees remaining in Zaire would be relocated farther from the border with Rwanda.⁴⁵ A similar statement calling for the return of the refugees was issued by President Mobutu and Tanzanian President Ali Hassan Mwinyi on 23 December 1994. These initiatives did not have much effect on the ground.

The presence of the refugees seriously affected the political life of Zaire. In particular, their presence prevented the holding of Zairian elections as the refugees outnumbered the local population in the refugee hosting areas. Rumors of possible vote rigging were numerous and even genuine attempts to organize elections in the Kivu region would have met with almost insuperable obstacles. On 29 April 1995, an angered Zairian parliament demanded the unconditional repatriation of the refugees. The refugees were increasingly perceived as the natural allies of President Mobutu as they de facto prevented the democratization process. Even when the Zairian President pledged to bar Hutu extremists from using refugee camps as launching pads for attacks against Rwanda, very few people believed him.⁴⁶

The Prime Minister, on his side, was more aggressive and specific in his statements. During a visit to Goma on 24 June 1995, he accused Hutu extremists of preventing the refugees from returning. Accusations against UNHCR were also mounting within his government. These came at a time when many of the initiatives launched proved unsuccessful, as the government did not have the strength or the control over the Zairian army (FAZ) necessary to implement them. On several occasions, UNHCR was accused by officials within the government or the army of preventing a return of the refugees. When given a list of the initiatives for which UNHCR had unsuccessfully tried to enlist the

⁴⁴ On 8 September 1994, Kengo Wa Dondo told a press conference the government in Rwanda still had to prove it enjoyed the support of the hundreds of thousands of Hutus who fled to Tanzania and Zaire: “Let this population return and grant the government what it so cruelly lacks today, i.e., popular legitimacy. Then, and only then, will we return the goods that belong to the Rwandan state,” said Kengo.

⁴⁵ *The Financial Times* (London), November 29, 1994.

⁴⁶ *The New York Times*, May 31, 1995.

support of the government, the response would invariably shift towards an accusation of Rwanda: the “greatest intimidator is the Rwandan government.”⁴⁷

There was no love lost between Rwanda and Zaire, and the refugees’ presence was further souring already strained relations. In July 1995, Zaire accused Rwanda of having attacked its territory three times in six months.⁴⁸ This gave the opportunity for Zaire to lobby the U.N. to maintain the 1994 arms embargo on Rwanda. Mutual accusations increased in 1995. Zaire accused Rwanda of not facilitating the return of the refugees and of preparing attacks against its territory, while Rwanda accused Zaire of training and arming the ex-FAR to overthrow the new Kigali regime. Both parties rejected these accusations but tension was on the rise. Continuous Hutu military attacks launched from the camps into Rwanda generated international support for the Rwandan authorities, which led to the lifting of the arms embargo by the U.N. on 16 August, despite strong objections by Zaire. The same day, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, declared that he would militarily support Rwanda against any aggression—a direct warning to Zaire.⁴⁹

The situation undermined the position of the Kengo government, which had to be seen as determined to solve the refugee problem. On August 17, the Zairian Prime Minister wrote to Boutros Boutros-Ghali that the suspension of the arms embargo against Rwanda left him no other choice but to request the U.N. to indicate other countries to which the refugees could be relocated. Failing this, Zaire would immediately proceed with the “evacuation” of the refugees back to Rwanda.⁵⁰ Within the following few days, some 12,000 refugees were suddenly expelled by Zaire, with the active involvement of the Zairian army. The expulsions ceased rapidly. We will review them in more detail later.

The above events, together with the resignation of some Hutu ministers in Rwanda, which was deplored by Kengo,⁵¹ and increasing criticisms by the opposition of Kengo’s leniency for having discontinued the forced return of the refugees, further weakened the Prime Minister. His powerlessness and the disingenuousness of the armed forces and of President Mobutu can best be illustrated by two short examples: The Prime Minister visited Goma on 24 to 26 June 1995 and was accompanied by the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, and seven other ministers. The refugee issue was high on the agenda. During this visit, it came to the attention of the author that ex-FAR Colonel Bagasora, the “number one” on the list of persons responsible for the genocide, was in Goma at the time; this was probably not coincidental. This information was communicated directly to the Prime Minister, who showed a keen interest in having Bagasora arrested. However, Kengo wa Dondo was reluctant to have either the local authorities or the local armed forces involved in the arrest: a definite vote of no-confidence on his part, especially considering that the Minister

⁴⁷ This phrase was repeatedly used in statements to the U.N., as well as in declarations at the local and national level.

⁴⁸ *Periscope Daily Defense News*, July 14, 1995.

⁴⁹ *Agence France Presse*, August 16, 1995.

⁵⁰ *The United Nations and Rwanda. op. cit.*, 527, Document S/1995/722.

⁵¹ *Reuters*, August 29, 1995.

of Defense, a Mobutu appointee, was part of the ministerial delegation. The Prime Minister reportedly reviewed options to carry out the arrest. Before any initiative could be taken, Bagasora had already disappeared, probably informed of Kengo's intention. The close connection between the refugee leaders and the ex-FAR and President Mobutu is illustrated by the regular visits of the ex-Chief of Staff of the ex-FAR, General Augustin Bizimungu, to Gbadolite and Kinshasa. While the Zairian authorities were busy forcibly repatriating the refugees in August 1995, Bizimungu was with President Mobutu: the will of the Head of State to neutralize the ex-FAR or to trigger a real return movement was clearly absent.

Another instance of disagreement between the government and the Head of State on the refugee issue concerns the 31 December 1995 deadline for the return of the refugees that was imposed by the Zairian government. This deadline was set up following the suspension of the August expulsions. After several months' silence, President Mobutu finally dismissed the deadline as impracticable.⁵² In an interview on state television for the 30th anniversary of his reign, Mobutu declared that enforcing the deadline would tarnish Zaire's image abroad. "For the dignity of our country, how can a people like ours which, at the call of its chief, received these refugees now say, "It's Dec. 31, go home"?... We can't give that image of Zaire abroad." The following day, the return movement that had recently been rejuvenated ground to a halt.

Given the above, President Mobutu's pledge to arrest intimidators sounded hollow, even when reiterated at the Cairo summit on 30 November 1995. Similarly, renewed attempts by the government to put pressure on the refugee leadership did not have any effect. Although it banned the RDR and threatened to arrest and deport its officials, who strongly opposed attempts to trigger a return movement, the RDR continued to function unhindered.⁵³ New statements by the government and threats to close the camps in February 1996 were met by the same skepticism among the refugee population as to the ability of the government to meet its commitments, now that it was openly at variance with the President's televised statement. The appointment of Kamanda wa Kamanda as Minister of Interior, directly in charge of refugee issues and a strong advocate of a refugee return, did not overly concern the camp population, which felt protected not by UNHCR but by the Head of State. The Minister of Interior did make another attempt at a new deadline a day after being criticized by Rwanda for not doing enough to encourage the refugees to return. Kamanda stated that the refugees should leave before Zaire held its planned elections. The deadline was flawed in itself since these elections had just been postponed to a yet undetermined date. It showed how little recourse and power the Zairian government had at the time, having been unsuccessful in all its previous initiatives. Renewed efforts by the Zairian Prime Minister and a joint statement with his Rwandan counterpart after a visit to Kigali met the same fate,⁵⁴ even though at the same time a substantial return of Rwandan refugees was taking place from Burundi.

⁵² *Los Angeles Times*, November 26, 1995.

⁵³ *Agence France Presse*, February 21, 1996.

⁵⁴ *Reuters*, August 22, 1996. The Prime Minister commented on the joint statement as follows: "The two Heads of Government have decided to make operational the organized, massive and unconditional

The central government's hold on the remote Kivu region had always been tenuous. Its control was slipping further away by mid-1996. The declaration of Foreign Minister Kilitwa at the U.N. in New York on October 3, denouncing the de facto creation of a Hutuland in the Kivu, and the government's suspension of the regional administrator who ordered ethnic Tutsis resident in the country to leave⁵⁵ epitomize the powerlessness of the central government. The South-Kivu deputy governor responsible for threatening to expel the local Tutsi population admitted that he had been suspended. Nevertheless, he added that he was reviewing the implementation of the expulsions with the local military forces. Meanwhile, the military and civilian authorities in Kinshasa were denying the existence of any order to expel ethnic Tutsis.

It was only when the situation slipped totally out of the control not only of the government but of ailing President Mobutu himself, that the latter finally gave his green light for a return of the refugees. "The refugees are the source of many problems...so everyone should go home and each government take the responsibility of looking after its citizens" Mobutu told a television interviewer in France, on 12 November 1996.⁵⁶

The government's initiatives, as will be seen in further detail later, were systematically undermined by the position, often unofficial, or the passive resistance of President Mobutu and his appointees, especially the Minister of Defense. In retrospect, however, the hold of President Mobutu and the Minister of Defense on the armed forces in the Kivu region was also probably more tenuous than what most observers believed at the time. One could argue that since the local forces were not interested in or capable of meeting the commitment of the government, reinforcement could have been sent from other regions, as was done with the deployment of the Zairian Camp Security Contingent. This would have required a will that was lacking on the part of the President.

The position of the local or regional authorities on the refugee issue varied greatly. In Goma, the Governor had never been confirmed in his position, which was thus fairly weak. He showed limited interest in the refugee problem (or in trying to keep the North-Kivu region under some sort of control). On the other hand, his acting deputy and the mayor of Goma were active and able officials. The mayor of Goma, a Hutu, who was also in charge of the refugee issue, tried consistently to help UNHCR in the negotiations with the Rwandans to find a way out of the status quo. Considering the working environment prevailing in the Zairian administration at the time, the mayor of Goma showed remarkable commitment. He was active in most refugee-related meetings and was committed to the return of the refugees.

repatriation of all Rwandan refugees; this [repatriation] is going to be carried out rapidly. The repatriation will be enormous and immediate. We are at a stage where Zaire is going to proceed with the closure of the camps."

⁵⁵ *Reuters*, October 14, 1996.

⁵⁶ *Reuters*, November 12, 1996. We wonder whether the President would have had the same reaction had he not been sick and in a terminal phase of illness.

The behavior of the Zairian armed forces (not to be confused with the Zairian Camp Security Contingent which will be discussed later) is well-known. The units within the army that demonstrated zeal and some efficacy were regarded as a jeopardy to the surrounding mediocrity, since their activity would outshine the so-called leadership of General Tembele, who was famous for being afraid of his own soldiers. Even by the Zairian army's admittedly low standards, his performance was poor, and he was rotated back to his former position as commander of the Kisangani region.⁵⁷ Except for the commitment of a few officials, nothing much could be expected of the local Zairian authorities, except an eagerness to milk the humanitarian cow and the refugees⁵⁸ as much as possible.

In the South-Kivu (Bukavu) region, the civilian authorities had a much stronger handle on developments. The Governor was a senior official with excellent connections to the Mobutu circle and a strong supporter of the self-proclaimed Rwandan government in exile and other Hutu extremists. He had a strong and open dislike for the new Kigali regime.⁵⁹ This did not help UNHCR Bukavu in enlisting the support of the authorities to put pressure on the refugee leadership to let the refugees decide for themselves whether they wanted to return.

The ethnic conflict that gradually spread throughout the region also constrained the initiatives of the civilian authorities. The mayor of Goma referred to above was viewed primarily as a Hutu by some of his colleagues, just as the acting deputy Governor, a Nande, had to tread cautiously to avoid alienating the other major ethnic groups in the North-Kivu, which were prone to interpret each others' moves through an ethnic "prism." The developing war in Masisi, which pitted the Hutus (both those who had been in Masisi for decades, but mostly new arrivals from July 1994 and especially the extremists among them) against the other ethnic groups in the area (Hunde, Nande, Nyanga, Tutsi) further exacerbated ethnic tensions and reduced the margin of maneuver of any officials trying to have a neutral stance. Despite these constraining factors and the mutual mistrust between the local authorities and their counterparts in Rwanda, the local Zairian officials involved in the refugee issue generally tried hard to find ways to encourage a refugee return.

As in the case of Rwanda, there were deep divisions between the Head of State and the central government and within the central government itself and local authorities. For a return to take place, consistency and constant pressure on the refugee leadership would have been required. Internal divisions made it virtually impossible to enlist any support from Zaire for more than a few days at a time. Rwanda's reluctance to have its doors wide-open to a refugee return, coupled with the inability and unwillingness of Zaire to do anything, were fundamental obstacles to the pursuit of a repatriation movement.

⁵⁷ Ironically, when in Kisangani, he would meet yet again his former soldiers fleeing Goma in early 1997.

⁵⁸ The refugees were hard working and were a cheap source of unskilled and skilled labor that was widely utilized, including by the authorities, despite protests by the local population.

⁵⁹ The Governor's dislike of the Rwandan regime was obvious during the first meeting of the Repatriation Commission in Gisenyi in 1995. Negotiations almost broke down over a technical issue of the language (French or English) to be used in the original minutes of the meeting.

UNHCR

UNHCR adopted a pragmatic approach to the refugee return. It generally supported an early return, although concern for the security situation inside Rwanda prevented a more forceful support to a return movement. We see in the following paragraphs that divergent analyses of the situation within the organization weakened its position and further limited its capacity to influence decision makers within the international community.

The nature of the camps, their structure, and the influence of extremists became clear within a few weeks of the arrival of the refugees in Goma. As such, the concept of “voluntariness” and of “dignity” in the return of these refugees could not apply in the traditional sense, given the level of coercion by the leadership over the refugees in the camps. The issue of security inside Rwanda was thus the main criterion to influence the position of UNHCR vis a vis a return. The gradually deteriorating situation in eastern Zaire and on the border areas, and pressure from the international community to have humanitarian agencies solve the problem, also played an important role in the formulation of a return policy.

Originally, the High Commissioner came out strongly in favor of an early return of the refugees. This was in tune with what most international actors were saying in July-August 1994. As early as 23 July 1994, Sadako Ogata stated that UNHCR needed to move back to Rwanda to help obviate the need for more Rwandans to flee south-west Rwanda and to facilitate the return of refugees in Zaire.⁶⁰

While in principle in favor of an early return movement, the High Commissioner wanted to see how the situation evolved inside Rwanda before giving the green light for UNHCR field offices to encourage the refugees to return.⁶¹ By that time, UNHCR Goma had announced that refugees were being well received in their home prefectures in western Rwanda, and there were no reports of returnees being killed there. The situation in eastern Rwanda was substantially worse. A week earlier, the UNHCR Special Envoy had met Rwandan authorities and expressed satisfaction at the commitment of the new leaders to welcome the refugees back.

An intense debate was nevertheless taking place between advocates for an early return versus those in favor of a more cautious approach, at a time when, hardly two weeks after the mass exodus of mid-July, the acute emergency was not yet over. Previous experiences in the Great Lakes had ended tragically, especially that of Tutsi refugees who, in 1992, had been encouraged to repatriate, some of whom were killed upon return. Little was known of the real situation throughout Rwanda during the end July-early August 1994

⁶⁰ *Reuters*, July 23, 1994. The author here gives preference to excerpts quoted in the media, rather than the primary sources (statements or speeches themselves), as excerpts are generally considered by the international environment and the public at large as the summarized, “official” position of a given agency.

⁶¹ *The New York Times*, August 2, 1994.

period, and the Division of International Protection (DIP), the Special Unit for Rwanda and Burundi (SURB), and UNHCR Kigali dampened the High Commissioner's zeal in encouraging a return. At the time, entire areas of Rwanda, especially in the east, were terra incognita for the international community, which had been barred from the area by the RPA. The fact that several hundred thousand Rwandan Hutus fled these RPA-controlled areas between May and September 1994 meant that at best the situation was most insecure there. Since UNAMIR, the U.N., and NGOs did not have access, few foreigners could verify the various rumors and reports of massacres there.

The DIP tends to adopt a cautious approach when it comes to the timing of a return movement. It is its role to ensure that existing international instruments are adhered to.

UNHCR's international protection activities traditionally focused on securing respect for the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees in the receiving countries. International assistance activities, including assistance in connection with voluntary repatriation, was seen as separate and distinct from the protection function. The strictly legally oriented attitude shifted gradually, especially since the 1980s, to a more operational approach to international protection.⁶²

Even so, in the late 1990s, the role of DIP in repatriation operations continues to be somewhat ambiguous, torn between the urge to stick to the spirit of international instruments and the need to find a viable solution in an environment increasingly hostile to refugees. The concept of voluntary repatriation is not set in concrete and is an evolving one; the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol do not deal with the issue of voluntary repatriation per se. This has "led to the progressive elaboration of the applicable principles in Executive Committee of UNHCR (EXCOM), the General Assembly and State practice."⁶³ In addition to this, the nature of the Rwandan refugee population made it difficult for DIP to apply traditional concepts to the situation in the Great Lakes Region. As the regional situation deteriorated and the need to return the refugees became greater in spite of volatile security in Rwanda, the role of DIP became more marginal in the UNHCR decision-making process.⁶⁴

⁶² Pirkko Kourula. *Broadening the Edges: Refugee Definition and International Protection Revisited*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1997. 211.

⁶³ Pirkko Kourula. *op. cit.*, 314.

⁶⁴ One issue which would be worth researching concerns the somewhat unclear approach adopted by UNHCR when dealing with repatriation. On the one hand UNHCR bases itself on regional instruments to recognize refugees *prima facie*. On the other hand, UNHCR applies criteria of the 1951 Convention and the Protocol when it insists on the voluntariness of repatriation and its individual nature. *Prima facie* determination is by essence a mass (i.e., a non-individual) determination of refugee status. It might at times be at odds with UNHCR's insistence that repatriation must be viewed from an individual angle. However, this does not mean that other factors, especially security in the country of origin, should not be applied. In fact, UNHCR's concern in the Great Lakes was related much more to security inside Rwanda than to strict voluntariness. UNHCR may have benefited from addressing this complex issue more openly than was the case.

Conflicting news increasingly reached UNHCR regarding events inside Rwanda in 1994. The High Commissioner's original stance temporarily gave way to a more cautious approach. Hence the High Commissioner's statement that "we would like to make sure things are okay (in Rwanda)...to say something is one thing but to put it into practice is another...We have to see how the intentions evolve."⁶⁵ By that time UNHCR, in cooperation with the U.S. State Department, decided to have a survey carried out inside Rwanda to establish facts more clearly and from there to review ways of initiating a return movement.

The UNHCR Special Unit for Rwanda and Burundi (SURB) epitomizes the dilemma faced by the refugee organization. It is composed of desk officers with geographical responsibilities, that is, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Zaire. These officers were in constant touch with the heads of field offices and were influenced by these contacts. Numerous discussions on strategies to be adopted and regular contacts with other units in Headquarters encouraged open debate and may have reduced disagreement between these focal points. The gap was probably greater between the field offices, with little or insufficient contacts with one another. However, differences of opinion did exist within Headquarters and persisted throughout the crisis, even on fundamental issues such as whether to facilitate or encourage a return. One of the stronger advocates for an early return was UNHCR Goma and its SURB focal point. Those with a direct responsibility for Rwanda were more hesitant. The "Rwanda" point of view should have prevailed—and certainly on a strictly humanitarian and protection basis it might have—were it not for the formidable political and regional security challenge posed by the presence of the Rwandan refugees throughout the region. In other circumstances, UNHCR would not have encouraged a return movement. However, the destabilizing impact of the camps, their temporary and unviable nature, and the thousands of "genocidal killers" who were reasserting their control over the population tended to counterbalance the mixed signals received from Rwanda. Although SURB consistently advocated repatriation, the continuing debate within the unit toned down the strength of the message it was transmitting to the High Commissioner.

The position of UNHCR Kigali was complex and reflected the contradictions within the Rwandan government. It stressed the need for a return, although as organized and "staggered" as possible. In October 1995, UNHCR representatives, as well as other officials in Kigali such as those of the World Food Program (WFP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) warned against a massive return, adding that food stocks were insufficient in Rwanda and that it would be a logistical nightmare.⁶⁶ The arguments were of a logistical nature and did not hint at other considerations, such as the killing one month before by RPA soldiers of some 110 civilians in Kanama, a village close to the border with Zaire.⁶⁷ The view that a massive return would be highly destabilizing

⁶⁵ *Reuters*, September 1, 1994

⁶⁶ *Reuters*, October 19, 1995.

⁶⁷ The official reason given by the Rwandan government is that the killing followed the alleged shooting of an RPA colonel by infiltrators. This was followed by a search and destroy operation and reprisals by the RPA, which were condemned by the government. In fact, the colonel was killed by other RPA

for Rwanda was also present and prompted the UNHCR Representative in Kigali to declare that, “If people march across in big numbers, there’d be bloodshed. A lot of lives would be lost.”⁶⁸

UNHCR Rwanda’s priority also had to consider the government’s priority which, in 1994-1995 was the return of the refugees from Burundi, secondly from Tanzania and, only later, from Zaire. From a Goma angle, however, the camps in Zaire were the greatest menace to the stability of the region and there was little time left before the situation deteriorated beyond redemption. UNHCR Rwanda, which had to deal with refugees or returnees from the entire region, did not have the same sense of urgency as UNHCR Goma concerning a return from Zaire. This was perceived on several occasions, inter alia during meetings of the Tri-Partite Commission on Repatriation, one sub-committee of which met regularly in Goma and Gisenyi. UNHCR Goma sponsored the creation of new exit points and transit centers within Rwanda. New exit points reflected the refugees’ preference to return directly to their homes without having to transit through Gisenyi and Nkamira transit center; the new transit centers were to increase the intake capacity of the existing centers and accelerate the screening of those who were availing themselves of the facility provided by UNHCR and were returning in escorted convoys. UNHCR Goma continuously stressed the need for the authorities to authorize spontaneous return, by letting refugees cross the border without UNHCR’s assistance and without having to go through transit centers, but only through normal customs formalities at the border. These points were not systematically followed up with the local and central government. In fact, UNHCR colleagues in Rwanda shared the authorities’ concerns over potential infiltrations. They tended to believe that security considerations needed to prevail. Inadequate pressure on Rwanda contributed to a lack of positive measures to encourage a return of the refugees.

The “Goma school of thought” was mostly concerned with the destabilizing impact of the camps on the region and was a strong advocate for an early return.⁶⁹ We will return later to some of the initiatives taken by Goma to try to prompt a return. Goma was perceived within and outside UNHCR as aggressive in its pursuit of a return movement. During her first visit to the camps in 1994, Irish President Robinson asked why the position taken by Goma in favor of a return was not as explicit in other refugee asylum areas she had visited before proceeding to Goma. One important factor that influenced Goma was that the refugee population there was larger and tougher than in the South-Kivu region (and the

colleagues who might have resented his position and the fact that he was a Hutu. The refugee population knew of the “real” story immediately and before the international community did. This proves yet again that the information network of the refugees was much more efficient than ours. Some 10 RPA soldiers and officers were arrested. However, the top officer who had been arrested was released shortly after and appointed advisor to Vice-President and Minister of Defense P. Kagame for the prefectures of Kigali Ville and Kigali Rurale.

⁶⁸ *Reuters*, November 30, 1995.

⁶⁹ This position does not reflect the intense debate within UNHCR Goma and it was at times difficult to keep all colleagues “in line” and make sure that no divergent messages were given to the outside world. The position of UNHCR Bukavu was different from that of Goma, especially concerning the refugee leaders: Bukavu was in favor of a limited dialogue with them while Goma did not believe in such a dialogue but in the marginalization of the leadership.

other refugee hosting areas). In the South-Kivu, the refugees had cohabited with a substantial Tutsi minority for centuries. The former witnessed and lived the genocide and probably remembered it vividly. The refugee population in the North-Kivu, on the other hand, was generally made up of strong supporters of the Habyarimana regime who did not live the genocide experience to the same extent as the refugees in the South-Kivu. For historical reasons, there were far fewer Tutsis in the Gisenyi and Ruhengeri prefectures (where over 60 percent of the refugee population in the North-Kivu originated) than in southern Rwanda. These Tutsis were massacred rapidly and did not create the same emotional stir amongst the population. Therefore, the genocide was probably less present in the mind of the refugees in Goma than in Bukavu. As such, the Goma refugee population did not feel the same “guilt”⁷⁰ towards the new regime and did not feel compelled to compromise or recognize past wrong-doings.

The position of the Zairian and Rwandan authorities and that of the other major players in the crisis—as we shall see—created an environment of deeply conflicting assessments and positions. Such a situation did not easily lend itself to a clear, straightforward strategy on the part of UNHCR. Further, UNHCR, like most of the agencies it was coordinating, tended to remain in an emergency humanitarian mode, even when the emergency was more political than anything else.⁷¹ Taking a strong position on an issue such as the return of the refugees often meant focusing on political actions to the detriment of UNHCR’s traditional protection role. It also meant taking security risks; this was not a monopoly of UNHCR, but the relatively high profile of UNHCR offices in asylum countries meant that the official position of a field office was immediately known by the authorities and especially by the local communities and refugees, who did not hesitate to resort to threats. Nobody within the international community who became directly involved in the Great Lakes crises was equipped to face such a situation and be able to harmonize his or her mandate with assisting the refugees and identifying a durable and viable solution for them. Several partners chose to leave. Others reluctantly stayed on. The situation was marked by a higher level of personal interpretation of the rules than in a traditional situation with clear “rules of engagement.”

Despite this, UNHCR pronounced itself in favor of a return in a fairly consistent manner. “For 1995, UNHCR envisages that nearly one million refugees and displaced persons will return,” announced Mrs. Ogata.⁷² This declaration reflected the belief that the majority of the refugees could and should return. During the regional conference held in Bujumbura in February 1995, the High Commissioner reiterated her hope of a return and confidence that the security situation in Rwanda had improved. Mrs. Ogata also emphasized the temporary nature of the refugee camps, which were declared unsustainable.

⁷⁰ This is admittedly an issue that is difficult to assess, let alone quantify, with any sort of accuracy.

⁷¹ Correspondence between UNHCR Goma and Geneva in October 1994 highlighted the necessity to find an urgent political solution, now that the humanitarian emergency was over.

⁷² *Reuters*, January 20, 1995. In fact, several organizations, particularly those concerned with human rights, criticized UNHCR for failing to adhere to its basic protection principles. This was the subject of heated correspondence and debates.

UNHCR suspended its repatriation activities on two main occasions: first, from September to late December 1994, after a UNHCR-sponsored assessment had detected a pattern of systematic killing of Hutus by armed forces in south-east Rwanda; second, from late April 1995, after the Kibeho massacres, until July 1995. Otherwise, the debate alternated between “facilitating” or “encouraging” a return. Facilitation was a fairly passive form of assistance to the refugees, who were left to decide whether they were ready to return and would join the convoys that had started to operate on a daily basis as of late December 1994.⁷³ Encouragement meant a more pro-active approach and entailed implementation of a series of activities:⁷⁴ information campaigns,⁷⁵ cross-border visits and, more generally, trying to create conditions conducive to a return through pressure on the refugee leadership and on the Rwandan and local Zairian authorities. UNHCR shifted from a policy of facilitation to one of encouragement as soon as relative stability had been maintained inside Rwanda for some time.

Cross-border visits were complex: refugees had to volunteer to travel to Rwanda in a UNHCR vehicle and visit their commune of origin and return to the camps to inform the population on what they had seen. Unexpectedly, many refugees with no apparent links to the leadership volunteered on an individual basis. The problem came from delays caused by the Rwandan authorities in authorizing these visits. It took several weeks to secure the authorization, which was approved only after a lengthy process of clearing the names of volunteers. This led the refugees to believe that they were seen with suspicion by the authorities, who seemed reluctant to authorize visits from Zaire but were more open to those from Tanzania. During one such visit from Zaire, one of the visitors was nearly lynched by a crowd in the prefecture of Kigali Rurale next to his own commune. The crowd was waiting for him and had obviously been informed of his arrival. The volunteers were warned in advance that if they had anything with which to reproach themselves, UNHCR would not be in a position to prevent arrests, even during the official visits. However, such arrests substantially cooled the zeal of many volunteers. UNHCR Goma had hoped that cross-border visits would become a daily feature of life in the camps and an effective counter-propaganda tool to the anti-repatriation rumors spread by the refugee leadership. In this case as in others already mentioned, the attitude of the Rwandan authorities was not constructive.

⁷³ UNHCR Goma organized convoys as early as August 1994, on an ad hoc basis only, whenever the need arose.

⁷⁴ These were unevenly applied in the various field offices.

⁷⁵ The information campaign that started in mid-1995 in Goma did not resort to open appeals to return. This would have been counter-productive in an environment where UNHCR was generally seen by the refugee leaders as an enemy. Nevertheless, a survey carried out in Goma indicated that 80 percent of those who returned in early 1996 did so on the basis of information provided by UNHCR through the videos shown on a daily basis in some 15 video centers, which were attended by an average of some 10,000 refugees daily. A magazine issued by UNHCR on conditions in areas of return and circulated in Kinyarwanda and French had limited impact. This information paper however had the merit of circulating factual information, such as schedules for repatriation convoys, and of keeping the issue of a return alive in the mind of the refugees. Several NGOs were reluctant to have copies of the paper in their health centers, as it might be “against their neutrality”: this is one example illustrating that the NGO community was very far from monolithic in its approach to the refugee problem, and that it had difficulty adapting its traditional role to an extreme environment.

To encourage a return, UNHCR Goma attempted to target specific communes, that is, to focus efforts and information on communes enjoying a certain stability and with a potentially large number of returnees. Some of these communes immediately witnessed increased security incidents. The Hutu extremists were eager to keep Rwanda unstable, and targeting specific communes back-fired. Tension inside Rwanda was not only the result of military activities initiated from the camps. One of the targeted communes was Kanama, which, as already explained, became a “no-go” zone after the killing of some 110 civilians there by the RPA. Focusing on specific communes was rapidly abandoned.

As many initiatives proved unsuccessful and tension grew throughout the region, the High Commissioner pledged that more aggressive measures would be taken. At field level it was difficult to figure out what more could be done with a reluctant Zaire and an ambivalent Rwanda, short of implementing a forced return, which a minority of officials amongst the major players began to regard as the only possible option. In fact, the High Commissioner became reticent when asked to comment on the possibility of a not-so-voluntary return. Mrs. Ogata even declined to comment when asked if forced repatriation could be considered as an option.⁷⁶ Instead, the High Commissioner declared she had taken note of the Zairian decision to have the refugees return by end of 1995 and would try to promote return. This readiness to “bend the rules” in an exceptional context was prompted by assurances, given by Rwanda to UNHCR in September 1995, of unhindered access to returnee areas. Similar promises by Zaire that the government would meet its commitment to arrest people preventing refugee returns further strengthened the High Commissioner’s resolve that a return was imperative and that the time was ripe. UNHCR also invoked the possibility of formally “excluding” some Rwandans in the camps from refugee status. A consensus was emerging within and outside UNHCR to find an urgent way to deal with the refugee leadership and its stranglehold on the refugee population. Although the application of the exclusion clause would not have had any immediate impact, it would have placed the responsibility to neutralize some of the leaders where it belonged, that is with the Zairian authorities.

The fact that most traditional and less traditional initiatives had been exhausted was acknowledged by the Assistant High Commissioner, Sergio Vieira de Mello, after meeting Rwandan ministers: “We all agree the non-resolution of the refugee problem is a major factor in the instability of the region...We need to take a different approach to the problem...implementation of the Cessation Clause is a possibility.”⁷⁷ Similarly, the director of DIP, Dennis McNamara, reported at a conference in Washington that the High Commissioner was considering a shift in policy that would let refugees be forced back because host countries did not want them any more and the international community would not pay for them.

Under a doctrine of ‘imposed return’, refugees could be sent back “to less than optimal conditions in their home country” against their will, the

⁷⁶ *Reuters*, September 4, 1995.

⁷⁷ *Reuters*, September 29, 1996.

UNHCR director of international protection, Dennis McNamara, said at a recent meeting with refugee analysts. Imposed return has become necessary because of pressure from host states and a lack of money to care for refugees, Mr. McNamara said. "Our doctrine will say that if the UNHCR has access and can monitor conditions and there is fundamental safety, we'll approve" sending refugees back, Mr. McNamara said. "We expect it to be highly criticized. But it's a fact of life because it is unavoidable."⁷⁸

The High Commissioner's appeal on the radio for the refugees to return home rather than face spreading conflict in eastern Zaire in October 1996 summarizes the position UNHCR had adopted for over a year throughout the region and in Geneva. "I am deeply saddened that once again you are on the roads fleeing for your lives....This terrible situation may not stop immediately, and I would like you to know that we will do everything possible, in cooperation with the authorities to help you where we can....[B]ecause of your current ordeal, I am sure you will consider where you will be safer—in Rwanda or Zaire. That is a decision for you to make, however. I am sincerely asking you to remember that 80,000 refugees have recently returned to Rwanda from Burundi, and UNHCR and U.N. human rights observers report that they are now resuming busy lives."⁷⁹ "I am elated with the news of this repatriation. It is difficult to express what I feel seeing all these refugees heading home," the High Commissioner commented upon the massive refugee return of late 1996.⁸⁰

The United Nations

The U.N.'s uneven representation in the region may have hindered an impartial analysis of the regional situation. The Security Council left most initiatives to the Secretary-General and to humanitarian organizations. The member states often disagreed and the Council proved reluctant to take the lead in addressing the problems of the Great Lakes region. The Secretariat itself seems to have had limited capacity to deal with the crises. We develop these issues below.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Ambassador Shaharyar Khan, was based in Kigali. Although Ambassador Khan had contacts with the Zairian Government and Head of State, his role did not span the entire region and was mostly confined to Rwanda. The SRSG gave his analysis of the situation to the Security Council during a debriefing on 5 June 1995. The SRSG indicated that on the positive side, the private sector was returning, markets were functioning, schools were open and electricity was back in the cities. On the negative side, the prison situation was atrocious, with 42,000 detainees in a prison system that could accommodate 10 percent of that figure.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *The Washington Times*, April 22, 1996.

⁷⁹ UNHCR, Mrs. S. Ogata, October 25, 1996.

⁸⁰ *Reuters*, November 16, 1996.

⁸¹ As of mid-1997, the prison population was estimated at some 120,000.

The SRSG acknowledged that the return of refugees was down to a trickle, mostly because of the Kibeho killings. However, whereas Kibeho had drawn the attention of the world, Ambassador Khan stated that seven other camps of IDPs had been closed without incident. This showed due credence was not being given to positive developments taking place in Rwanda, the SRSG believed. Shaharyar Khan drew the attention of the Security Council to three areas of frustration for Rwanda: first, the fact that many suspected perpetrators of genocide were known and living freely in neighboring countries, with few signs of being brought to justice. Second, the Geneva Round Table had not fulfilled its promises.⁸² Third, the issue of “cross-border militarization” was perhaps the most intractable. Mr. Khan stated that the Rwandan Government and its people were frustrated, because the “world was doing nothing” while humanitarian aid was being given to those responsible for the genocide in the border camps, who were also busy re-arming and committing acts of sabotage on an increasing scale inside Rwanda. The SRSG concluded his remarks by highlighting that the two top priorities were, first, to deploy U.N. monitors in the border refugee camps, and second, to move the camps away from the Rwandan borders. Failing this, Mr. Khan warned of a possible “conflagration.” On reconciliation and repatriation, Shaharyar Khan underscored that reconciliation should focus at the grass-roots level—a view UNHCR was also trying to sponsor—by having the Rwandan authorities make gestures of good will towards the refugees.

The SRSG’s status was substantially more prominent than that of the U.N. Resident Coordinator/UNDP Representative in Kinshasa. Ambassador Khan’s views carried more weight within the U.N. system than that of the U.N. in Kinshasa. This unequal representation of the U.N. in a situation that was intrinsically regional had the potential of giving undue weight to the position of Rwanda versus that of the asylum countries and Zaire in particular. Although a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General is generally appointed only in the area of operation of U.N. peacekeeping forces, the crisis of the Great Lakes may have required a different, more global approach.⁸³

The Special Envoy was keeping the U.N. Secretariat informed on a permanent basis. In turn, the Security Council received numerous reports and was regularly briefed by missions returning from the field and by the Secretariat. A review of the debates and issues raised during the formal and informal proceedings of the Security Council are revealing of its role.⁸⁴

⁸² During the Geneva Round Table Conference in January 1995, donors had pledged \$714 million. As of mid 1995, only \$294 million had been contracted out. Of this figure, \$43 million had actually been disbursed and \$26 million had gone towards debt repayment. The SRSG stated he felt “embarrassed” spending \$500,000 per day on UNAMIR when the Government did not have the means to do anything.

⁸³ In addition to uneven U.N. representation, Zaire was almost “incommunicado” at the New York level. In 1994-95, the Chargé de Mission of Zaire to the U.N. was operating out of his house in a relatively remote area, reportedly out of touch with the U.N. Several Council members found it difficult to contact the Zairian mission. On the contrary, the Rwandan Mission is situated just opposite the U.N. Headquarters and a few yards from the U.S. Mission. More direct contacts with the U.N. and Security Council members at a senior level might have helped improve Zaire’s position relative to that of Rwanda.

⁸⁴ From mid-1994 to end 1996, Rwanda and its refugee problem was discussed over 100 times during formal and informal meetings of the Security Council; the President of the SC issued some 10 statements

The relationship between the U.N. and the Rwandan government was often tense, and this was known to the Council members. Although difficulties were mainly linked to the presence and role of UNAMIR, the Secretary-General and Secretariat seem to have been skeptical of the intentions of the new Rwandan regime. The British Ambassador to the U.N. once urged intensified dialogue between Shaharyar Khan and the Government. The Ambassador also encouraged the Rwandan government to transmit its grievances to the Council, where they would receive “sympathetic consideration.”⁸⁵ Obviously some members of the Security Council had limited confidence in the U.N. Secretariat’s relationship with Rwanda. On another occasion, the British Ambassador expressed dismay at the fact that the Secretariat and Rwanda had not yet come to an agreement on the appropriate force level for UNAMIR and called for an immediate dialogue on this issue.

In spite of this, the Security Council generally left most initiatives to the Secretary-General: on 31 March, the President of the Council expressed the hope that the Secretary-General would “give close attention” to reports of arbitrary arrests, detention, and torture of prisoners inside Rwanda. Nothing else was suggested. Similarly, no reaction was forthcoming from the Council members to demonstrations that were organized by the Rwandan authorities in early April 1995, with placards inciting violence against UNAMIR personnel; influential members of the Government made fiery speeches against UNAMIR as well.

Some debates did take place at times, such as after the Kibeho killings, but seemed to have been confined to disagreement on the wording of the Presidential statement, which pitted the U.S. and France against each other. The latter wished a more strongly worded statement (using “condemns” instead of “deplores” the killings), while the U.S. warned against “overblown rhetoric” and recommended that the Kibeho killings be portrayed within a larger context.⁸⁶ Otherwise, the Security Council was not ready to put pressure on Rwanda to re-open its borders to humanitarian convoys through Rwanda into Zaire.⁸⁷

on the crisis and over a dozen Security Council resolutions were passed. However, the Great Lakes crisis was only one issue among several others. The situations in Iraq, the Former Yugoslavia, Central Asia, and elsewhere seem to have been discussed at least as frequently as, if not more than, the Great Lakes region.

⁸⁵ Daily Summary of Activities, Proceedings of the Security Council, 24 March 1995.

⁸⁶ Daily Summary of Activities, *op. cit.*, 24 April 95: The United States, reacting to the Kibeho killings, called upon UNAMIR and the Government jointly to investigate the killings. The U.S. also recommended that the Council adopt a Presidential statement highlighting several points, including (i) obliging the Government to ensure the security of U.N. and international personnel and to create a “climate of trust” to allow the IDPs to return to their homes; (ii) indicating that the Council would review the Secretary-General’s observations on the UNAMIR mandate; and (iii) calling attention to Member States’ responsibilities to imprison former RGF (ex-FAR/militia) personnel suspected of having committed war crimes.

⁸⁷ The U.S. and the United Kingdom merely “agreed” that borders should be kept open. This is a far cry from a protest and was unlikely to yield any result with the Rwandan regime.

The Security Council turned more pro-active when dealing with the arms embargo on Rwanda. In early July 1995, the U.S. prepared a document requesting a provisional suspension of the arms embargo. The policy was clearly heading towards an eventual lifting of the embargo. Although cautioning that arming the Rwandan government could impede the return of refugees, France also supported the idea of changing the embargo regime, not in its entirety but gradually. This view was supported by most Council members. The United Kingdom, for its part, addressed the issue by welcoming the readiness of the Rwandan authorities to focus on reconciliation. As for the U.S., it commended the Government of Rwanda for its efforts to stabilize the political and security situation. The U.S. pronounced itself in favor of a lifting of the arms embargo, as that would help the country prevent a continuation of the cycle of violence. The caution expressed by some members of the Council was not shared by the U.S. or the U.K.

Differences of opinion were also obvious during the forcible expulsions of the refugees by Zaire in mid-August 1995. On 23 August, a draft statement by the President of the Security Council on the forcible repatriation of Rwandan and Burundian refugees was submitted by the United States. France insisted on the need to take into account the extraordinary burden placed on the neighboring countries hosting refugees, and to appeal to the Rwandan government to make possible the safe return of its nationals by applying, among others, the Tripartite Agreement of 24 October 1994 and the Bujumbura Plan of Action of February 1995. Rwanda disagreed and maintained that the Zairian government had not honored its commitments regarding the refugees. The U.S. was also reluctant to focus on the burden of the refugee presence on Zaire. Italy intervened to stress that the central purpose of the proposed Presidential statement was to stop the forcible repatriation of the refugees, and therefore argued for a recognition of the burden Zaire had borne. This, Italy felt, would provide Zaire with a reason to stop the current expulsions. The Presidential Statement eventually focused on the need for Zaire to stop the expulsions while alluding briefly to the difficulties encountered by the countries of asylum because of the refugee presence.

When faced with the question of refugee repatriation, and the deadline of 31 December 1995, many Council members merely welcomed the work of the Tripartite Commission involving Rwanda, Zaire, and UNHCR, while the representative of Rwanda at the Council emphasized the need for compliance with existing refugee agreements. In February 1996, the Security Council did express its support of UNHCR's efforts to prompt a return movement, and its concern over the continuing stalemate on repatriation. However, this was not followed by any particular initiative or suggestion apart from calling on Zaire and Rwanda to cooperate better. The announcement of the administrative closure of the camps that same month did not prompt any reaction from the Council members. A similar inertia predominated when the renewal of UNAMIR was questioned by Rwanda, in spite of the fact that the United Kingdom and Germany in particular expressed concern, early in December 1995, over the potential consequences of a withdrawal of UNAMIR in terms of its effect on the refugees' confidence to return. As for the U.S., while nominally supporting a future U.N. presence in Rwanda, it considered that any such presence should be financed through voluntary contributions and not from the regular budget.

Efforts by the U.N. to convene a regional conference to address the intractable refugee issue were met with skepticism by the Council members. Only in late April 1996 did several council members emphasize that it was high time for the international community to be more forceful as to the convening of the conference, which should be modeled after the Dayton meeting on Bosnia. Eventually, on 30 October 1996, the United States expressed the view that, although the convening of a well-prepared conference under the auspices of the U.N. and the OAU could be considered as a means to ease the tension, the leaders of Zaire and Rwanda should, in the first place, hold a high-level meeting to diffuse the situation.⁸⁸ U.S. Ambassador Albright remarked that it might be useful for such a meeting to be followed by a meeting between local officials of the two countries, adding that her Government was already making *démarches* to arrange such meetings. After months of procrastination, a multilateral framework for a regional dialogue started to emerge, but very late in the day. One African Security Council member remarked that the Council should not strengthen the perception that it was “running away from the region,” and that the Council would have to deal with the issues of disarmament of the militias and the repatriation of refugees. On the other hand, the U.K. wished to see the Great Lakes region take the lead in a solution to the crisis. The United Kingdom remarked that the latest Arusha Summit mechanism had shown that local leaders could find solutions to regional problems when determined to do so, and that they might wish to consider some “bridging” arrangements until a decision regarding a regional conference was taken. At the same time, the Security Council could not agree on a draft Presidential statement on the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region in late October 1996. While several members maintained the need to refer to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the United States believed that such a reference would imply the existence of an inter-State armed conflict, an issue that would have to be considered subsequently. Several members asserted that, indeed, according to all evidence, more than one State had been involved in the armed confrontation. Reference to the Geneva convention was nevertheless dropped.

As for the deployment of the Multinational Forces (MNF), Chile remarked that the discussions at the Security Council in early November revealed the Council’s inability to take preventive action. Summing up the question of an international security force, the United Kingdom acknowledged that the French proposal had put the Council in front of its responsibility. One member stressed that the Council was truly being challenged by the refugees’ need to know that there was a concerned U.N. and a Security Council that took action. Another delegation underlined that the Council itself had to react and could not leave the issue to the Secretary-General or the European Union. By the time the Council eventually reacted, events had changed to such an extent that the deployment of an MNF had to be reconsidered.

The above illustrates the working of a generally ineffective Security Council, in spite of its fairly extensive knowledge of the situation. As one senior UNHCR official put it, “we were alone,” and could not expect much support apart from expressions of sympathy. On the other hand, there seems to have been some dysfunction between the U.N. Secretary-

⁸⁸ Daily Summary of Activities, *op. cit.*, October 30, 1996.

General and the Security Council. One mission to the U.N. remarked that the initiatives taken by Boutros Boutros-Ghali were generally “half baked” and were intended only to place the onus on the Council members. The issue of the deployment of security forces in the refugee camps in eastern Zaire in 1994-1995 is indicative: the Secretary-General reportedly knew that his recommendations would not be acceptable to the Council members, and he reportedly did not try to lobby for them. Despite this, the Secretary-General went ahead and circulated them, which resulted in a muted but angry reaction from some Council members. Other officials commented that Boutros-Ghali was happy to be rid of the whole issue and leave it for UNHCR to sort out. The comment “we were alone” applied not only to the Security Council but also to lack of support from the U.N. Secretariat.

The Council did not seem to have had long-term objectives, and its initiatives were often short-term responses to crises or internal pressure. It first lifted the arms embargo on Rwanda and thereby strengthened Rwanda’s stand, increasing tension on the border with Zaire. The President of the Council subsequently issued a statement that somewhat recognized the positive role of Zaire and called on Zaire to stop the expulsions. This in turn strengthened Mobutu. Hence, because of pressure by some of its members, the Security Council encouraged Rwanda to continue a policy that was increasingly regarded as deterring a refugee return, while also encouraging President Mobutu in his obstructionist attitude. Several delegations recognized that the warning of the Zairian government against lifting the arms embargo was not really heeded and that the expulsions came as a surprise.

Whenever France was ready to apply pressure on Rwanda (for its own agenda and its bias in favor of Zaire), this was blocked by the U.S. Similarly, whenever the U.S. wished to put pressure on Zaire, this was also blocked by France. Hence one could not expect much of the Council except moderate statements and resolutions, with little impact and substance. However, conflicting interests do not in themselves explain the relative inertia that characterized the Security Council. Refugee issues had only recently become the subject of attention of the Council.⁸⁹ The complexity of the crisis, added to relative inexperience of refugee issues, must have contributed to the Council’s tendency to delegate, if not abdicate, its responsibility to humanitarian agencies or unilateral initiatives. Such a tendency might also have reflected the attitude of the Security Council, which tended to define as a refugee issue a crisis that was, first and foremost, political.

The Security Council also struggled with the concepts of sovereignty versus international peace and security. Although the position of the Security Council had recently evolved towards a more interventionist attitude, by linking massive human rights violations with threat to international security, this concept was not accepted by all the Security Council members. This further weakened the Security Council.

⁸⁹ On overlapping competence between the General Assembly and the Security Council, see Pirkko Kourula. *op. cit.*, 207-208.

The U.S. Government

In sum, as long as the U.S. administration showed little interest in the Great Lakes crisis, and was reluctant to be involved, policy formulation was left to the State Department. Internal dissents there enhanced the role of a few committed officials who were able effectively to influence the U.S. policy in the region. When instability directly threatened the entire region, the National Security Council (NSC) and the Department of Defense (DoD) took over from the State Department, which was marginalized. The U.S. position had been consistently in favor of the new Rwandan regime and often clashed with the position of France, which had conflicting interests.

The Washington Post of 3 October 1994 summarized the position that dominated the debate in the U.S. on the Great Lakes region: “Everyone involved—the President, Lake, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs George E. Moose, officials from the Pentagon’s Africa department—agreed from the beginning that Rwanda simply did not meet any test for direct U.S. military involvement.” “Some of those who are looking back at this situation, and suggesting that we should have done something [inside Rwanda], what they mean by that is inserting American troops, and no politician in this city was advocating that at the time,” J. Brian Atwood, Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, said in an interview. “It’s not just because these were poor Africans [as some critics charged]—no one is advocating it in Bosnia.” Rwanda was the first test of how the United States would respond to a war-induced humanitarian disaster after the ill-fated 1992-93 deployment to Somalia. Unfortunately for Rwanda, officials said, it did not meet the new, tougher test of importance to U.S. interests that the Clinton administration had set down following Somalia. In addition, the Pentagon was concerned that troops might be needed someplace of greater importance than Rwanda, a White House official said. A potential conflict was looming with North Korea over that country’s nuclear weapons program, and the administration already was beginning to think seriously about invading Haiti.”⁹⁰

This did not prevent the emergence of a lively debate within the Clinton administration as well as between the legislative and executive branches. We will first review the initiatives of the U.S. government and try to find a pattern of behavior in the maze of the decision-making process, for the making of U.S. foreign policy, probably more than in any other government, is an extremely diffused affair!⁹¹

The U.S. government’s grasp of the unfolding situation and the genocide in Rwanda was limited at first. The White House first resorted to conventional diplomatic actions, in the

⁹⁰ *Washington Post*, October 3, 1994. For a good summary of U.N. peacekeeping operations and the role of the U.S. in them, see William J. Durch, *U.N. Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996. A whole chapter of this book is devoted to UNAMIR from its origin and gives some interesting details on Operation Turquoise as well.

⁹¹ See Robert H. Johnson. *Improbable Dangers: U.S. Conceptions of Threat in the Cold War and After*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994 and his comments that “American parochialism and the growing dispersion of power within the American society are serious limitations on the U.S. ability to act with subtlety and wisdom in a world that lacks the relative simplicities of the Cold War.”

form of statements inter alia to request all the forces in Rwanda to agree on a cease-fire.⁹² Considering the lack of “national interest”⁹³ in the Great Lakes region, the U.S. was happy to leave it to the old colonial powers to find a solution, provided that its army did not have to become directly involved. Hence, in spite of the oft-repeated criticism of France and its neo-colonial pretenses, the White House approved the deployment of Operation Turquoise in July 1994 and put some pressure on the French government to have it extended until the U.N. peacekeeping forces could be operational.

Isolated voices could be heard in favor of an aggressive American intervention in Rwanda and Zaire, such as the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs of the 103rd Congress. However, a few days after the Senate Hearings of 26 July 1994 on the crisis in the Great Lakes, Congress was moving to restrict U.S. forces to humanitarian relief missions only, barring them from participating in military operations without express Congressional approval.⁹⁴ Additional restrictions were proposed, but these were overtaken by the DoD’s announcement of deployment of U.S. personnel in Kigali. Things were not much brighter on the foreign relations front: the House International Relations Committee approved a bill on 27 January 1995 to limit the President’s authority to put U.S. troops under U.N. command, arguing that the Clinton administration had “subverted U.S. foreign policy to the U.N.”⁹⁵ Although the bill was not approved, the message was clear. Senator Jesse A. Helms summarized the position of the Republicans in November 1994 by stating that: “The foreign aid program has spent an estimated two trillion of American taxpayers’

⁹² As explained by Gerard Prunier during a recent discussion, the RPA pointed out to him the absurdity of a cease-fire, which simply would have given the necessary time for the Hutu extremists to finish their grim task of exterminating all Tutsis and moderate Hutus from the face of Rwanda. Cease-fires were repeatedly requested by the international community during the genocide.

⁹³ There is an abundant literature on the definition of “national interest.” Its evolving nature, partial subjectivity, and its short-term political considerations are far beyond the present study. The author questions the apparent consensus that existed at the time, that the crisis in the Great Lakes region of Africa was not even remotely a matter of direct concern to the U.S., hence the impossibility to invoke the need to dispatch troops and have them involved in activities other than strict humanitarian ones. Senator Simon, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the 103rd Congress, begged to differ when he stated: “[W]e need to recognize that Africa DOES matter to our national security. The greatest threat to our security now is instability, as evidenced by the plethora of regional and ethnic conflicts. We have a responsibility to lead the international community in responding to these situations. It costs us far more to wait—in terms of lives, money, and security.” U.S. Congress, Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on African Affairs. [*Hearings on the] Crisis in Central Africa*. July 26, 1994. 103rd Congress, Second Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1994. We are not here trying to demonstrate that the Great Lakes region should have been the top priority of the Clinton administration and the Congress, but that there were solid reasons for the U.S. to intervene and that the argument that U.S. involvement is based on national interest is often specious.

⁹⁴ *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol. 52, July-September 1994, no. 30. 2159: “Moreover, the bill [HR 4650] would require that U.S. forces be withdrawn from the country by October 1, unless Congress specifically approves a longer stay...[A]nother of (Senator) Byrd’s Rwanda relief provisions would bar the deployment of U.S. troops on Rwandan territory for humanitarian missions until the president certified to Congress that the situation inside the country was sufficiently stable to keep U.S. forces from getting pulled into a peace-making role between the warring factions...’we have had enough of that in Somalia’ Byrd said.”

⁹⁵ *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol.53, January-March 1995, no. 4, 375-376.

money, much of it going down foreign rat holes.”⁹⁶ While the new Republican Congress approved a foreign appropriations bill of \$14.8 billion (of which 30 percent was for Israel and Egypt), it also initiated a new bill in May 1995 (HR 1561) to slash foreign aid and agencies like USAID. While HR 1561 was eventually blocked, it sent strong signals to the Clinton administration. In the same vein, the Foreign Operations Bill (HR 1868) for 1996 cut foreign aid by 34 percent for aid to Africa and 40 percent for international organizations,⁹⁷ and was 12 percent lower than the 1995 appropriation. While the administration had requested \$14.8 billion, only \$12.1 billion was approved by the House and Senate. It is worth noting that, in November 1995, the defense spending bill was approved by Congress and became law: while Congress had requested an increase of \$15 billion over the administration proposal, the bill was approved with an increase of \$7 billion.⁹⁸

The above illustrates the mood prevailing in the legislative body, and Senator Simon must have felt quite isolated.⁹⁹ It is thus no wonder that the Clinton administration was in no mood to fight an aggressive Republican Congress. Hence, when Defense Secretary Perry mentioned that 4,000 U.S. troops would be deployed in Goma for humanitarian purposes,¹⁰⁰ this was immediately trimmed down by the White House and other senior military officials to 2,000 to 3,000 in the entire region, including Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya. Although Secretary Perry made it clear from the beginning that the U.S. troops would not take part in any peace-keeping operations, he also mentioned that they could be used to set up transit centers inside Rwanda to attract the refugees home. This met with stiff resistance within the Clinton administration and Congress, which were extremely nervous about any perceived open-ended commitment of U.S. troops.

The chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John M. Shalikashvili mentioned the number of “several thousand” troops to be involved if President Clinton approved setting up a major supply hub at Kigali airport. The General also declared that the Rwandan relief effort must concentrate on getting refugees out of the camps and back to their own country, although he added that there was no agreement on how to do this. In what could summarize the attitude of the international community in the early days of the emergency, General Shalikashvili added that although the refugees had to go home, he acknowledged that the security situation inside Rwanda was “uneven...we don’t want to get into a situation where we are forcing them to go home.”¹⁰¹ Yet, at the same time,

⁹⁶ *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol.52, October-December 1994, no. 49, 3566-3569.

⁹⁷ *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol. 53, April-June 1995, no. 24, 1760-1762.

⁹⁸ *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol. 53, October-December 1995, no. 47.

⁹⁹ Senator Simon was really “politically incorrect” when stating: “In Somalia...hundreds of thousands of lives were saved. Yes, we did have some American casualties, and a majority of them were caused by a mistake, an honest mistake but a mistake, that was made. But we lost few soldiers overall. We had fewer deaths in Somalia than New York cab drivers were killed last year. You know, to view Somalia as some kind of a disaster for the United States is just not accurate. And I think that we have to recognize there are going to be risks.” *Crisis in Central Africa*, supra note 92.

¹⁰⁰ *Reuters*, July 26, 1994.

¹⁰¹ *International Herald Tribune*, July 29, 1994.

White House officials reiterated that there was no final plan and some confusion within the U.S. Department of Defense regarding plans to send troops to Rwanda.¹⁰²

Shortly after, William J. Perry declared that only 3,000 U.S. troops might be needed.¹⁰³ He assured the members of the House Defence Appropriations Subcommittee that U.S. troops would withdraw rather than get involved in fighting, if widespread killing returned to Rwanda. The Defense Secretary reassured the Subcommittee members that U.S. forces would not stay long in Goma and Rwanda, and that they would withdraw as soon as the humanitarian operations could be taken over by other organizations. Obviously, Secretary Perry's initiative had greatly diminished in scope within a few days of its inception. Eventually, "the U.S. military pullout came just a month after President Clinton promised a "massive" U.S. relief effort for (Rwanda) and its troubled people."¹⁰⁴

Although the U.S. government as a whole was reluctant to commit itself to activities beyond humanitarian ones, there was a consensus that a return should take place on a voluntary basis even if the picture was far from clear in Rwanda. John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights visited the region and expressed his concern about "some isolated attacks."¹⁰⁵ The position of John Shattuck was shared by other officials, especially within the State Department, who became increasingly worried at the turn of events not only in eastern Zaire but inside Rwanda.

Once the acute emergency of July-August 1994 had passed, the Great Lakes region was quickly forgotten by the administration, and the management of this "low-intensity" crisis was left to the State Department. The U.S. government remained consistent throughout 1994 and 1995 in its reluctance to take the lead in any initiative or solution in the region. For instance, while Assistant Secretary of State Phyllis Oakley acknowledged a difficult moral dilemma faced by the international community in aiding Rwandan refugee groups that include people who committed genocide, she confined herself to expressing the hope that the Bujumbura conference of February 1995 would deal with the issue. The U.S.

¹⁰² The following excerpts of an article, illustrates the mood in the U.S.:

Now, American soldiers are back in Africa, just four months after being withdrawn from Somalia, concluding a well-intentioned humanitarian intervention that few imagined would be repeated so soon. Once again, the politicians are promising that this will be a strictly humanitarian operation. And once again, this is an open-ended mission in an unstable, violent part of the world with no political solution in sight. The 900 U.S. military personnel in the African region are many fewer than the 28,000 deployed at the peak of the Somalia operation. U.S. officials say they expect between 200 and 2,000 to be deployed in Rwanda itself; as of late Sunday (31 July), about 85 American soldiers were in Rwanda. This time, almost all of them are logisticians-engineers with bulldozers, water purification equipment, and technical expertise, not tanks, helicopter and heavy weaponry. This is hardly the "immediate, massive relief" promised by President Clinton when he first said he would commit U.S. troops to the relief effort in Rwanda 10 days ago. But the smaller numbers point to the U.S. military's determination to play a supporting, not a leading, role in the effort.

Chicago Tribune, August 1, 1994.

¹⁰³ *Los Angeles Times*, August 2, 1994.

¹⁰⁴ *The Baltimore Sun*, August 26, 1994.

¹⁰⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1994.

administration was not prepared to commit additional resources to the region¹⁰⁶ even if these resources would be used to separate the perpetrators of the genocide from the refugee population. Many U.S. NGOs at the time protested against the position of the administration and raised their voices in favor of the deployment of troops, to no avail. The fact that the U.S. sponsored a Security Council resolution urging all states to arrest people suspected of involvement in genocide in Rwanda and in refugee camps outside the country sounds slightly rhetorical when put in the context of the time.¹⁰⁷

During the same period, the U.S. embassies in Kinshasa, Kigali and Geneva were dispatching conflicting analyses of the situation.¹⁰⁸ The State Department historically tends to adopt a cautious and diplomatic approach to international issues. Further, there was admittedly a lack of strong leadership within State at the time. These elements combined to play an important role in weakening the State Department's capacity to come up with a clear policy on the Great Lakes region, and in gradually marginalizing it.

As long as the Great Lakes crisis remained of marginal interest to the U.S. administration, the State Department could resort to its traditional approach to international crisis. For instance, it condemned the forcible repatriation of August 1995.¹⁰⁹ A few days after the discontinuation of the expulsions however, western diplomats stated that the only viable solution to the refugee problem was a forced repatriation. One U.S. diplomat believed that another forced repatriation would take place before the end of 1995.¹¹⁰ Official protests by Washington against the initiative of the Zairian authorities did not meet the approval of all U.S. officials, especially in the Great Lakes. Most international actors had in fact been notified of the expulsions a day in advance, and this move by the authorities had been fairly openly discussed with these diplomats, as one way out of the refugee crisis.

Minister of Defense Paul Kagame was supported by the U.S. administration, not least because he was seen as the only person capable of keeping the country together. However, the Human Rights Department at State and PRM tended to be more cautious

¹⁰⁶ By declaring that UNAMIR could carry out its responsibilities "within existing resources for the moment" U.S. Ambassador Albright made it impossible for UNAMIR—or a similar arrangement—to deploy troops to the refugee camps.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations, S/RES/978 (1995), 27 February 1995.

¹⁰⁸ A senior State Department official indicated to the author that the fight was not so much between Kigali and Kinshasa as between the embassy in Kigali and the U.S. mission in Geneva. While the former was heavily influenced by the Rwandan authorities, the latter was probably more sensitive to the attitude of organizations like UNHCR and ICRC. It is public knowledge that the US. Embassy in Kinshasa and that in Kigali had very different analyses and positions, to the point that several officials wondered, half-jokingly, if the two embassies were talking about the same region. We have previously mentioned that the genocide and refugee crisis lent itself to widely divergent positions. The U.S. government proved no exception (quite the contrary) and this was compounded by the very diffused decision-making process in foreign affairs, and refugee issues in particular.

¹⁰⁹ *Reuters*, August 24, 1995: State Department spokesman John Dinger welcomed news that Zaire had halted its expulsion of Rwandan refugees. "We are very pleased that forceful repatriations have been suspended...we believe that all parties should refocus on organizing orderly, voluntary repatriation in partnership with the international community."

¹¹⁰ *Reuters*, September 3, 1995.

vis a vis the Rwandan strongman, while the Africa Bureau in State, Assistant Secretary Moose, the NSC, and DoD were generally more enthusiastic. Rotation of key personnel of the U.S. embassy in Kigali influenced the position of the government. A new Deputy Chargé de Mission (DCM) was appointed in mid-1995, with a radical view of what needed to be done to solve the refugee problem.¹¹¹ Ambassador Gribbin replaced Ambassador Rawson in mid-1996. Ambassador Gribbin seems to have been in agreement with the position of his Deputy, while Ambassador Rawson had adopted a more cautious approach to the Rwandan authority. The position of the U.S. government shifted increasingly in favor of the new Rwandan regime, whereas the State Department's traditional opposition to the forcible return was perceived as reinforcing the status quo and destabilizing the region.

Lack of progress on the return frustrated attempts at stabilizing the region. Added to this, Burundi was lurching towards total civil war with Buyoya threatening to overthrow the government. The administration was nervous about Burundi as it could have led to yet another request for U.S. forces to intervene, which might have been more difficult to turn down. As such it was vital to avoid an escalation of violence in Burundi, and one way to prevent this was to cut the supply of weapons and infiltrations from the extremists in the camps of eastern Zaire and South-Kivu in particular. The idea of a buffer zone between eastern Zaire, with its mass of refugees, and Burundi and Rwanda was not new but took another dimension and sense of urgency. At this point, the DoD and NSC took the lead within the U.S. administration, somewhat marginalizing the State Department, with its traditional multilateral diplomacy and insistence on respect of voluntariness of repatriation and human rights. As with the Rwandan authorities, the original reluctance of the U.S. government to have a massive, destabilizing return, which was echoed by most of the international community, gave way to an acceptance that this was the lesser of two evils, the other being an escalation of military operations throughout the region.

By early 1996, there was a consensus that something drastic needed to happen. On a tour of the region with Emma Bonino, the European Union (EU) Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, USAID Administrator Brian Atwood declared that a deadline should be set for closing the refugee camps once Rwanda had demonstrated that the situation was stable and "murder cases handled fairly."¹¹² Meanwhile, advocacy groups in Washington and New York, at times together with UNHCR, were envisaging new "concepts": "We've got to bend and bend around the concept of imposed return," said Denis Gallagher, executive director of the Refugee Policy Group, "partially to prevent more drastic forcible return and to respond to the intractable refugee situation in the Great Lakes."¹¹³ A senior official of USAID declared that the errors in Cambodia, when aid to

¹¹¹ The DCM's position was basically that all assistance to the camps should be stopped, agencies should withdraw from eastern Zaire, and Rwanda should be "capacitated" to deal with the refugee leaders and ex-FAR. The DCM was fairly outspoken and his position met with heavy criticisms inside State Department.

¹¹² *Reuters*, April 9, 1996. B. Atwood also mentioned the possibility of integrating part of the refugee population locally—an issue that was being increasingly discussed within UNHCR at the time as well: "[I]f some...money were used to give the refugees plots of land and agricultural implements, some good percentage [of the people] would decide to resettle...and another percentage will agree to go home."

¹¹³ *The Washington Times*, April 22, 1996.

refugee camps in Thailand helped sustain the Khmer Rouge, should not be repeated. This hardening attitude was accompanied by open criticism of the Zairian authorities accused of “providing an unfettered corridor for arms shipments” to Hutu refugees in camps on its territory.¹¹⁴

The U.S. government was seen as increasingly hostile to the Hutu extremists. One such group, the People in Arms for the Liberation of Rwanda offered \$1,000 for the head of every American killed in Rwanda and \$1,500 for that of Ambassador Gribbin.¹¹⁵

Even the U.S. Congress, which had kept a low profile apart from the July 1994 period, found a renewed interest in the region. It is symptomatic that no hearings were organized on the situation in the Great Lakes between August 1994 and December 1996. Congressman Harry Johnston, a member of the African Affairs Subcommittee, and Congressman Douglas Peterson—both Democrats from Florida—said the problem of an estimated 1.1 million Rwandan refugees in Zaire was destabilizing the region and hopes for democracy in Rwanda. “The international community and Rwanda should work together to close these camps and encourage refugees to return,” Johnston told a news conference in Kigali. “Stopping feeding in the camps is an alternative, but it may take pressure to bring in a U.N. security force to escort refugees across the border and guarantee security to returning refugees.”¹¹⁶ Apart from the fact that a U.N. security force was yet again being proposed, the radical solution of cutting food to the refugees was openly discussed. Similarly, Mrs. Phyllis Oakley declared in early October 1996 that a consensus was emerging on the need to accelerate repatriation. This was indeed a perception that was shared by all the major players at the time—a bit late, one might add.

The rationale for a return seemed to rest more on the threat the camps were posing to regional security than on the actual need for the refugees to return. Secretary Christopher underlined the urgency to close camps “closest to the border,” while those refugees who choose not to repatriate should be moved away from the border.¹¹⁷ In February 1996,

¹¹⁴ *Reuters*, June 20, 1996. Also see Richard J. Payne, *The Clash with Distant Cultures: Values, Interest and Force in American Foreign Policy*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995. Mr. Payne underlines that, “consistent with U.S. dominant cultural values, many Americans believed that negotiations with ethnic cleansers [Serbs] was morally wrong.” 192. This was certainly applicable for Hutu extremists and any of their perceived allies (Zaire). The margin between denouncing Hutu extremists and the entire Hutu population was thin, and many international actors and visitors did not hesitate to amalgamate the two. Further, the Kinshasa-Khartoum axis must have been particularly distasteful to the U.S. administration. It was public knowledge that Ugandan rebels, armed and supported by the Sudan, were operating from Zaire with the blessing of President Mobutu. This could only widen the gap between Zaire and the U.S. government.

¹¹⁵ The acronym PALIR, which in French means “to pale” or “to turn white,” may be some sort of macabre humor typical of the Hutu extremists. The fact that the U.S. Ambassador was only “prized” 50 percent over the reward for an ordinary American citizen demonstrated either a lack of any serious intention or a lack of understanding as to what an ambassador represents!

¹¹⁶ *Reuters*, September 17, 1996.

¹¹⁷ *Reuters*, October 11, 1996. The U.S. government expressed interest in transferring camps away from the border as early as mid-1995. When some \$5 million were requested by UNHCR to transfer Kibumba to a site some 30 km. from the border, this was readily accepted by the State Department.

Paul Kagame had made it clear that Rwanda would “take care” of the camps if the international community was not prepared to do it—as it was obviously not. This declaration was made during his visit to the U.S. at the invitation of the DoD, where he met senior administration officials. For reasons previously mentioned, DoD and NSC took an increased interest in finding a quick solution.¹¹⁸ They were thus interested in a stabilization of the region, which meant the creation of a buffer zone to prevent a further destabilization of Burundi and the neutralization of the refugee camps, starting with the Uvira region.

Commenting on the military operations of October 1996, USAID, soon joined by major international actors, voiced its hope that they could help spark a much-awaited return.¹¹⁹ As for the State Department, it denied any involvement of the U.S. government in the military operations. Chances are most U.S. officials were not aware of its involvement, even if indirect, in the military operations that led to the overthrow of the Zairian government by the ADFL and its leader, Mr. Kabila.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, the statement to

¹¹⁸ Interview with Associated Press journalist B. Tomlinson, on October 24, 1997. Mr. Tomlinson accompanied the ADFL for several months at end 1996 and in early 1997. Several U.N. officials in Kigali reported to him that, in March-April 1996, the Ethiopian Minister of Defense signed a security agreement with Rwanda which increased shipments of weapons from Ethiopia to Rwanda. The same sources reported that the U.S. government may have chosen this way to channel its support to Rwanda and Zairian rebels. The new weapons “found their way” to the Banyamulenge and ADFL. It would seem that funds started being “cleared” for Rwanda and for military purposes, at least training and arming of the rebels, as of July 1996. This was a “green light” given to Paul Kagame to deal with the camps on the border. Banyamulenge started to be trained in the Akagera Park around March 1996. The ADFL openly acknowledges that some 2,000 to 3,000 were trained in total. The reinsertion of Banyamulenge into Zaire was observed on several occasions by villagers in Burundi through which the Banyamulenge were transiting. On one occasion, in August 1996, the Banyamulenge were ambushed by the FAZ; this was the first major clash between the Zairian forces and the “rebels.”

¹¹⁹ *Reuters*, October 29, 1996: “We are hoping that we can defuse a problem that has existed for a while and encourage people to come back home. The Rwandan government has taken the position that it wants people to come home and wants the United Nations to be feeding people in Rwanda not on the borders. If that’s the case then they have an opportunity themselves to make this happen.” Atwood said.

¹²⁰ The following transcript of a State Department debriefing is a good illustration of the position of State:

QUESTION: The Rwandan army, I believe, has connections and ties with the U.S. Government. I believe that we supply arms to them and training and trainers. So it struck me as a little bit odd that you were behind the curve so much last week on what they were doing in Zaire. In fact, today Zaire has accused the United States of supplying equipment to Rwanda used in the assault. They specifically mentioned the speedboats donated by Washington. What can you tell us about U.S. relations with the Rwandan army?

MR. BURNS: I wouldn’t say we’ve been behind the curve about what’s happening there. We’ve followed it with great interest, and we’ve been very active diplomatically and also in supporting the relief efforts—first. Second, the United States in no way, shape or form encouraged or supported the Rwandan army or the Rwandan Government to attack Zairian forces. We were not involved. We didn’t give any recommendations to that effect. In fact, if we had been asked—and I’m sure we were not asked—we would have told the Rwandan Government not to get involved militarily in the fighting. It hasn’t been helpful. I can’t tell you every aspect of U.S. military assistance to Rwanda. But, as you know, we have had a relationship with that government. But certainly, whatever U.S. military assistance given to Rwanda or in Rwanda was not meant to serve any kind of offensive military operations against a neighboring state.

Congress by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs in April 1997 that “there is no evidence that leads us to believe that either organized Ugandan or Rwandan units [are] fighting with or directing the Alliance”¹²¹ seems slightly disingenuous.

The U.S. position on the deployment of a multinational force (MNF) proved of great assistance to the ADFL/RPA-led military operations. Beyond the rhetorical support for an all-African force, the U.S. administration dragged its feet over the deployment of the MNF.¹²² An official from the U.S. embassy in Kigali stated openly that the MNF had to be delayed as much as possible. As the military operations of October-November 1996 were having the desired effect, namely the destruction of camps close to the border with Burundi and Rwanda, this was a logical position, even if the refugees were still not returning as of end October. An official from the Canadian embassy accompanying Ambassador Chretien reported an exchange with a U.S. official: when asked by the latter what the MNF intended to do with Goma and Bukavu once taken from the rebels, the Canadian official replied that these towns would obviously be returned to the Zairian authorities (whatever this may have meant at the time), to which the U.S. official responded by saying that this was precisely what they wanted to avoid. It was thus no surprise that the Security Council could not authorize the immediate dispatch of troops, because the United States declared it was still studying whether it could take part and if so, in what way.¹²³ The ADFL, which was in regular contact with the officials of the U.S. embassy in Kigali, and General Kagame were well aware of the progress on the issue of the MNF deployment. Despite this, Kagame was apparently surprised to hear from Ambassador Chretien that a resolution would finally be passed on 15 November. However, by the time the U.S. had given its agreement in principle to the deployment of an MNF, on 14 November, some time had been gained, which enabled the offensive against Mugunga to take place, almost at the same time as the vote for the resolution on the deployment of the MNF.

It seems at times that history repeats itself. Even though the deployment of the MNF had been approved, in the same gesture the Security Council refused to empower it to disarm armed elements among the refugee population. This was an all-too-familiar reluctance to

QUESTION: So then in fact are there specific restrictions and are there prohibitions on these, and therefore is [there] some penalty that attaches to having crossed the border?

MR. BURNS: There are sometimes restrictions placed upon U.S. military equipment when it's transferred from the United States to another country. I'll have to check in the case of Rwanda to see what specific restrictions are in place.

U.S. Department of State, Daily Press Briefing, *M2 Preswire*, November, 5, 1996.

¹²¹ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Africa. [*Hearings on Zaire: Collapse of an African Giant?* April 8, 1997. 105th Congress, First Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1996, p.53.

¹²² The mandate of the MNF was the object of lengthy negotiations. Immediately however, a consensus emerged that the MNF should not become involved in military operations such as disarming of armed elements among the refugee population. UNHCR and others were vocal on the need for such an operation but did not manage to convince the Security Council members. Instead the Council decided that the MNF should be deployed only for humanitarian purposes, to ensure access to the refugees for them to be assisted and eventually repatriated.

¹²³ *The Sun (Baltimore)*, November 10, 1996.

get seriously involved in the separation of the extremists from the bulk of the refugee population, even after the repeated failures to address the refugee problem without dealing with separation of the leadership. Secretary Perry stated that the projected 1,000 U.S. troops to be part of the MNF would have “robust” rules of engagement to protect themselves. “We are not planning a mission to go in and disarm factions or to separate the military from refugees.”¹²⁴ There was some improvement compared to 1994, at which time Congress tried to block any U.S. troops under a U.N. command, but there was still an obvious lack of commitment to become engaged in areas of limited interest to the administration, regardless of the scale of the drama. This could not be attributed to the acute caution of an election period, as President Clinton had been re-elected the week before.

Beyond the involvement of the French authorities, which quasi openly stated that the MNF could help restore Mobutu’s hold on the country,¹²⁵ the procrastination of several Council members, not least the U.S., is not entirely clear. While delay in the deployment of the MNF was to the advantage of the ADFL, one wonders about the reason behind such support to Kabila at a time when President Mobutu was in the terminal phase of his illness, as was well known to all the officials concerned. It probably reflected the limited commitment of the major international players, who wanted only to solve short-term issues, namely neutralization of the refugee camps close to the borders, without becoming heavily involved in the future of a country with no obvious and credible successor to Mobutu. However, the DCM of the U.S. embassy in Kigali (as well as the U.K. Ambassador there) had reportedly known Mr. Kabila since their postings in Kinshasa in the early 1990s. Mr. Kabila also went to college with President Museveni in Dar es Salam. It is thus clear that he was a “known quantity” to U.S. officials involved in the region. One could relate this with the fact that many Canadian and American businesses were queuing up in Goma as of December 1996 to meet Mr. Kabila. There was obviously some hope in his future in Zaire. The statement by the State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns that: “U.S. ambassadors in Zaire and Rwanda have been asked to talk directly to those governments...to appeal to them to do everything possible to diffuse the current political tension that has arisen because of the fighting in Eastern Zaire,”¹²⁶ hides a much more complex involvement of the U.S. in the events of late 1996.¹²⁷

The present study does not cover the role of NGOs during the whole crisis. Many U.S. NGOs/advocacy groups were heavily involved and tried to influence the decision-making process of the Clinton administration. They offered precious support to initiatives launched to solve the refugee crisis. They succeeded in keeping the Great Lakes crisis on

¹²⁴ *Reuters*, November 14, 1996.

¹²⁵ By this, the French authorities probably meant trying to control the post-Mobutu period.

¹²⁶ *Reuters*, October 23, 1996.

¹²⁷ It is by definition arduous to discuss the alleged role of the CIA in the Great Lakes region. The fact that the DoD denied any involvement, direct or indirect, in the military operations of late 1996 may imply a CIA involvement. In turn this would imply that the CIA operation was known to several top administration officials as well as several members of Congress, as required by the Intelligence Oversight Act. See Harry Howe Ransom “Covert Intervention,” 113, in Peter J. Schraeder, *Intervention into the 1990s: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Third World*. Boulder: L. Reinner, 1992.

the agenda of the top U.S. officials, even if only marginally so. NGOs were systematically invited to comment before Congress on the events of the Great Lakes, and there were regular contacts between the U.S. administration and the NGOs (Inter-Action in particular, which comprises some of the most influential NGOs/advocacy groups). In spite of this, NGOs could exert some influence only in so far as their opinions coincided with those of the U.S. officials concerned. The potential for real influence¹²⁸ may have been lost among the many conflicting positions within the State Department. Several experts had predicted that NGOs would see an increase of their influence in a post Cold-War world, in the absence of a well defined U.S. foreign policy. Their influence on the DoD and NSC is difficult to ascertain but must have been even more tenuous than with State. Since the DoD and NSC dominated the debate on the crisis in the Great Lakes, the influence of the NGOs was reduced.

Congressman Payne opined on the role of the U.S. government in the whole crisis, in very blunt terms: “There has been a lack by the Clinton Administration of focusing on Africa in general, central Africa in particular. This is a State Department, in my opinion, that has miserably failed. Our behavior in the United Nations has been disgraceful, and I just believe that much of this could have been prevented....I think that the whole moral leadership could have been provided has failed and been failed miserably by the Clinton Administration. There has been no policy at all, no comprehensive policy on the part of the State Department.”¹²⁹ In parallel, Secretary Christopher in a public statement took a dim view of the action of Congress: “A number of recent actions by the Congress raised grave concern about whether the Congressional leadership is beginning America’s retreat from the world....This...would leave us with the unacceptable choice each time a global crisis arose, a choice between acting alone or doing nothing.”¹³⁰ This seems to have characterized the U.S. attitude in the Great Lakes.

Brian Atwood declared:

Containment of communism defined our national security policy for nearly half a century. A previous generation of Americans built new institutions, alliances and strategies in the wake of World War II to meet the demands of that era. Now, we must forge the tools and policies needed to meet a threat that can best be summarized by the word ‘chaos.’ It is a threat that

¹²⁸ See Andrew S. Natsios, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Humanitarian Relief in Complex Emergencies*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1997. The author reports (62) that, “[I]n 1996 all American NGOs combined raised nearly \$ 4.5 billion in private and public assistance, including both cash and private gifts-in-kind from U.S. corporations.” The financial weight of the NGOs is a substantial asset in their efforts to exert moral influence on the U.S. government.

¹²⁹ U.S. Congress, House of Representative. Committee on International Relation, Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights. [*Hearings on*] *Refugees in Eastern Zaire and Rwanda*. December 4, 1996. 104th Congress, Second Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1996, 58-59.

¹³⁰ U.S. Department of State, “Proposed Congressional Budget Cuts: American Interests Pay the Price,” Statement by Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Washington, D.C.: September 12, 1995.

demands a response far more complex than the zero-sum arithmetic of the Cold War.”¹³¹

Another analyst observed:

What can be hoped for is that whatever the policies and strategies, that at least they are formulated and implemented in a coherent and consistent manner. If recent history can be a guide, the U.S. administration may recall that the United States had close relations with three countries which, subsequently, went through most destructive civil wars, namely Sudan, Liberia and Somalia. The extent of the U.S. support to Rwanda and the DRC may need to be reviewed on a regular basis.¹³²

The French Government

In the view of one analyst, “Some French policymakers considered Rwanda the first in a series of regional “dominoes” that could eventually lead to Anglo-Saxon domination of portions of central Africa.”¹³³ This fear seems to have been a determining factor in the attitude of the French government towards the U.S. One senior French official openly declared to Gerard Prunier that, “we cannot let anglophone countries decide on the future of a francophone one. In any case, we want Mobutu back in, he cannot be dispensed with...and we are going to do it through this Rwanda business.”¹³⁴ France’s support to Mobutu during the crisis was ensured. The growing influence and privileged position of the U.S. with the new Rwandan regime was regarded as jeopardizing the role of France in Africa.¹³⁵

¹³¹ *St. Petersburg Times*, August 21, 1994.

¹³² See Carol J. Lancaster, *U.S. and Africa: Into the 21st Century*. Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council, 1993. For a Gramscian analysis of U.S. foreign policy, see William I. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalisation, U.S. Intervention and Hegemony*. Cambridge (England): Cambridge University Press, 1996:

Just as client regimes and right-wing dictatorships installed into power or supported by the United States were characteristic of a whole era of US foreign policy and intervention abroad in the post-World War II period, promoting ‘low-intensity democracies’ in the Third World is emerging as a cornerstone of a new era in US foreign policy. (p.6)...Authoritarianism increasingly proved to be an untenable mode of domination...polyarchy should prove to be more resilient in constructing and maintaining global order. But the shift is in the means, not the ends, of US foreign policy. It involves a change in methods, in formal political-institutional arrangements, and in cultural and ideological discourse. The ends are defense of the privileges of Northern elites and their Southern counterparts in highly stratified world system. (72).

¹³³ Peter J. Schraeder, “France and the Great Game in Africa,” *Current History*, vol. 96, no. 610, May 1997. 208.

¹³⁴ Gerard Prunier, *op. cit.*, 279.

¹³⁵ The decision-making process in French foreign policy is a centralized affair. Documents are not readily available and few officials are willing to share their views of the situation. It is thus more difficult to find evidence of the French role than in the case of the U.S., which has an incomparably more open political system. Gerard Prunier had direct access to the decision-making process, most notably during

The Franco-American relationship has always been fairly tumultuous. “While America’s supremacy in strength forced the French to take seriously U.S. visions, France’s relative weakness empowered Americans to disparage and dismiss French aspirations.”¹³⁶

In the Great Lakes crises, France seems to have retrenched behind a curtain of secretiveness and silence. Its role and intervention in multilateral or international circles were generally fairly limited, apart from some open disagreements with other Security Council members, mostly the U.S., the U.K. and Rwanda. These disagreements were rare relative to the sensitivity of the issue for the French government.¹³⁷

The role of France at field level was limited. French embassy officials rarely visited eastern Zaire and when they did their contacts with the U.N. and UNHCR in particular were brief.¹³⁸ From a discussion between the French Ambassador to Zaire and the author in early 1996, it would seem that the French government was skeptical about a refugee return. The Ambassador strongly felt that the Hutu refugees would not repatriate under the circumstances prevailing in Rwanda at the time. According to the Ambassador, the refugees would return in their own time, and it was useless to try and force the issue. UNHCR’s initiatives were thus rejected or regarded with some sort of faint amusement. In a statement to the Security Council on 5 November 1996, the French Ambassador to the U.N. declared that the refugees had no desire to return. The statement did not seem to be based on any field assessment, but it confirmed France’s position on the refugee issue.

The French government did not seem to have attached much importance to the refugee situation in eastern Zaire. Its analysis of the situation was deeply influenced by its perception of a Zaire-Rwanda/Uganda struggle (or of a French-U.S./U.K. fight by proxy), and failed to grasp the implications of a protracted refugee presence. Whereas the U.S. policy could have been characterized, until 1996, as trying to do “damage control” and

Operation Turquoise, which gave useful evidence of the driving force behind French politics. Other sources of information are more scarce. The attitude of France towards Rwanda can be illustrated by its veto to release special credits to Rwanda at a time when the European Union was ready to disburse some \$200 million. These funds were partially transferred late in November 1994. See Gerard Prunier, *op. cit.*, 336.

¹³⁶ Franck Costigliola, *France and the U.S.: The Cold Alliance since World War II*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992. 246.

¹³⁷ Minutes of the Security Council daily proceedings give a good indication of the intervention of the Council members. Although these are only minutes and do not necessarily reflect “behind-the-scene” discussions and lobbying, they reflect the dynamics of the Council meetings. For instance, disagreement between France and the U.S. and U.K. was fairly common but limited in scope, while France seems to have found an ally in the Russian Federation.

¹³⁸ The French government could argue that the presence of a French honorary Consul in Goma did not necessitate such contacts. The honorary Consul knew the local situation extremely well but his contacts with the humanitarian agencies were irregular. Two French nationals also present in Goma from 1994 to 1996 were rumored to belong to military intelligence. This did not, however, preclude more regular contacts with UNHCR. U.S. embassy officials were, on the contrary, paying regular visits and spending long hours in discussion with UNHCR and other agencies involved in refugee-related activities in eastern Zaire, although their intelligence-gathering capability must have been comparable to that of France.

postpone any thorny issues ad infinitum, the French government played the status quo, whereby the refugees were pawns who were useful to reinforce the power of Mobutu and also keep Rwanda weak.

As often mentioned in the press, the French authorities did not grasp the fact that Africa was no longer the continent France used to know during the post-colonial period. “We are a country that has trouble facing up to the reality of the world,” said French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine.¹³⁹ Nowhere is this better illustrated than in its role in the Great Lakes crisis, where France obstructed initiatives that were perceived as potentially strengthening the new Rwandan regime. Obviously France played the card of a refugee repatriation only if it heralded the return of a friendly government. It would be interesting to study France’s role in the release of funds to Rwanda, inter alia through the World Bank and the European Union.

France’s strategy was further unveiled in its role in the deployment of the multinational force (MNF) in October-November 1996. The French government must have been conscious that insisting on a French role in the MNF potentially doomed the initiative. It shows how secondary the refugee issue was for France. Several French officials said openly that their government believed the MNF could be used to strengthen an ailing Mobutu. As everyone knew that the President was dying, this most likely meant that France was keen to control the post-Mobutu era. That it weighed so heavily on the MNF shows that France had a limited margin of maneuver to control such a process, which was becoming all the more hazardous since France perceived a direct U.S. involvement in the ADFL offensive.

The clash between the U.S. and France in the Great Lakes region did not, however, change the fundamentals of the relations between the two countries. Some recent efforts are underway to repair the situation. As Professor Zartman stated recently:

I know it is very fashionable to beat on the French, and we always laugh a little when we mention the French. But we cannot do what we want to do in our own interest alone in Zaire. We are not that strong. We are not that engaged. We do not have the depth of interest of other people. We do not need to follow the French. We need to engage the French in the same kinds of actions that are for Western, democratic values and interests instead of engaging in a little carping war that makes people laugh about competing interests in that part of the world.¹⁴⁰

The French government also seems to recognize its changing role in a changing world. The French Foreign Minister recently declared: “France is not at the center of the

¹³⁹ Roger Cohen, “France vs. U.S.: Warring Versions of Capitalism,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1997, A1.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Africa. [*Hearings on*] *Zaire: Collapse of an African Giant?* April 8, 1997. 105th Congress, First Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1996, 36.

world...but that is not a reason to despair. Let us try to have relations with the United States that are normal, calm, dispassionate and useful.”¹⁴¹

Other Actors

We mentioned that the role of NGOs, both local and international, would need further research. An in-depth review of the role of the business world is also required. Business groups do not seem to have played a proactive role in the Great Lakes crisis; rather they followed events without controlling them. It would nevertheless be interesting to review the ties between the ADFL and certain lobbies, and between the latter and the U.S. administration in particular, since many businesses shifted from Belgium or French hands to U.S., British, or Canadian hands as the ADFL progressed into Zaire. The international involvement in the Congo crisis of 1962-65 may be an interesting parallel to what happened in 1996. David Gibbs contends that, “specific policies followed by the [U.S.] government to preclude communist influence were conditioned by business conflict.”¹⁴² This explains the shift of policy by the Eisenhower administration, which was close to American investors linked to Belgian companies, whereas the Kennedy administration had privileged links to businesses that wanted to replace the Belgians. Hence even issues of primary importance to the western world, such as anticommunism, were tainted and influenced by other, more localized interests. Similarly, Gibbs argues that, “there is evidence that economic interest did influence American anticolonialism. A Council on Foreign Relations study, for example, stated that ‘preferential trade relations .. are a significant factor in explaining American hostility to colonial ties.’”¹⁴³ The importance of U.S. business in the Congo (including Katanga) may have been greater in the 1960s than in the late 1990s, but Mobutu’s terminal illness might have rejuvenated hopes for increased U.S. business in the region. It is then logical to envisage that the Clinton administration also may have been influenced by some business interests.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Roger Cohen, “France vs. U.S.: Warring Versions of Capitalism,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1997, A10.

¹⁴² David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*. University of Chicago Press, 1991.

¹⁴³ David N. Gibbs, *op. cit.*, p.64.

¹⁴⁴ Regular meetings on the Great Lakes, attended by State Department, DoD, U.S. NGOs, and visitors, were also attended on a regular basis by former senior administration officials with business interests in the region. Please see David Gibbs, *op. cit.*, for detailed accounts of business interests in the Congo.

Madeleine G. Kalb, mentions that the Reagan Administration:

Considers the strategic minerals of the ‘spine of Africa’—which runs from Shaba Province south to the mines around Johannesburg—vital to the economy and defense of the West. A few months before he became Secretary of State, Alexander Haig testified before the House Mines and Mining Subcommittee as president of United Technology Corporation, the nation’s third largest defense contractor [in 1982] and a major user of cobalt, which is a key component of the high-quality steel used in jet engines, artillery shells, and armor plate. Haig described the Soviet Union’s efforts to extend its influence in Africa as the beginning round of a “resource war” aimed at the United States and its industrial allies. In this strategic scenario, Zaire plays a central role. It is the world’s largest exporter of industrial diamonds and supplies between 60 and 70 percent of the

The positions of the main actors described in the preceding chapters, highlight an uncooperative environment, which was not conducive to working jointly towards a constructive outcome to the crisis in the Great Lakes region. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, however, several initiatives were taken to find a way out of the refugee problem that was exacerbating an already tense situation in the region. We review some of these initiatives below. Their success, and more often, failure is more easily explainable when the positions and constraints of the actors mentioned above are taken into account.

MAIN INITIATIVES RELATED TO THE RETURN OF THE REFUGEES

Separation of Armed Rwandans

It became rapidly clear to UNHCR and the other agencies working in the camps that the ex-FAR and the militia needed to be extricated from the refugee camps. The civilian nature of the camps needed to be safeguarded. Further, their removal would decrease the violence that was a daily feature of life in these camps. As early as 15 August 1994, the Zairian Prime Minister had sent a written request to the Secretary-General for support to transfer an estimated 20,000 ex-FAR away from the border.¹⁴⁵ UNHCR also briefed Kofi Annan on the need to implement an urgent separation, during the Head of Department of Peacekeeping Operations' (DPKO) brief visit to Goma in October 1994. SRSR Shaharyar Khan discussed the issue with President Mobutu in a meeting on 12 September, and the President proposed several sites to which the ex-FAR might be transferred. As of 26 September, a joint team was formed to assess the feasibility of such a transfer.¹⁴⁶ The team was composed of the Deputy Commander of UNAMIR, General Anidoho, with other UNAMIR officers, UNHCR, and UNDP, as well as government officials from the Prime Minister's Cabinet and several Zairian army officers. The team traveled throughout Zaire until 11 October, as the proposed sites were in extremely remote areas, among others in Shaba and Haut Zaire. The team also met with the top ex-FAR officers to sense

world's cobalt and 5 to 7 percent of its copper. The United States, which has no domestic source of cobalt, is Zaire's best customer, just as it was in the early 1960s.

Madeleine G. Kalb, *op. cit.*, 386. Kalb also gives interesting details on U.S. businesses in the Congo.

On a related note, references to the U.S. having to put a stop to the neo-colonial role of France in the region were often heard during the 1994-1996 crises. This phrase was also repeatedly mentioned during the Congo crisis of the 1960s under the Kennedy administration. Beyond the fact that this was probably a correct assessment of the situation, it also heralded a future role for the U.S., especially in the economic sphere. The fight against "colonialism" was and is not always disinterested.

¹⁴⁵ *The United Nations and Rwanda*. supra note 49.

¹⁴⁶ A progress report and summary of recommendations can be found in the following U.N. documents: *Progress Report of the Secretary-General on UNAMIR for the Period from 3 August to 6 October 1994*. S/1994/1133, 6 October 1994 and *Report of the Secretary-General Outlining Three Options for a Possible Peace-keeping Operation to Enhance Security in Camps for Rwandan Refugees*. S/1994/1308, 18 November 1994.

their possible reaction. While the ex-FAR may have offered some resistance, UNHCR Goma believed that the militia would not be capable of organizing any overt resistance. In his report to the Secretary-General, Shaharyar Khan mentioned that attempts to transfer the ex-FAR could spark violence, and that Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter might have to be invoked. The number of persons that would need to be transported exceeded the planned 20,000, since the ex-FAR and militia would need to be transferred with their families if they so wished. Second, identifying the ex-FAR was not that simple, since many of the Rwandans still wearing a uniform often were not soldiers but rather showing their “masculinity,” as is done all over the world it would seem. Costs related to the transfer of up to 80,000 persons to remote places, as well as rehabilitation of what were often old, dilapidated barracks in the middle of nowhere, was estimated between \$ 90 to 125 million.

The team’s recommendations called for a large peace-keeping force to separate the armed forces from the refugee population. It was also estimated that six months might be necessary to rehabilitate the locations where the armed forces and their relatives would be transferred. In the meantime a peace-keeping force would be required to manage security in the camps, until such time as separation could be effected. Hence separation of the armed elements was assessed to be more complex, heavier, and more expensive than merely policing the camps. The Secretary-General’s report included an alternative to the separation that combined deployment of peace-keeping forces with the training of local security forces to police the camps. The unenthusiastic response of the Security Council came through a Statement by its President.¹⁴⁷ The statement did not address the issue of separation and the substantial forces needed to do it, but focused on the lighter peace-keeping operation also proposed in the Secretary-General’s report. The only suggestion was for Boutros Boutros-Ghali to provide more details on the operation and continue to explore other alternatives to address the problems in the camps. While the issue of the refugee camps was the object of “only” a statement, the same day the Security Council passed a resolution to extend the mandate of UNAMIR. This is explained by the fact that resolutions are “decided upon in accordance with Article 27 of the United Nations Charter [and] create obligations to the United Nations member states,” whereas this is not the case for presidential statements, which are not binding.¹⁴⁸ In fact, “the Council may tend to issue a presidential statement when lack of consensus prevents the adoption of a resolution. Presidential statements may become a means to avoid the use of veto powers and are, in themselves, statements with a “hidden veto.””¹⁴⁹ Obviously the Council members did not want to be bound by a resolution that addressed an intractable situation with open-ended commitments.

Transferring only the top officers and known militiamen and ex-government officials “in exile” was more feasible from a logistics point of view. Nonetheless, it would have met with the same unknown level of resistance and entailed thorough searches not only of the camps but of the region as a whole. The top ex-FAR officers and other Rwandans with

¹⁴⁷ *Statement by the President of the Security Council on the Situation of Rwandan Refugees.* S/PRST/1994/75, 30 November 1994.

¹⁴⁸ Pirkko Kouroula. *op. cit.*, 220.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 221.

past high positions were highly mobile. They could travel unhindered to Nairobi, Kinshasa, and between camps. This shows at least a passive support from the Zairian authorities.¹⁵⁰ Not only would troops be required to transfer top ex-FAR officers and other high profile Rwandans, but the active support of the Zairian authorities would be essential, which meant of the Zairian army as well, hence of President Mobutu.

The Secretary-General admitted in a letter to the Zairian Prime Minister¹⁵¹ the reluctance of the international community to devote the necessary resources to solve the issues of security and armed Rwandans in the camps: “under the present circumstances, I believe that the best way for the United Nations to help improve security in the refugee camps is for UNHCR to address this issue under its refugee protection and humanitarian assistance programmes.” The letter illustrates the extent to which the international community was ready to “delegate” its political responsibility to the humanitarian world.

Deployment of Security Forces

The concept of security forces started being discussed in August 1994. One of UNHCR Goma’s situation reports to Geneva at the time mentioned that, in the absence of security forces, there was little the refugee agency could do to bring some semblance of order to the camps, which were dangerous places for the refugees and relief workers. Numerous news agencies reported the chaos and the deep paranoia in the camps, which reached the point that one could be immediately killed for having been called a Tutsi even if the accusation was groundless. Gang battles were raging for control of lucrative aspects of camp life. On one occasion, UNHCR Goma called on the Chief of Staff of the ex-FAR, Augustine Bizimungu, and requested him to use the authority he claimed he had to clear the road into Mugunga, so that at least assistance could get through without the risk of workers getting lynched or relief trucks running over a refugee. The ex-Chief of Staff obligingly complied. By the end of September 1994, the situation in Katale camp, where the majority of the ex-militia were based, was also out of control. A black list had allegedly been set up by militia leaders, upset at the mobilization of Rwandan scouts to control road traffic in the camp, with the blessing of the agencies working there.¹⁵² Several relief workers were on the list and tension was rising. UNHCR and the NGOs in the camp ordered the complete evacuation of all international and Zairian relief workers. The evacuation lasted one week, which meant that no assistance was given, especially no food. The first negotiations between some of the self-appointed refugee leaders of Katale, Zairian authorities, and UNHCR Goma (with a heavy military escort) were fairly tense. Security guarantees for the relief workers were requested from the leaders and reluctantly given, in so far as any intention to harm anyone was denied by the refugee leaders.

¹⁵⁰ As well as a very persuasive purse: going through customs procedures in Zaire was notoriously difficult.

¹⁵¹ Letter dated 17 January 1995. *The United Nations and Rwanda*, *op. cit.*, doc. 110, 442.

¹⁵² The Rwandan scouts were no saints, and their involvement in the genocide along with the Interahamwe was known. In Katale however, they were the only fairly organized and disciplined group that volunteered to help keep some sort of control over the camp situation.

UNHCR Goma declared the guarantees insufficient and indicated that talks could resume once the leaders had become more serious. New leaders emerged in the following days; a few of them turned out to be moderate.¹⁵³ Several days later, all huts in the immediate vicinity of the road were relocated further into the camp, and no machetes were visible, at least for a while. The relief agencies were not the masters of the camps, but this evacuation at least compelled the extremists to seek less open ways of asserting their control.

The above illustrates that humanitarian agencies were fairly powerless and could only resort to extreme measures that were, in fact, controversial even within the Goma relief community. Although solidarity between the agencies functioned for a week, it would have broken down had UNHCR Goma tried to extend the isolation of Katale. The Katale incidents highlighted the importance of having security forces deployed without delay.

For the concept of a security force to have a chance of being accepted, insecurity in the camps had to remain high on the agenda of the international community. By the end of September, the media and international focus on the Great Lakes region was on the wane, as could be expected. This was accompanied by increased lethargy and reluctance to act in the capitals and in New York. UNHCR tried to alert the international community to the danger of extremists taking control of the camp. The High Commissioner issued a statement on 3 October 1994 condemning the tightening grip of the militia on the camps. The NGOs in Goma had been alerted that such a statement was forthcoming. Some of them feared that their security might be jeopardized in the camps, as they would be regarded as enemies by extremists. Most of them, however, supported the statement. They responded positively when asked if they would be ready to issue a similar statement, which would not only strengthen UNHCR's position but would alert the NGOs' constituencies and sensitize them to the need to do something about Hutu extremists.¹⁵⁴

The report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on 18 November did not move the Security Council beyond rhetorical condemnation. On 25 November 1994, some 18 refugees were killed and over 70 wounded by the Zairian army in a shoot out in Katale after a dispute over a vehicle and the killing of one Zairian soldier. This incident further highlighted the need to deploy security forces. However, on 30 November, the Council postponed discussion concerning such a force, requesting more information on it but authorizing Boutros-Ghali to consult potential donors. Of 60 states contacted, only one declared its readiness to contribute. The Secretary-General eventually admitted the

¹⁵³ One of the rare moderate refugee representatives the author met emerged during this period. Ironically, he was eventually arrested in one of those symbolic gestures by the Zairian authorities to arrest so-called intimidators and to "look clean" in the eyes of the international community. This representative was subsequently killed in Kisangani in early 1997.

¹⁵⁴ The NGO statement, signed by some 16 agencies came out one month later, after some quibbling over the wording, as some agencies resisted overt condemnation of the extremists and militia.

reluctance of the international community and handed over to UNHCR the responsibility to negotiate deployment of security forces with Zaire.¹⁵⁵

It was a unique opportunity for Zaire to project a more positive image of its army, which was widely known as one of the most undisciplined and corrupt in the world. The authorities gave the deployment a high profile and chose recruits among the elite Division Speciale Présidentielle (DSP). UNHCR was confident that Zaire would deploy an effective force for several reasons: first, Zaire could not allow the forces to fail under the spotlight of the large media coverage and general skepticism that the forces would immediately revert to their old habits of stealing and harassing civilians. Second, the forces would be paid by UNHCR: this was an effective way to ensure some loyalty from the soldiers.¹⁵⁶ The Memorandum of Understanding between Zaire and UNHCR was signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense and by UNHCR's Special Envoy. The deployment of the first soldiers of the ZCSC took place on 12 February 1995 and was witnessed by the High Commissioner and the Zairian Minister of Defense, who stressed in his speech that the ZCSC were "Ogata's soldiers" and would be accountable for its actions to the international community and the Head of State.

The deployment of the security forces had several objectives. First, it was intended to ensure security in the camps for the refugees and relief workers. A second, unstated objective was to give the refugee population an alternative to the power of the extremists who were exercising their control through coercion. During the exodus into Tanzania, some refugees almost lynched their leaders, denouncing them in front of the Tanzanian forces as the main culprits. This reaction showed that the level of submission and passivity of the refugee population could not be taken for granted; but the separation of the population from its leaders could be pursued only with a credible force in the camp. The

¹⁵⁵ *Second Report of the Secretary-General on security in the Rwandan refugee camps, indicating that deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping operation to enhance camp security does not appear feasible.* S/1995/65, 25 January 1995 in *The United Nations and Rwanda. op. cit.*, 443.

¹⁵⁶ We had cooperated with the Zairian armed forces stationed in Goma as of September 1994. Several sections had demonstrated discipline and resilience, thanks to the presence of a few competent officers and NCOs in command, and because they were paid by UNHCR when their assistance was required. Before the deployment of the ZCSC, a group of a dozen soldiers from various forces had been selected and positioned at the entrance of the main camps to intervene at short notice should the need arise. While the section deployed in Katale (from the paracommando forces) proved excellent, the soldiers at Kibumba (the Garde Civile) gave more problems than it solved, and the section at Mugunga (from the Gendarmerie) was above average. UNHCR Goma had proposed that the local armed forces that had shown discipline and effectiveness be rewarded and integrated into the Zairian Camp Security Contingent (ZCSC). This was seen as a way to placate the local forces who would be most unhappy with the prospect of good, regular wages being distributed to outside forces while they continued not being paid by their government, as had been the case for almost two years. The agreement between UNHCR and the Government of Zaire included a salary scale which started at \$3 per day for a second-class soldier. This was a good salary by Zaire standard. Food, lodging in tents, and clothes were also provided by UNHCR. The weapons were provided by Zaire. The authorities eventually decided to select all the soldiers of the ZCSC from the DSP in Kinshasa. The colonel heading the ZCSC was influential and diplomatic enough to build fairly good relations with the other forces stationed in the Kivu region under General Tembele. Although only a colonel, being from the DSP and in a high-profile mission gave him substantial authority, as he was in close contact with the Minister of Defense.

presence of such a security force might undermine the power of the leaders and the extremists as a whole. It would then facilitate their arrest and referral to the competent authorities. Arrest of leaders was dropped when the terms of reference of the security force were discussed with the Zairian authorities. As seen previously, President Mobutu was opposed to this. However, since the main responsibilities of the force were to establish security and assist in the voluntary repatriation of the refugees, it followed that the force should neutralize those who might try to prevent such a repatriation through intimidation.¹⁵⁷

In other words, the security force would not attempt a frontal attack on the extremists, as was the case when the transfer of ex-FAR to remote areas was proposed in 1994. However, several well-publicized arrests by the forces would dampen the enthusiasm of the extremists. We have already mentioned that we were unsure of the potential of the ex-FAR, but any resistance from the militia was considered unlikely. As the events of end 1996 demonstrated, the capacity of the ex-FAR (and the FAZ) was overestimated.

In fact, the potential of security forces to undermine the power of the extremists was UNHCR Goma's primary motive in calling for such a deployment. Once this force had shown its credibility and poised itself as a viable "counter power," UNHCR Goma believed that a regular and substantial return movement would be possible. The fate of the initiative to deploy an international force has been discussed, and the unwillingness of the major players to commit themselves is well known. The proposal circulated by the Secretary-General, after several DPKO missions to the refugee camps, was substantially heavier than what UNHCR Goma had thought necessary. Another, lighter alternative might have been workable, but none of the potential contributors seems to have taken the time to look into it. Deploying troops in a sovereign country with no civil war, nor at war with its neighbors, must have met with a lot of resistance among members of the Security Council. Since the Council was involved deeply in humanitarian matters, it could not outrightly reject the proposal. It procrastinated until another solution less compromising to its members could be found. The alternative was to transfer the responsibility to UNHCR, from which the idea had originated.

Separation of Intimidators and Extremists

The deployment of the Zairian Camp Security Contingent (ZCSC) began in February 1995. By that time the camps were much quieter than had been the case in 1994. The

¹⁵⁷ The term "intimidators" may be difficult to defend in a court of law, but it has the advantage of being broad. Intimidation could be physical or it could be spreading false rumors or propaganda. Since those carrying out intimidation were generally the same extremists or refugee leaders that should have been brought to justice, this theoretically compelled the security forces to separate intimidators cum leaders from the bulk of the refugee population. Separation meant a transfer away from the border—a prerogative of the authorities whose responsibility it was to place refugees wherever they deemed necessary, not least for national security reasons. Keeping the intimidators at a reasonable distance from the camps would de facto have neutralized them and given time for the international community to become organized and ensure that they were brought to justice.

1,500 troops were disciplined and fulfilled part of their mandate; that is, they guarded strategic points within the camps and they escorted the convoys. Refugees were arrested, but for minor offenses. The first rotation of the ZCSC, which was replaced in December 1995, behaved satisfactorily. The second one proved much more difficult to control and its officers were more interested in “making deals” with the refugees than in controlling them.

The ZCSC could have played a role similar to that of a multinational force. Had an international force been deployed, its rules of engagement would have been, in all likelihood, very limited. The ZCSC had the advantage of an excellent knowledge of the terrain. In fact, many of the ex-FAR top officers were known to the Zairian officers in charge of the ZCSC. The Zairian contingent could communicate with the refugee population, which was also an advantage. The ZCSC did arrest a few Rwandans who had been designated by refugees as having threatened them because they wanted to return. Most of the dozen Rwandans arrested were small fry, however, with one notable exception—the ex-Prefet of Kigali. Hence, when under pressure, the Zairian authorities could issue direct orders to the ZCSC with which it would comply.

Zaire’s reluctance to repeat this type of operation was immediately clear. The day following the arrests, the government declared that these had been carried out on the basis of a list submitted by UNHCR. This demonstrated a certain nervousness and a need to justify its action, probably vis a vis President Mobutu.¹⁵⁸ Subsequently, the authorities declared that intimidators would be arrested when UNHCR proposed additional names. This was a strange request, since the ZCSC had a much better knowledge of the camps and of its inhabitants because of their past cooperation with the former Rwandan regime and the strength of its troops present in the field.

A list of alleged criminals who had been key actors in the planning and perpetration of the genocide had been prepared by the Rwandan authorities. Although far from complete, this list was well-known to the refugees. The list was shared unofficially with the Zairian government, which pretended not to know about it. One way to put pressure on the Zairian authorities would have been for the Rwandan regime officially to forward the list to Kinshasa. This also would have enabled the international community in Kinshasa to follow up with the government and put pressure on the authorities to investigate these cases and possibly transfer them away from the camps. UNHCR Kigali was asked to approach the Rwandan authorities accordingly. The list was not officially transmitted to Zaire.

The issue of separation of intimidators became a major bone of contention between UNHCR and the Zairian authorities. The authorities, and the Minister of Defense in particular, would declare that the ZCSC were “Mrs. Ogata’s troops,” which they obviously were not. The authorities were aware that it would have been unheard of to

¹⁵⁸ On this occasion, the author remembers calling the office of the Prime Minister to “thank” the authorities for putting our lives in danger; violent reaction against UNHCR by extremists could not be underestimated.

have a national army, in a sovereign country, under direct order of an international organization—and a humanitarian one at that. The fact that UNHCR was paying the troops did not mean that they were under the organization's direct command. UNHCR offices in eastern Zaire could exert some damage control through its civilian liaison unit.¹⁵⁹ It was, however, clear that directives were coming from Kinshasa or Gbadolite. UNHCR's unsuccessful attempts to have the ZCSC neutralize more intimidators was the proof of the organization's limited influence. Eventually Zaire declared that the terms of reference of the ZCSC were unclear and needed to be renegotiated, as separation of intimidators was not specifically included. The terms of reference of the contingent were fairly vague as, in February 1995, the situation was still rapidly evolving and it was urgent to agree on the deployment of a security force after over six months of daily pressure. Still, the *Aide Memoire* signed between Zaire and UNHCR on 27 January 1995 stipulated as one of the four main tasks of the ZCSC the prevention of intimidation.¹⁶⁰

UNHCR was unable to convince the ZCSC and through it, President Mobutu, to arrest intimidators who were well-known to the contingent and the authorities.¹⁶¹ Hence other alternatives were explored. The involvement of a special force from outside the region, with the ZCSC serving as "second line," was discussed within the framework of the Repatriation Commission in October 1995. The specialized unit would have carried out short missions to arrest extremists on the basis of a pre-established list. These missions were supposed to target, among others, the top brass of the ex-FAR who were residing in the bananeraie. The Office of the Prime Minister was expected to submit to the National Security Committee in Kinshasa a detailed proposal that had been reviewed at Goma level. Although this option was regularly mentioned, it never went beyond the drawing board. UNHCR also pressed Zaire to deal with the bananeraie: it was public knowledge that the ex-FAR were directly involved in anti-repatriation propaganda, in the war in Masisi (together with groups of bandits and militiamen), not to mention infiltrations into Rwanda. The authorities were sensitive to the situation of the Masisi area, probably much more than to infiltrations into Rwanda, which was, after all, an unpleasant neighbor. The bananeraie was a small area by the lake, which easily could have been surrounded. There were an estimated 100 officers there with relatives and an unknown amount of weapons—at least unknown to UNHCR, although probably not to the Zairian authorities. UNHCR's request that Zaire deal with the bananeraie fell on deaf ears.

¹⁵⁹ A UNHCR civilian liaison unit was set up to assist the ZCSC. It was composed of officers and NCOs from armed forces or police from various Western and African countries. They were seconded, in a civilian capacity, to the liaison unit. Their main task was to train and monitor the activities of the ZCSC. The relations between this unit and the ZCSC were at times strained, especially when the ZCSC's discipline started to decline.

¹⁶⁰ *Aide Memoire between the Government of the Republic of Zaire and UNHCR*, January 27, 1995.

¹⁶¹ We already mentioned that ex-Chief of Staff Augustin Bizimungu was flying to Gbadolite, Kinshasa, and Nairobi on a regular basis. Most of the ex-FAR top brass were residing in a separate camp, a few kilometers from Mugunga, called the "bananeraie" after the banana plantations in its vicinity. This camp was created in September 1994, without outside assistance but at our insistence and that of the local authorities who wanted to recover the classrooms occupied by the top officers. Identifying and arresting the top brass of the ex-FAR could thus have been a fairly simple operation.

UNHCR tried to secure the support of the numerous officials visiting eastern Zaire and representing the whole spectrum of the international community. Officials from the U.S. embassy in Kinshasa in particular visited the area on a regular basis. We had open and frank discussions with them and the stakes were clear: extremists/intimidators needed to be arrested and UNHCR needed the persuasive power of the international community on Zaire for it to happen. Although our visitors seemed to be in full agreement with our analysis, little pressure seemed to have been applied on the Head of State and the Head of Government. French officials were absent from the Kivu region for the most part during the period 1994-1996 and they kept a low profile in Kinshasa. There was thus little possibility of a dialogue with them. The European Union, through its Special Envoy, was well aware of the situation but its margin of maneuver was limited by lack of consensus within the European Union itself.¹⁶²

Although the ZCSC was operating in a relative legal void, this was not the main obstacle. One could argue that UNHCR's involvement with the ZSCS and efforts to have intimidators arrested was also legally problematic. However the situation was exceptional and required going beyond legal "niceties" even if it created a dangerous precedent for UNHCR. Maintaining the status quo was much more dangerous. We may have been stretching a point, by equating separation of intimidators (a direct responsibility of the ZCSC) with arresting extremists (who often posed no open, physical opposition to repatriation but who were active in spreading propaganda and coercing refugees into staying put). In the absence of defined coordination mechanisms between the International Tribunal and UNHCR, and especially between the Tribunal and the Zairian authorities, it was not possible to undermine the power of extremists, have them face justice in due course, and leave the refugees freer to decide their own future.

The relief community generally felt that, despite the understanding and sympathy of officials visiting the area, not much support could be expected. In a situation such as that in eastern Zaire, consistent and coherent pressure would have been required to deal with intimidators and extremists. Further, beyond differences of opinion, Kengo wa Dondo needed the support of President Mobutu to survive, not vice versa. No matter how genuine the efforts of the Prime Minister to solve the refugee issue, he could not unduly jeopardize his position for a problem that was taking place in a remote and chronically restless area. A senior government official once responded to UNHCR Goma's growing impatience by arguing that the refugee problem might not be solved in the near future but, after all, time played in favor of Zaire, not Rwanda. As it turned out, he was wrong, although at the time the Zairian authorities were playing the refugee card to put pressure on Rwanda. The question as to what was expected from this pressure on the Zairian side remains open. Zaire found, in its incapacity and unwillingness to act, reasons for comfort by pretending that time was on its side.

¹⁶² Lack of consensus was mentioned by the European Parliament on the issue of deployment of the MNF. The Parliament deplored "the lack of unity within the Council of the EU." *Resolution on the Situation in Eastern Zaire*, European Parliament, 12 December 1996.

Forced Repatriation

The causes of the forced repatriation that started on 20 August 1995 are multiple. Several observers linked it to a statement by President Museveni during a visit to Rwanda, in which he strongly criticized the “reactionary” leaders whose days were numbered. This reportedly infuriated Mobutu, who may have felt personally attacked by his arch enemy.

Beyond this personal power game, Zaire had several reasons to feel slighted by the international community at that time. Security Council Resolution 1011¹⁶³ of 16 August added insult to injury for the Zairian government. Its opposition to the lifting of the arms embargo on Rwanda had been ignored.¹⁶⁴ Secondly, in the same gesture, the Security Council requested the establishment of a commission to investigate illegal arms flows to the ex-FAR. This was implicating Zaire directly. Although Kinshasa had requested such a commission in a letter to the Secretary-General, the government claimed that this letter had not been acknowledged by New York, and the government was feeling slighted that the only acknowledgement was, indirectly, through Resolution 1011. This was considered a breach of protocol.¹⁶⁵ The following day, Kengo wa Dondo advised the Secretary-General that he did not have any other choice but to “evacuate,” i.e., to send the refugees forcibly (“refoule” in the UNHCR jargon) back to Rwanda.

¹⁶³ S/RES/1011 (1995) of August 16, 1995.

¹⁶⁴ Zaire’s viewpoint was considerably weakened by reports, especially by the Human Rights Watch/Arms Project, of rearming of the Hutu extremists. This report was widely circulated in Washington. See Human Rights Watch/Arms Project (1995). *Rwanda/Zaire. Rearming with Impunity: International Support for the Perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide*. Washington, DC. The quality of the report is questionable, so is the research method of its author. The fact remains, however, that Hutu extremists were trying to rearm and were getting an undetermined level of support from some FAZ. The poor resistance of the FAZ and ex-FAR to the November 1996 offensive by the ADFL/RPA would tend to indicate the rearming and retraining of the ex-FAR/militia was far from complete, in spite of the fact that this offensive freed many more weapons from military stocks than were available in the camps in 1995. The Human Rights Watch report however, coincided with efforts of the U.S. government to lift the arms embargo on Rwanda.

¹⁶⁵ The U.N. did not seem to have accorded Zaire that same diplomatic treatment accorded to other, equally “problematic” countries. Prior to proceeding to Zaire, the International Commission of Inquiry on illegal arms shipments remained some two weeks in Rwanda, working closely with the authorities and the RPA. This alone may have confirmed to nervous and sensitive Zairian officials that, yet again, the international community was plotting against Zaire. To make matters worse, upon arrival in Goma, the Commission requested to be accommodated in Gisenyi (in Rwanda) while conducting investigations in Goma and the Kivu Region. This was received as an insult and a sign of open bias and mistrust by the Commission even before it had started its investigation. Whatever the rationale behind such a request, the Commission could not have started with Zaire on a worse footing. Without trying to defend the often untenable position of Zaire, the author perceived a certain bias against this country from many visitors coming to the region. While sympathy and solidarity for the genocide victims is commendable and, by extension sympathy for the new Rwandan regime is understandable, and while one should be critical of the tortuous position of Zaire, the fact remained that several, if not many Zairian officials and local organizations were keen to solve the refugee problem so that they could devote their attention to the development of their country. Less arrogance on the part of the international community and more understanding could have been helpful at times.

Many articles were written on the expulsion of some 12,000 refugees from the Kivu region, over four days (with one interruption after the first day to allow for a Sunday rest). The Cabinet of the Prime Minister called UNHCR Goma on a Friday evening to notify the organization that expulsions would start the following day. Most of the embassies in Kinshasa already knew about it. The likelihood of such an action by Zaire had been discussed, and government officials were mentioning this possibility prior to the upcoming debate in New York on the arms embargo. An expulsion, although in total contravention to UNHCR's Mandate and other basic international instruments, was discussed as one way to trigger a return. Many officials, including within the relief community, felt that if a forcible repatriation could be organized, with the Zairian armed forces acting as a deterrent against any violent retaliation by Hutu extremists, it would free the population from the grip of extremists and allow a voluntary return to take place. Embassy officials understood the situation and recognized that while criticism of any expulsion would preserve the "form," the international community should also express its understanding of the initiative of the Zairian government. It was felt, especially in UNHCR Goma (and Kinshasa) that a controlled coercion was much preferable to a violent outburst, which was bound to occur if no viable solution were found for the refugees in eastern Zaire.

Once the expulsions had started, the decision to assist the expellees at the border was taken without much hesitation. UNHCR and the NGOs present there did not feel that they were condoning the activities of the government, but responding to a need. Further, the refugees appeared actually to be relieved to return, in spite of an initial nervousness. We had to negotiate with the Rwandan authorities at the border who initially refused to accept the expellees after the normal closing hours of the border. The first expellees consequently had to stay overnight aboard the Zairian trucks that had brought them, and they were assisted there. The second day of the expulsions was marked by the visit of high Rwandan government officials and the SRSR. Everyone was hoping, more or less openly, that the movement would continue.

UNHCR could not condone the refoulement. The Zairian authorities, however, knew that it was generally considered as a possible blessing in disguise. The capitals as well must have been informed by their embassies regarding the potential impact the expulsions could have on a return movement. Nonetheless, the decision of the authorities was widely criticized and, as a violation of human rights, the forcible return was condemned. The reality in the field was different from the picture generally drawn at the time. Refugees were, in the great majority, coming down to the road of their own will, to be picked up by the trucks confiscated by the Zairian army for this purpose.¹⁶⁶ A few violent acts were

¹⁶⁶ At one point, the local authorities asked, half seriously, if UNHCR Goma would be kind enough to lend them some of the UNHCR trucks that we used for the *voluntary* repatriation. They expected the response they received and expressed their understanding and some disappointment. UNHCR Goma could not lend trucks to the authorities, as this would have been condoning the forcible expulsions. The *démarche* of the local authorities was also a sign that they had been left alone to organize the expulsion, without any assistance from the central government. A few thousand dollars to rent trucks easily could have been found by the government. The authorities could confiscate a few but the bulk of the fleet belonged to businesspeople who had the necessary influence to resist confiscation. They would, however, have rented their trucks obligingly, but those who could have identified the necessary funds were busy doing business:

reported, but they were limited. Refugee huts were also burned down. These deplorable incidents were kept in check as the civilian authorities were keen to have a “clean” expulsion, and the soldiers were withdrawn by mid-afternoon, before they could get out of control after a few drinks. These soldiers were not those of the ZCSC. In fact the latter were in an uncomfortable position. During the first day of the expulsion, they remained quartered. During the second day and thereafter, they tried to protect strategic points, such as warehouses and health centers, in Mugunga camp (the only camp where the operations were taking place in the North-Kivu region).

The expulsions were beneficial to the refugees for one major reason: they could claim to having been coerced by Zaire into returning. Intimidation by refugee leaders had long-term connotations: even if the refugees could, courageously enough, decide to return in spite of a hostile environment, they were still vulnerable to retaliation by infiltrated extremists. Further, it was widely believed that the new Rwandan regime would be overthrown. Hence the refugees feared that they would be looked upon with extreme suspicion, if they returned before “their” leaders. The expulsion cleared them of any suspicion—hence the general feeling of relief amongst the expellees even if they were unsure of what they could expect back in Rwanda.¹⁶⁷

The protests that followed the expulsion did not impress the Zairian authorities. Kamanda wa Kamanda declared that Zaire was not under particular pressure “from the United Nations or other countries to stop the expulsions.”¹⁶⁸ Contacts taken between representatives of the international community in Kinshasa and the Zairian authorities were mostly on a personal basis and the tone did not seem to have been confrontational. One member of the “troika” (Belgium, France and the U.S) stated: “We have been contacting Zairian ministers on a personal basis and asking them to restrain themselves in what they are doing, and I believe the other troika countries and the European Union are doing likewise.”¹⁶⁹

The situation was not overly tense in Goma. Some 20,000 refugees had fled into the forest. This was not worrying for several reasons: first, these were mostly young men who were fit and would not die of starvation. Second, these young men would in any case have been the last to return to Rwanda (if ever they would), either because they were

for example the General Commandant of the Kivu region, General Tembele, was stealing cars from the refugees during the expulsion and did not seem overly to mind the fact that he was personally doing it right in front of the author’s eyes and those of the mayor of Goma, when touring Mugunga camp. The mayor was uncomfortable but managed to smile and raise his eyes to the sky. The fact that the local authorities were left alone was a sign that the expulsion was not taken seriously, either by the government, or by the Head of State.

¹⁶⁷ Several Rwandan officials at the Gisenyi border point were openly disappointed at not being able to put their hands on more expelled adult males. Zaire was accused of not expelling Hutu males, in order to use them to fight against Rwanda. Returning young men were regarded with much more suspicion than anyone else—a logical consequence of the genocide. The disappointment of the customs officers also underscores that revenge was very much present in the minds of many Rwandan officials.

¹⁶⁸ *Reuters*, August 22, 1995.

¹⁶⁹ *Reuters*, August 22, 1995.

involved in military operations against Rwanda or because it was simply more difficult for a young, fit man to return to Rwanda without attracting suspicion. The scale of displacement was more important in the South-Kivu region. The level of destabilization was nevertheless not catastrophic, and it was a necessary price to pay to “break the back” of the leaders. The potential that the expulsions could prompt a genuine return movement by showing to the refugees that a return was, indeed, possible could not be ignored. Extremists were fleeing the camps, but UNHCR did not have the means to arrest them and knew that, without the shield of the refugees, it would be more difficult for them to carry out their infiltrations into Rwanda.

There was not much illusion, however, as to the success of the operation; several extremists, whose huts had been burned to the ground by the FAZ, were seen the very same day in their company, laughing. It was reported that, during the expulsions, the ex-FAR Chief of Staff was with President Mobutu in Gbadolite. This did not augur well for the future. After the second day, the local authorities were obviously finding it difficult to keep up with the threat that they would continue the expulsions as long as necessary. While on Monday some 200 soldiers had been deployed, their number dwindled as of Tuesday and so did the operation. When the President of the Security Council issued a statement mentioning that Zaire had contributed to peace in the region by receiving the refugees, it offered only small consolation but a face-saving gesture all the same. This enabled the Zairian authorities to discontinue an initiative which—they were fully aware—they could maintain only for a few days. A continuation of the operation with disciplined troops would have required the direct involvement of the President. We saw that he was not ready to help.

UNHCR took the view that the momentum created by the expulsions should not be lost since, as soon as the camps were back to normal, the leaders would regain control of the refugees. The expulsions had created a certain dynamism that could be used positively to launch a substantial and peaceful voluntary repatriation. As the UNHCR Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region declared: “What we’d like to do is to change totally the character of what is going on here and to transform this into a genuine voluntary repatriation programme.”¹⁷⁰ A letter from these leaders addressed to UNHCR reinforced this argument: it declared that they would return voluntarily if the Zairian army pulled out.

No sooner had the expulsions died out, however, than the refugee leaders recanted and presented conditions for a return: power-sharing arrangements, security guarantees, and so forth, that were anathema for the new Rwandan regime and the international community. The days following the end of the expulsions witnessed intense anti-repatriation propaganda orchestrated by the refugee leaders, who had promised a few days earlier that they would encourage a return. It was a quasi-victory for the refugee leadership, who either felt protected by the President or questioned the capacity of the FAZ to carry out any substantial operations against them.

¹⁷⁰ *Reuters*, August 24, 1995.

Nevertheless, the Zairian authorities could claim the moral high ground, since they had officially discontinued the expulsions for humanitarian reasons and at the request of the international community. The latter, through UNHCR, had committed itself to finding a quick solution and to take over from Zaire the return operation, but on a voluntary, not coercive basis. UNHCR however, did not have the capacity to keep pressure on the leaders, since force was the only persuasive tool and this was not available to the organization. Hence, from the moment UNHCR took over, the operation was doomed to failure. The position of Mobutu had not changed either. He did not intervene during the forcible return, but the attitude of the army clearly indicated that it was not going to do anything dramatic. As for the international community, it seemed satisfied that the turmoil of the expulsion was out of the way. Neither the position of the major players nor their will to find a solution had substantially changed.

Still, a new trend of opinion started to emerge. Several officials, especially in Kigali, opined that a forceful return was the only solution. UNHCR should step back and close its eyes while it happened and then assist once the refugees had returned. This was far from the dominant discourse at the time, especially in the capitals, but it was becoming more widespread and highlighted the divergence of opinion on how to tackle the Great Lakes crisis. As no international actor was willing to get involved in decisive actions, initial coercion by Zaire was necessary to create a momentum—and probably a certain amount of chaos—to disorganize the camp structures, which were omnipresent, and create a window of opportunity that would permit the refugees to decide what was best for them. This was neither an idealistic nor a cynical analysis of the situation. On the one hand, the refugees were returning on a daily basis. Even if these were in small numbers, they at times reached over a thousand persons a day. This was remarkable considering the pervasive anti-repatriation propaganda and the systematic use of violence by the leadership structure. On the other hand, we saw at the beginning of this study the rationale behind advocating for an early return. Being prepared for a certain amount of chaos to prompt a return was not a cynical position but a recognition that repatriation was the first priority.

Deadline for a Refugee Return and President Carter's Initiatives

One way to keep some pressure on the refugee leaders was to leave open the option to expel refugees. The Zairian Prime Minister was widely criticized by his political opponents for failing to pursue the expulsion. Kengo wa Dondo made it clear to UNHCR that he accepted to “hand over” the operation, but all the refugees should return home by 31 December 1995. Mrs. Ogata took note of this condition and stated that UNHCR would redouble efforts towards a voluntary return, without committing the organization to any deadline, which would have run contrary to the concept of voluntariness. The Zairian authorities also reproached UNHCR for putting inadequate pressure on Rwanda. Zaire (and UNHCR) felt that Rwanda was not doing enough to welcome the refugees back. This time, few officials criticized the 31 December deadline imposed by the Zairian government. A consensus was thus emerging, even if there was widespread skepticism, including within the U.N., as to the ability of UNHCR to attract refugees back to Rwanda.

The fact that UNHCR did not oppose the deadline was criticized by human rights groups. This criticism rested on a traditional analysis of repatriation in a situation that was extreme and could not be dealt with in a traditional manner. UNHCR and its partners in the field could gauge the intentions of the refugees. Although their position was not clear cut, in their majority, the refugees wanted to return but were being prevented from doing so by intimidation and violence. Pressure on the leadership was thus necessary, even if it meant pressure on the population as a whole, since the leaders were hiding behind the mass of the refugees. The deadline maintained such a pressure.

It might have been, yet again, unfortunate coincidence that Prime Minister Twagiramungu and two other Hutu ministers resigned (or were fired) just as UNHCR was resuming the repatriation convoys in late August. The position of Twagiramungu, who was considered a traitor by the Hutu extremists, was immediately reconsidered, and he was declared a hero in the camps. His divorce from the new regime sent a stern signal to the refugees that was amplified by the leaders as well as the RDR: "If those most faithful to the RPF [Twagiramungu] can no longer accept violations of human rights and dictatorship, and start to leave, how can one imagine, under these conditions, that the refugees could return voluntarily?" the RDR declared in a statement made public in Nairobi on 29 August. The fact that Twagiramungu was replaced by someone widely considered weak and malleable did not help either.

The killings of Kanama, after those of Kibeho, strengthened a growing suspicion within the international community that the Rwandan authorities were not really committed to "reconciliation" nor to a return of the refugees. For its part, UNHCR was promoting a return, but with "its eyes open" and as a lesser of two evils (staying or returning). The Kanama killings reinforced the resolve of the Zairian authorities to maintain the 31 December deadline: the less welcome the returning refugees were in Rwanda, the more decisive Zaire would need to be to prompt a return movement.

The number of returnees increased substantially, especially in October. In one single day of that month, some 1,600 refugees returned. During the following days, several hundred refugees a day joined the repatriation convoys. At the same time, the Rwandan authorities declared they were ready to receive 20,000 refugees per day. Although this figure did not rest on any rational or logistical consideration (the transit centers did not have the capacity to screen such a number per day, and Rwanda insisted on continuing to screen the returnees), it was a gesture of good will, which reinforced the perception that, this time, Zaire's deadline should be taken seriously. In fact, it was so taken even by the Hutu extremists, who responded with renewed infiltrations in western Rwanda to increase instability and tension there. The extremists hoped that once again their actions would prompt repression by the RPA, thus rendering any return dangerous for the refugees. This tactic had worked before and would continue to function for some time. Several international officials started to express concern over a rapid return movement: food shortage was mentioned, so was absorption capacity. The RDR accused UNHCR of collusion with the Zairian troops to force the refugees back home. A discourse similar to

that heard during the expulsion was resurfacing, only more subdued. Then former President Carter intervened.

In September 1995, the OAU had welcomed Jimmy Carter's plan to discuss with African leaders the means to end the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi.¹⁷¹ On 30 September, Carter met President Mobutu, who reportedly promised, first, not to intervene militarily in Rwanda and Burundi, in spite of growing tension on the border with these two countries.¹⁷² Second, Mobutu reiterated to Carter his pledge to bring to justice Rwandans who had been involved in the genocide. The former U.S. president then proceeded to Goma, where he was met by the central and regional Zairian authorities. The authorities' determination to maintain the 31 December deadline seemed to weaken in front of the former president. The Zairian authorities announced that they were ready to show some flexibility, to let the upcoming Cairo conference take place and see its results before deciding on the next course of action. Former President Carter may have considered the deadline from a humanitarian point of view and may have been worried that expulsions were to resume by the end of the year. Carter himself declared to reporters: "I think that no one now has confidence in a December 31 date....instead the aim [is] to send home some 6,000 refugees per day starting from now."¹⁷³ The difference between 20,000 previously announced by Rwanda and 6,000 used by Carter was fairly immaterial since these were political statements, not based on practical considerations.

The author believes that Carter's position had a negative impact on the return of the refugees. Without the former president's intervention, it might have been more difficult for President Mobutu unilaterally to lift the deadline, regardless of his wish to do so, and continue to use the refugees as pawns in his regional power game. The stance of the former president derived from a laudable perspective that combined morality, human rights advocacy, and conflict prevention. The result of this approach created something very different however. During the Cairo conference, UNHCR Goma was in regular contact with a U.S. advocacy group to try to have practical issues addressed and included in the joint statement that would conclude the conference. In particular, we underlined the need to keep pressure not only on the refugee leaders but on Zaire and Rwanda. Declarations of good will that had been given in abundance by end 1995, we argued, should now be supported by deadlines. Jimmy Carter's entourage was reluctant to listen. As it turned out, the conference produced another declaration of good will that not only enhanced Mobutu's image but postponed any substantive decision. Meanwhile, progress on the ground was interrupted for a while before and after Cairo, since it was believed that the international community should give the benefit of the doubt to the conference and its participants. No deadlines beyond vague commitments were included in the statement. Lack of understanding of the situation in the field could be epitomized in one statement by former President Carter, who declared that the Zairian authorities might drop the December 31 deadline if UNHCR speeded up voluntary repatriation. For UNHCR to

¹⁷¹ *Reuters*, September 21, 1995.

¹⁷² Retrospectively, this threat was a gross overestimation of Mobutu's own strength. At the time it seemed fairly reasonable.

¹⁷³ *Reuters*, November 21, 1995.

accelerate repatriation, however, some pressure was needed, and the deadline served this purpose. UNHCR Kigali openly stated that, in spite of Carter's statement that no refugee should be forcibly returned, the Cairo agreement could not be implemented without some forced repatriation.¹⁷⁴ Subsequent statements that reiterated the Cairo accord sounded rhetorical when they envisaged an increase in the rate of return to 10,000 persons per day. No suggestions were made as to how this could be achieved.¹⁷⁵ Several positive points were reportedly agreed upon such as the extension of UNAMIR's mandate in Rwanda. This, however, was denied by a senior official in Kigali who stated that "what came out of Cairo was Carter's wishful thinking. We never agreed to automatically extending the present mandate."¹⁷⁶

Several senior Zairian officials confirmed to the author that Carter had asked President Mobutu to be flexible. These government officials may not have missed a chance of criticizing the Head of State or the outside world for Zaire's own weakness. On the other hand, President Mobutu may have been more than willing to comply, and Carter's position gave him an excellent opportunity. What is known is that a few days later, on 26 November, the President addressed the nation in a state television interview on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the coup that brought him to power and declared that the December 31 deadline was impracticable and that enforcing it would harm Zaire's image abroad.¹⁷⁷ The following days, the number of returnees dropped to negligible levels.

The visit of former President Carter had been previously discussed with several U.S. officials, as UNHCR was wondering how such a visit could be utilized towards a positive end. UNHCR was advised that the U.S. government did not control the former president.¹⁷⁸ On the other hand, the former president had close links with the State Department. It may have been advisable to ensure that the former president received a thorough brief.

¹⁷⁴ *Reuters*, November 30, 1995.

¹⁷⁵ In a similar vein, a senior diplomat from Kinshasa arrived in Goma and declared to the media that he was touring the region to see UNHCR "put refugees on trucks" back to Rwanda. The author retorted, to the diplomat's displeasure, that he would be most happy to comply if the official would be kind enough to indicate how to do it. The author was subsequently accused of, first, not obeying the High Commissioner's order and, second, of being opposed to a return. The official was informed that first, UNHCR did not (in spite of appearances) have an army at its disposal; second, that the refugee organization still believed in the concept of voluntariness; third, that for voluntariness to work we needed to "get rid" of the extremists and leaders, and that no country had expressed its readiness to help or even to try and put pressure on Zaire. This incident was symptomatic of a recurring accusation against UNHCR for either failing to engineer a refugee return or refusing to separate the "wolves from the sheep."

¹⁷⁶ *Reuters*, December 2, 1995.

¹⁷⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, November 26, 1995.

¹⁷⁸ See Douglas Brinkley, *Jimmy Carter's Modest Quest for Global Peace*. The former president was even compared to an "unguided missile," in spite of all the constructive initiatives he and his center had launched. Because of its reluctance to listen to advice, the center was considered to be, at times, a liability rather than an asset. However, criticism of the former president was relatively mild, as he was considered well intentioned.

The Carter Center organized a similar conference in Tunis. U.N. participation was banned, which was not promising, since whatever recommendations the summit would devise would need to be implemented.¹⁷⁹ Short of the armed forces, the U.N. and its partners in eastern Zaire would have had to be in charge of carrying out new initiatives. The two-day meeting ended on 18 March 1996 with renewed, solemn pledges that were as vague as ever and contained no fresh ideas. Although diplomacy can be the art of playing for time, this commodity was becoming scarce as the regional crisis deepened. Not inviting the U.N., whatever its weaknesses, pointed an accusing finger at one entity when the positions of the main actors were, as we saw, far from consistent or constructive.

UNHCR Goma once remarked that Carter's initiative had undone several months' worth of work by the organization to prompt a return. The credibility of the Zairian government, as well as that of UNHCR, had suffered another blow, and the refugee leaders had the upper hand and the open support of President Mobutu. Ideas on how to resuscitate a return were also running short.

Economic Measures to Prompt a Return Movement

Since 1994, the Zairian authorities had tried to keep the refugees in geographically limited areas. In November of that year, the authorities had forcefully uprooted refugees who were scattered in villages and marched them into the camps. Over 60,000 had integrated into the existing camps, Kahindo in particular. Refugee movements were constrained but still relatively easy for those who could afford to pay the multiple "tolls" at the check points set up by the Zairian armed forces. Shuttle services, organized by the refugees, often in joint ventures with Zairian army officers, were linking the camps of North-Kivu on a daily basis. Trade in the camps was thriving.¹⁸⁰ "Markets in the camps were so well-stocked with vegetables, grown on the tiny refugee plots....that Zairians came to the settlements to do their shopping....Meat...suspected to come from rustled cattle, is cheaper than in Goma."¹⁸¹ As for the leaders and Augustine Bizimungu in particular, they were on constant rotation between Nairobi, Kinshasa/Gbadolite, Bukavu, Goma, and western Tanzania, not to mention Europe and West Africa.

The Zairian authorities had issued decrees that limited the movement of refugees out of the camps. These were ignored, especially by large plantations eager for cheap and hard-working labor. From Kibumba camp alone some 20,000 refugees would be leaving the camp from five o'clock in the morning, returning in the evening after a long day in the field. The local government itself was employing skilled refugee labor. The decrees also

¹⁷⁹ The RDR protested for not being invited either.

¹⁸⁰ In late 1995, UNHCR Goma carried out a survey that gave a good indication of the adaptation of the refugees in the four main camps of the North-Kivu region: there were some 2,324 bars, 450 restaurants, 589 shops, 62 hairdressers, 51 pharmacies, 30 tailors, 25 butchers, five ironsmiths, four photographic studios, three cinemas, two hotels and one abattoir. The four camps concerned totaled some 650,000 refugees.

¹⁸¹ *Financial Times (London)*, February 22, 1996.

forbade the refugees to run businesses in or outside the camps. As seen above, this was very far from being respected either. Smuggling of charcoal was also thriving, which involved the ex-FAR and the FAZ, among others, at the expense of the Virunga National Park.¹⁸² Those thriving in the camps were the Rwandans most opposed to the return, as the wealthiest refugees were generally those who had emptied the coffers of Rwanda on their way out.

Undermining the economic base of the leaders had been discussed within UNHCR for some time,¹⁸³ and an internal UNHCR communication in mid-September 1995 had recommended that Zaire be approached at the appropriate level to review this issue. It could be argued that this ran contrary to the international conventions to which Zaire was a party. It would have been difficult, however, to defend a literal interpretation of international instruments, considering the exceptional nature of the situation (and the fact that most Western countries do impose restrictions on the movement and employment of refugees).

Following President Mobutu's statement of 26 November 1995, the Zairian authorities and UNHCR agreed that, as another alternative, economic pressure should be exercised on the refugee leadership. The so-called "administrative closure of the camps" was basically the strict implementation of previous decrees. Several meetings took place to discuss implementation of the closure, and the Zairian authorities, both from Kinshasa and from Goma, understood that this was the "last chance," that this initiative should not fail. The authorities seemed committed to the success of the operation and agreed that careful planning was required.

In order to confine the refugee population to the camps and to close hundreds of shops, the authorities needed the involvement of both the ZCSC and additional troops. Several scenarios were reviewed and the simplest and least costly—using some of the troops locally available—was selected by the authorities. The ZCSC was unwilling to be involved in this initiative, in spite of the fact that they had been deployed, *inter alia*, to ensure compliance with Zairian law in the camps. This reluctance revealed the ZCSC's vested interest in keeping the shops open. On UNHCR Goma's side, a circular had been sent to all personnel and agencies requesting that they refrain from buying anything in the camps.

¹⁸² On several occasions, the park rangers shot some refugees who had fetched wood in the park. The Governor was reminded that there was a much more damaging traffic going on, and details were given to the Governor for him to take action accordingly, which never happened.

¹⁸³ UNHCR Goma officially requested all NGOs to dismiss local staff with an alleged "dubious past." Without pretending to act as a judge, UNHCR, which was financing many NGOs, stressed to the NGOs the fact that the refugee agency did not want to risk having on its payrolls Rwandans who may have participated in the genocide. While several NGOs readily complied and forwarded lists of names of persons they had fired, others showed less enthusiasm and continued to hire several Rwandans who appeared on the list of 400 genocide leaders issued by the new Rwandan regime. Pressure had to be exerted on those NGOs, which were primarily concerned about their security in the camps. There may also have been some confusion in the minds of many relief workers on the distinction between neutrality and impartiality.

Zaire decided to deploy several hundred troops, starting with one camp in the North-Kivu and one in the South-Kivu region. Kibumba was chosen for the north since it had consistently proven to be the least organized of the camps because of a smaller proportion of ex-FAR, ex-officials, or ex-militia. It had also been consistently the camp from where the greatest number of returnees originated. It was thus the one with the greatest potential to prompt a return movement. Further, it was the camp that posed the most problems for border security, as infiltrations into Rwanda generally transited through Kibumba and used it as a cover, because of its location just two kilometers from the frontier.

Some confusion ensued when authorities declared that activities should stop in the camps, which was misconstrued as including essential assistance activities. The misunderstanding continued for a while as the government sought to appear to be taking a strong stance while being able to blame the international community of any eventual failure. Even before the closure had started, Zaire was trying to find a scapegoat.

Three ministers flew from Kinshasa to oversee the administrative closure.¹⁸⁴ The Prime Minister's Cabinet was aware that camp closure had to be accompanied by serious discussions between top government officials and refugee leaders. In fact, for UNHCR, deployment of troops around the camp was Zaire's decision and was less important than contacts between the government and the refugees. The Minister of Interior was leading the delegation but his government's seat was fragile. He lost his position during the subsequent government reshuffle. The Minister of Defense could have exerted some influence but he kept a low profile.

From the first day of the deployment, it was clear that the initiative was stillborn. Some 120 Zairian soldiers were deployed on the road along Kibumba. Shops (not all) were closed, at least temporarily. The Minister of Interior met with the refugee leaders, who assured him of their cooperation, and the negotiations ended there. The following day the number of soldiers dwindled and stabilized at a few dozen. The Minister of Interior realized that he had been deceived by the leaders. He seemed genuinely surprised and flew back to Kinshasa shortly thereafter.

UNHCR was expecting more than this proforma action from the high level delegation, even if there was widespread skepticism as to the government's real commitment to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. The discussions between the government and the refugee leaders were brief and formal, when they should have been much more specific and should have made clear that the leaders' attitude would not be tolerated anymore. Either the Minister of Interior did not feel he had sufficient support to go into a confrontational mode with the leaders, or he was under instruction not to push negotiations too hard, or he was simply taken aback. The situation became further confused when, a week later, the government declared that it had not yet started to carry

¹⁸⁴ The Vice-Prime Minister-Minister of Defense, the Vice-Prime Minister-Minister of Interior, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

out its plan. It also resumed its accusations against UNHCR and the organization's alleged opposition to repatriation.

In 1996, many within the international community still believed that the refugee issue could be solved through diplomatic channels. In late January 1996, a U.S. aid official declared: “[we] were terrified that by [camp closure] he [Kengo] meant on any date within the next two weeks the Zairians could declare any camp closed, as this sounds like a forced movement...We would have a disaster with a million Rwandans whose camps were declared closed and who were barred from staying in Zaire. This is precisely what we have been trying to avoid.”¹⁸⁵ Several months before, officials from the same administration had stated that some pressure was necessary, but it did not seem yet to have convinced all those concerned with U.S. policy in the region.

Camp Relocation and Refugee Integration

The year 1996 was also marked by a shift in UNHCR's strategy. By February, it was clear that little could be expected either from Zaire or from Rwanda. “A pervasive climate of intimidation in the camps and fear of arbitrary arrest or retribution in Rwanda remain the two major obstacles to large-scale repatriation...[R]elocation of the refugee camps would improve regional and refugee security.”¹⁸⁶ Infiltrations by Hutu extremists were increasing in scale and in efficiency and were spreading into Uganda. Tension on the border was on the rise and was reaching deeper into Rwanda. The detainees population in Rwandan prisons continued to rise and had reached some 100,000 persons. The situation in Burundi was worsening. Clashes in the Kivu were frequent between the refugee population and the local communities. As predicted in 1995, the conflict was engulfing the whole of the Masisi area, spreading northward, and gradually drawing most ethnic groups into a regional civil war. Most of the major players seemed to accept that nothing much could be done and that the region was irremediably sliding into chaos.

UNHCR Goma proposed that Headquarters sponsor linking development assistance to Zaire and Rwanda to progress on the “refugee front,” within deadlines to be agreed upon between all the parties concerned. The UNHCR Goma office believed that deadlines should be imposed on Zaire to arrest intimidators, dismantle the bananeraie, and relocate the camps closest to the border, starting with Kibumba and Kamanyola. Similarly, within a given timeframe, Rwanda should issue decrees on the return of properties, on arrest procedures, and on degrees of responsibility in the genocide. The Rwandan authorities should also visit the refugee camps, open additional entry points, and reinstate the cross border visits, which had been discontinued for several months. These were measures that had been proposed throughout the crisis and needed to be reactivated. Development assistance was starting to reach Rwanda after much delay. Some multilateral and bilateral assistance to Zaire was being resumed after several years of disruption. Development assistance, no matter how acutely required, could be seen as condoning Zaire and Rwanda

¹⁸⁵ *Reuters*, January 5, 1996.

¹⁸⁶ Sadako Ogata, June 28, 1996.

in their counterproductive attitudes, conducive to neither a solution to the refugee crisis nor to regional stability. This was discussed with the EU Special Envoy, who stated that reconstruction funds would be forthcoming for the Kivu region once Rwandan refugees had departed. France, however, had unilaterally resumed some limited humanitarian assistance to Zaire, and Germany had released substantial funds.

The refugee issue could not condition all aspects of multilateral relations with Zaire and Rwanda. Extreme regional instability, which could only be put in check through massive repatriation, does not, however, seem to have been fully recognized. Closer cooperation and adoption of a common strategy between financial/development and humanitarian institutions would have been needed. Major powers, especially the U.S., could have been an effective link between these institutions, with their voting weight and unchallenged influence in most international fora, be it the World Bank, the IMF, UNDP, or the Security Council. Such a pervasive influence should have been used to encourage the establishment of a coherent policy, even if departments dealing with financial institutions were not the same as those dealing with refugee and humanitarian issues. Lack of an overall policy was a reflection of the marginality of the Great Lakes Region crisis in national agendas.

While continuing to pursue the issue of voluntary repatriation, UNHCR Goma argued that it was time to focus on an alternative durable solution: integrating the refugees inside Zaire. There was no point pursuing only one option. Goma proposed that those refugees who did not want to return, after a deadline to be agreed upon with Zaire, Rwanda, and the main international players, should be integrated into settlements to be set up at a reasonable distance from the border. UNHCR was aware that this would raise an outcry in Zaire, considering the ethnic problems in the Kivu region.¹⁸⁷ Mentioning integration could also doom any further attempts at repatriation; surfacing this alternative to the refugees meant helping their leadership maintain its pervasive influence with renewed hopes of a better future inside Zaire, until they could return together. The entire refugee caseload present in the Kivu region in early 1996 would thus be likely to remain. Whether the settlements would be temporary or “semi-permanent” was not a crucial issue in the field. The fact that refugees would be transferred to more permanent camps meant that the international community recognized a substantial portion of the refugee population could or would not return in the medium or long-term, but there was not much of a choice. On the other hand, it was hoped that new pressure on Zaire would prompt the authorities to meet their previous pledges of, inter alia, arresting intimidators.

UNHCR had previously envisaged that one fourth to one third of the Rwandan refugees might eventually integrate into Zaire, unable or unwilling to return to Rwanda, but this integration had to occur *after* a major return movement, which would have left the refugee leadership severely weakened and with little choice but to “vanish” into the Zairian jungle.

¹⁸⁷ In fact Zaire strongly criticized the U.N. Secretary-General, who had reportedly remarked that it may be time for the international community to think about integrating the refugees into Zaire. This gave the opportunity for Zaire to underscore that the international community and the U.N. in particular was against repatriation and was thwarting the genuine efforts of Zaire to return the refugees.

Integrating the entire population was not possible without major ethnic trouble in the Kivu region, unless a major and expensive transfer of population much further west into Zaire could be initiated; this had been considered in October 1994 for the ex-FAR, and the idea had been dropped because it involved an energetic armed intervention and an expensive logistical operation.

One intermediary solution had been to begin by relocating the camps that were closest to the borders. It dealt with the security risk posed by these camps, which were being used as launching pads or transit centers for infiltrations into Rwanda, while avoiding the issue of integration of refugees into Zaire. UNHCR Goma was criticized for not doing more on this issue, especially in 1994 and 1995. At the time, relocation of these camps away from the border was not actively pursued for one main reason: transferring the camps to more remote locations would have given the “wrong signal” to the refugee population and its leaders, that the international community intended to look after them forever. The leaders had already stated that time was on their side, as it would give them the opportunity to re-arm and eventually overthrow the new regime. Hence camp relocation without separation or arrest of the leaders would not solve any problem and was giving these leaders a sanctuary where they could pursue their objectives, unhindered, far from any potential hot pursuit by the RPA. Second, transferring camps entailed breaking them up into smaller, more manageable, and also more comfortable camps, thereby giving a sense of permanency to the refugee presence. Setting up better camps would not only keep those refugee in the Kivu, it would signal to the refugees in the other camps that they too, could remain.¹⁸⁸ Donor fatigue had also reached a point of no return, short of a major crisis, and new camps would in most likelihood not be sustainable for lack of funds.

Although camp relocation, even if partial, was closely linked to integration of the population, the transfer of a few selected camps was considered with renewed interest in 1996, in view of the diminishing window of opportunity. Kibumba was once again the obvious choice because of its geographical situation and its internal, comparatively weak, structure. In addition, many in Kibumba were keen to stay there as they were within easy reach of their properties in Rwanda. It was hoped that its relocation might destabilize the camp structure, to the advantage of refugees desiring to return. UNHCR and IOM could increase repatriation convoys to accommodate several thousand returnees per day, should the need arise. Relocation of Kibumba, it was still believed, could trigger a return movement that could spread to other camps and refugee hosting areas in the Great Lakes.¹⁸⁹ Plans for the relocation of Kibumba were paralleled by a noticeable increase in

¹⁸⁸ Contrary to what has often been said, breaking up large camps into smaller units would not have broken the back of the extremists. This might just have multiplied the problems: the leaders had several thousand devoted ex-FAR/militia and other thugs at their disposal to impose their rule wherever refugees were. In fact, the 30 camps of Bukavu, although much smaller, were under the same iron rule as those of Goma, maybe more so. Large camps offered some margin of maneuver for the refugees who wished to return since camps of 200,000 persons were not easy to control. The fact that, from 1994 to 1996, more returnees came from Goma than any other refugee hosting area in the region may be explained partially by this factor.

¹⁸⁹ In early 1995 UNHCR had already selected one site which had been approved in principle by the central government. The site was not ideal, being situated just west of Mugunga, however it could be

military operations into Masisi by ex-FAR/militia, at times supported by local Hutu, to create a Hutuland for the extremists and their entourage should Kibumba, and subsequently other camps, be dismantled.¹⁹⁰

Camp relocation was thus a complex issue. It could not be used as a tool to promote repatriation without also necessitating the transfer of reluctant refugees to a new site. Camp relocation, just like integration, meant leading the refugees to think about their future in Zaire. This ran contrary to our understanding that the only viable solution for the stability of the region was a peaceful return. Camp relocation could also lead to heightened tension with the local ethnic groups, which could rapidly degenerate into open warfare throughout the Kivu region and beyond, into Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi.¹⁹¹ Camp relocation however, fitted with the tendency of the international community to postpone any direct involvement, leaving most responsibilities to humanitarian agencies.

In fact UNHCR's proposed strategy of giving the choice between voluntary repatriation and relocation may not have solved the issue, since the international community was not prepared to intervene with the refugee leaders. The latter could have procrastinated for a long period of time, as they knew that coercion against them was not an option. When Mrs. Oakley declared in Geneva that, "UNHCR has a draft on the table...I think there has been an emerging consensus....Without strong disagreement from major donors, we would then expect the UNHCR to go forward....We will certainly be continuing those discussions in capitals and trying to move that situation along,"¹⁹² the problem remained the same: putting pressure on the refugee leadership. At least the initiative had the merit of keeping refugee returns on the agenda of the international community. This might finally have prompted it into decisive action. What happened next was not the product of a concerted international initiative but of secretive preparations within a selective group.

better monitored, since it was by the lake and some 30 km. from the border. In spite of numerous threats from ethnic groups in Masisi who were fiercely opposed to having another large camp next to their land, the idea was maintained until the forcible repatriation of mid-August and the imposition of the 31 December 1995 deadline. Since all refugees were to leave by the end of the year, the reasoning went, there was no need to transfer refugees. The idea was therefore dropped by the authorities. We tried to resurrect it with the central and local authorities in 1996 but met with limited success.

¹⁹⁰ One letter received by UNHCR Goma from representatives of local Hutus in Masisi denounced the activities of the ex-FAR/militia in their area. Their activities were seen by many local Hutus as seriously jeopardizing future relationship with the other ethnic groups in the vicinity. Many local Hutus were opposed to the creation of a "Hutuland" in Masisi.

¹⁹¹ This is one of the main reasons why UNHCR was opposed to the growing idea that assistance to the camps should be discontinued, including food distribution. Such a radical option may indeed have prompted a return in 1994, but was an impossible decision to make at the time while thousands were already dying of dysentery, cholera, or general exhaustion. In 1996 the result might have been very different: it might have prompted a massive exodus into the Masisi and beyond. While an undetermined percentage of the refugee population might have returned, a massive transfer of ethnic Hutus into areas of low-intensity conflict would have immediately sparked off a civil war. The U.S. government and several Congressmen proposed such an option; once more, the humanitarian agencies were requested to take action in the absence of any initiative on the political front. It was unrealistic to expect humanitarian agencies to comply with such a request, which is almost like asking a doctor to kill his or her patient, even if the patient is of dubious morality.

¹⁹² *Reuters*, October 10, 1996.

The October-November 1996 Military Operations

The military operations of late 1996 were carried out with the overt support of Rwanda and at least the blessing of some parts of the U.S. administration. They successfully dealt with the refugee problem in so far as the majority of the refugees returned home after the attack on Mugunga. Many thousands also died and many more were still on the run or unaccounted for over a year later.¹⁹³ There are diverging analyses of the rebellion, and it is beyond the scope of this study to go into its details. Notwithstanding the fact that an increasing number of international actors had an interest in the rebellion, “one of the greatest mysteries...is why it did not happen before.”¹⁹⁴

The operation’s first goal was to destroy the refugee camps, both in the South-Kivu (to weaken Nyangoma’s military activities) and in the North-Kivu (to hamper infiltrations into Rwanda). The main objective does not seem to have been the repatriation of refugees. Had it been the case, the attacks by the RPA would not have hit the camps from the east, thereby pushing the refugees further into Zaire. Were it not for the Mai-Mai¹⁹⁵ who were instrumental in blocking access to the Masisi area before and after the attack on Mugunga, many more refugees would have fled further west into the Zairian forest. On the other hand, the Rwandan government may have assumed that the destruction of the camps would scatter the refugees, thus freeing them from the grip of the extremists and giving them the possibility to decide for themselves. One wonders, however, whether the success of the military operations and the sudden massive return did not go beyond expectations.

The fact that the Rwandan authorities, immediately and publicly backed up by the U.S. government, declared, shortly after the massive return from Mugunga, that there were no more refugees left in Zaire reflected a certain apprehension about the scale of the return movement. It was widely assumed that Rwanda could not absorb the entire refugee population in addition to the large number of Tutsis (estimated at some 600 to 800,000 persons) who had returned from 1994 onwards. This would have placed the population of Rwanda at a pre-genocide level, with unbearable pressure on land and the Rwandan economy as a whole. If several hundred thousand refugees, extremists, and other former leaders were to remain in Zaire, far from the border, this would have brought a much-needed respite. Added to this, the prison population continued to increase and was likely to jump up following a massive return, with all its collateral problems. The tendency to declare the refugee problem over must, therefore, have been strong within Rwandan government circles and their backers. This position was held by the U.S. government, at

¹⁹³ For a concise summary of the events leading to the October-November 1996 operations, see Gerard Prunier, “The Great Lakes Crisis,” *Current History*, vol. 96, no. 610, May 1997, 193-199.

¹⁹⁴ Peter Rosenblum, “Endgame in Zaire,” *Current History*, vol. 96, no. 610, May 1997, 202.

¹⁹⁵ The Mai-Mai were a composite group of Hunde, Nande, and other ethnic groups who wanted to oust all Kinyarwanda speakers of the Kivu region. The boundary between banditry and more politically motivated actions was often blurred. Their alliance, which proved temporary, with the ADFL was forged to get rid of the Hutus who had carved a Hutuland in the Masisi area at their expense.

least temporarily. The strong views held by the U.S. embassy in Kigali were dominant and shaped the response of the U.S. administration to the November crisis. The feud over figures, between UNHCR and the US. government, was interesting in its timing. During the mass return, the U.S. government, through its embassy in Kigali, declared that it was taking over the counting of the number of returnees. This was followed shortly by the announcement that UNHCR figures were inflated and that no refugees remained in Zaire. The U.S. government came up with daily estimated returnee figures that were some 100,000 persons higher than UNHCR's. It may have been a weakness on the part of UNHCR not to possess accurate figures, considering that for over a year contingency plans had been prepared for a massive return. The information provided by the U.S. government was, however, contradictory at times, and its source was unclear, since aerial photographs by U.S. and U.K. surveillance planes were taken inside Zaire and then only along specific routes. The U.S. Rwandan government figures were eventually accepted by UNHCR after a long meeting in Kigali.¹⁹⁶

It is widely accepted that with the destruction of the eastern Zaire refugee camps, the governments of Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and their supporters had reached their goal. The consensus was that the massive return and dismantling of the camps was a positive development for the region. Few observers predicted at the time that the ADFL would reach Kinshasa and topple the government there. Hence our reference in the introduction that the international backers of the ADFL may have played the sorcerer's apprentices.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Great Lakes refugee crisis was marked by a series of missed opportunities. Thousands of persons were killed, despite the potential for peaceful solutions that could have ended the refugee problem.¹⁹⁷ The crisis could have demonstrated that, in a post-Cold War world, the various players in the "international concert" could, at long last, play in tune. Multilateral initiatives in the Great Lakes region were weak, however, and failed repeatedly. Other initiatives launched by various actors, often after consultation with some partners, did not succeed in enlisting the support of the international community and withered away. Why was this?

¹⁹⁶ The French government became an alternative source of information and shared its estimates of the number of refugees in Zaire in December 1996. They roughly corresponded to UNHCR's own estimates.

¹⁹⁷ Sadako Agata declared recently:

I am profoundly disturbed by the breakdown of fundamental humanitarian principles in the Great Lakes region and by the degree of inaction with which the international community has watched that breakdown occur. There is an urgent need for States to reaffirm their commitment to upholding principles and to manifest more clearly their resolve to address the political dimensions of humanitarian crises.

Statement by the High Commissioner to the Third Committee of the General Assembly, New York, November 3, 1997.

To answer this question, it is important to understand the geopolitical interests (or lack thereof) of the state actors involved in the region. This region did not represent insurmountable conflicting interests between the main international actors; and business interests, though present, were not vital.¹⁹⁸ This meant that the Great Lakes region was not considered worth a protracted fight between members of the Security Council. There was, however, some interest in the region, even if limited, and this led to problems. Political calculations are not the product of rational considerations but sometimes boil down to national pride, or a perception of one's historical responsibilities. Clashes between an "old world" (France) unwilling to consider any changes that could jeopardize its interests in the region, and a newer one with limited interest in the area (the U.S.), generated rear-guard fights and a passive but stiff resistance by these players and their allies.¹⁹⁹

Marginal interest in the Great Lakes on the part of most western capitals, created an environment in which personal initiatives and individual commitments played a substantial role in the developments of the crisis.²⁰⁰ The commitment of U.S. embassy officials in Kigali to the cause of Rwanda was probably instrumental in enlisting U.S. administration support for the military operations of late 1996 in general and for the ADFL in particular.²⁰¹ The fact that individuals within a government can significantly influence decision-making processes in their bureaucracies is not necessarily negative; it can lead to new initiatives or counteract inflexibility and bureaucratic inertia. Nevertheless, to avoid the loss of coherence or consistency that follows when a government speaks with many different voices, it is imperative that reinforced internal coordination mechanisms be in place. Reinforced coordination between the field and headquarters/regional centers is a prerequisite to reducing the effect of clientelism and to keeping personal interpretations in check.

Initiatives that might have solved the refugee problem were considered from a "Kinshasa" or "Kigali" angle, often mutually exclusive, and were then buried in the labyrinths of

¹⁹⁸ French officials, however, associated U.S. involvement with the Rwandan and Kabila regimes with the existence of strategic and precious minerals in the DRC.

¹⁹⁹ The perception of internal conflicts as "ethnic pieces that were put together by the colonial glue, and reinforced by the old world order, [and] are now pulling apart and reasserting their autonomy or independence" must have been more difficult to accept for states with a colonial past than for the "new world." See Francis M. Deng, Sadikiel Kimaro, Terrence Lyons, Donald Rothchild, William I. Zartman, *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1996.

²⁰⁰ Chidozie F. Ogene, *Interest Groups and the Shaping of Foreign Policy: Four Case Studies of United States African Policy*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. "Groups might facilitate or obstruct the implementation of decisions already made. This form of influence was demonstrated in the study of the Nigerian civil war where the State Department bureau and even the American Embassy in Lagos deliberately failed to carry out instructions coming from the White House." 192. In the case of the Great Lakes, the absence of a clearly defined policy further enhanced the influence and role of several officials in the Great Lakes crises.

²⁰¹ Graham T. Allison defines the people in an organization as the component "whose energy, skills, and values more nearly than any other factor determine whether government works." Graham T. Allison, *Remaking Foreign Policy: the Organizational Connection*. New York: Basic Books, 1976, 14.

international diplomacy. Differences between Council members were left unattended and festered. Suspicion between actors concerned with the crisis grew and undermined attempts to enlist international support towards a peaceful and long-term solution to the refugee problem in the region. As a consequence, the road was open to unilateral or bilateral initiatives at the expense of multilateralism. In the Great Lakes region, none of the actors concerned seemed prepared to settle differences within the international fora. The low-intensity competition between the U.S. and France overshadowed the more palpable inter-State conflict in central Africa and hindered an impartial analysis of the situation.

Conflicting agendas between international actors, limited interest, and internal dissents were recipes for a disastrous international involvement in the Great Lakes region. For instance, actions of the Rwandan authorities were frequently perceived by many within and outside government circles to obey a zero-sum logic of power; however, no matter how understandable the motives of the Rwandan government might have been, the international community “added fuel to the fire” instead of containing it. The international community supported some of Rwanda’s actions, even when doing so meant making the return of the refugees more difficult, or opted for military solutions when more peaceful means would have been possible.

State behavior is generally characterized by a narrow search for short-term gain and self-interest. This explains why “policies of prevention and conflict management were subjected to miserly criteria of risks and costs; only when the emphasis shifted to low-risk, high-visibility humanitarian assistance did states generally show generosity.”²⁰² However, it is widely recognized that policies based on narrow self-interest are costly in the long term because of the conflicts and humanitarian expenditures that result. Although this is now understood by most international actors, it has so far failed substantially to affect their behavior, as was demonstrated in the case of the Great Lakes region of Africa.

A second set of issues that partially explain the failure of initiatives concerns the relations between the U.N. Secretariat and other U.N. agencies, especially humanitarian ones. During the period 1994-1996, these relations were poor. Dissents within the U.N. system undermined its capacity to influence its environment and weakened the initiatives it took. The U.N. Secretariat and the agencies under its direct responsibility needed to be much more unified. The Security Council could have played a useful role in this regard, but it did not. In addition, both the Security Council and the General Assembly failed to alert the international community to the danger of the refugee crisis and were weak in proposing and lobbying for solutions.²⁰³

²⁰² *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience. op. cit.*, vol. 2, “Early Warning and Conflict Management,” 77.

²⁰³ A recent international conference concluded:

The responsibility of the Security Council and, in particular, that of its permanent members remains a key element in the international community’s response to humanitarian crises....The decision-making processes at the Council did not often work well....Information provided to the Council on crisis situations is not always sufficient, timely, or comprehensive, and may derive from too few sources.

It is often argued that in the absence of political will the United Nations cannot do much, being the sum of the will of its members and of the Security Council in particular.²⁰⁴ However, it is precisely in the absence of such will that the United Nations is needed, both to raise awareness and to elevate the debate beyond short-term parochial interests. As international security issues take on a new and expanded meaning, the role of the Security Council has been reinforced, and greater transparency in the workings of the Council may be called for, perhaps in the same way as parliamentary debates (including informal consultations) can be watched on television. All citizens are entitled to know the role and position of each Council member in any particular crisis.

Divergence between Security Council members will always exist, but it is the unwillingness to solve problems at a multilateral level that is undermining concerted actions. Multilateral actions are too constraining for most states, and many resort to unilateral actions that they are able to carry out more freely and away from the scrutiny of their domestic constituencies, for whom international issues are remote and cryptic. The Secretary-General could play a useful role in ironing out the differences between Council members.

Harmonization of policy between different departments and agencies may be difficult to achieve in the short term, but it is imperative that more control be exercised on internal dissents *within* a given agency, such as UNHCR, be it in the U.N., an NGO, or a government ministry/department. Internal conflicts that are left unsolved undermine the capacity of these actors to respond to a crisis in a consistent and effective manner. Most of the organizations in the Great Lakes region suffered from deep divisions, which led to inconsistent responses to the crises in central Africa and blurred their message to the outside world.

One of the significant actors in the Great Lakes region was UNHCR, and as discussed earlier the organization showed several shortcomings. Overall, UNHCR would have gained by displaying more discipline and consistency in its approach to the Great Lakes crisis. This was most manifest in UNHCR's inability to maintain and implement a clear policy regarding a return. The office of the High Commissioner tended to resort to traditional measures in an untraditional environment, for example by insisting that the return be voluntary; second, the issue of the exclusion clause—whether applicable *prima facie* or on an individual basis—was discussed only very late in the process. UNHCR

UNITAR/IPS/NIRA Conference on “Humanitarian Action and Peace-keeping Operations: Debriefing and Lessons,” Singapore, 24-26 February 1997.

²⁰⁴ Another view on this, also widely held, is that the U.N. is simply a tool for advancing the interests and values of some international actors. Many U.S. government statements reflect this. For example, a statement to Congress by then Secretary of State Warren Christopher called the U.N. “a valuable tool for advancing our interests and our values.” U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Appropriations Committee, Statement before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary by Secretary Christopher, Washington, D.C.: May 15, 1996. The statement was issued to convince a reluctant Congress and has the merit of being fairly candid. Nonetheless, numerous public statements from international players with global ambitions are in the same vein.

proved reluctant to pinpoint openly the bottlenecks and conditions within Rwanda preventing a repatriation. It could have voiced more openly its concern over the inflexibility of Rwanda and the reluctance of Zaire to act decisively. The refugee organization should have been more forceful and systematic in expressing moral outrage against Hutu extremists in the camps and against blatant human rights violations inside Rwanda. In this respect, relations with the U.N. Human Rights Center in Geneva and Kigali were tenuous and often unproductive. UNHCR did not react early enough to the dilemma posed by the camps and could have alerted the international community more forcefully. This, reinforced by the support of NGOs and advocacy groups in Washington and Brussels, might have put some pressure on the international community to act.

The establishment of a UNHCR Special Envoy was an innovative measure, but its results fell short of expectations. The authority of the Special Envoy was unclear, in particular as concerns the relationship with UNHCR country Representatives. In addition to an inadequate authority to coordinate UNHCR policies throughout the region, the Special Envoy was not given the means to coordinate material assistance effectively.

Perhaps, no matter how hard UNHCR might have tried or how perfect its interventions might have been, it would not have made a substantial difference, considering the odds against any attempt to accelerate a return movement. Staff in the field in particular need to recognize that an agency's capacity to influence is limited. However, such capacity could be enhanced through more systematic contact with decision-making bodies. For example, UNHCR may need additional senior staff in its Washington office, if it wants to keep abreast of developments in the executive and legislative branches and to try to influence them. Regular contacts with members of Congress and their staff in key Committees and Subcommittees would be important.²⁰⁵ UNHCR was not invited to any of the hearings organized by Congress from 1994 to 1997, although references to the organization were repeatedly made during the hearings. The recent refugee crises have led UNHCR to major rethinking of the concept of repatriation. UNHCR should open the debate to the outside world and invite experts, observers, and major policy-makers to participate in a discussion to review this issue, which is crucial to the future role of the organization.

This study has argued the importance of recognizing and understanding the political nature of intervention in the Great Lakes crisis. Greater political awareness should be part of the approach to all emergencies and post-emergencies in the post-Cold War period.

²⁰⁵ The following Committees and Subcommittees are of direct interest to UNHCR (to the Subcommittees on African Affairs, one should add other regional Subcommittees as required by the situation). Senate: Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs; Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on African Affairs, and Subcommittee on International Operations. House: Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export, Financing, and Related Programs; International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, and Subcommittee on Africa. This list is not exhaustive.

Despite their apparent humanitarian nature, refugee problems are always highly political as well. This was so even during the Cold War, when refugee issues were generally considered as fairly static and dealt with mainly from a humanitarian angle. Today's refugee situations seem to be much more fluid and can no longer be treated largely as humanitarian issues. There is a need to redefine parameters for intervention and roles of the various actors, both humanitarian and political. The interface between humanitarian, peacekeeping, and political agencies is still built on an ad-hoc basis, depending on the good will of individuals, and this relationship needs to be structured more effectively.²⁰⁶ The interface between humanitarian agencies and the countries of asylum and of origin needs also to be redefined. One could argue that the failure of both Zaire and Rwanda to meet their commitments should have led the international community, and UNHCR in particular, to contemplate withdrawal seriously. Withdrawal or non-involvement from the start are options, but if UNHCR involvement is inevitable, the political context of such involvement should be recognized and incorporated from the start into a strategy of protection, assistance, and durable solution.

Given the need for multilateral action in complex emergencies and the overtly political nature of such actions, there is need for an entity that is specifically charged with negotiating political differences and coordinating policies based on awareness of these differences, at headquarters and field levels. Negotiation and coordination are issues that must be dealt with on a daily basis, not in an ad hoc way, as has been the case to date. Such an entity could be an agency that is already in existence, such as OCHA, or a special envoy with a team, to be deployed immediately and with regional responsibilities at the onset of a crisis. Whether the lead agency, the special envoy, or the OCHA model is applied, it is obvious that the staff involved in negotiating and coordinating activities must have political experience and a contextual knowledge of the region concerned. To date, the political wing of the U.N. has been heavily centralized in New York. It may be time to consider, in a more systematic way, the deployment of a substantial presence of political officers in the early phase of a complex emergency. The political arm of the U.N. needs to have stronger field experience than is presently the case.

The concern of this study is not only that opportunities were missed and that the international community could have played a stronger role in the resolution of the refugee crisis. Our concern is that the military operations that led to the massive return of Rwandan refugees from eastern Zaire may ultimately have sown seeds for a bitter harvest. We mention in the chapter dealing with the Rwandan government that the new regime showed no flexibility vis a vis the return of the refugees, and that its attitude augured badly for the future of the returnees. We also mention that the Rwandan government seemed to favor a marginalization of the refugee population upon its return, to avoid any attempt

²⁰⁶ For example, UNAMIR's mandate included the protection of UNHCHR but not of UNHCR and other U.N. humanitarian agencies. It is a shocking fact that the Security Council did not deem it necessary to include in UNAMIR's mandate the protection of all U.N. agencies. The dichotomy between political/peacekeeping affairs and the humanitarian world needs to be addressed. The U.N system would benefit from an equal treatment of all its agencies.

toward power-sharing arrangements. Beyond the security issue inside Rwanda and the concept of voluntary return, we should also consider the concept of “constructive” return.

Such a concept may be difficult to quantify and would be subject to broad interpretation.²⁰⁷ However, the 1996 military operations offer a good example of an “unconstructive” return. The refugees returned in a context of decreasing Hutu influence within the political apparatus of Rwanda. Negotiations between the refugee leadership and the Rwandan regime were not a desirable prospect, but dialogue between the new regime and moderate representatives of the refugee population would have helped bridge the “perception gap.” This did not happen. Rwanda’s urban population far exceeds what the land and the economy as a whole can bear. The rural population, Hutu in its majority, is at risk of being confined to activities aimed at sustaining the towns inhabited by the majority of the Tutsi population. In that sense, one could argue that economic marginalization may be inevitable. Political marginalization, however, is not.

The above may be a harbinger of future turmoil. The marginalized segment of the Rwandan society cannot forever remain submissive and accept undivided power by a minority. Extremist elements will thrive in this context, as was the case before. The return of the refugees did not take place in a constructive environment, socio-economically or politically speaking; this may further aggravate the situation inside Rwanda. The initiatives discussed in the previous chapters might have resulted in a semi-forced return, but in an early phase only and aimed at undermining the power of the extremists. A certain degree of voluntariness subsisted. This meant that the returnees had to be considered as individuals. In late 1996, the refugee population was trapped in Mugunga and was virtually marched down to Gisenyi, after having been shelled and fired at both by the FAZ/ex-FAR and ADFL/RPA/Mai-Mai. Although relieved to see an end to the refugee problem, the international community did not participate in the return, and had no substantive voice in it. The returnees were considered by Rwanda as “prima facie culprits.” The Rwandan regime had not moved one inch towards the refugee population. No compromise had been reached. It was a “zero-sum” repatriation in which one party (the new regime) maintained its previous inflexible position, and the other was immediately marginalized. Even if the refugee return is a positive development, the international community should not close its eyes and declare it a success. The way the return was implemented casts a long shadow over the future of Rwanda.

The role of the humanitarian community in the Great Lakes refugee crisis has been repeatedly criticized. Fewer articles analyzed the role of the political actors in the region, as it was widely considered that the region did not matter politically and hence one should not expect agencies with a political mandate to get involved. How many phrases or titles of articles like “international intervention: thoughtless responses,” or “The bankruptcy of ‘humanitarian policy’” have we read, concerning the Great Lakes?²⁰⁸ Many criticisms,

²⁰⁷ The concept of voluntariness is also far from clear, and security is relative as well.

²⁰⁸ See for instance Alex de Waal, “International Intervention: Thoughtless Responses,” *Crosslines*, ...” a good proportion of \$2 billion in foreign aid enabled a clique of genocidal maniacs to remain in business and begin their killing again.” The present author questions the basis of such a statement. There was

especially of a technical or structural nature, are legitimate and have been well covered by the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda. Other criticisms, however, are ambiguous when they describe the role of humanitarian agencies as one that prevents political solutions. At best, it is argued, humanitarian interventions make it easier for political actors to abdicate their role and leave it to the humanitarian world to sort it out. In the case of eastern Zaire, saving lives while trying to prompt a return movement was possible. These actions failed because the actors vested with a political mandate were not willing to intervene. Failure of the political world to act, weakness, and—at times—lack of direction within humanitarian agencies call for renewed cooperation between humanitarian and political interventions. These are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing.

Humanitarian agencies, especially at field level, may have underestimated certain elements when promoting or lobbying for an early return movement. For example, the size of the prison population inside Rwanda and, at times, the questionable arrest procedures there may not have been given due consideration, and this had a negative influence on the refugees in the camps. The parallel rise of extremists in the refugee camps and in Rwanda should also have been analyzed more systematically than was the case: the obstacles put by the Rwandan authorities to initiatives towards a return should have been fought more energetically or analyzed in depth. As already mentioned, the nature and legal status of the camps population was not reviewed adequately.

At field level again, humanitarian organizations in asylum countries, and eastern Zaire in particular, may have been too ready to play a role in political issues, such as trying to erode the power base of extremists, disarming Rwandans in the camps, trying to influence events inside Rwanda, or even sponsoring contacts between the new Rwandan regime and refugees. We may have been too willing to jump into the void left by the inaction of political actors, when it might have been strategically (but not necessarily humanly) more effective merely to highlight this void to the public. However, no matter how acutely we were aware that these actors were happy to leave the situation in the hands of humanitarian agencies, it seemed difficult to remain passive in front of an unfolding tragedy, or to stick to one's own strict mandate, when those with broader, political responsibilities were hesitant to get involved. For instance, the international community

some food diversion in the first few weeks. To extrapolate from there and state that a good proportion of all foreign aid helped the Hutu extremists remain in power is factually incorrect. Besides, the level of assistance to the refugees in eastern Zaire remained consistently extremely low and much lower than would have been accepted in other circumstances by the international community and public opinion. Second, de Waal's statement neglects the issue of assistance to innocent and vulnerable victims. The camps did provide a sanctuary for the refugee leaders, however, as stated by Sadako Ogata:

[T]he civilian nature of refugee camps—a fundamental tenet of refugee conventions—was not compromised by humanitarian action, but by failure of States to provide political, material and military support to separate armed elements and political extremists from refugees. It was this failure...not providing food and shelter to the refugees—which eventually put humanitarian action on an inevitable collision course with the security concerns of States in the region.” Sadako Ogata, Statement to the Third Committee of the General Assembly, New York: November 3, 1997.

could have been much more active in sponsoring the emergence and organization of Hutu moderates, of a “contact group” of Hutus not compromised in the genocide. First, it would have helped “clean” the Hutu population, which tended to be blamed in its entirety for the genocide. Second, it would have increased pressure on the Rwandan regime to find an acceptable solution to the refugee problem.

In 1994, UNHCR Goma had discussed with a number of refugees and officials the possibility of sponsoring the creation a group of moderate, respectable Hutus. In this respect, the RDR could have developed into something other than a group harboring extremists, as is now the case. Some senior members of the RDR acknowledged that, in spite of their good will, they had been almost immediately infiltrated by extremists. Had the international community been more interested (and less cynical) about the emergence of the RDR or any initiative that could foster a dialogue, the latter might have taken a different direction, towards moderation and constructive interface with the new Rwandan regime.

The above issues need to be the object of further debates and research. Whatever weakness humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR may have displayed, they often were the victim of their own success. We should not forget that, first and foremost, UNHCR and its partners had to deal with the largest humanitarian crisis of recent times and responded to an emergency and a human drama of almost unprecedented scale.

CHRONOLOGY OF STATEMENTS AND EVENTS

1994

- April 6 Presidents Habyarimana and Ntaryamira are killed when their plane is shot down.
8 RPF commander Paul Kagame, citing ethnic killings, declares war and his battalion advances into Kigali.
- 22 Security Council (SC) votes for a reduction of UNAMIR.
- May 2 Clinton signs Presidential Decision Directive 25, setting new and much tighter post-Somalia criteria for U.S. participation in, and payment to support, U.N. peacekeeping operations.
- June 7 U.N. says it is ready to send 5,500 troops but is lacking equipment.
- 11 France condemns slaughter in Rwanda and says international community may take steps to secure a cease fire.
- 13 Rebels capture Gitarama, former government seat.
- 14 Hutu militiamen abduct 40 Tutsi children in government-held area of Kigali and are believed to kill them.
- 16 France says world must end inaction over Rwanda and is prepared to intervene with European and African allies.
All members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee send a letter to President Clinton urging him to respond to the genocide in Rwanda.
- 18 RPF tells other countries not to join the French.
- 21 French advance party arrives in Goma, Zaire.
- 22 42 French-speaking African peacekeepers in U.N. force leave Kigali after RPF objects to their presence. U.N. SC approves French intervention (with five abstentions) under Resolution 929, which authorizes member states to conduct a multinational operation until UNAMIR is strengthened. French and Senegalese forces begin Operation Turquoise.
- 23 First French troops reach Goma and enter western Rwanda.
- 24 Tutsi refugees in Nyarushishi camp near Cyangugu welcome French troops, and Hutu militiamen dismantle roadblocks.
- 28 French troops evacuate 35 nuns to Goma, Zaire.
- July 2 Boutros-Ghali backs French proposal for designated safe area in southwest Rwanda, and French troops are deployed.
- 3 French troops evacuate 600 orphans from Butare; clash with rebels for first time.
- 4 Rebels capture Kigali and seize Butare; French troops in town of Gikongoro receive order to halt rebel advance.
- 13 UNHCR Goma says as many as 100,000 have crossed the only frontier still controlled by Rwanda's government.
- 14 France calls for an emergency meeting of the U.N. SC and warns of another humanitarian catastrophe; SC demands an immediate cease-fire in Rwanda and calls on the international community to supply relief for refugees fleeing rebel troops.
Twagiramungu, named by the RPF to head a national unity government, arrives in Kigali on a U.N. plane from Uganda.
- 15 The United States (U.S.) closes the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, orders diplomats to leave the country in five days, and initiates removal of Rwandan representatives from the U.N. SC.
A senior French official states that the rump government leaders have requested asylum from France. Paris issues a statement saying they would not be welcome in the French zone.
Aid agencies estimate upwards of 200,000 people crossed into Zaire from Rwanda.
- 17 Rebel mortar shells begin exploding in Gisenyi, in northwestern Rwanda, where refugees have jammed the border crossing hoping to escape the civil war. The number of refugees crowding Goma is estimated at nearly a million.
A U.N. official states that, by continuing to fight when they have control of the country, the RPF is giving credence to charges that they want to force all Hutus out of the country.

- France condemns mortar shellings around Zaire's Goma airport, which resulted in the deaths – directly or as a result of trampling – of about 60 people, most of them children. U.N. officers say there is little doubt the shelling came from RPF positions. The shelling caused the U.N. to suspend its humanitarian aid flights to Goma.
- 19 Several hundred thousand Rwandan refugees reach Bukavu.
- 21 The U.N. special human rights investigator for Rwanda calls on countries giving refuge to people responsible for mass killings there to ensure that they do not escape justice. Rene Degni-Segui also expresses concern at reports received of summary executions and pillage in Kigali by "certain forces" of the RPF.
- 23 UNHCR wants to encourage and assist the voluntary repatriation, on foot, of more than one million Hutu refugees. This decision – a shift for UNHCR, which had declared Rwanda was still a dangerous place – came after receiving assurances from Rwandan rebel leaders that those returning would be safe.
- Refugees start walking North, as aid officials and the Zairian government urge refugees to leave Goma town and join camps.
- France rules out leaving its troops in a French-declared safe area in southwestern Rwanda beyond the expiry of its U.N. mandate on 22 August, despite pressure from Washington and UNHCR.
- 25 U.S. troops begin a massive operation to deliver aid to Zaire for Rwandan refugees, a move that aid groups and U.N. officials hope will not deter people from returning home.
- The U.S. ambassador to Rwanda returns to Kigali and President Bizimungu says he will formally ask the envoy to move the operation to Kigali to act as a magnet to attract refugees home.
- Pasteur Bizimungu arrives in Mauritius for talks with Mobutu Sese Seko on speeding up the return of refugees from Zaire and disarming ex-FAR soldiers.
- 27 UNHCR criticizes the militia members and others in the camps for spreading rumors against repatriation. The U.N. refugee agency itself is also criticized for not yet having used radio, sound trucks, or any other means to tell refugees that it is safe to leave.
- Defense Secretary Perry says U.S. troops in Africa could reach 4,000.
- Jerome Bicomupaka, foreign minister in the exiled government, announces that the Hutus are ready to launch a new guerrilla war if the RPF continues to refuse to negotiate.
- 29 Senior administration officials correct what they say were premature statements by the U.S. military that up to 2,000 American troops may be deployed in Rwanda as part of a repatriation operation. White House officials say there has been confusion among U.S. military officers about plans to send troops to Rwanda. Secretary Perry, who plans to go to the region over the weekend, says no final decision has been made on whether to send troops to Rwanda, in addition to the 4,000 U.S. servicemen and women expected to take part in the humanitarian operation outside Rwanda. The U.S. government stresses that its mission is strictly humanitarian, and has nothing to do with a U.N. commitment to send up to 5,500 soldiers into the country to replace French troops.
- 31 The first 60 U.S. troops arrive in Kigali.
- August 1 France's Prime Minister and the U.S. Defense Secretary arrive on separate visits in Zaire to assess how to increase the U.S. role in the Rwandan relief operation ahead of a French army pullout from Rwanda. Balladur declares French may stay longer in Rwanda. About 440 Canadian troops and 550 British soldiers are flying in over the next days, as Westerners take over a mission carried out until now mainly by ill-equipped U.N. African troops. Perry says the opening of Kigali airport would allow the doubling of relief supplies going into Goma.
- The first main body of U.S. troops arrives in Kigali's airport.
- Mrs. Ogata declares she would tell Rwanda's 2.2 million refugees to go home only when the new government shows it can deliver on its promises to protect them.

- 2 Defense Secretary Perry states on his return from Africa that he is more hopeful about an international effort to save millions of Rwandan refugees and that only 3,000 U.S. troops will be needed to support the humanitarian operation. The U.S. and many relief agencies reiterate that the quick return of the million refugees from Zaire is critical and suggest that an organized start should get under way immediately before the onset of heavy seasonal rains the following month, when conditions in the camps will deteriorate further. However, Mrs. Ogata, who was expected to endorse quick repatriation during her visit, expresses caution.
- 3 Rwandan Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu says that his government would not object to French troops staying on in the safe zone set up in southwest Rwanda if they joined a U.N. peacekeeping force.
Rwandan Premier declares he wants to try 30,000 persons for genocide.
During a heated meeting with U.N. officials, about 20 provincial leaders refuse to cross the border in cars with U.N. banners and come back to Zaire in the same cars to report on conditions to their constituents.
- 4 U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry states U.S. troops would withdraw rather than get involved in fighting if widespread killing returned to Rwanda. Perry tells the House Defense Appropriations Committee he does not expect U.S. forces to be in Rwanda and refugees camps for a long time.
- 6 The U.N. hopes to have 3,000 soldiers in Rwanda within the next month. Mr. Iqbal Riza blames governments' reluctance to send soldiers to the war-ravaged country for the delay in deploying the 5,500 troops approved by the U.N. SC in May.
- 7 U.S. military chief visits U.S. troops in Rwanda and Zaire.
- 8 UNHCR estimates that 100,000 refugees have left the camps in Zaire and begun the trek home. UNHCR officials say they have no evidence of attacks on returnees and continue to encourage a return and relief distribution en route. For the first time, a fleet of 42 trucks is deployed on the roads of Rwanda to assist those who need transportation home. A UNHCR-sponsored radio station established for refugees plans to broadcast testimonials from Hutus who returned.
- 10 The SC urges the rapid return home of Rwandan refugees and strongly condemns intimidation by those trying to prevent them.
- 11 According to a senior French army officer, the rebels who took power the previous month in Kigali and the defeated Rwandan army are holding talks.
- 13 UNHCR warns that refugee camps risk becoming a new Gaza strip.
- 15 The Zairian Prime Minister asks the Secretary-General for a contribution to transfer 20,000 ex-FAR from the border and temporarily to install former Rwandan authorities in Kinshasa.
- 16 Burundi's interim leader, Sylvestre Ntibantuganya, and Rwanda's new president, Pasteur Bizimungu, meet Presidents Ali Hassan Mwinyi of Tanzania, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, and Frederick Chiluba of Zambia in Arusha to discuss ways of restoring peace and coaxing refugees back home.
- 19 Rwanda's Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu declares that any closure of the border with Zaire would be unhelpful and not stop people fleeing the Zone Turquoise.
- 21 300,000 U.N. leaflets urging Rwandans to go home are dropped in the refugee camps.
- 22 Hutus panic as French troops leave Rwanda.
- 23 According to Monsignor Joseph Duval, Bishop of Rouen and president of the French Episcopal Conference, although it is too early to tell the refugees to go home, they must prepare themselves to return.
- 24 Refugees leave Bukavu for new camp site.
Attackers prevent UNHCR-sponsored repatriation of Rwandan park rangers.
- 26 U.S. troops pull out.
- 27 President Pasteur Bizimungu, Paul Kagame, Faustin Twagiramungu, and other government officials visit Butare city and surrounding areas to reassure people they are committed to peace but also pledge punishment for those who have caused trouble.
- 29 Troops of the RPF shoot and kill a refugee returning home in a U.N. convoy as he tries to escape from them.

- 31 Talks between Zairian and Rwandan ministers are postponed for a third day after teams of experts failed to agree on key issues. Rwandan delegates say they are not getting the answers they want from the Zairians on the return of Rwandan property brought into Zaire and on the formation of a joint commission.
- Sept. 1 Speaking at the start of a ministerial meeting with the Rwandan government, Zaire Justice Minister Kamanda Wa Kamanda declares Zaire wants the 1.2 million Rwandan refugees on its territory to leave by the end of the month and promises to stop Hutu militiamen terrorizing refugees into staying, and to disarm and encamp members of the former Rwandan government army. UNHCR, Zaire, and Rwanda agree that repatriation should be voluntary. UNHCR opens Kahindo camp to decongest Kibumba and 50,000 Rwandans are transferred there.
- 8 Zaire's Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo announces that there is no question of returning property taken out of Rwanda by fleeing ministers until the government in Kigali persuades Hutu refugees to go back home. He expresses dissatisfaction at not having received any reply to the three letters he has sent the U.N. Secretary-General asking for help in providing former Rwandan soldiers with civilian clothing, moving them to two camps selected more than 150 km (100 miles) from the border, and finding a country of asylum for the government-in-exile. Kengo adds it now looks likely that France, which still has men and equipment stationed in Goma, would provide planes to transport the Rwandan soldiers.
- 9 Troops of Rwanda's ousted Hutu government are preparing to go back to war, according to the U.N. special envoy to the country, Shaharyar Khan.
- 12 Shaharyar Khan leaves Kigali for Kinshasa to meet President Mobutu Sese Seko to discuss Rwandan refugees. Tousignant mentions infiltrations from Zaire, but not enough to speak of organized operations.
- 16 The World Bank says it cannot release up to \$250 million in loans to revive Rwanda's economy until its arrears are paid. Once the arrears are paid, the World Bank would be ready in two to three months to transfer \$100 million a year in loans.
- 18 Shaharyar Khan confirms that the decision on who should be moved to camps farther away from the border would be made by a joint task force consisting of the U.N., its aid agencies, and Zaire, which would meet in the next few days. The joint task force would report to the U.N. within two weeks on sites for the new camps, the cost of the operation, and on numbers to be moved.
- 25 UNHCR states it has good evidence of revenge killings by Tutsis of Hutus in different areas of Rwanda. UNHCR confirms it cannot in good conscience assist in repatriation to any location where UNAMIR does not have a good presence.
- 28 20 U.N. experts are in Rwanda investigating reports by the UNHCR that troops of the new government systematically killed Hutus, especially in the south east.
- 30 A military spokesman of UNAMIR criticizes people who allegedly try to discredit what the Rwandan government and the U.N. are trying to achieve.
- As the last French contingent leaves Goma, aid agencies pull all international staff out of Katala camp, after bandits among the refugees took control of the camp and threatened the workers. The UNHCR tells the refugees they would be given 48 hours to think about their position, during which time no food would be delivered to the camp. UNHCR continues to press for some kind of international peacekeeping force in Goma's volatile camps, and President Mobutu Sese Seko is rumored to have made a formal request to the UN for such a force to be deployed.
- Under command of Brig. Gen. Henry Anyidoho, the U.N. begins assessing the risks of moving up to 30,000 defeated Rwandan soldiers from the camps; but UN special representative to Rwanda acknowledges in a report to Boutros Boutros-Ghali that attempts to move the troops could spark violence, and the U.N. might have to invoke Chapter 7 of its charter, which allows the use of force. Mr. S. Khan suggests U.N. troops already in Rwanda could be used for the job, as the Zairian government has admitted that its own army would not be able to carry out the task.
- Oct. 1 The main Japanese military contingent arrives in Goma, but Japanese officials say they may withdraw their troops if security in the area deteriorates.
- 3 Zaire's President buries the remains of former Rwandan leader Juvenal Habyarimana in his own

northern Zairian home town of Gbadolite until they can be returned to Rwanda.

The last 478 U.S. troops depart central Africa.

S. Ogata appeals to the international community for armed elements inside Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania who threaten refugees and aid workers to be withdrawn immediately.

Rwandan Prime Minister rejects claims in a UNHCR internal report that his government has organized systematic massacres of returning Hutus.

- 4 Army officers and officials of Rwanda's ousted government say they are ready to negotiate power-sharing with its new rulers.
- 5 UNHCR declares that international aid workers will return to Katala refugee camp in eastern Zaire if camp leaders agree to demands to improve security.
- 7 Rwandan President warns that his country would create its own war crimes tribunal if the U.N. does not move quickly on its proposal to try suspected murderers.
- 8 Zaire is to bar Rwandan refugee children from enrolling in schools in northern and eastern Zaire.
- 13 Zairian Premier Kengo wa Dondo declares that his country is prepared to extradite those responsible for the genocide in Rwanda who have fled to refugee camps in Zaire.
- 21 The U.N. accuses Rwanda's new government of planning to force 800,000 Hutus out of camps in the southwest.

The European Commission awards Rwanda 5 million Ecus to restore water and electricity to its capital and to encourage its refugee population home.

- 24 The prime ministers of Zaire and Rwanda call for the creation of two buffer zones under U.N. protection where Hutu refugees could re-adapt to life in Rwanda and lose their fears of returning. However, this is watered down to setting up reception centers: after initially appearing to support the idea, the Rwandans objected. Both countries also call on the international community to press on with plans to resettle former ministers and an estimated 30,000 ex-FAR.

A Tri-partite agreement on the repatriation of refugees is signed between Zaire, Rwanda, and UNHCR.

- Nov.
- 1 According to aid workers, hundreds of villagers have been killed in ethnic clashes in the hills of Masisi, triggered by the influx of Hutu refugees.
 - 2 26 children are among 36 villagers killed by attackers who crossed from Zaire into northwestern Rwanda.
 - 4 Relief agencies warn that they might pull out of Rwandan refugee camps in eastern Zaire unless international action is taken to break the rule of terror by Hutu leaders and their militia forces.
 - 6 In a statement, the Rwandan government accuses certain SC members of trying to torpedo the tribunal because they fear seeing their own leaders implicated.
The whole of eastern Zaire is ready to blow, a UNHCR official in Goma warns.
 - 8 Shaharyar Khan announces that up to 4,800 U.N. troops may be sent to keep peace in Rwandan refugee camps.
Mobutu Sese Seko criticizes France for keeping Rwanda away from a Franco-African summit.
 - 9 The SC establishes an international tribunal to prosecute the killers of more than a half-million people in Rwanda. The government in Kigali votes against the resolution.
 - 14 Rwanda's PM says the U.N. and aid agencies should scale down or cut off aid, to force Rwandan refugees to return home.
 - 15 MSF-France calls off its work in Rwandan refugee camps inside Zaire and warns that killers linked to the ousted Rwandan government have begun a reign of terror.
 - 17 The Rwandan army and paramilitary police will be given 6 seats in the national assembly, and the party of the late president Juvenal Habyarimana will not be represented. Parties in the current Tutsi-led coalition government, established in July, will share out 13 seats previously allocated to Habyarimana's National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MNRD).
 - 18 In a statement after its weekly session, the Zaire cabinet expresses its outrage at the existence in

eastern Zaire of a shadow government formed by Hutu ministers who fled when the Rwanda Patriotic Front won the civil war in July.

A report by Boutros-Ghali to the SC proposes a gradual deployment of up to 5,000 U.N. troops in eastern Zaire refugee camps.

- 25 Corruption and mismanagement mean Zaire's economy has shrunk to its 1958, pre-independence level, but the World Bank declares there will be no new cash until the government can prove it is serious about reform.
Zairian troops open fire in Katale refugee camp, killing at least 18 people and wounding 70 on 24 and 25 November, after a soldier is killed in a quarrel over a refugee car.
Rwanda installs an interim Parliament.
 - 27 Zaire expels 37 Hutus from Goma refugee camp, handing them over to RPF troops at the border in what an official says is a crackdown on crime.
 - 29 The presidents of Rwanda, Zaire, and Burundi call for internationally supervised security zones to be set up in Rwanda to encourage the return of refugees.
Forced out of scattered settlements, thousands of refugees move toward official camps, where the Zairian authorities have vowed to keep them.
 - 30 The SC renews the mandate of U.N. forces in Rwanda for six months but takes no action in establishing any outside security forces for refugee camps in Zaire. Following Boutros-Ghali's recent recommendation in his report of 18 November to deploy 3,000-5,000 additional peacekeepers to provide security in the camps, the SC requests the Secretary-General to provide additional information on objectives of peace-keeping troops, and requests the Secretary-General to consult potential troop contributors as well as investigate hiring private security guards to train and monitor Zairian authorities patrolling the camps. The SC also expresses concern over the potential use of local security forces without international involvement. U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright states she believes the current UNAMIR could carry out its responsibilities "within existing resources for the moment."
- Dec.
- 1 Thousands of Rwandans flee into Zaire from the southwest of the country, after Rwandan government forces empty at least one camp of displaced persons.
 - 2 Zairian army's move to regroup Rwandan refugees into U.N.-designated camps has uprooted some 60,000 people in eastern Zaire into cramped camps.
 - 5 Paul Kagame warns that government troops would launch "hot pursuit" operations into Zaire if attacked by forces of the ousted regime in exile there.
 - 6 Rwandan PM asks governments in neighboring African countries to push refugees to return home and urges aid groups to stop feeding former government troops massed in camps.
 - 11 to 19 DPKO's mission to review camp situation at the Secretary-General's request and following the SC statement of November 11.
 - 13 In Washington, Paul Kagame asks his U.S. counterpart, William Perry, for his support in taking action to remove members of the Hutu militia from refugee camps in Zaire.
 - 14 ICRC chief Cornelio Sommaruga declares that there is no prospect of a genuine settlement of the tragedy left by Rwanda's civil war and massacres.
 - 15 At the SC, Paul Kagame says that U.N. and other international aid groups should cut off supplies to militant Hutus in Zaire camps, who should be separated from other refugees. Kagame later suggests to reporters that the U.N. Assistance Mission for Rwanda could be expanded by about 3,000 to monitor the camps and use force if necessary to restore order in the camps, although this was not mentioned to SC members by Kagame. The U.S. continues to oppose expanding the 5,600-member U.N. force and suggests private security guards for the refugee camps.
 - 18 The Rwandan government appears to have accepted U.N. pressure to delay its plans to close all camps for displaced persons in the southwest of the country by the end of December. This follows a large-scale operation by the U.N. to search two of the camps to round up extremists there.
 - 19 UNHCR states it would resume helping Rwandan refugees return home from camps in

neighboring Tanzania, Zaire, and Burundi. UNHCR stopped helping repatriations in September when a UNHCR mission reported reprisal killings by members of the army of Hutus who had returned from the camps.

- 20 Some 800 Rwandan refugees escorted back home by UNHCR.
- 21 UNHCR denounces a decision by a French medical aid agency to pull out of Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania.
- 23 The presidents of Zaire and Tanzania call for more than one million Rwandan refugees to be repatriated and for a regional summit to meet on Rwanda's crisis. The presidents say safe zones should be established in Rwanda to receive returnees.
- 31 Shaharyar Khan announces that for lack of funds and troops the SC would probably abandon plans to post 5,000 peacekeeping troops to the area and concentrate instead on supporting Zairian security efforts, with U.N. advisers if necessary.

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- Jan.
- 2 The German air force ends supply flights for Rwandan refugees after six months.
 - 3 The Rwandan government issues new banknotes and declares the previous ones no longer legal tender, in a secretly prepared bid to deprive exiled former leaders of their wealth. The aim is to render worthless the huge sums of money taken abroad, mainly to Zaire, by former government officials and soldiers. The decision is announced only one day before the move is taken. The government states that the exchange of currency would begin the same day and end the following day in the morning.
 - 6 East and Central African ministers meet to prepare a seven-nation summit in Kenya on the regional crisis.
 - 7 Six African presidents meet to debate the refugee and security crises created by the genocide in Rwanda, but Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko stays away, reducing hopes of real progress at the summit. Tanzanian minister says the new government in Rwanda must come to terms with the 40,000 former government soldiers and militiamen now in camps in eastern Zaire and press the new regime in Kigali to introduce members of the ousted National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND) into its administration.
 - 9 Rwanda's army confirms its troops attacked a camp in the southwest where 12 homeless people were killed and more than 30 were wounded.
 - 10 The Rwandan government threatens to expel more than 60 international aid agencies that flocked to the country after last year's war and refugee crisis. A senior government official says they had failed to register with the government by a deadline set for 9 January.
 - 12 Soldiers of Rwanda's former government army stage their first big cross-border attack from Zaire the previous day, a foray that UN peacekeepers fear could signal the start of an insurgency. A UN military spokesman states the group of about 50 Hutu troops was driven back into Zaire after a two-hour gunbattle with government forces.
 - 15 According to UNHCR, nearly 200,000 Rwandan refugees who fled to the Zairian border town of Goma in July and August last year have since returned home.
 - 17 UNHCR Special Envoy Carrol Faubert declares that camps in Tanzania and Zaire are to be moved more than 30 miles from Rwanda's borders.
 - 19 Major Western donor countries have pledged up to \$600 million to fund Rwanda's recovery plan in 1995-96, Faustin Twagiramungu says.
 - 20 U.N. officials warn that two large volcanoes are expected to erupt the following month near Goma, threatening 800,000 Rwandan refugees.
Mrs. Ogata estimates that in 1995 nearly one million refugees and displaced persons will return, referring to those abroad as well as some of the 340,000 displaced in Rwanda.
Rwanda's PM calls on Zaire to disarm former leaders of the fallen Hutu government and its army, as well as their loyal militia, whom he accuses of intimidating "innocent refugees" from returning home; but Twagiramungu concedes his country cannot absorb a mass influx of returning refugees in the near future. The economy shrank by 50 per cent in 1994.

- Zaire, cold-shouldered by its erstwhile backers in the West, signs a new deal with China focusing on private sector cooperation.
- 25 The U.N. drops a plan to send 5,000 peacekeepers to police Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire because member states would not contribute troops, U.N. Secretary-General declares. Even securing civilian police personnel to train local security forces or even military observers did not attract any potential donors. The U.N. chief further announces that the task has instead been passed on to UNHCR.
- 26 Rwanda's government will name 200 officials and army officers of the former regime who it says planned the genocide. Twagiramungu adds that his government would also grant amnesty to ordinary Hutus who took part in the killings between April and July last year: "Are we really going to give an amnesty to some people? Yes," he confirms.
- 27 UNHCR signs an Aide Memoire with Zaire under which 1,500 elite Zairian troops will police Rwandan refugee camps.
- 30 UNHCR announces it has registered some 726,000 Rwandan refugees in camps in eastern Zaire in the first phase of an exercise to establish an accurate head count.
- Feb. 6 Rwanda's U.N. envoy expresses dismay that the international community, after failing to prevent or halt genocide in his country, is unable to deal with some of the killers now living in refugee camps in neighboring countries. He notes that the Secretary-General, in a recent report, said only one country out of the 60 he asked had been willing to provide troops to ensure the safety of hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees, particularly in camps in Zaire.
- 7 The Belgian branch of the medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) declares it will withdraw from a Rwandan refugee camp in eastern Zaire because of massive fraud and threats against staff.
- 9 Assistant Secretary of State Phyllis Oakley acknowledges a difficult moral dilemma faced by the international community in aiding Rwandan refugee groups that include people who committed genocide, but adds it would take a comprehensive effort to solve this and other problems faced by Rwandan refugees and hopes a conference set for Feb. 15-17 in Bujumbura, Burundi, will take concrete steps toward this end.
- 10 The SC condemns former Rwandan leaders and armed groups for intimidating Rwandan refugees living in camps in neighboring countries, especially Zaire, and welcomes a recent agreement under which 1,500 Zairian troops will help maintain order.
- 12 Mrs. Ogata welcomes the first Zairian troops hired to bring order to Rwandan refugee camps where former militia and government soldiers rule through violence and intimidation.
- 13 Zaire has drawn up plans to evacuate 400,000 Zairians and Rwandan refugees from the Goma region if a simmering volcano erupts as predicted towards the end of the month.
- 15 In a letter read by his special envoy to Burundi, the U.N. chief tells the opening session of a three-day refugee conference, organized by OAU and UNHCR, it has to search for stability and tackle reasons for ethnic strife that has bedeviled Rwanda and Burundi since independence.
- 22 The SC approves Arusha, Tanzania, as the seat of an international tribunal set up in November 1994 to try people accused of genocide and other crimes in Rwanda.
- 25 The chief of staff of Rwanda's ousted government army declares that talks with the new Tutsi-approved government are the only way to prevent a repeat of last year's genocide in the central African state. Augustine Bizimungu adds that an international tribunal to try people accused of genocide and other crimes in Rwanda should target both parties to the conflict: the new government army and his ousted administration.
- 27 The SC adopts a unanimous resolution urging all states to arrest people suspected of involvement in genocide or other atrocities in Rwanda and in refugee camps for Rwandans in neighboring countries. The U.S.-sponsored resolution calls for the suspects to be detained pending prosecution by an international tribunal, which the council set up in November 1994, or by the appropriate national authorities.
- Mar. 2 Zaire's Foreign Minister Lunda Bululu declares that Zairian soldiers have taken control of Rwandan refugee camps and disarmed former soldiers staying in them.
- 5 Gunmen kill Pierre-Claver Rwangabo, prefect of the main southern town of Butare and a key

Hutu politician.

- 15 Zaire's first multi-party elections cannot be held on schedule this year due to the confusion and insecurity caused by one million Rwandan refugees, a senior government official said.
- 16 The pace of return from camps near Goma gathered speed early this year, reaching 1,000 a day. Confidence was growing. A sudden increase of armed raids into Rwanda by groups of refugees changed all that. The new authorities in Rwanda and their soldiers in the renamed Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) got tougher, and now only about 300 refugees a day are going home from the Goma sector.
- 17 A shortage of food for refugees has increased tensions in and around the Central African country, stirring fear of renewed violence.
- 27 Oxfam states that planes have been landing in Zaire over the past two months to supply arms to supporters of the former government in Rwanda.
- 31 Thousands of Rwandan refugees face death in Zaire from hunger and cholera, the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) said in a statement.
- Apr. 5 The tribunal set up by the U.N. to investigate genocide in Rwanda says that it has identified about 400 suspects and aims to issue its first indictments later this year.
- 8 Zaire state media announce that the authorities have decided to act to prevent the defeated Rwandan army from training on its territory for renewed civil war.
- 10 The U.N. World Food Program (WFP) fears that one million Rwandan refugees in Zaire face food shortages and possible malnutrition because Rwanda is holding up its shipments at two border crossings. The WFP appeals to donor countries for \$ 1.5 million to improve roads in Uganda, Zaire, and Tanzania, so that it can use alternate routes.
- 11 Rwanda is on the verge of stopping all U.N. relief supplies passing through its frontier to refugee camps in Zaire because they harbor hardline Hutu rebels.
- 13 Gunmen slaughter 31 Rwandan refugees near Rwanda's eastern border in the first such attack on a camp in Zaire since the exodus a year before.
- 15 Zaire denies that armed groups of Hutu hardliners from Rwanda and Burundi are training on its soil to launch invasions to seize power in their homelands.
- 16 An exiled former president of Rwanda declares that he and other prominent Rwandan refugees accused of mass murders are willing to be examined by an international human rights tribunal. "We are ready to give our contribution to find the truth," Theodore Sindikubwabo, who was president of Rwanda for a brief period in 1994, told the press.
- 18 Zaire completes the deployment of 1,500 soldiers to provide security for Rwandan refugees in camps in eastern Zaire.
- 19 Francois Nzabahimana, president of the newly born (3 April) Rally for the Return and Democracy in Rwanda (RDR) indicates it would pursue talks with Rwanda's government and take military action as a last option. The RDR has the full backing of the ex-FAR.
- 22 The RPA opens fire on refugees and a stampede ensues in Kibeho – a camp for displaced persons that the government has been trying to close for several months.
- 24 In Kigali, a U.N. official indicates that U.N. troops have found more than 8,000 people dead and 650 wounded in Kibeho camp in southwest Rwanda after a search of the site.
- 26 S. Khan tells reporters that after a careful count, U.N. came out with the figure of 2,000 people dead in Kibeho. Khan had given a figure of 5,000, hours after Australian army medical staff said they had counted 4,050 dead and 600 wounded, but the RPA had prevented them from continuing their count.
RPA soldiers cut off food and water supplies to the last Hutus besieged in Kibeho camp.
- 28 The Rwandan government insists only 300 people were killed in Kibeho camp by troops and stampedes, a figure strongly contested by Australian and Zambian U.N. peacekeepers who were in Kibeho throughout the shootings.
- 29 Zaire blames the Rwandan government for the crisis, which leads Zaire's parliament to call for the repatriation of the Rwandan refugees.
- 30 Villagers beat to death 14 Hutus who had returned home to southern Rwanda.
- May 5 UNHCR Kinshasa is confident Zaire will not heed the advice of its parliament to expel more

- than a million Rwandan refugees.
- 8 An international inquiry begins work in Rwanda to determine how many Hutu refugees died when the army's attempt to close Kibeho camp by force ended in slaughter.
 - 9 The stand-off in Kibeho ends and several hundred Hutus give up and leave for their villages.
 - 16 The RDR calls for talks with the Kigali government and seeks help from the international community to set up a meeting.
 - 18 Rwanda's army used excessive force against Hutu refugees in Kibeho camp last month but the killings were not planned beforehand, an independent inquiry into the Kibeho massacre concludes. The commission cannot say how many died at Kibeho camp, but said it was many more than the official government figure of 338.
 - 22 Rwanda accuses the U.N. of helping suspected mass murderers flee the country after two prominent fugitives are arrested on the Zairian frontier.
 - 26 Rwanda's prison population had reached 33,000 by early May, according to Justice Minister Alphonse Nkubito. Human rights monitors think the true figure was closer to 40,000 by then.
 - 30 Rwanda appeals to the international community to halt arms shipments and military training for rebel troops in eastern Zaire. Rwandan officials speak a day after the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch group accused France, Zaire, and, to a lesser extent, South Africa, China and Seychelles, of helping to re-arm Rwanda's former Hutu army.
 - 31 The South African cabinet orders a Defense Ministry investigation into reports that the state-owned arms procurement agency, Armscor, illegally sold arms to Rwandan militias.
- June
- 2 The U.S. wants military observers to monitor airports in Zaire following allegations of arms flows to Rwanda's Hutu extremists.
Rwanda's defense minister urges U.N. forces to leave Rwanda and focus their efforts on refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania.
 - 7 The Rwandan government proposes a U.N. force of 1,865 troops while the U.N. suggests a figure of 2,715.
 - 8 Rwanda will no longer distinguish between Hutus and Tutsis when it issues new identity cards, ending a practice that helped Hutu militiamen to select their victims in last year's genocide, according to government officials.
 - 9 SC extends UNAMIR to December 8, 1995 but decides to reduce the number of troops from 5,500 to 2,330 within three months and to 1,800 within four months and requests the Secretary-General to investigate possibility of deploying military observers to Zaire to prevent violation of arms embargo on Rwanda.
 - 10 Zaire declares that calm has returned to Masisi - its region in North Kivu - after paramilitary troops intervened to stop clashes between local people and Rwandans. At least 85 people died in the fighting in which the government says the immigrants were backed by armed Rwandan refugees.
 - 13 Zairian officials dismiss accusations by human rights group Amnesty International that weapons and ammunition are being flown into the country to arm Rwandan Hutu extremists.
An aide to Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu declares he quits because he cannot stand by while extremists in the government army terrorize innocent Hutus.
 - 14 The commander of Rwanda's ousted Hutu army denies importing arms and planning a new war in Rwanda.
 - 17 Rwanda's Foreign Minister, Anastase Gasana, wrapping up a West African tour in Ivory Coast, states he has won pledges of cooperation with efforts to put on trial more than 400 exiled Hutus suspected of genocide. Anastase Gasana adds that he has handed the leaders of the countries he visited lists containing the names of 446 suspects.
 - 20 to 28 A U.N. special envoy (Aldo Ajello) is sent to central Africa to investigate how illegal arms trafficking can be stopped.
 - 24 Zaire's prime minister, Kengo wa Dondo, tells several thousand cheering fellow countrymen that the Rwandan refugees have overstayed their welcome and must go home.
 - 25 The U.N. plans to send observers to Rwandan refugee camps in eastern Zaire to investigate reports of arms deliveries to Rwandan Hutu extremists.
 - 26 Zaire will decide shortly whether to let U.N. troops patrol Rwandan refugee camps as observers

to ensure Hutu hardliners do not distribute weapons and train fighters there.

- 28 Foreign aid is encouraging two million Rwandan refugees to remain in exile instead of going home, a European Union official declares.
- Parliament opts to extend Zaire's democratic transition by two years.
- July 1 The USAID Chief of Staff (Richard McCall) blasts U.N. and other agencies for "doing a miserable job" in Rwanda and says they should adapt or be replaced. The official singles out the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank for being slow and ineffective in responding to Rwanda's post-war needs.
- 2 An unlikely alliance of radicals and backers of President Mobutu ousts a Roman Catholic archbishop as speaker.
- 4 Rwanda marks the first anniversary Tuesday of the capture of its capital.
- 6 Rwanda's government and the U.N. meet to review the flow of aid to Rwanda. Since January, up to \$700 million was pledged by donors, only \$134 million of which has been disbursed. UNHCR resumes its voluntary repatriation program in eastern Zaire.
- 11 Rwanda urges the U.N. SC to lift an arms embargo imposed last year on its previous Government.
- 12 The RPA opens fire on soldiers of the ex-FAR. At least one person is killed and four injured in the Panzi camp, in the region of Bukavu.
- 14 Zaire declares its territory has been attacked three times in six months by Rwandan troops and it would push for the U.N. to keep an arms embargo on the Kigali government.
- 17 Following the introduction by the U.S. of a draft on 14 July, the SC unanimously adopts Resolution 1005 (1995) authorizing the supply to Rwanda of "appropriate amounts of explosives intended exclusively for use in established humanitarian demining programmes."
- 22 Rwanda denies it has sent troops to Zaire to kill Rwandan Hutu refugees there and accuses Kinshasa of sealing the border to prevent their being repatriated.
- 25 Zaire denies accusations from Rwanda that it is preventing refugees returning home and urges its neighbor to do more to ensure that the refugees could safely return.
- Aug. 14 Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni arrives in Rwanda for a three-day visit, his first since rebels seized power in Kigali in July 1994.
- 15 Zaire accuses Rwanda and Burundi of preparing to launch an attack on Hutu refugee camps in the east of the country.
- 16 Tanzania's foreign minister defends its decision to close its borders with Rwanda and Burundi to block refugees fleeing ethnic fighting.
- Ugandan President warns he would step in militarily to help Kigali as tension mounted on Zaire's eastern border amid fears that extremist Hutus are planning attacks to retake Rwanda.
- The U.N. SC unanimously approves a one-year suspension of the arms embargo on Rwanda: Resolution 1011/1995 lifts SC Res. 918 of 1994. The Rwandan government made the request in view of increased military activities by Hutu militias. Kigali, backed by non-aligned countries in the SC and by the U.S., had hoped to win an outright lifting of the embargo.
- 17 In a letter to Boutros-Ghali, the Zairian PM notes that the suspension of the arms embargo against Rwanda compels Zaire to call on the U.N. Secretary-General to evacuate Rwandan and Burundian refugees from the country.
- 20 Zaire announces its troops have begun expelling Rwandan refugees.
- 21 Zairian troops expel more than 2,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees. UNHCR estimates that 26,000 took to the hills to escape. Newspapers in Kinshasa unanimously welcome the expulsions.
- 22 Boutros-Ghali and the U.S. call on Zaire to halt the mass expulsions, but the Kinshasa government shrugs off international concern and confirms it wants the U.N. to take the refugees off its hands. Boutros Boutros-Ghali asks Sadako Ogata to proceed to Zaire in an attempt to defuse the crisis.
- More than 10,000 refugees have been sent across the Rwanda border and 60,000 others have fled their camps to avoid the same fate.
- Zaire states the U.N. has expressed understanding for the expulsion and announces that the forced repatriation would continue.

- 23 In a statement approved at a formal meeting, the SC calls on Zaire "to stand by its humanitarian obligations regarding refugees" and "to reconsider and halt its declared policy of forcibly repatriating refugees to Rwanda and Burundi." The statement notes the contribution of Zaire and other states in the region that have accepted refugees from Rwanda and Burundi. It encourages Rwanda to facilitate the safe return of its nationals as soon as possible. Nearly 15,000 refugees have been expelled since the 21st and more than 130,000 have fled to escape a forced return. The U.N. and the troika of Belgium, France, and the U.S., the Western countries most influential in Zaire, have called for a suspension of the expulsions. In 1991 the troika suspended all but emergency assistance to Zaire. Early in 1992 the European Community followed suit. By 1994 the Bretton Woods international lending institutions did the same in view of Zaire's failure to meet its interest repayments, let alone pay off its debts. In February the World Bank closed its office, and in June Zaire was suspended from the International Monetary Fund. UNHCR might consider taking over the Zairian operation if the refugees showed signs of genuine willingness to go. UNHCR Goma indicates refugee leaders have written to the UNHCR expressing their willingness to return to their countries under the auspices of the UNHCR.
- 24 The OAU appeals to Zaire to exercise tolerance and stop its forced repatriation of thousands of Rwandan refugees. The U.S. welcomes news that Zaire has halted its expulsion of Rwandan refugees and kept its troops out of camps as an agreement is being negotiated on voluntary repatriations by UNHCR. Some experts link this week's expulsion to tough talking during a recent visit to Rwanda by Museveni, who lashed out at "reactionary" leaders "whose time is drawing near." Rwanda hopes that Hutu refugees in Zaire will continue to return but cannot condone forced expulsions, according to Information Minister Jean-Baptiste Nkuliyingoma.
- 25 Thousands of Rwandan refugees return to their camps but only a few refugees repatriate. U.N. officials believe that Zaire's brief expulsions "broke the back" of the extremists who controlled the camps.
- 28 France and Rwanda clash during a SC meeting when Kigali's representative accuses Paris of pursuing its economic interests in central Africa to the detriment of the people. Rwandan Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu resigns.
- 29 Speaking in Geneva after talks with Sadako Ogata, Kengo wa Dondo declares that all refugees must be out of Zaire by the end of the year. Kengo regrets the resignations of Rwanda's Minister of the Interior and Minister of Justice, considered as moderates by Zaire, who followed the example of Twagiramungu. The resignation of the Rwandan Hutu Prime Minister confirms that the situation in Rwanda is too dangerous for the two million Hutu refugees to return voluntarily, RDR declares.
- 30 The Dutch arm of the international aid group Medecins sans Frontières intends to pull out of the Rwandan refugee camps because it believes they are being used as shelters by the perpetrators of genocide. France expresses its concern over the sudden departure of four Hutus from the Rwandan cabinet, which may discourage Rwandan refugees in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi from returning home. Zairian PM is criticized by the opposition as being too lenient in setting a year-end deadline for the U.N. to remove the Rwandan refugees from Zaire. Twagiramungu declares his intention to remain in Rwanda.
- Sept. 31 Rwanda's new PM, Pierre Claver Rwigema, is sworn in.
- 3 "By the end of 1995, we believe the refugees will be gone under a responsible forced repatriation," says a U.S. diplomat. A senior European diplomat agrees, describing UNHCR's efforts to persuade Zaire to stop expelling Rwandan refugees as "politically correct but strategically wrong. ... Zaire had just unlocked the door by deporting these people. It was such a window of opportunity," the diplomat says. "We must make a deal with Zaire and let its troops go into the camps. The UNHCR must pull out and wait for refugees on the Rwandan side of the border. In that way, it can remain pure," he adds.
- 4 UNHCR promises more efforts to convince hundreds of thousands of Rwandan and Burundian

- refugees to return home.
- 6 Rwanda's President appeals to the refugees to return home and promises his government would do its utmost to protect them from any reprisals. President Pasteur Bizimungu issues his appeal before Mrs. Sadako Ogata, on a visit to Rwanda and neighboring countries in an effort to push forward the flagging repatriation.

Zaire and the UNHCR agree on a plan to return the refugees on a voluntary basis.
 - 7 The SC votes unanimously to set up an international commission of inquiry to investigate reports of arms flows to the former Rwandan army.
 - 8 UNHCR Goma mentions that the agreement between Zaire and UNHCR includes a commitment by Zaire to arrest Hutu militants in the camps who led the genocide and now prevent the refugees from going home.

France asks Zaire PM, on a visit to Paris, to help arrange an early peace conference with the OAU and the U.N. to settle problems with neighbors Rwanda and Burundi.

A UNHCR deal with Zaire to send home more than a million Rwandan and Burundian refugees comes as a surprise to senior diplomats, and some see slim prospects of success.
 - 11 According to a U.N. diplomat, former Maj. Gen. Augustine Bizimungu was recently seen in Paris.

Rwandan Hutu militants in eastern Zaire have stepped up their attacks on western relief agencies as part of a campaign to torpedo the return home of the refugees, UNHCR says.
 - 12 At least 100 people are reported killed in a raid on Kanama in Rwanda near the border with Zaire. The raid deals a blow to U.N. efforts to repatriate Rwandan refugees.
 - 13 Zaire closes its Goma border crossing after the attack on Kanama.
 - 14 Zaire reopens its border with Rwanda but only for Hutu refugees crossing back into Rwanda.
 - 15 A Western ambassador declares that the international community no longer believes the Rwandan government really wants to stop killings by the army nor that it wants the refugees to come back.
 - 18 Authorities in Zaire impose a night-time curfew in Goma, following a series of attacks on the border with Rwanda.

The first French official to visit Rwanda since last year's genocidal civil war has unscheduled talks with Paul Kagame, which are described by French sources as very positive.
 - 19 According to UNHCR, Rwandan and Zairian ministers are to meet in Geneva the following week to discuss accelerating repatriation of refugees who must go by year-end.
 - 21 The OAU welcomes former U.S. president Jimmy Carter's plan to discuss with African leaders how to end conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi.
 - 22 About 50 to 60 percent of the refugees might return but there is still a remaining 40 to 50 percent who will probably never go back, according to Shaharyar Khan.
 - 26 In Geneva, Zaire's Foreign Minister, Rwanda's Rehabilitation and Social Integration Minister Patrick Mazimhaka, and Mrs. Ogata express commitment to ensure the return of the refugees in an organized and safe manner.
 - 27 Zairian Foreign Minister tells the General Assembly his country can no longer cope alone with the refugee burden and calls for international assistance.

Rwandan Rehabilitation Minister confirms Zaire will forcibly evict all Rwandan refugees who fail to leave its soil by December 31.
 - 29 Rwanda arrests and jails nine officers and soldiers in its first action on army killings of 110 Hutu villagers in Kanama.
 - 30 Zairian President pledges not to intervene militarily in Rwanda or Burundi despite the growing crisis in the region, former U.S. president Jimmy Carter tells journalists in Portugal.
- Oct. 2 Hutu rebels are getting more organized in cross-border raids into Rwanda to destabilize the government, U.N. officials say.

Tanzania forcibly expels 37 Rwandan Hutu refugees, increasing fears they might force tens of thousands home.

 - 5 Zaire welcomes a \$108 million humanitarian aid package from the European Development Fund as a gesture of confidence in Kengo Wa Dondo's economic reforms.

- 11 The UNHCR hopes to lure 600,000 refugees home with confidence-building cross-border visits and an information campaign to fight Hutu extremist propaganda.
Rwanda urges the U.N. to speed up the repatriation of Rwandan refugees before the year-end deadline set by Zaire; but talks between senior officials of the two countries and the UNHCR in the border town of Gisenyi are tense and fail to resolve the issue. "We need to ensure that refugees return in security and dignity," Rehabilitation Minister Patrick Mazimhaka declares. "The return of refugees should be accelerated in a very orderly manner."
- 13 Zaire, after two days of talks with Rwanda and UNHCR in Gisenyi, agrees to neutralize extremists scaring refugees from going home. A joint statement indicates the crisis would drag on if concrete deeds did not follow the talks, which ended on 12 October. Rwandan Rehabilitation Minister confirms that Rwanda is ready to handle 20,000 returnees daily by increasing the number of crossings and transit centers along its border.
- 18 The RDR accuses UNHCR of collusion with Zairian troops using strong-arm methods to force the Hutu refugees to return home.
- 19 WFP officials declare that Rwandan refugees in Zaire would face hunger back home because of lack of food if Zairian troops resume mass expulsions.
- 20 Accelerated repatriation is matched by a growing insurgency by Hutu militants in western Rwanda.
- 23 Mobutu Sese Seko takes the podium at the U.N. General Assembly.
- 29 Some 2,330 inmates have died from disease over the past 15 months in Rwanda's jails, where the government holds 57,000 genocide suspects with no sign of a date for their trials, Red Cross officials say.
- 30 Hutu extremists have struck 50 times inside Rwanda this month, claiming an equal number of lives, U.N. observers report.
- Nov. 1 At least two western relief agencies suspend operations in a Rwandan refugee camp and villages in Zaire after an American aid worker lost both legs in a mine blast, but her own agency confirms it will continue its work.
- 2 Rwanda opens an international conference on genocide with a pledge to do more to reconcile its rival Hutu and Tutsi tribes and an appeal for Western help.
- 9 Major-General Paul Kagame appeals to Zaire to curb Hutu guerrillas staging cross-border attacks, but rules out any Rwandan military incursion to deal with the threat.
- 15 Zaire accuses Rwanda of being behind a network responsible for a bombing campaign in the Kivu region.
- 19 Violence in the border area leads local Zairian officers to close the border.
- 21 Zaire tells Jimmy Carter it might relax an end of year deadline for a million Rwandan refugees to leave or be thrown out, diplomats said. Carter himself tells reporters the Dec. 31 deadline is not realistic and hints that Zairian authorities might scrap it if UNHCR speeds up voluntary repatriation, adding that instead the aim is to send home some 6,000 refugees per day starting from now.
Carter announces his plan to organize a summit in Cairo from November 27 to December 2 grouping the heads of state of Tanzania, Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, reportedly with the help of the U.N., the U.S., and the European Union.
- 22 The U.N. recommends that two international observers be based permanently in Zaire to monitor human rights abuses.
- 24 UNHCR begins an operation to register some 14,000 soldiers of Rwanda's former Hutu army and their families camping in Eastern Zaire, but many of the men refuse to accept UNHCR's condition for registration - that they first denounce their military status.
- 26 Shaharyar Khan expects the peacekeeping force to leave upon expiry of its mandate, barring last-minute negotiations with the government.
In Zaire, President Mobutu dismisses as impracticable a Zairian government deadline for Rwandan and Burundian refugees to leave his country by the end of the year. Mobutu declares that enforcing the deadline would harm Zaire's image abroad.
- 30 Carter says that no refugees would be forcibly returned to Rwanda, but UNHCR in Kigali

- doubts the Cairo agreement can be implemented without some forced repatriations.
- In Cairo, Rwandan President signs an accord with four other African states to speed up the return of the Rwandan refugees in Zaire and Tanzania and to get most of them home in three months.
- Rwanda also agrees to extend by three months the mandate of a 1,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force expiring on December 8.
- Rwanda stresses that Zaire must follow words with deeds to separate killers from the innocent in camps following this week's accord.
- Jimmy Carter says the accord, signed by leaders of Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zaire, envisages a repatriation at a rate rising to 10,000 refugees a day "within a short time."
- Dec. 2 Rwanda's President attacks France, accusing it of having had a hand in 1994's genocide and still wanting to control the central African country.
- Pasteur Bizimungu declares that the 1,800 U.N. peacekeepers in Rwanda should leave when their mandate expires December 8, but adds that he is prepared to discuss a modified role for the U.N. mission. "What came out of Cairo was Carter's wishful thinking. We never agreed to automatically extending the present mandate," says a senior government official. Bizimungu maintains that no timetable for repatriation of Rwandan refugees in Zaire was discussed in Cairo.
- 4 Armed men in uniform kill 20 Rwandans, mostly women and children, in a settlement in the southwestern Nyungwe forest.
- 5 Boutros Boutros-Ghali believes U.N. peacekeepers should leave Rwanda shortly because the Kigali government doesn't want them. In a report to the SC, the Secretary-General indicates the Rwandan government officially informed him that it would not extend the U.N. Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), when its mandate expires later during the week.
- Four people are killed and at least 31 wounded when their bus hit an anti-tank mine near a Rwandan refugee camp in eastern Zaire.
- 6 Kengo wa Dondo announces his government's willingness to extend its end-of-year deadline for Rwandan refugees to leave but adds that the risk of local people driving them out remains.
- UN special envoy Shaharyar Khan accuses Zaire and Tanzania of giving political support to "intimidators" in refugee camps.
- 7 Western aid workers prepare to leave Rwanda, a day after the government ordered 38 foreign relief agencies to leave and 18 others to suspend work pending further investigation.
- 9 A Rwandan official accuses the SC of lying and trying to interfere in its security by insisting on maintaining U.N. troops whose mandate expired on 8 December. In New York, the SC and Rwanda fail to agree on a new mandate for the peacekeeping force and postponed for four days a decision on its size and composition.
- 13 A Hutu colonel in Rwanda's government army who had fought in the bush alongside former Tutsi rebels has defected to Zaire, Zairian military sources indicate.
- Zairian forces send reinforcements into the Masisi region after fighting between Rwandan refugees and members of a local tribe.
- 23 Rwanda criticizes Boutros Boutros-Ghali for warning that the central African nation could descend into genocide again if the refugee crisis is not solved.
- 27 Six Zairian soldiers and an unknown number of civilians die in Goma after attackers killed a colonel, triggering a rampage by troops.
- 29 UNHCR indicates that Rwanda has requested Sadako Ogata to recall her special representative for central Africa's Great Lakes region. The letter, handed over by the Minister for Rehabilitation at a December 20 meeting with UNHCR, accuses Carrol Faubert of hindering the repatriation of the refugees from camps in Zaire, Burundi, and Tanzania by displaying in his actions and remarks a negative and sometime aggressive attitude to Kigali's policy in this respect.
- Zairian troops will begin acting in the next two months against Hutu extremists in the first Rwandan refugee camps scheduled for closure, a UNHCR official indicates.
- 30 Zaire has arrested Rwandan Hutus who were trying to prevent refugees from going home, a government official declares. Mr. Mutiri reaffirms Zaire's intention to close the refugee camps, which are creating an environmental and social disaster on its eastern borders with Rwanda.

Mutiri indicates that a new round of talks involving Zaire, Rwanda and UNHCR would take place in Kinshasa the following week to determine when and how to start closing the camps.

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- Jan. 1 Rwandan President reports about 1,000 infiltrators have been arrested by security forces.
- 2 The RDR accuses UNHCR of secretly supporting the forced repatriation of Rwandan refugees and being behind arrests in eastern Zaire.
Two people are killed and one wounded when a truck hits a landmine in eastern Zaire.
- 4 Zaire is ready to hand over to the new government military equipment and other property belonging to the Rwandan regime ousted in the 1994 civil war, Rwandan officials say.
They also indicate that President Mobutu told them in their talks that 33 extremist Rwandan Hutu refugees have been arrested by Zairian authorities.
- 5 UNHCR denies that it has agreed with Zaire to a voluntary repatriation plan for Rwandan refugees that would target specific groups to return home.
Zaire also denies it wants to start returning the refugees by force.
- 12 U.N. member states have displayed a "schizophrenic attitude" toward Rwanda, voicing support for an operation to monitor human rights there but failing to fund it, a U.N. spokeswoman says.
- 21 The Rwandan government must improve conditions for the tens of thousands of people crammed into overcrowded prisons on suspicion of involvement in genocide, Envoy Madeleine Albright declares in a meeting with President Pasteur Bizimungu and Vice-President Maj. Gen. Paul Kagame.
- 28 Two ministers from Rwanda and Burundi team up over the weekend to fly to a camp in Burundi and try to persuade thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees that they have nothing to fear from returning home.
- 30 The European Union declares it will send a special envoy to the Great Lakes region in Africa to step up its role in helping to restore peace in the region.
- Feb. 2 Rwanda condemns Zaire for blocking the work of a U.N. commission investigating reports of illicit arms supplies to ex-government soldiers.
- 5 to 11 Civilians are killed in northwestern Rwanda near Zaire's border after an attack by unidentified gunmen who blew up an electricity pylon.
- 8 UNHCR trusts Zairian forces will stay out of Rwandan refugee camps despite Rwandan officials' fears they would be forcibly emptied.
- 9 Zaire's defense and interior ministers leave for the Rwandan refugee areas amid suggestions that the Zairian government is poised to resume forcible repatriation.
Zaire tells UNHCR it plans to "administratively close" two camps – Kibumba and Kashusha – to revive flagging voluntary repatriation.
- 11 Suspected Hutu extremists have slipped out of refugee camps in Zaire and are setting up a stronghold in the interior, especially Masisi, killing and driving Tutsi residents away. The witnesses, members of Tutsi minority that settled in eastern Zaire decades ago, declare they have been forced to flee over the border into Rwanda to escape marauding Hutus.
- 12 Zairian officials are expected to meet Rwandan Hutu refugee leaders in Goma to ask them to prepare their people for a voluntary return to their homeland.
- 13 Zairian commandos and guards are deployed around Kibumba, and refugees leaders say they will ignore the Zairian campaign to pressure them to return home "voluntarily".
Zaire hands over to the Rwandan government rusting artillery pieces, troop carriers, arms, and ammunition seized from fleeing former Hutu government troops at the end of Rwanda's 1994 genocide. Rwandan officials and army officers are disappointed by the collection given to them by Zaire's defense minister in a ceremony in no man's land on the Rwandan-Zairian border.
- 14 Fewer Zairian troops are on the edges of Kibumba camp, a day after some 250 refugees moved in. "Even if 30 or 40 percent of the refugees came back, that would be a big success," Shaharyar Khan, U.N. special envoy to Rwanda, tells journalists; "the remainder won't come back anyway because they would face charges in Rwanda for the genocide".

- 15 Zairian troops arrest 15 Rwandan refugees alleged to be intimidating fellow refugees to stop them from returning home.
A summit to try to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda and Burundi will be held next month, possibly in Tunis, a spokeswoman for former U.S. President Jimmy Carter reports.
 - 16 Zairian troops surround a second refugee camp in eastern Zaire, stepping up pressure, as UNHCR warns the Rwandan refugees that this is their last chance for voluntary repatriation.
European Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Emma Bonino warns against ill-prepared attempts to repatriate Rwandan refugees forcibly from Zaire, saying it could result in violence and abuse of human rights.
 - 17 Zaire presses ahead with its program for closing refugee camps, and extends a ban on businesses to taxis and buses.
 - 20 Amnesty International warns that a forced return of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Rwanda and Burundi could be followed by mass arrests and executions without trial.
 - 21 Zaire outlaws the RDR, which is suspected of obstructing a massive drive to send home refugees from camps in Zaire.
 - 22 A UNHCR survey carried out recently in Goma's four largest camps lists nearly 82,000 enterprises, including 2,324 bars, 450 restaurants, 589 shops, 62 hairdressers, 51 pharmacies, 30 tailors, 25 butchers, five ironsmiths, four photographic studios, three cinemas, two hotels and one abattoir.
Zaire plans to start closing Rwandan refugee camps on its territory in early March, its interior minister announces, which confuses observers regarding the deployment of troops around camps.
Rwandan Prime Minister Pierre-Celestin Rwigema condemns Amnesty International's report.
 - 26 Zaire expels two U.S. nationals, accusing them of teaching the refugees passive resistance.
 - 27 A cabinet reshuffle in Zaire appoints a new interior minister who is a strong advocate of mass repatriation of the refugees.
- Mar.
- 1 An angry mob tries to lynch a Hutu refugee returning to the Rwandan capital Kigali on a UNHCR-sponsored visit, accusing him of taking part in the 1994 genocide.
The troops, who had surrounded Kibumba camp near the border town of Goma, leave because they have not been paid.
 - 3 Anastasa Gasana declares that refugees in Zaire are unlikely to return voluntarily and that force must be used because they are victims of intimidators.
The SC agrees to the withdrawal of the U.N. force in Rwanda, but votes unanimously to retain a U.N. office to help revive the country.
 - 8 UNAMIR ends its operation in Rwanda.
 - 9 In a communiqué, the RDR notes that the U.N. withdrawal "will dash any hope of a quick and voluntary repatriation of the refugees."
 - 14 Rwanda has modest hopes of progress at a summit next weekend in Tunis on conflict and the refugee crisis in the Great Lakes region of central Africa.
 - 16 Jimmy Carter's African summit on the twin crises in Rwanda and Burundi starts despite ruffled feathers in the U.N. and OAU and protests from refugees and rebels who are not invited.
 - 18 The Tunis meeting ends with solemn pledges.
 - 19 Jimmy Carter argues strongly that his summit made clear progress and predicts a sharp increase in the number of refugees willing to go home.
 - 22 A U.N. panel accuses the Zairian government of either helping or turning a blind eye to arms smuggling to former Rwandan army officers attempting to recapture power in Kigali. The six-member commission also indicates that Zaire has obstructed its work and given misleading and inadequate statements, claiming it had no knowledge of any misdeeds in Goma.
Rwandan government soldiers rape two Hutu women at a transit camp, after they returned from refugee camps.
 - 23 The military and government authorities of Gisenyi region order an overnight curfew and announce plans to start issuing new identity cards in border districts to try to catch infiltrators from Zaire.
 - 29 Rwandan PM states that the most important step towards national reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis is the return of all refugees.

- The Rwandan government also urges the SC to approve sanctions against countries that fail to cooperate with the commission investigating illegal arms supplies to the ex-Rwandan army.
- 31 UNHCR shows videos, accompanied by billboards and photographs, at information centers set up in camps in Zaire. The information campaign will run six days a week.
- Apr. 1 One person is killed and two badly wounded when a truck hits a land mine in southwest Rwanda near the border with Zaire.
- 3 A joint European-U.S. aid mission to central Africa calls for international pressure on the governments of Burundi and Rwanda to keep hardliners in check.
- 6 Paul Kagame is tired of endless talk of the presence of Hutu refugees outside his country and condemns Zaire for not doing enough to send them home. Zaire in return accuses Rwanda of bad faith on the second anniversary of the start of the genocide.
- 9 The USAID top official suggests that a deadline should be set for closing camps for refugees from Rwanda and Burundi.
- 11 34 people are killed in a village in western Rwanda in fighting between government troops and Hutu infiltrators.
- More than 40,000 Zairians of Rwandan origin have been expelled over the last two years from eastern Zaire to Rwanda, where nearly 1,000 arrived on 10 April.
- 22 Under a doctrine of "imposed return," refugees could be sent back "to less than optimal conditions in their home country" against their will, the UNHCR director of international protection says at a recent meeting with refugee analysts. Imposed return has become necessary because of pressure from host states and a lack of money to care for refugees.
- 23 The SC adopts Resolution 1053 (1996) on the International Commission of Inquiry and agrees that it should continue probing into weapons allegedly shipped to former Rwandan soldiers. Uganda's defense ministry condemns the attack on a military border post in the southwest by Zaire-based "bandits" from Rwanda's majority Hutu tribe, killing six people. Rwandan government troops are reportedly called in to help the Ugandan forces repel the attack.
- 26 President Mobutu hails as "courageous" France's decision to resume aid to his country, suspended five years before.
- 29 Rwandan government troops kill 19 men in a northwestern village after a prison escape in which an army guard is shot dead.
- May 2 Jimmy Carter requests but is denied a U.S. visa for President Mobutu Sese Seko for him to take part in a meeting of African leaders in Atlanta.
- 7 Around 65,000 people have fled ethnic violence in eastern Zaire in the past few weeks and thousands of them are still on the move.
- 11 Zairian soldiers arrest a well-known Rwandan Hutu singer who used to preach racial hatred.
- 12 Tension rises in Goma region after gunmen, with rocket-propelled grenades, ambush a western aid convoy near a refugee camp, killing 13 people and wounding 13 others.
- 16 About 10 people believed to be Rwandan Tutsis are killed, 30 are wounded, and 60 are listed as missing in an attack on a monastery in the Masisi area.
- 20 Armed men in uniform kill a Zairian aid worker in an attack near a refugee camp. The RDR accuses UNHCR of human rights violations stemming from arrests of refugees on charges of intimidation.
- 21 At least 37 prisoners are killed when infiltrators attack a jail near Rwanda's southwestern border with Burundi.
- 22 Unidentified attackers kill about 100 Tutsis in eastern Zaire and at least 3,000 more Tutsis are surrounded in two villages.
- 24 Rwanda and Burundi agree with neighboring countries to speed up the voluntary return home of the refugees. UNHCR says agreed measures include stepping up a mass information campaign to counter propaganda as well as the "separation of intimidators" in the refugee camps. The agency issues the statement after hosting a one-day meeting of regional officials to monitor implementation of an accord reached in Bujumbura in February 1995.
- 27 17 people, including six children, are killed over the weekend in Rwanda's southern regions.
- 28 Carter arrives in Brussels to brief European officials on his efforts to organize a U.N.-overseen conference on deep ethnic divisions in the central African countries of Rwanda and Burundi.

- More than 1,000 Tutsis pour into Rwanda, fleeing people they described as machete-wielding Hutu militiamen responsible for carving out a Hutu enclave in the Masisi area of eastern Zaire.
- June 2 Zairian soldiers close Goma airport after unidentified gunmen killed several of their comrades in an ambush near a refugee camp – the third ambush on the same road in a month.
- 4 Goma airport reopens.
- 6 Rwanda state radio announces that 16 people have been arrested for attempting to poison officials, soldiers, and survivors of the 1994 genocide.
- Mobutu Sese Seko agrees to the deployment of U.N. officials in eastern Zaire to monitor Possible violations of an embargo on arms exports to Rwandan extremists.
- 11 The Ugandan military deny its troops attacked a Zairian border town and killed 30 people.
- 14 Amnesty International urges Zairian authorities to protect tens of thousands of people forced from their homes by attacks throughout eastern Zaire.
- 19 The government of Rwanda seeks \$800 million in foreign aid in Geneva, but several donors are reluctant.
- 20 The world's errors in Cambodia 20 years ago, when aid to refugees in Thailand helped sustain the Khmer Rouge, must not be repeated in Rwanda, a senior USAID official declares. In a speech to a major donors' conference in Geneva, the official also accuses Zaire of "providing an unfettered corridor for arms shipments" to Hutu refugees in camps on its territory.
- Rwanda begins issuing new passports, thereby rendering worthless thousands of old passports held by refugees or other persons in exile.
- 21 Suspected Hutu militiamen kill at least 21 genocide survivors in an attack in western Rwanda on a lakeside village facing Zaire.
- 26 Suspected Hutu rebels kill eight members of a family of survivors of Rwanda's 1994 genocide and a local official in Rwanda.
- 27 Tutsis from Zaire who have fled to Rwanda to escape the violence in Masisi confirm the view of UNHCR, which recently declared the emergence of this "Hutuland" was "increasingly visible". Unidentified attackers killed 27 people near Gisenyi.
- 28 Unidentified gunmen kill eight people, including two Zairian army officers, in an attack on a Zairian base near Kibumba.
- 29 A Hutu rebel group offers a \$ 1,000 bounty for the head of every American killed in Rwanda, and \$ 1,500 for that of U.S. Ambassador to Kigali.
- July 4 Large scale trouble is brewing in eastern Zaire, where persistent insecurity and the unbridled activities of Hutu hardliners are undermining efforts to solve the Rwandan refugee crisis, UNHCR Goma says.
- 14 At least 62 people were killed the previous week when Rwanda's army carried out an operation against Hutu insurgents in the Gisenyi region, western aid workers report.
- 25 Rwanda's army killed well over 100 people in search operations for Hutu rebels during an eight-day period, U.N. human rights workers report.
- 27 Zaire steps up security checks on aid consignments after alleging it has found a consignment of weapons for the Rwandan government army in a cargo plane chartered by aid organizations.
- Aug. 9 Thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees in Burundi are going home in the largest movement since they fled during Rwanda's genocide.
- Rwanda suspends road and air links with Burundi, joining other East and central African states in sanctions against Burundi.
- 22 U.N. human rights monitors report a large rise in killings by "state agents" in Rwanda last month, as the number of prisoners and detainees reach nearly 80,000.
- The two heads of government (Kengo and Rwigema) decide to make operational the organized, massive, and unconditional repatriation of all Rwandan refugees," says a statement read by Kengo.
- 23 "Nobody [in Rwanda] is advocating an abrupt return of the refugees. The return should be orderly, decent and well-organized because not even powerful America can afford to take in one million people at once," Ndahiro [assistant to Kagame] reports.
- 24 Zaire expels 28 Rwandan Hutus from refugee camps and Rwandan authorities jail 17 of them,

- according to a spokesman for Rwanda's army states.
- 28 Rwanda Rehabilitation Minister hopes large numbers of the refugees in Zaire will not start returning home until after high-level talks in about three months time.
An armed Hutu movement, the Interior Resistance Front (FRI), claims to have killed more than 100 Rwandan government troops in several operations.
- Sept. 3 UNHCR census-takers in refugee camps in Zaire face a boycott by refugees.
9 The International Federation of the Red Cross suspends operations in the refugee camps after a landmine blast kills three staff.
15 Zairian troops battle Tutsis in eastern Zaire.
17 A U.S. congressman declares that stopping feeding Rwandan refugees is one way to make them go home and suggests a U.N. force to escort them across the border.
19 Zairian soldiers beat up two U.N. staff members after a television program reporting that UNHCR is helping armed Rwandans infiltrate across the border. Boutros Boutros-Ghali decides to send a special emissary to Kinshasa about the country's televised accusations against U.N. staff.
20 Zaire suspends operations of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
24 U.N. agencies start evacuating non-essential staff from Bukavu following heavy exchanges of gunfire overnight between the Rwandan army and Zairian forces.
UNHCR announces it is excluding from refugee status 20 Rwandans indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and believed to be living in Europe and Africa. Zairian soldiers in the east execute 40 men from the Tutsi ethnic group known as the Banyamulenge, an official from their community reports.
Zaire and Rwanda call an end to two days of artillery exchanges across their common border.
27 The Rwandan army resumes machinegun and mortar fire over the border into eastern Zaire, aid officials report; but a Rwandan military spokesman denies the report.
28 Zaire states that infiltrators from Rwanda killed at least 35 people and wounded three this month during cross-border attacks.
29 U.N. aid officials meet in Geneva to review the legal status of the Rwandan refugees.
- Oct. 3 Foreign Minister Kititwa Tumansi signals the U.N. General Assembly in New York that his government's patience is running out. "Zaire is always prepared to cooperate with ... Rwanda and Burundi ... to ensure the voluntary and dignified return of refugees, ... [f]ailing which ... Zaire will have no choice but to proceed to enforced and unconditional return of refugees to their countries of origin."
8 UNHCR presents a plan to close down gradually Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania.
10 Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Phyllis Oakley mentions that a consensus is emerging among donor countries and in states of Africa's Great Lakes region to accelerate repatriation of Rwandan refugees.
11 U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher declares it is safe for Hutu refugees to return to Rwanda and that the camps in Tanzania and Zaire, especially those closest to the border with Rwanda, must be closed.
12 Zaire welcomes a U.S. call for the closure of refugee camps, adding it is now up to international agencies to help avert forced repatriation.
14 South Kivu Deputy Governor Lwasi Ngabo Lwabanji, who gave some 200,000 Tutsis of the Banyamulenge clans a week to leave, with a deadline of 15 October, says he was told by telephone he has been suspended.
18 The European Union favors action to close camps in eastern Zaire.
19 Some 46,000 Rwandan and Burundian Hutu refugees flee two camps in eastern Zaire where the Zairian army is battling Banyamulenge.
21 Almost a quarter million Rwandan and Burundian Hutu refugees abandon all their 12 camps around the Zairian town of Uvira, where the army continues to fight against the Banyamulenge.
23 U.S. officials say they are still struggling – but making progress – with efforts to put together an all-African force of up to 10,000 troops that could react to such in the future. The aim is not to intervene between warring parties but to meet humanitarian needs of civilians.

- 24 Zaire appeals to the U.N. SC over what it terms "external aggression" in its eastern region. The State Department renews calls for an end to the fighting, in which the Banyamulenge advance has uprooted nearly 300,000 Rwandan and Burundian refugees.
- 25 UNHCR tells Rwandan refugees in eastern Zaire to return home, as heavy shelling rocks the city of Uvira.
Banyamulenge rebels say that opponents to the Zairian government have joined them to bring Kivu under control and oust Mobutu.
Boutros Boutros-Ghali calls for an international conference to prevent warfare in Zaire from spreading throughout the central African region.
- 26 Kibumba is attacked and hit with mortar fire; over 200,000 refugees flee towards Goma and are directed by the Zairian army towards Mugunga camp.
- 27 Unknown attackers fire on Katale camp but are repelled.
- 29 The last foreign aid workers leave Bukavu by plane, as mortar and machinegun fire blast to the south of the town.
President Pasteur Bizimungu strongly denies that Rwandan troops have invaded Zaire to fight alongside the Tutsi rebels.
One million people could die in Zaire, Emma Bonino, the European Union's humanitarian aid commissioner, declares, calling for swift action from a world she accuses of standing aloof from the unfolding tragedy.
U.S. officials state Washington has little leverage over the situation. USAID Administrator Atwood and other officials acknowledge that Zaire's disintegration would have grave consequences for regional stability. In such a case, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns declares, the U.S. would "obviously react" but has not considered what that reaction might be.
UNHCR appeals for urgent Western satellite pictures to trace hundreds of thousands of refugees who could face death as they flee ethnic conflict in eastern Zaire.
- 30 The EU publicly proposes that the OAU lead a force to monitor and protect refugees, with logistical support from the EU.
In New York, U.N. sources mention the U.N. is set to appoint Canada's ambassador to Washington as its new representative to deal with the crisis in eastern Zaire.
Rwandan Ambassador Manzi Bakuramatusa appeals for the international community not to treat the crisis simply as a humanitarian problem and calls on Belgium to take the lead as present events, he states, are the consequences of the past.
Bukavu falls to the Banyamulenge.
- 31 Paul Kagame warns that all-out war with Zaire is increasingly likely, after Rwandan troops raided eastern Zaire in retaliation for cross-border shelling.
Tutsi fighters seize Goma airport.
UNHCR says some 115,000 refugees fled from Kahindo after fighting and are heading south towards Mugunga camp, already overflowing with 400,000 people.
French Defense Minister Charles Millon calls for the U.N. SC to take immediate action on the crisis in eastern Zaire.
President Nelson Mandela declares that South Africa is prepared to play a role in troubled central Africa, but he did not say what form this might take.
- Nov. 1 Fighting continues between Katale and the now-empty Kahindo camp.
Rwandan troops enter Goma by lake and land to assist Tutsi rebels fighting to capture it, diplomats confirm.
- 2 The town of Goma falls; the U.N. evacuates its foreign staff.
- 4 France proposes urgent talks with the U.S., its European partners, and Africa on an action plan to restore security in the area.
The rebels announce a cease-fire in eastern Zaire.
- 5 The parties in the (newly-created) alliance are Kabila's Popular Revolutionary Party (PRP), the National Council of Resistance for Democracy (NCRD) led by Kissante Ngandu, the Revolutionary Movement for the Liberation of Zaire (RMLZ) led by Mosasa Minitaga, and the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) led by Robert Bugera. None of these men seems to have

strong home constituencies. The Alliance says it is committed to a free-market economic system and a pluralist political set-up.

- 6 Efforts to help refugees reach a stalemate, with Zaire telling aid agencies to keep out of Kivu or send aid directly into Rwanda and the U.N. saying many lives are at risk.
- 7 Sadako Ogata urges a neutral force to be sent by the West to set up safe routes to deliver aid through fighting. With U.N. approval, France and Spain are ready to send 1,000 men each as part of a 5,000-man force.
- 8 Rwanda opposes troops from France and Belgium in the multinational force (MNF).
- 9 Calls for immediate foreign intervention are blocked by resistance from the U.S., which stalls SC action on a military mission. While the French and German proposals to send troops have strong support in the Council, the U.S. asserts it still holds out hope for a cease-fire that would allow aid operations to resume without outside military protection. "We are confronted by a new genocide," Boutros-Ghali tells reporters, "I will call it genocide by starvation."
- 10 Kengo wa Dondo insists that any food or medical aid brought in must first go through Kinshasa.
- 11 The U.S. and Britain back away farther from the French-supported military option, citing its imprecise goals.

Underlining the reluctance of countries to become involved, only nine foreign ministers of the 17 member states of the OAU's conflict committee attend the one-day session in the Ethiopian capital.

Foreign Minister Herve de Charette states that there is no conflict of interest between France and the U.S. in Africa.
- 12 Canada steps forward with an offer to lead a multinational force to secure food aid and passage for the refugees scattered by three weeks of violence in eastern Zaire.

"The refugees are the source of many problems," Mobutu tells a television interviewer in France; "So everyone should go home and each government take the responsibility of looking after its citizens," he adds.

U.S. government sends 40 military personnel to central Africa to assess the situation.
- 14 President Clinton speaks with PM Jean Chretien of Canada and sets conditions for US cooperation with a multinational force.

France hopes the first troops will be in place by 16-17 November.

Eritrea, one of only seven African states that have tentatively agreed to join the force, backs out.

A U.S. military assessment team of 37 arrives in Kigali from Uganda to prepare for the dispatch of U.S. troops.
- 15 Rwanda's ambassador urges the U.N. SC to postpone approval of a multinational force for eastern Zaire, as Mugunga is attacked and hundreds of thousands of refugees are heading back to Rwanda.
- 16 The U.N. SC approves the deployment of a Canadian-led multinational force to provide relief to refugees in eastern Zaire and ensure their safe return home. The intervention force will be deployed under section 7 of the U.N. Charter that allows a multinational intervention in the face of a threat to international peace and security. More than 20 countries offer to contribute over 10,000 troops; the main body of the force would come from Britain, Canada, France, and the U.S.; but U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright warns that "outstanding questions concerning the organization and operation of the mission" must be worked out before Washington can give a firm commitment to participate in the force. U.N. military sources say the first contingents of the intervention force could be on the ground as early as next week. The humanitarian operation will be completed by March 31 but a U.N. follow-on force will be created, although the mandate and duration of that mission have yet to be determined.

President Bill Clinton arrives in Hawaii for three days of vacation to rest up before a trip to Australia.

Sadako Ogata is delighted at the mass return of refugees, and pledges to help them resume normal lives. By nightfall, some 200,000 refugees had arrived at Gisenyi.
- 20 Zaire's rebels vow to take their military offensive all the way to the capital Kinshasa, now that Rwandan refugees are no longer impeding them.
- 21 Eighteen countries have been implicated by U.N. investigators for selling arms to Rwanda's

former Hutu military forces.

- 22 The U.S. halts reconnaissance flights over eastern Zaire Thursday amid a heated international debate over how many refugees remain stranded in the countryside in need of assistance. The confusion reigns on the eve of a meeting in Stuttgart, Germany that will consider what role, if any, a multinational force should play in dealing with the humanitarian crisis.
Officials at the U.S. Committee for Refugees acknowledge a clash of views with other aid agencies on the refugee crisis in eastern Zaire.
Ethiopia will participate in a multinational force to help refugees in Zaire only if its mandate also includes the separation of Rwandan Hutu militias and troops from them, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi warns.
 - 24 Military planners meet in Stuttgart to discuss the deployment of MNF.
 - 25 Zaire voices astonishment at the international community's foot-dragging over sending a multinational force to the Great Lakes region.
 - 30 Museveni advises Lieutenant General Baril "to concentrate on humanitarian aid and avoid being drawn into internal regional conflicts".
- Dec.
- 1 Ugandan troops enter the town of Beni, north of Goma.
 - 2 The U.N. special envoy for the Great Lakes region, Raymond Chretien, stresses that a multinational humanitarian force must be deployed in eastern Zaire to help refugees.
Planned international humanitarian intervention in Zaire is merely a "pretext" to support President Mobutu, Paul Kagame asserts in an interview.
 - 9 An estimated 15,000 Rwandan refugees in Tanzania have abandoned two camps and are retreating farther from the border with Rwanda, UNHCR reports. The week before, Tanzania stressed it wanted the estimated 500,000 refugees, most of them Rwandan Hutus, to return home to Rwanda by the end of the month.
 - 12 The multinational force, several hundred strong and headed by Canada's army commander, Lieutenant General Maurice Baril, is stationed in Kampala, with its operational wing at the Ugandan capital's airport at Entebbe, but its negotiations on dropping supplies from planes or setting up ground corridors are still at a dead end. The force's 14-nation steering committee is due to meet in New York on 13 December to discuss the rationale for continuing its mission.
 - 16 France expresses regret at the collapse of the multinational task force for eastern Zaire, but stresses that aid groups still have an essential role to play in the region.
 - 24 The U.N. SC is preparing to approve the appointment of a U.N. special envoy to Africa's Great Lakes region.
 - 31 More than 480,000 Rwandan refugees have returned home from Tanzania since the beginning of December, leaving some 50,000 still in the country.
The final 16 Canadian military personnel assigned to the multinational force leave Uganda. Their departure formally ends an international mission that never really got started.

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