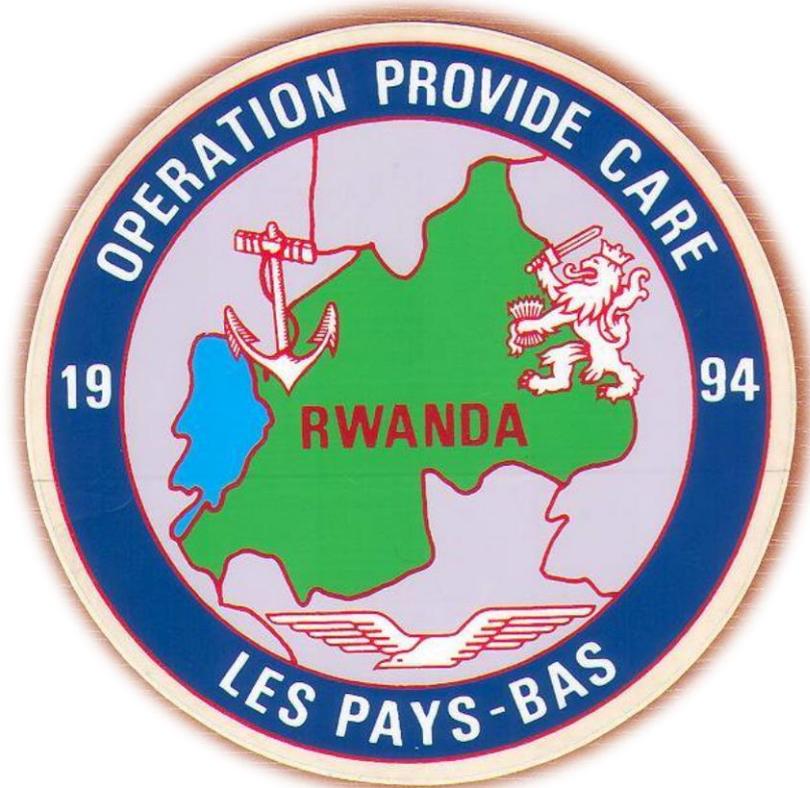


# ‘We didn’t go to Rwanda, we went to Zaire’

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A Dutch Military Humanitarian Intervention in the Zairian  
Refugee Camps in 1994

Bart Nauta



*'We didn't go to Rwanda, we went to Zaire'*

*A Dutch military humanitarian intervention in the Zairian refugee camps in 1994.*

By Bart Nauta

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

Holocaust and Genocide Studies

Universiteit van Amsterdam

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July 2017

## **Abstract**

From July 29 till September 4, 1994, more than a hundred Dutch soldiers assisted the relief operations in refugee camps in Zaire. In the first month of the humanitarian crisis an estimated 50,000 Rwandan refugees died of thirst, disease and exhaustion. Western military contingents and hundreds of NGOs arrived to help the refugees. The Dutch armed forces provided water, medical- and logistical support to the humanitarian aid efforts. The suffering of the refugees was mitigated, the worst of the crisis was stopped. But this was not a normal outflow of refugees, it was an organized system of mass mobilization of Hutu-civilians for political purposes. For Hutu-extremists, those who had planned and executed the genocide of the Tutsi, Zaire was a temporary base from which they could continue the war and genocide. This thesis researched how the presence of genocidal perpetrators affected the aid assistance of the Dutch military humanitarian intervention.

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## **Preface**

In December 2016, while investigating the archives of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs I stumbled across a humanitarian intervention by the Dutch armed forces in Zaire in the months after the Rwandan Genocide. I did not think much of it that time. The mission was purely humanitarian and the genocide had run its course. I laid those documents about the Dutch mission aside. Provide Care was indeed a minor operation, short in its timespan, small in its number of participants, overshadowed by Dutch peacekeeping in Yugoslavia and Cambodia.

Accidentally, while leafing through a reader on genocide, a mind-boggling article appeared. From that I found another article, and then another. They all had the same conclusion: after the mass murder, the Rwandan *génocidaires* controlled the refugee camps in Zaire. They terrorized ordinary Hutu-refugees, appropriated relief items, and vowed to take back Rwanda to finish the complete destruction of the Tutsi. Were these *génocidaires* also present during the Dutch mission? Was the Dutch goodwill usurped by *génocidaires*? I then fervently researched archival sources and Dutch historiography, but there was not much to be found.

For this reason, I decided to conduct interviews with those who were deployed in Zaire. From one interview came another, and the ball kept rolling. I spoke with nine veterans of Provide Care and one who at the time worked for the NGO Memisa. After train journeys of an hour or two, they heartily welcomed me at their office, in a café or at their home. They provided me with vital information. They also talked about their personal experiences and gave a closer look into how the operation affected their lives, in positive but sometimes also in less fortunate ways. I want to sincerely thank them for their openness, their help and hospitality.

Secondly, I want to thank Johannes Houwink ten Cate, Chair Holocaust and Genocide Studies, for his time and help, in editing the draft, providing suggestions for literature and ideas for a future career. I have been under his supervision for some years, starting with an undergraduate course on genocide, then the research of my bachelor thesis and now my master's. He made a very positive impact on my academic and intellectual life. As an alumnus I will look back with fondness. I also want to thank second-reader Thijs Bouwknecht for his help during the master program and his recommendations on Rwanda before I departed to the country where I have lived for five months. I further want to thank Myriame Bollen of the Netherlands Defence Academy, Herman van Bruggen from the Ministry of

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Defence, Harold Zee of Foreign Affairs, Bavo Hopman of *Stichting De Basis*, Kees Stijnis of the Academic Medical Center, my friend and corrector Philip de Tombe, and my girlfriend Colette Laseur for her attentive ears.

## **Introduction**

A transport aircraft circled above the airport of the city of Goma in eastern Zaire. From the airplane windows men from the reconnaissance team of the Dutch armed forces looked down to see the smoke and the reddish-orange glow coming out of a cinder coned volcano, the 3,500 meter high Mount Nyirogongo. They saw the green hills, the vast plains and the idyllic Lake Kivu with its paradise-like shores. Unable to land, the plane flew another circle. The runway was packed with people. It was late July 1994. The mass killings in Rwanda were over, leaving between 600,000 to 800,000 slaughtered Tutsi and moderate Hutus behind. Two hundred kilometers away from the Rwandan capital Kigali, lay Goma, a city in Zaire with 200,000 inhabitants. In mid-July 850,000 Rwandan refugees had walked through Goma into the northern Kivu district. Men, women and children took everything with them what they could: mattresses, refrigerators, their goats and cooking pots.

Machetes were collected at the border post between Zaire and Rwanda, next to it lay a pile of hand grenades.<sup>1</sup> The refugees were Hutus who fled Rwanda out of fear of the advancing Tutsi rebels. The Hutu refugees settled in wretched circumstances around Goma, under blue and white plastic tents in enormous camps that were covered by a thick blanket of gray-blue smoke caused by numerous wood fires. As the airplane descended for landing the masses on the runway scattered about. The Dutch armed forces would provide humanitarian aid in an area where in the first month 50,000 refugees died of disease, thirst and exhaustion.<sup>2</sup> A member of the reconnaissance team reported on his first confrontation with a cholera-ridden refugee camp:

'The situation was indescribable. There was a place where people just died in rows, dehydrated. We really got to see the inhuman and degrading conditions. I still can see of a woman who, completely dehydrated, was crawling towards a faucet on razor-sharp lava rocks. But I also recall the sickly sweet stench of corpses, the smell of countless wood fires and children who walked aimlessly because they lost their parents, or were sitting helplessly at the feet of their dead father or mother.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Situational Report (Sitrep) Nr. 8, 07-08-1994, the Netherlands Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10.

<sup>2</sup> Goma Epidemiology Group, 'Public health impact of Rwandan refugee crisis: what happened in Goma, Zaire, in July, 1994?', *The Lancet* (1995) 340 & 345.

<sup>3</sup> *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, The Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIHM) (online PDF-edition on the website of The Netherlands Ministry of Defence) 7.

Between the end of July and early September 1994, more than one hundred Dutch troops provided humanitarian assistance to the refugee camps in eastern Zaire. The Operation was named Provide Care. This thesis will focus on Operation Provide Care and investigates how it came about and what the results of the mission were. This was a purely humanitarian mission in a region where outflow of Rwandans meant something else than an ordinary refugee crisis caused by war. This was not only a flight of individuals wishing to escape the dangers of war. It was - just as the Rwandan genocide had been - an organized system of mass mobilization for political purposes.<sup>4</sup> For Hutu-extremists, those who had planned and executed the genocide of the Tutsi, Zaire was a temporary base from which they could continue the war and genocide. The Hutu population was sometimes violently forced out of Rwanda by its extremist leaders. The refugees provided a valuable cover for reorganization of the genocidal Hutu-army. The goal of this thesis is to put the Dutch mission in this context of war and genocide.

The international response to the Great Lakes refugee crisis has been severely criticized by present-day historiography. Some authors stress that the international community, hitherto unable and unwilling to prevent and stop the genocide, enthusiastically sent their military contingents to Zaire to unconditionally aid the refugees. The Dutch armed forces had a relatively small role in the total of the response to crisis. France, The United States, Canada, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Israel and Ireland had troops on the ground to provide humanitarian assistance.<sup>5</sup> More than two hundred NGOs were involved too.<sup>6</sup> The international community then made no efforts of separating those responsible for the genocide from genuine refugees.

One outspoken author who propagates the above viewpoint is Sarah Kenyon Lischer, an associate professor at the department of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University. She is the author of the book *Dangerous Sanctuaries: Refugee Camps, Civil War, and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid*. Therein Kenyon Lischer shows that refugees can spread civil war and that humanitarian aid can become a tool of conflict. Three categories of refugee populations are distinguished: situational refugees, persecuted refugees and refugees who form a state in exile. 'The Rwandan refugee population in Zaire constituted a state in

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<sup>4</sup> Gérard Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War. The 'Congolese' Conflict and the Crisis of Contemporary Africa* (London 2011) 24

<sup>5</sup> Philippe Guillot and Larry Minear, *Soldiers to the Rescue – Humanitarian Lessons from Rwanda* (Paris 1996) 129.

<sup>6</sup> Overseas Development Institute, *The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda. Study III: Principle Findings and Recommendations* (London 1996) 3.

exile from the early days of the crisis', wrote Kenyon Lischer.<sup>7</sup> The Hutu-leaders established complete control over the camps, stockpiled weapons and continued military training to reconquer Rwanda.<sup>8</sup> Zairian authorities showed neither the will nor capability to prevent the military reorganization of the Hutu state, which aggravated the potentiality of further conflict. Mobutu's Zaire was unwilling to demilitarize the refugee camps and incapable to enforce security in its Kivu Region.<sup>9</sup>

Kenyon Lischer categorized four ways how humanitarian aid can exacerbate war. The ousted Rwandan Hutu state reaped the benefits from the billions of dollars in humanitarian aid to the refugee camps. International donors spent \$1.4 billion on relief contracts for Goma between April and December 1994.<sup>10</sup> According to Kenyon Lischer humanitarian aid exacerbated the Rwandan conflict by feeding militants and sustaining and protecting militants' supporters and families. Aid also supported a war economy because the *génocidaire* leaders levied tax on the refugee population and controlled the food distribution in the camps. The militants stole food, medicines and equipment as well. Fourthly, international relief worsened the conflict by providing legitimacy to the Hutu state-in-exile. Humanitarian assistance shaped international opinion of the actors in the crisis. In order to raise money from Western public and governments, aid agencies presented the refugee crisis with oversimplified stories that emphasized the helplessness and victimization of the Hutus. This obscured their role as perpetrators, accessories to-, or supporters of genocide.<sup>11</sup> On a whole, the international intervention functioned as the infrastructure of a genocidal state-in-exile, providing food, healthcare, sanitation and water supply.<sup>12</sup>

According to Kenyon Lischer, the ideal response to a militarized refugee crisis is the deployment of a security force to separate soldiers and provide protection to genuine refugees. Such a force might be supplied by the host state or by international donors who offer troops to a UN peacekeeping mission.<sup>13</sup> Humanitarian organizations, such UN agencies and international NGOs, should lobby receiving states, the UN Security Council and major donors for a swift police action to demilitarize the camps. These humanitarian agencies cannot approach their work in isolation from the political and military context, and must realize that it is virtually impossible for material assistance to have a neutral effect in a

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<sup>7</sup> Sarah Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries: Refugee Camps, Civil War and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid* (Ithaca 2006) 78.

<sup>8</sup> Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 6-8, 90.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 142.

conflict situation.<sup>14</sup> And if all else fails she proposed that: 'In extreme situations where the negative effects of assistance outweigh the benefits, humanitarian agencies must consider withdrawing or reducing assistance.'<sup>15</sup>

Four Dutch studies specifically dealing with Operation Provide Care have been published. The Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIHM) provides an excellent historical reconstruction of the mission in 'Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal-Afrika (1994-1998)'. It discusses the safety risks caused by the presence of looting Zairian soldiers and thousands of Hutu-soldiers of the former Rwandan government. In the beginning of the mission Hutu-soldiers frequently plundered food distribution centers and halted food transports in order to have the first choice.<sup>16</sup> Such incidents are mentioned in the article of NIHM, although just briefly in a paragraph or two. This thesis will discuss safety, or the lack thereof, and the actions of Hutu-militants in further detail.

Myriame Bollen, professor at the Netherlands Defence Academy, researched the civil-military cooperation during humanitarian operations, including Provide Care. In her dissertation *Working Apart Together: Civiel militaire samenwerking tijdens humanitaire operaties* she focused on the sometimes difficult cooperation between the Dutch armed forces and NGOs.<sup>17</sup> She also described the difficult teamwork between the three service branches of the Dutch armed forces. In Bollen's dissertation the political side of the Rwandan conflict and the refugee crisis serves as a historical background. What the presence of Hutu-militants meant for the Dutch mission is just briefly mentioned in two quotes of Dutch soldiers who expressed that a lot went amiss with aid because of Hutu-militants.<sup>18</sup> Two members of the reconnaissance-team of Provide Care, Albert-Jan van Leusden and Wim Wertheim, also studied Civil-Military cooperation in their article 'Humanitaire hulp door Nederlandse militairen in Zaïre. Een civiel-militaire samenwerking'. In the latter article it is stated that 'the mass-killings led to the outflow of refugees'.<sup>19</sup> While the Rwandan Genocide indeed prompted the flight of Tutsi, the majority of refugees was Hutu and fled for different motives.

In 1996, Van Leusden wrote the article 'Ethiek bij noodhulp. Reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van ervaringen bij recente (noodhulp)operaties'. The text is a

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<sup>14</sup> Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 143.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, NIMH, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Myriame Bollen, *Working Apart Together. Civiel militaire samenwerking tijdens humanitaire operaties* (Alblasserdam 2002).

<sup>18</sup> One quote came from an Army doctor: 'Hutu soldiers were in charge of the refugee camps. They had their own interests. A lot went wrong with emergency aid'. See: Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 169.

<sup>19</sup> A.J. van Leusden and W.J. Wertheim, 'Humanitaire hulp door Nederlandse militairen in Zaïre. Een civiel-militaire samenwerking', *Militaire Spectator* (1995) 164:7, 309.

meditation on the ethics of humanitarian intervention. It deals with themes such impartiality during humanitarian missions and the sense of powerlessness in the face of the enormity of the Zairian refugee crisis. This thesis will discuss these issues as well. Van Leusden describes the mentality of soldiers who have to deal with these circumstances. Reconstructing the thoughts of a military doctor on the ground in Zaire, Van Leusden stated that:

‘Generally, there was no dilemma on whether or not we did meaningful things. There is no reason for a discussion if it is wise to help combatants who might be able to kill again later. (...) You're standing there and you have to do something. (...) In general, there was therefore almost no opportunity for ethical considerations.’<sup>20</sup>

At the same time he wondered about the long-term results of the Dutch efforts. Undoubtedly a large number of refugees were saved, but he wondered for how long, since many of them were HIV-positive. Van Leusden also elucidates the dilemma of when soldiers come across violence (for example rape) and they, in accordance with the rules of engagement, are not allowed to act, especially if their own safety could not be guaranteed.<sup>21</sup>

Another moral aspect is that a commander must be aware of what he is doing to his subordinates when giving them an assignment. A superior has to recognize that he has the moral responsibility to ensure that his staff is not put at more risks than is absolutely necessary - both physically and mentally.<sup>22</sup> This is what the then Minister of Defence Relus ter Beek called *aanvaardbaar risico's*. The core issue of Ter Beek's formulation of *aanvaardbaar risico's* was where to draw a line exactly in terms of safety.<sup>23</sup> Responding to the risks of sending a battalion to Srebrenica, the *chef-Defensiestaf* General Arie van der Vlis expected some fatalities, which was acceptable. The commander of the Royal Netherlands Army Hans Couzy, answered to the question about risks in Bosnia: ‘I expected bullying, our troops being taken hostage, but not large-scale violence.’<sup>24</sup> Mental safety is included in Van Leusden's assessment as well. He states that after Operation Provide Care, ten percent of the soldiers had suffered from psychological problems.<sup>25</sup> In the end, Van Leusden concluded that defence assets should be used in emergency aid. The justification lies in the fact that the Ministry of Defence is an organization that can provide quick and effective assistance, and

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<sup>20</sup> A.J. van Leusden, ‘Ethiek bij noodhulp. Reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van ervaringen bij recente (noodhulp) operaties’, *Militaire Spectator* (1996) 165:4, 158-159.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 160.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 161.

<sup>23</sup> Richard van Gils and Christ Klep, *Van Korea tot Kabul: de Nederlandse militaire deelname aan vredesoperaties sinds 1945* (The Hague 2005) 111.

<sup>24</sup> Jan Hoedeman and Theo Koelé, ‘(On)aanvaardbaar risico’, *De Volkskrant*, July 8, 2006

<sup>25</sup> Leusden, van, ‘Ethiek bij noodhulp’, 160.

that it would be immoral not to intervene in case of a severe humanitarian crisis.<sup>26</sup>

This thesis will be the fifth study specifically focused on Provide Care and will include a main research question that will uncover matters that were generally overlooked. In the Dutch historiography and assessments of the mission, Hutu-militias are more seen as an external factor, and not as the primary reason the Dutch armed forces were operating in Zaire in the first place. The analysis of Kenyon Lischer and the gaps in Dutch historiography regarding the violent context begs the main question of this thesis: How did the presence of genocidal perpetrators affected the aid assistance of the Dutch military humanitarian intervention? The main question will expose related issues, hitherto largely ignored. Was Dutch materiel- and medical aid misused by genocidal perpetrators? Did Hutu-extremists hinder the relief efforts? And how dangerous was the mission for Dutch soldiers in terms of physical and mental safety? The answers will have implications for the evaluation of the net results of Operation Provide Care and for policy makers who in the future might have to rethink their approach when considering humanitarian intervention.

Chapter 1 will give both an explanation of the Rwandan Genocide as of the mass-exodus of Hutu-extremists and Hutu-civilians into Zaire, drawing an explanatory analogy between the two events. The next chapter will first shortly discuss the role of the international community before and during the genocide, then shifts to the Dutch context, outlining the Dutch stance towards the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda. It will show why the Netherlands declined to send reinforcements to the UN mission in Rwanda in May 1994, and why it enthusiastically stepped in to offer aid to a refugee crisis in July 1994. Chapter 3 will delve into the question what motivated the Dutch cabinet to approve a humanitarian intervention in Zaire. The thesis' core is Chapter 4, which will provide an in-depth look at the day-to-day realities of the Dutch soldiers working in the Zairian camps. The focus on 106 soldiers who were deployed for five weeks will provide a detailed account of a Dutch micro-cosmos in eastern Zaire.

A variety of sources was used in research, including secondary literature dealing with the Rwandan Genocide, the role of United Nations, the subsequent Zairian refugee crisis and the international response, and the Congo Wars. Studies by multilateral workgroups assessing military humanitarian intervention were also a valuable source of information. Reports of that time by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the UN and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) give a detailed account of the conditions in the refugee camp, the presence of

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<sup>26</sup> Leusden, van, 'Ethiek bij noodhulp', 163.

militarized elements, and provide the necessary numbers of ordinary refugees and Hutu-militants. Newspaper articles written in the course of the refugee crisis from *The New York Times*, *The Independent*, *Het NRC Handelsblad* and *De Telegraaf* all paint a picture of the circumstances in the camps and the mood back home in the Netherlands. For reconstructing the policy and decisions building up to Provide Care and the conditions for soldiers on the ground, documents from the archives of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Ministry of Defence were investigated. Lastly, I conducted interviews, amassing roughly ten hours of audio recordings, with nine veterans of Provide Care and one who at the time worked on behalf of the NGO Memisa. These men and women will remain anonymous and are indicated by their former function.

A creeping sense of paradoxes and dilemmas will continuously loom over this thesis. Was humanitarian intervention just? Should the Netherlands have chosen differently whether-or-not to send troops? The same questions are still ever-present in the minds of the interviewees. For some, despite the feeling that the relief efforts were merely a drop in the ocean, they cherish the thought, to quote one interviewee: 'whoever saves one life saves the world entire'. Others conclude that this mission was an absolute farce, and pay more attention to the rash and emotional response by the Dutch armed forces, and the lack of intelligence of the area.

This sort of criticism calls to mind the ill-fated Dutch mission in Srebrenica. Concerning a UN-intervention in Yugoslavia, the *Srebrenica-rapport* noted that Dutch policy was generally determined by two factors: the desire to play a significant role in the international stage through moral politics, and the importance the Netherlands placed on human rights and humanitarian aid.<sup>27</sup> During the Balkan crisis, the public debate pushed the government into intervention on moral and humanitarian grounds. However, in-depth analyzes of the backgrounds of the crisis and measures adapted to the causes of the conflict rarely played a major role.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Dutch intelligence of the conditions on the ground was severely lacking and soldiers were largely ignorant of the hidden activities of warring parties surrounding them. In Yugoslavia, the Netherlands was getting involved without sufficient information on the status on the ground, taking neither risks nor long-term consequences into account.<sup>29</sup>

Such interventions 'consistently overestimated our moral prestige and consistently

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<sup>27</sup> Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, *Srebrenica, een 'veilig gebied'. Reconstructie, achtergronden, gevolgen en analyses van de val van een Safe Area* (Amsterdam 2002) 3133.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 3130.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*.

underestimated the resolve of those bent upon ethnic war', the Canadian historian and public intellectual Michael Ignatieff wrote.<sup>30</sup> Dutch military historian Christ Klep emphasized the same, albeit differently. He wrote that many soldiers believed that politicians, but equally the media and public opinion, did not see or want to see the stark reality of peace operations. Spoiled Western democracies were apparently no longer used to dirty armed conflicts.<sup>31</sup> Did this also ring true for Operation Provide Care?

The diary of military chauffeur Hans van Leest indeed shows the violence, even in this strict humanitarian mission.<sup>32</sup> On the day of departure from Zaire on September 4, he wrote: 'I can assure you that everyone was pretty much silent on departure, definitely when we flew over the refugee camps'. His mind wandered over the countless deaths, the killings, being held hostage, the injured and the sick. 'At that very moment you do not think about celebrating with a beer because you are going home. Strange isn't it?' Five weeks of non-stop providing care in the camps were over. 'Everyone had left something behind, and we got something back for it in return. We will probably return to society as different human beings.'<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor. Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London 1998) 94.

<sup>31</sup> Klep seems to draw this conclusion from the Canadian ethicist Arthur Shafer. Shafer points to the tension caused by the discrepancy between the soldiers' values, including those in the moment of warfare, and the culture of liberal democracy with values as individuality, openness and autonomy. See: Arthur Shafer, *The Buck Stops Here. Reflections on Moral Responsibility, Democratic Accountability and Military Values* (Ottawa 1997) 29-33; Christ Klep, *Somalië, Rwanda, Srebrenica: de Nasleep van Drie Ontspoorde Vredesmissies* (Amsterdam 2008) 178.

<sup>32</sup> Hans van Leest, *Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care* (Personal publication 2004).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

## 1. Soccer and the origins of the refugee crisis

In November 1994, five months after the Tutsi-led rebel group the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took control over Rwanda, Théoneste Bagosora - one of the many leaders of the Rwandan regime in exile in Zaire - vowed to: 'wage a war that will be long and full of dead people until the minority Tutsi are finished and completely out of the country'.<sup>34</sup> He was part of a Hutu-extremist *génocidaire* leadership that had led the killings of around 75 percent of the Tutsi population between April and July 1994.<sup>35</sup> Although the genocide was over, its intentions were not. The *génocidaires* sought to murder Tutsi - all the Tutsi. For Hutu-extremists Zaire was just a temporary base. The Hutu population had to go back to 'work', meaning the continuation of war and genocide. There now follows a brief discussion what led to the Rwandan Genocide. This chapter also gives an explanation why the Hutu-regime fled to Zaire and compelled thousands of Hutu-civilians to join them. A similar set of factors provides both parts in explaining the massacres, as well as the subsequent Hutu mass-exodus.

Since Rwandan Independence in 1961 the regime's legitimacy depended on the exercise of power by a Hutu majority. This ethnic Hutu majority overthrew a minority-based rule of the Tutsi, who in German and Belgian colonial times governed the country. President Juvénal Habyarimana, who ran the country from 1973 until the start of the genocide in 1994, institutionalized and maintained ethnicity as a fundamental political and social category in Rwandan society.<sup>36</sup> Before the start of the genocide, Rwanda was a country with 6.9 million inhabitants, and was divided along ethnic lines into three social categories: 85 to 95 percent of the population was Hutu, 10 to 14 percent Tutsi and around 1 percent Twa.<sup>37</sup>

In the early 1990s, the regime of long-term president Habyarimana was in a political crisis. The elite of the presidential party *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND) and the network around the president faced the threat from a newly legalized, primarily Hutu opposition.<sup>38</sup> Even more threatening to the Hutu majority-rule was the upsurge of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The Uganda-based rebel group was

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<sup>34</sup> Human Rights Watch Arms Project, 'Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity', 1995, Website Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Rwanda1.htm> (11 April 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Marijke Verpoorten, 'The Death toll of the Rwandan Genocide: A Detailed Analysis for Gikongoro Province', *Population* (2005) 60:4, 357.

<sup>36</sup> Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca 2015), 290.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 276.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 290.

principally composed of Tutsi descendants of refugees who fled Rwanda in periods of anti-Tutsi violence in the late 1950s and 1960s. They claimed to fight a nepotistic, corrupt and authoritarian regime.<sup>39</sup> From October 1990, when the RPF attacked from the northeast of Rwanda, until the Arusha Peace Accords in August 1993, Rwanda was entangled in a civil war.

In a severe political and military crisis the extremist Hutu-elite then choose to foster hatred and fear to keep itself in power. This small group of elite MRND and the circle around the president set the Hutu-majority against the political opposition and the Tutsi-minority.<sup>40</sup> Their fear-based ideology is both an explanatory factor of the genocide of Tutsi and Hutu-moderates, and of the subsequent mass-migration of Hutus to Zaire. The fear of Hutu subjugation by Tutsi, invigorated by the real military threat of the exiled Tutsi rebel group the RPF, was an aspect of this ideology. Political scientist Jacques Semelin wrote that political ideologues structure fear into hatred: 'These are the ones who were already saying: "we are victims of History. If we are all victims, we certainly have the right to defend ourselves against Them! And besides, didn't they already slaughter us in the past?'"<sup>41</sup> In times of crisis, identity is subject to manipulation by politicians and other prominent public figures. Rwandan identity politics revolved around the self-interests of a self-proclaimed Hutu identity. Renowned American historian Allison Des Forges discerned interrelated themes of extremist Hutu-ideology: Tutsi unity, infiltration, the restoration of the old Tutsi regime, the genocide of the Hutu, Hutus as innocent victims and Hutu solidarity. These were ingredients in the stigmatization of Hutu-Tutsi differences.

Hutu propagandist unified Tutsi living inside Rwanda to those who had exploited Hutu in the pre-colonial and colonial past, and with the Tutsi who formed the RPF.<sup>42</sup> The Hutu-extremist asserted that the Tutsi had no right of infiltrating the Rwandan state and society.<sup>43</sup> European colonialism was the main factor in constructing an interpretation of Tutsi and Hutu as racialized ethnicities, contrary to a marker of a fluid socio-economic status as it was in pre-colonial times.<sup>44</sup> Europeans theorized that the Tutsis were a superior race of white-like cattle herders who had descended from North Africa and the Middle East to dominate the lowly Bantu 'negroid' farmers.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 293.

<sup>40</sup> Allison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story* (online PDF-edition on the website Human Rights Watch) 1.

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (London 2013) 43.

<sup>42</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 87.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

<sup>44</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 276.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 277.

German and Belgian colonialists structured the society based on a preexisting Tutsi power structure. This colonial intervention had the effect of increasing the resentments attached to the social categories, especially on the part of Hutus toward Tutsis.<sup>46</sup> The history of Hutu serfdom was open for manipulation in the run-up to the 1994 Genocide. Officials and propagandist warned that the RPF had come to reestablish total control over the Hutu, as was the case under the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tutsi monarchy and Tutsi domination under Belgian rule.<sup>47</sup> Hutu-extremist even insisted that not only the freedom of Hutus was at risk but their very lives as well. Prime ideologue Leon Mugesera produced a pamphlet declaring that the RPF planned 'to restore the dictatorship of the extremists of the Tutsi minority [by] a genocide, the extermination of the Hutu majority'.<sup>48</sup>

In the face of the RPF aggression, propagandists and officials constantly reminded Hutus that they had one important advantage: they were *rubanda nyamwinshi*, the great majority. The Influential extremist magazine *Kangura*, encouraged the Hutus that: 'Your unity, your mutual understanding, your solidarity are the certain weapons of your victory'.<sup>49</sup> Des Forges wrote that: 'Underlying much of this propaganda is the image of the Hutu as the innocent victim - victim of the original aggression by Tutsi conquerors some centuries ago, of the "infiltration" of the state and society, and of the 1990 invasion [by the RPF].'<sup>50</sup> The invasion led to the growing realization that the RPF's objective was to claim renewed Tutsi power. Death-defying Hutu Power was the last bulwark against the prospect of Hutu servitude.<sup>51</sup>

After three years of civil war, a peace agreement was signed between the Rwandan government and the RPF. The 1993 Arusha Accords included a political power sharing between the MRND, the RPF and the political opposition. The accords also included a military power sharing between the RPF and the Rwandan Army, the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR). This meant a major blow to the power of the MRND. The party consequently sought to undermine the Arusha Agreements by dividing the Rwandan people and the political opposition in Pro-Hutu and Pro-RPF camps, contributing to mounting tensions between Hutu and Tutsi.<sup>52</sup> Rwanda was turning into a powder keg, as both the MRND leaders and the RPF were preparing for war. Inflammatory political rhetoric, high-

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<sup>46</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 277.

<sup>47</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 91.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 98.

<sup>51</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'When Victims Become Killers' in: Jens Meierhenrich (ed.), *Genocide. A Reader* (Oxford 2014) 150.

<sup>52</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 300.

level political assassinations, and public rallies of militias and youth wings made the situation extremely tense.<sup>53</sup>

On the evening of April 6, 1994, the plane carrying President Habyarimana was shot down. All passengers, including senior members of the president's entourage and the chief-of-staff of the FAR were killed. The assassination of the president and the renewal of the civil war triggered one hundred days of genocide. With the top political and military leaders gone, MRND hardliners and the network surrounding the president quickly jumped into the power vacuum and created an interim government. Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, who in the introduction boastfully declared of wanting to finish the Tutsi, was a key figure in the group that made the principal decisions to initiate the genocide. This group of *grand génocidaires* decided to assassinate opposition leaders, established a hardline provisional government and orchestrated the full-blown mass murder of Tutsi and Hutu-moderates.<sup>54</sup>

Yet the Hutu hardliners failed to install a well-functioning military government and to develop a clear military response to the RPF invasion. This stood in sharp contrast to the clear military preparedness of the RPF. The Hutu-extremist leadership then engineered a two-fold strategy of genocide: first the Hutu-population was used as a last resort to defeat the RPF; and second a massive collective punishment of the Tutsi was imposed.<sup>55</sup> Even if the RPF conquered Rwanda, it would lose its support base and achieve the smallest benefits possible.<sup>56</sup>

The killings were not spontaneous, but followed instructions from the highest echelons. The extremist leaders had substantial control of a highly centralized state. The organizational capacity was a result of well-established hierarchies of the military and a far-reaching local administration. Therefore the organizers of the genocide were able to extirpate Tutsi with an extraordinary level of efficiency. The perpetrators included soldiers of the FAR, the Presidential Guards, the National Police, reservists and former soldiers, militias and paramilitaries. The youth wing of the MRND, the *Interahamwe*, was transformed into a powerful militia that received military training from regular soldiers and was armed to the teeth.<sup>57</sup> The *Interahamwe* would serve as a strike force in the extermination of Tutsi. The *génocidaire* leaders provided this militia for attacks, dispatching them around the country to

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<sup>53</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*. 300.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> André Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide: Criminal Politics in Rwanda, 1990-1994* (Madison 2015) 210.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 63.

propel a locality to attack schools, hospitals, or churches where Tutsi sought refuge.<sup>58</sup>

Participation of Hutu-civilians in the massacres was widespread during the genocide. Many men joined groups out of feared punishments from other Hutus. Others were scared of the advancing RPF, and after their leaders encouraged them to do so, they attacked Tutsis as a way to counter the rebels. Other men opportunistically grabbed power in the chaos of the moment, or saw the chance to steal from their neighbors.<sup>59</sup> Prunier wrote that obedience to authority is a long national tradition, which together with the organizational capability of the state led to the mobilization of Hutu-civilians.<sup>60</sup> Orders from the Prime Minister Jean Kambanda were handed down to the prefect, who passed them to burgomasters (local government officials), who then instructed the population.<sup>61</sup> Extremist ideology and the acute sense of insecurity shaped a broad awareness of Hutu self-protection in the context of Tutsi aggression.<sup>62</sup> The message of anti-Tutsi stigmatization and the incitement to the extermination of Tutsi was further disseminated by *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM) and the newspaper *Kangura*. They were calling for "self-defense" against "accomplices". Slaughter was euphemistically called "work", machetes and firearms were described as "tools".<sup>63</sup>

Despite the propaganda, many Hutus refused to kill. The solution to this was outright force by Presidential Guards and the *Interahamwe*, sometimes at gunpoint.<sup>64</sup> A less violent incentive for participation was greed. Houses, farms and businesses of Tutsis were looted by Hutu-civilians who could steal with total impunity.<sup>65</sup> Congregating metal stolen from Tutsi houses was especially a valuable good. One sheet of metal could be sold for about fifteen Primuses, the Rwanda-brewed beer from the Heineken brewery situated along the shores of Lake Kivu. A sheet could also be taken down to Zaire.<sup>66</sup> Another 'spoil' and an instrument of genocide was systematic rape. Soldiers and militiamen raided homes, hospitals and churches looking for Tutsi women. It is estimated that more than 350,000 women, most of whom were Tutsi, were raped during the genocide.<sup>67</sup>

It is important to note that not all Hutu adult men were *génocidaires*, and not all

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<sup>58</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> Straus, *The Order of Genocide. Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca 2006) 96.

<sup>60</sup> Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 23; Straus, *The Order of Genocide*, 119.

<sup>61</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 8

<sup>62</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 319.

<sup>63</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 8

<sup>64</sup> African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, 569.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 578.

<sup>66</sup> Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: the Killers in Rwanda Speak* (New York 2005) 77 - 78.

<sup>67</sup> Carrien Bijleveld, Aafke Morssinkhof and Alette Smeulers, 'Counting the Countless: Rape Victimization during the Rwandan Genocide', *International Criminal Justice Review* (2009) 19:2, 208.

*génocidaires* killed with the same fervor. American political scientist Scott Straus estimated that around 200,000 Rwandans directly participated in killings during the genocide.<sup>68</sup> A small part of the total perpetrators were extremely zealous killers, soldiers or paramilitaries. This minority accounted for the majority of deaths.<sup>69</sup> Other estimates determine a figure of one million participants in the mass murder. This numbers however include those who were not directly involved face-to-face executions, but were in post-genocidal trials accused of looting and being present at roadblocks without specific charges of killing or assault.<sup>70</sup>

As the victory of RPF appeared imminent in mid-July 1994, between 600,000 and 800,000 Tutsi had been murdered.<sup>71</sup> Hutu extremist-leaders fled Rwanda and settled a couple of kilometers away from the Rwandan border in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi. Over 2.1 million people fled Rwanda out of a postgenocide population of 6.9 million.<sup>72</sup> In Zaire, the Hutus constituted a quasi-state with an army, a treasury and political *génocidaire* leaders. Within less than a week 850,000 Hutus had walked into Goma in July 1994, camping on inhospitable volcanic terrain. The closure of the French-protected zone in southwest Rwanda a month later pushed over 300,000 Hutus in the direction Bukavu, Zaire. Contrary to other refugee exoduses from countries at war, this was not the flight of individuals wishing to escape danger. It was - just as the genocide had been - an organized system of mass mobilization for political purposes.<sup>73</sup> The Chief-of-Staff of the Rwandan Army, General Augustin Bizimungu, said in an interview quite briskly: 'We are busy regrouping'.<sup>74</sup> To the question of a *New York Times* journalist of what they wanted from the world, a Hutu soldier answered: 'Bullets, so that we can go back to our country'.<sup>75</sup>

Considering such remarks, the above-mentioned two-fold strategy of genocide should be altered in a threefold plan. Mobilization of the population as a last resort against the RPF came first. Next, massive collective punishment on the Tutsi was imposed. The third part of the strategy was the temporary settlement in Zaire to continue the war against the RPF and

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<sup>68</sup> Straus, Scott, 'How many perpetrators were there in the Rwandan genocide? An estimate', *Journal of Genocide Research* (2004) 6:1, 93.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>70</sup> Gerd Hankel, 'Gacaca Courts', 2013, Website Oxford International Public Law. <http://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1667> (27 June 2017); Cyanne E. Loyle, 'Why Men Participate: A Review of Perpetrator Research on the Rwandan Genocide', *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies* (2009) 1:2, 36.

<sup>71</sup> Verpoorten, 'The Death Toll of the Rwandan Genocide: A Detailed Analysis for Gikongoro Province', 357.

<sup>72</sup> Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 5.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>74</sup> Raymond Bonner, 'Army Routed From Rwanda Now Intimidates Its Refugees', *The New York Times*, August 2, 1994.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

Rwanda. The *génocidaire* leaders did not view themselves defeated.<sup>76</sup> With the reorganization of the military and the stacking of weapons and material, they sought to continue war against the Tutsi. FAR-General Bizimungu entrusted the listeners of RTLM:

‘That is how things happen in a war. It is like in a soccer match: one [side] scores, they play on and equalize or more. There is always attack and counterattack. Football fans cannot despair until the ninetieth minute, as most of the time a goal can be scored at the last minute. It is the same in our war with the Inkotanyi [RPF].’<sup>77</sup>

The *génocidaire* leaders had plenty of reasons to flee Rwanda and set up its base in Zaire to continue the war. The same RTLM broadcast continued: ‘We therefore have to stand up as one and fight the Inkotanyi [the RPF] wherever they are, even in Zaire, rather than sitting down and feeling miserable.’<sup>78</sup> But for the genuine Hutu refugee there was nothing to gain in surviving in barren terrain, without food and water. A combination of deep-seated beliefs regarding Hutu-Tutsi polarization, the imagined and real fear for the RPF, and the coercion by extremists, and obedience to authority explain why non-criminal Hutu civilians fled Rwanda. These were the same factors that prompted popular participation in the genocide in the first place.

Prunier observed during his first visit to postgenocide Rwanda in 1995, that many Hutu who stayed in the country were simply not able to run away in time. The Hutu population formed a peculiar “middle ground” of society.<sup>79</sup> The rough ideological beatings and indoctrination had taken its toll on minds of the Hutu-civilians. After years of relentless political manipulation and propaganda most Hutus resented the new RPF government; a state they perceived as an illegitimate conquerors’ regime. They showed little or no sensitivity to the genocide and equated their sorrows to the massive horrors suffered by the Tutsi. Some even denied that mass murder had taken place at all and attributed the many deaths to the war.<sup>80</sup> Through the genocide the Hutu extremists aimed to transform the collective identity of the Hutu. The new Rwanda would be a country of Hutu people bound together by their joint participation in the genocide, resulting in a permanent social and psychological divide between Hutu and Tutsi.<sup>81</sup>

Fear was the main reason why many joined Hutu extremists groups. Fear for the RPF

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<sup>76</sup> Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide*, 291.

<sup>77</sup> African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair, and Defiance*, 658.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 659.

<sup>79</sup> Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 4.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>81</sup> African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, 568.

was both imaginary and real. American freelance consultant Robert Gersony, who was hired by The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), brought massacres committed by the RPF to light and concluded that the RPF had killed between 25,000 and 45,000 people (including Tutsi) between April and September 1994.<sup>82</sup> The RPF strove to terrorize the Hutu community into submission by eradicating *génocidaires'* friends and family, educated people, and other possible opponents of the new regime.<sup>83</sup> The campaign of terror aimed to coerce and control the Hutu masses, but it was not - as the Hutu propagandist in Zaire claimed - a double genocide.<sup>84</sup>

On the other hand the fear for the RPF was imaginary. As we have seen, already before the genocide Hutu extremist declared that the Tutsi rebels wanted to exterminate the Hutus. Hutus anxiously recalled the massacres of thousands of Hutus by Tutsis in Burundi in 1972, 1988 and 1991.<sup>85</sup> South of Kigali, in Ntarama, the news of the assassination of president Habyarimana was followed by rumors that there would be mass killings of Hutus, after which many fled the area.<sup>86</sup> As the RPF advanced, Rwanda fell in total panic and rumors circulated that the RPF would push all the Hutu into Lake Kivu.<sup>87</sup> Extremist propaganda continued to influence the minds of Hutu-civilians in refugee camps. The imaginary fears played into the hands of the *génocidaire* leaders who greatly exaggerated the horror stories in order to discourage refugees to return home.<sup>88</sup>

If propaganda, ideology and fear for the RPF were not sufficient in compelling Hutus to flee, obedient compliance and social and bureaucratic control surely were.<sup>89</sup> As mentioned previously, the Rwandan state was highly centralized and possessed a powerful bureaucratic apparatus on the regional and local levels.<sup>90</sup> It was able to mobilize the masses, not only for mass murder but also for mass immigration. Hutus were forced to flee by their political leaders. Belonging to a culture of a tradition of obedience to authority, the Hutu masses

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<sup>82</sup> For this paragraph I follow Prunier's interpretation of the controversial Gersony Report in: *From Genocide to Continental War*, 16.

<sup>83</sup> Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 20.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 75.

<sup>86</sup> African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, 210.

<sup>87</sup> Marie Béatrice Umutesi, *Surviving the Slaughter: The ordeal of a Rwandan refugee in Zaire* (Madison 2004) 69.

<sup>88</sup> Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 101.

<sup>89</sup> Academics such as Gérard Prunier, Great Lakes Region expert Filip Reyntjens, American sociologist Jon Oplinger and American professor of African Studies Catherine Newbury all mention obedient compliance, and social and bureaucratic control as influential factors in Rwandan society and as causative factors for the genocide. I use the same factors to explain mass-exodus of Hutus. For a literature review of the discussed authors see: Helen M. Hintjens, 'Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (1999) 37:2, 271.

<sup>90</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 319.

complied.<sup>91</sup> A Hutu refugee sums the situation up in an interview with a French journalist in August 1994:

‘Very clever people have pushed us into fleeing to months ago. FAR troops were opening the way with a lorry and we had to follow them, forced from behind by other soldiers with guns. They pushed us like cows... Anyway, we do not know what to think because our leaders are not around just now. We are waiting for a new burgomaster to give us our orders.’<sup>92</sup>

The refugees were the extremists’ last political asset, a cowed population that could be used for political negotiation, and for the misuse of well-intentioned humanitarian aid. The *génocidaire* leaders were not only guilty of perpetrating genocide against the Tutsi and moderate Hutus, they are also responsible for kidnapping the minds and lives of Hutu-civilians, many of whom died of hunger, thirst, exhaustion and disease in Zaire.

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<sup>91</sup> Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 23.

<sup>92</sup> Florence Aubenas, ‘La longue marche vers Kigali’, *La Liberation*, August 2, 1994. This newspaper article is quote by Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 25.

## 2. Ten Belgians

Ten Belgian commandos of the UN peacekeeping mission were pinned down in a Kigali villa by heavy grenade fire from the Rwandan Presidential Guard. In the early hours of April 7, the Belgians had hastily moved to the house of the moderate leader of the opposition, Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, trying to protect her life. She managed to escape but was eventually killed by Hutu-extremists. The UN-peacekeepers, including five Ghanaians, had no choice but to surrender to violent Rwandan soldiers, and were taken to the military headquarters of the FAR in Kigali. The night before, the RTLM spread the rumor that the Belgians were responsible for the downing of the plane with the president onboard. Upon arrival at the military camp, a mob of revengeful Rwandan soldiers immediately beat the Belgian soldiers with sticks, bayonets and rifle butts. The last radio contact with the ill-fated Belgian contingent reported: 'I am afraid that they are going to lynch us.'<sup>93</sup> Four Belgians would not survive the frenzy of the first attack. Six others fled to put up a defense in a small office that lasted for a few hours. After Rwandan soldiers attacked the office with machine guns, tear gas and grenades it went terribly silent. Robbed from their money and personal belongings, the bodies of ten mutilated and naked Belgian soldiers were later found in the Central Hospital.<sup>94</sup>

The murder of the Belgian commandos would play a role in the decision-making of the Netherlands towards the Rwanda crisis. This chapter will discuss the role of the international community in relationship to the Rwandan Genocide, especially the role of the UN and its peacekeeping mission. The rest of the chapter will elucidate the Netherlands' self-perception and policy concerning peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, and the government's position regarding the crisis in Rwanda. The main question of this chapter is: why did the Netherlands decline the request of the UN to send reinforcements to the UN mission in May?

After learning that ten Belgian blue-helmets had been killed, and that the U.K., the U.S. and France blocked extra reinforcements for the UN peacekeeping operation, the Belgian cabinet decided to end its participation.<sup>95</sup> The 440 Belgian troops constituted the best-equipped and best-trained contingent of The United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR). In the wake of the Arusha Accords, UN peacekeepers were deployed to

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<sup>93</sup> Koen Vidal, *Stukken van de Waarheid. De Rwandese Genocide en de Belgische Politiek* (Antwerp 1998) 75.

<sup>94</sup> Vidal, *Stukken van de Waarheid*, 77; Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: the Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto 2003; eBook edition), chapter 10 'An Explosion at Kigali Airport'.

<sup>95</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 937.

patrol the Rwandan cease-fire, assist demilitarization and demobilization, and to create a secure environment so that exiled Tutsi could return.<sup>96</sup> At the time of UN troop deployment in Rwanda in late 1993, the UN was already dispatching 70,000 peacekeepers on seventeen operations around the world.<sup>97</sup> The Rwanda mission had a very low status.<sup>98</sup> It was critically short of ammunition, medical supplies, and qualified troops. UN decision makers had little understanding of the basic features of Rwanda politics. So when the genocide had started, the UN Security Council assumed that it was seeing a civil war, which reinforced the idea that negotiating a cease-fire between the RPF and the interim government was the best chance at peace.<sup>99</sup>

On the ground in Rwanda, large-scale mass killings unfolded before the eyes of Canadian UNAMIR-commander Roméo Dallaire who vociferously asked UN headquarters for reinforcement, only to see the Belgians withdraw. An even more devastating blow was the decision of the Security Council to reduce the troop size from 3,000 to a mere force of 270. Amid reports of some 100,000 dead in Rwanda, the evacuation of 1,000 blue-helmets began on April 22. 387 soldiers and 72 UN military observers stayed behind to arrange a cease-fire, monitor developments and assist in humanitarian relief operations in Kigali.<sup>100</sup> The reduced UNAMIR force still managed to save 20,000 Tutsi refugees in UN protection sites such as the Amahoro Stadium and Hotel Mille Collines.

In a detailed account of why the UN took the decision to reduce its presence in Rwanda, American political scientist Michael N. Barnett wrote:

‘the [UN] Secretariat gave a calculated and staged performance that was designed to discourage intervention. Its preferences were born not from cynical, immoral, or purely instrumental reasons. It rank-ordered its responsibilities and calculated the risks associated with different types of actions. There were peacekeepers to protect. Also to consider was an organization that might not survive another failure.’<sup>101</sup>

The UN, and most notably the United States, had vivid memories of the fiasco of the UN mission to Somalia in 1993. That peacekeeping intervention went terribly wrong when Somalia combatants killed nineteen American soldiers during the Battle of Mogadishu. The

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<sup>96</sup> Samantha Power, ‘Bystanders to Genocide: Why the United States Let the Rwandan Tragedy Happen’, 2001, Website The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2001/09/bystanders-to-genocide/304571/> (27 June 2017).

<sup>97</sup> Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide. The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca 2002) 104.

<sup>98</sup> Power, ‘Bystanders to Genocide’.

<sup>99</sup> Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*, 177.

<sup>100</sup> Guillot and Minear, *Soldiers to the Rescue*, 75.

<sup>101</sup> Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide*, 124.

images of a maimed body of an American G.I. that was dragged by a mob, shook audiences across the world. Highly frustrated with peacekeeping missions, the Pentagon concluded that intervention in Africa meant trouble.<sup>102</sup> The United States' Rwanda policy intended no U.S. military intervention and the U.S. made strong demands for a complete UNAMIR withdrawal.<sup>103</sup> Meanwhile, the UN and America were reluctant to use the 'g-word', for they felt that uttering the word genocide would mean the obligation to act under the terms of the 1948 Genocide Convention.<sup>104</sup> The UN Security Council continued to speak about 'large-scale violence, which has resulted in the death of thousands of innocent civilians.'<sup>105</sup> The Hutu-extremists had counted on the inaction of the international community and continued the slaughters unhindered.<sup>106</sup>

The international community had other - yet untouched - means to pressure the *génocidaire* government. Despite pleas of Dallaire, nothing was done to neutralize the instigation of mass murder by RTLM. Best-equipped to jam the radio broadcastings was the U.S., but it was unwilling to meet the financial means.<sup>107</sup> Instead of military intervention or radio jamming, Des Forges wrote: 'The leading international actors continued to conduct diplomacy as usual, dealing with the interim governments as a valid party to the negotiations which they hoped to broker.'<sup>108</sup> Even though there was an increasing willingness to admit that the massacres of civilians was different from ordinary combat, America and others states remained stuck in the familiar track of trying to bring the RPF and the genocidal government together, as they successfully did in Arusha. A cease-fire was however highly unlikely because both warring parties refused to put down its guns, and the RPF refused to stop its advancing army.

Since early May, the Secretary General of the UN had been asking member states to provide soldiers for the Rwandan mission. On May 13, the UN Security Council reached a near complete agreement on a draft resolution on expanding UNAMIR to 5,500 troops.<sup>109</sup> It was the same number of troops that Dallaire had wished for to stop the genocide in early April. What would become UNAMIR II had almost the same mandate as the original UNAMIR mission, except it now had a larger geographical scope of responsibility. The

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<sup>102</sup> Power, 'Bystanders to Genocide'.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 957.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 962.

<sup>107</sup> Power, 'Bystanders to Genocide', 23.

<sup>108</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 962.

<sup>109</sup> Berichtenverkeer, Onderwerp: VR/Rwanda/Uitbreiding UNAMIR en verzoek Nederlandse deelname, 13-05-1994, The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Crisisrapportage rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01602.

mandate intended for contributing 'to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in Rwanda' and protecting humanitarian aid operations. It broadened the sphere of responsibility from Kigali to the whole of the country and it approved the establishment of safe havens.<sup>110</sup>

The UN authorized UNAMIR II on June 8, two months and a day after the first massacres and more than five weeks after the Secretary General declared that a larger force was necessary. National and international bureaucracies were slow in implementing the decision, wealthy nations, such as the U.K., contributed little.<sup>111</sup> It was too late to protect the last remaining women and children who were systematically murdered from mid-May onwards. In mid-July, when the RPF had taken Kigali, there was still about the same number of blue-helmets in Rwanda as there was at the time of the large withdrawal in April.<sup>112</sup> The UN had also approached the Netherlands to provide forty troops for UNAMIR II. But the Netherlands refused, fearing the risks involved for Dutch personnel.

### **The Dutch Involvement from 1993 till July 1994**

In the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1994, Dutch army captain and adjutant to the UNAMIR commander, Robert van Putten, accompanied Dallaire to the morgue of the Kigali Central Hospital. They made their way down a dark path towards a small hut, situated in a courtyard that was filled with injured and dozens of bodies.<sup>113</sup> Van Putten recalled seeing the following scene in front of the dimly lit hut:

'We saw a pile of bodies as we stood there. Those were the Belgians. (...) I started to count, the corpses were intertwined, it was difficult to see. (...) Horrible, it was bizarre to see ten of my colleagues laying there.'<sup>114</sup>

Dallaire vividly recollected the car ride to UNAMIR headquarters through the pitch-black night: 'Still I could see Robert's [Van Putten] face in the back seat, bone white and

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<sup>110</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 977.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 979.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 980.

<sup>113</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: the Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, eBook edition chapter 10. 'An Explosion at the Kigali Airport'.

<sup>114</sup> *Rwanda - Andere Tijden*, NPS/VPRO, 2004. Website *Andere Tijden*. <https://anderetijden.nl/aflevering/469/Rwanda> (20 May 2017).

motionless'.<sup>115</sup> In the second week of the genocide, Van Putten explained on the phone to his superiors in the Netherlands:

'It's not the case that nothing is happening, nor that I am panicking, but things are not right here. I wonder whether, given the developments and the withdrawal of the Belgians, it is wise to stay.'<sup>116</sup>

It was decided that Van Putten would be transferred to the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMIR) in Kabale, Uganda.<sup>117</sup> Since 1993 a small contingent of Dutch soldiers were deployed in UNAMIR and UNOMIR. The 81 observers of the UNOMIR peacekeeping mission had the task to monitor the Uganda-Rwanda border to see that no military assistance from Uganda was being provided to the RPF. The Dutch Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence agreed, as requested by the UN Secretary General, to send ten soldiers from the Royal Netherlands Army. The first four Dutch officers went to Uganda in August 1993.<sup>118</sup> Taking into account the shortage of personnel and equipment, then UNOMIR commander Dallaire noted that the mission was at best symbolic.<sup>119</sup>

The relation between the Netherlands and Rwanda had been limited in the years preceding the Rwandan Genocide. Dutch development cooperation constituted three to five million guilders from 1991 till the beginning of 1994 and was channeled through the UN and NGOs. There was no direct support to the government of president Habyarimana, due to human rights violations in the country.<sup>120</sup> During the Rwanda crisis, the Netherlands, in addition to the soldiers in UNAMIR and UNOMIR, also dispatched a C-130 Hercules transport aircraft with sixteen Dutch military personnel to assist in the evacuation of 1,664 foreign nationals, including around 120 Dutch expats.<sup>121</sup> Jan Pronk, the Minister for Development Cooperation, visited Rwanda twice during the genocide on own initiative, meeting representatives of the RPF and the UN. After his visit in May, he explained to Dutch parliament that political pressure on the warring parties to enforce a cease-fire was required. The Netherlands also had to financially support humanitarian relief operations within and

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<sup>115</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: the Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, eBook edition chapter 10. 'An Explosion at the Kigali Airport'.

<sup>116</sup> *Rwanda - Andere Tijden*, NPS/VPRO, 2004. Website *Andere Tijden*. <https://anderetijden.nl/aflevering/469/Rwanda> (20 May 2017).

<sup>117</sup> *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, NIMH, 3.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, eBook edition chapter 5. 'The Clock is Ticking'.

<sup>120</sup> Brief van de Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, 08-10-1996, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Vergaderjaar 1996-1997, 23 727, no. 24.

<sup>121</sup> *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, NIMH, 6.

outside of Rwanda, including in refugee camps in Tanzania.<sup>122</sup> Pronk additionally pleaded for a strong UN-peacekeeping force, of which Dutch soldiers should be part.<sup>123</sup>

At the time, the Netherlands reached a maximum in terms of military deployment, having provided more than 3,000 soldiers to peacekeeping missions, the largest contingents being in the Balkan and Cambodia.<sup>124</sup> The Netherlands had the international reputation to be top of the class in peacekeeping operations.<sup>125</sup> The Dutch always had the urge to be more than just a small country. The Ministry of Defence actively pursued an assertive policy to promote peace and stability in the world, in cooperation with the UN and NATO.<sup>126</sup> Immediately after the end of the Cold War a new enthusiasm for peacekeeping flourished. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defence faced the most fundamental reorganization and downsizing since the Second World War, and had barely time to adapt itself.<sup>127</sup> But the significance of peacekeeping increased, and in the 1993 *Prioriteitennota* it was determined to be the main task of the Dutch military, to the approval of parliament and public opinion. The Netherlands had to be able to simultaneously participate in four peacekeeping operations. Since 1948, the Netherlands took part in fifty peacekeeping missions, exclusively under the auspices of the UN or the NATO, of which two thirds occurred after 1989.<sup>128</sup> Peacekeeping was high-profile and undisputed.<sup>129</sup>

The May draft resolution on UNAMIR II included the request from the UN to the Netherlands to provide twenty military police and twenty men who could handle the logistics of incoming goods at airfields. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter Kooijmans made clear to the Parliamentary Committee of Foreign Affairs that Dutch contribution to UNAMIR outside Rwanda would be a possibility, but considered Dutch participation inside the country too dangerous.<sup>130</sup> The Ministry of Defence informed that, despite having deployed more than 3,000 soldiers worldwide, military personnel was available, and expressed that it did not

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<sup>122</sup> Brief van de Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, 24-05-1994, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, vergaderjaar 1993-1994, 23 727, no. 1.

<sup>123</sup> Fanny Kerstens, *Weet de wereld wel wat hier gebeurt? Analyse van de berichtgeving over de Rwandese crisis in NRC Handelsblad en de Volkskrant van 6 april tot 31 augustus 1994* (MA-thesis History of International Relations; University of Amsterdam 2010) 79.

<sup>124</sup> Gils, van, and Klep, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 112 & 182.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

<sup>126</sup> Anamarija Kristić, *De Staten-Generaal en de Inzet van de Nederlandse Krijgsmacht. Een Onderzoek naar de Parlementaire Betrokkenheid bij de Besluitvorming over Deelname aan Internationale Militaire Operaties* (Deventer 2012) 18.

<sup>127</sup> Gils, van, and Klep, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 114.

<sup>128</sup> Kristić, *De Staten-Generaal en de Inzet van de Nederlandse Krijgsmacht*, 18.

<sup>129</sup> Gils, van, and Klep, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 127.

<sup>130</sup> Berichtenverkeer, Onderwerp: Rwanda/Mondeling overleg Tweede Kamer, 03-06-1992, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01602.

disapprove the request considering the catastrophe in Rwanda.<sup>131</sup> Notwithstanding the Ministry of Defence believed that it:

‘would be irresponsible to send Dutch soldiers to Rwanda at this very moment. In particular because of the experiences of the Belgian UNAMIR-troops, of whom ten were atrociously murdered, as well as the experience of Dutch Captain Van Putten, who worked with the Force Commander of UNAMIR, and had to rapidly leave Kigali. The Belgian-Dutch parallel plays such a large role, that it does not want to dispatch Dutch troops before an improvement of security is guaranteed.’<sup>132</sup>

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, Relus ter Beek, explained to the *Tweede Kamer* that the refusal to send Dutch soldiers was based on the idea that Belgian and Dutch soldiers look similar, and that this would endanger Dutch troops.<sup>133</sup> In *De Volkskrant*, the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Army Hans Couzy commented on the possibility of Dutch deployment in Rwanda: ‘I was strongly opposed. That had nothing to do with fear for victims, but such a mission was unworkable in an area where total chaos reigned. I said at home: "If it goes ahead, I'll resign"’.<sup>134</sup> But the two ministries would consider assistance to UNAMIR outside the borders of Rwanda if necessary, and was committed to continue financial support to humanitarian relief.<sup>135</sup>

Rwanda was indeed a dangerous place for blue-helmets. Twenty-seven members of UNAMIR lost their lives. The psychological burden of operating in area where soldiers are reduced to become bystanders of genocide - resulting in the sense of powerlessness - was enormous. On his return to Canada, UNAMIR-commander Dallaire was diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In his memoir *Waiting for First Light, My Ongoing Battle with PTSD*, he describes his suicide attempts of cutting his arms and thighs with his father's razor, and drinking whisky on a park bench on top of his medication.<sup>136</sup>

The UN was severely criticized for its indifference to the crisis in Rwanda. The UN and the United States were on the track of diplomacy, of bringing parties together, trying to

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<sup>131</sup> Memorandum, Onderwerp: UNAMIR/Nederlandse Deelname, 18-05-1994, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage Rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01602.

<sup>132</sup> Memorandum, Onderwerp: UNAMIR/Nederlandse Deelname, 18-05-1994, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage Rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01602.

<sup>133</sup> Brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en van Defensie, 30-05-1994, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, vergaderjaar 1993-1994, 23 727, no. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Hoedeman and Koelé, ‘(On)aanvaardbaar risico’, *De Volkskrant*, July 8, 2006.

<sup>135</sup> Brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en van Defensie, 30-05-1994, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, vergaderjaar 1993-1994, 23 727, no. 2.

<sup>136</sup> Sarah Hampson, ‘Romeo Dallaire's new memoir explores his battles with PTSD’, *The Globe and Mail*, October 27, 2016.

establish a cease-fire. But the peace train was already derailed by Hutu-*génocidaires* and the military advance of the RPF, leaving the Arusha Accords disfigured and dented. After Somalia and the brutal murder of ten Belgians, the UN could not afford the loss of more peacekeepers. If the lives of UN-soldiers were lost in Rwanda, it was feared that the concept of world peacekeeping would be shattered. The indecisive pondering of the UN, first to reduce the size of UNAMIR and then vowing to increase it, meant that the Hutu-extremist could continue their hunt for Tutsi unhindered.

The Netherlands, providing more than 3,000 soldiers to peacekeeping operations, reached its maximum of troop deployment. Since ten soldiers of the Low Countries had died, the Netherlands understandably thought that it was unwise to send military personnel to UNAMIR II. The Dutch and Belgian simply look too similar from the viewpoint of revengeful Hutu-extremists. The Netherlands thus waited for the occasion to provide humanitarian relief outside Rwanda, showing good-will to the world and to the suffering of refugees, in a place that was considered safe for Dutch soldiers to operate. The opportunity was offered a month and a half later. By mid-July 1994, the *génocidaire* leaders and their subordinates - either perpetrators, accomplices or supporters of the genocide - coerced one million Hutu-civilians into exile in Zaire.

### **3. 'Why do we have to send a reconnaissance team first?'**

It was on the road into exile that Jean Baptiste Murangira heard the word genocide for the first time. He had never heard the word before and did not know its meaning until international journalists and humanitarian aid workers arrived in region. He heard it again in the refugee camps in Zaire.<sup>137</sup> His reason for fleeing was simple: he had killed numerous Tutsi singlehandedly with a machete, because 'we thought we had to kill them all'.<sup>138</sup> His first victim did not die immediately but kept moving for two hours before he died. Although killing was obligatory at first, he quickly got used to it. Sometimes he has nightmares of his crimes, still seeing the blood and the people he killed with his own hands. He was one of the perpetrators that French journalist Jean Hatzfeld interviewed for the book *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*. Hatzfeld wrote that most killers, contrary to the victims, rarely dreamt about the face-to-face murders of their fellow townsmen. They instead had nightmares of the horrors of the Zairean refugee camps.<sup>139</sup>

The conditions of the refugee camps were indeed horrific. Endless rows of corpses wrapped in straw mats, tied up with ropes, lay besides overcrowded roads leading into Zaire. Non-responsive and unable to move, exhausted refugees were lying down, the whites of their eyes turned yellow, staring into nothing. Unaccompanied barefooted children in filthy rags wandering through makeshift outdoor hospitals with patients in the dust waiting for death to come, wearing colorful African wax prints, besmeared by diarrhea caused by dysentery and cholera. Desperation was clouded in thick smoke of wood fires. News cameras from all over the world were there to record it. Confronted with suffering, the world had to act. The Netherlands too, and thus the Ministry of Defence sent a reconnaissance unit, and a small medical team, to Goma, to get a clear insight of how the Dutch armed forces could best provide assistance to the humanitarian relief operations. This chapter will reconstruct the decision-making of sending a reconnaissance-team, and successively dispatching more than one hundred Dutch troops to provide care. Why did the Dutch government decide to provide aid in this instance, in light of her refusal to intervene two months earlier?

Hundreds of thousands of refugees panicky fled westwards after the capture of Kigali by RPF forces on July 4, 1994. Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 850,000 refugees crossed the border into Zaire. A correspondent of the British newspaper *The Independent* reported that thirty people, mainly children, had been crushed in a stampede of rush and panic at the

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<sup>137</sup> Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: the Killers in Rwanda Speak*, 228.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 199.

border on July 17.<sup>140</sup> The fleeing Hutus formed a human river of more than 25 kilometers long, stretching both sides of the border.<sup>141</sup> Confusion and chaos prevailed. During the first month of the crisis an estimated 50,000 died, a number based on the collection of 48,347 bodies by trucks.<sup>142</sup> The Katale refugee camp recorded a crude mortality rate (CMR) of 41.3 deaths per day on a population of 10,000, exceeding the CMR of the famines in Ethiopia in 1985 and Somalia in 1992.<sup>143</sup> This death rate was associated with diarrheal disease caused by cholera and dysentery, and acute malnutrition among children under five years old.<sup>144</sup> Among unaccompanied infants, 100 to 800 died per day, per 10,000.<sup>145</sup> Cholera was a result of horrific conditions and the lack of sanitation. The rock-hard volcano surface made the digging of latrines almost impossible. The water of Lake Kivu was a perfect growth media for cholera, and the only source of drinking water for the refugees in the first days of the crisis.<sup>146</sup>

In the Mugunga camp, 40 percent of the deaths were due to exhaustion and dehydration.<sup>147</sup> Entire families were found dead under their makeshift tents.<sup>148</sup> Measles, malaria and meningitis were recorded daily.<sup>149</sup> In Kigali, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS was reported 20-30%, and since a proportion of the refugees had come from the capital and rape was widespread, the disease was a significant hazard.<sup>150</sup> At the edge of the Mugunga camp, the Nyirogongo volcano had turned active, potentially causing another catastrophe. Jacques Durieux, a French volcanologist, told a French newspaper: 'According to the information we have, a lake of molten lava has just reappeared in the crater. This signals a serious risk of eruption, as in 1977.'<sup>151</sup> In that year, the lava flows reached speeds of 50 to 60 km/h and burned some 60 to 300 people alive, before stopping 10 kilometers away from their springheads.<sup>152</sup>

Humanitarian relief could not keep pace with the mass-exodus. *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) was overwhelmed. UNHCR and its sub-office in Goma were only prepared

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<sup>140</sup> 'Mayhem as Rwandans stampede to Zaire', *The Independent*, July 17, 1994.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Goma Epidemiology Group, 'Public health impact of Rwandan refugee crisis', 339.

<sup>143</sup> Daniel H. Waterman, 'Journey after Darkness. A Study of Goma, Zaire in 1994: Cholera and Clean Water', 2004, Website UNICEF. [https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/07-Goma\\_2004\\_Journey\\_After\\_Darkness.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/07-Goma_2004_Journey_After_Darkness.pdf), 3.

<sup>144</sup> Goma Epidemiology Group, 'Public health impact of Rwandan refugee crisis', 339.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 341.

<sup>146</sup> Waterman, 'Journey after Darkness', 3.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Goma Epidemiology Group, 'Public health impact of Rwandan refugee crisis', 340.

<sup>150</sup> Waterman, 'Journey after Darkness', 37.

<sup>151</sup> Guy Dinmore, 'Aid effort overwhelmed by Rwanda's dying', *The Independent*, July 21, 1994.

<sup>152</sup> H. Tazieff, 'An Exceptional Eruption: Mt. Niragongo, Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1977', *Bulletin of Volcanology* (1976-77) 40:3, 193 & 196.

for an influx of 50,000 refugees.<sup>153</sup> The MSF press officer in Goma immediately alerted the international press. The whole crisis was to be seen on live television. Some 500 news reporters, cameramen and sound technicians only had to leave their encampment at the Goma airport to chronicle the images of destitution and misery.<sup>154</sup> During the genocide itself, the international media was largely absent, failed to interpret the killings as a genocide, and underestimated the number of deaths.<sup>155</sup> Now, most journalists framed the mass-exodus as a humanitarian drama, without understanding or simply ignoring the political context.<sup>156</sup> The never-failing CNN-effect made an impact, pressuring Western governments to act, convincing Western publics to donate money.<sup>157</sup>

The media had the same effect in the Netherlands. Dutch television was broadcasting live from Goma, and long and detailed accounts of dying children, mass graves and mutilated bodies appeared in Dutch newspapers.<sup>158</sup> Already on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* reported on the 'human tidal wave' of emaciated men, women and children.<sup>159</sup> *De Telegraaf*, with the largest readership of the Netherlands, would make the refugee crisis front-page news for the next weeks. It printed headlines such as 'children's tragedy in Rwanda', 'Rwandans in the grip of famine', 'Rwandans caught between bullets and cholera' and 'Rwandan boy rescued from mass grave' - accompanied with explicit photos highlighting the suffering.<sup>160</sup> At the same time, Dutch newspapers, both *De Telegraaf* and the less sensationalistic newspaper the *NRC Handelsblad*, understood the fact that some refugees had blood on their hands and were committed to continue the war from Zaire.<sup>161</sup> *NRC* correspondent Koert Lindijer quoted a radio broadcast of the RTLM saying: 'it will cost us a month to return [to Rwanda by force]'.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Overseas Development Institute, *The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda. Study III: Principle Findings and Recommendations*, 9.

<sup>154</sup> Linda Polman, *De Crisiskaravaan. Achter de Schermen bij de Noodhulpindustrie* (Amsterdam 2008) 22.

<sup>155</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, 'How the Media Missed the Rwanda Genocide', in Thompson, Allan (ed.) *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (London 2007) 256-260.

<sup>156</sup> Polman, *De Crisiskaravaan*, 23.

<sup>157</sup> The CNN-effect refers to 24-hour live broadcasting by the CNN, and other news agencies, that has the power to influence agenda-setting of policy makers and convince audiences to donate money for a humanitarian cause. See: Steven Livingston, *Clarifying the CNN-Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention* (Research Paper Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government 1997); Anup Shah, 'Media and Natural Disasters', 2005, Website Global Issues. <http://www.globalissues.org/article/568/media-and-natural-disasters> (27 June 2017).

<sup>158</sup> Cees van der Laan, 'Goma: een stad waar hoop vervliegt', *Leeuwarder Courant*, July 21, 1994; Guy Dinmore, 'Rwandese kinderen halen Goma alleen om er te sterven', *NRC Handelsblad*, July 20, 1994.

<sup>159</sup> 'Massavlucht uit Rwanda', *De Telegraaf*, July 14, 1994.

<sup>160</sup> 'Rwandezen in de greep van hongersnood', July 21; 'Kinderdrama in Rwanda', July 19; 'Rwandees jongetje gered uit lijkenkuil', *De Telegraaf*, July 27, 1994.

<sup>161</sup> 'Rwandezen tussen kogel en Cholera', *De Telegraaf*, July 23, 1994.

<sup>162</sup> Koert Lindijer, 'Rwandese leger maakt zich op voor guerrilla', *NRC Handelsblad*, July 20, 1994.

To Western audiences the televised images of the crisis were so overwhelming that refusing to help would have seemed inhuman.<sup>163</sup> The Dutch public opinion thought so too. 'It is simply impossible not to act', said a spokesperson for *Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties* (cooperating aid organizations). In May, a national public aid initiative for Rwanda only brought in 5.5 million guilders; the new initiative in response to the televised refugee crisis in Zaire amassed a total of 72 million.<sup>164</sup> A live concert on the Museumplein in Amsterdam was broadcasted, with singer Ruth Jacott performing a tragic song about a Rwandan boy with the peculiar non-Rwandan name *Buseruka*. Simone Kleinsma sang *Breng hem hier*, a song about a Rwandan mother and her child, who lost each other, presumably during flight, and found each other again - to loud applause of the audience.<sup>165</sup> A Dutch organization that facilitates the adoption of children received tens of phone calls of people who wanted to adopt a Rwandan child.<sup>166</sup> The Netherlands was suddenly very concerned about the fate of Rwanda.

The Minister of Development Cooperation Jan Pronk frequently appeared in national media, shaping public opinion and urging the cabinet to take initiative. Between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of July, Pronk visited Goma to get an idea of the humanitarian situation and to investigate how the Netherlands could contribute. A day before departure, he again called for Dutch military contribution to the UN forces in Rwanda on national radio, expressing his disappointment in the lack of involvement of Western countries in the crisis.<sup>167</sup> Conservative columnist J.L. Heldring of the *NRC* wrote in reaction to the pleas of Pronk: 'What kind of policy is there behind a statement stemming from the emotion of the moment? Maybe none at all.'<sup>168</sup>

In Goma, Pronk met with representatives of MSF, UNHCR, World Food Program (WFP) and The International Committee of the Red Cross. Upon departure Pronk said: 'Even the word tragedy does not apply here. It is impossible to put to words of what is happening here'.<sup>169</sup> On July 20, during a stop-over in Entebbe, Pronk again made an urgent appeal to his colleagues, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, for the deployment of Dutch troops to support humanitarian activities in Rwanda and Zaire.<sup>170</sup> Pronk's appeal

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<sup>163</sup> Ben Barber, 'Feeding Refugees, or War? The Dilemma of Humanitarian Aid', *Foreign Affairs* (1997) 76:4, 13.

<sup>164</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 117.

<sup>165</sup> Coen van Zwol, 'Nationale tv-actie voor Rwanda sober maar succesrijk', *NRC Handelsblad*, August 8, 1994.

<sup>166</sup> 'Adoptieverzoek uit Rwanda vergeefs', *De Telegraaf*, July 29, 1994.

<sup>167</sup> 'Pronk: Nederlandse troepen naar Rwanda', *NRC Handelsblad*, July 18, 1994; 'Aanvoer hulp in Goma ligt stil na aanval', *Leeuwarder Courant*, July 17, 1994.

<sup>168</sup> J.L. Heldring, 'Het Vermogen en de Wil. Dezer Dagen', *NRC Handelsblad*, July 22, 1994.

<sup>169</sup> 'Pronk overstuur door toestand in Rwanda', *Limburgs Dagblad*, July 21, 1994.

<sup>170</sup> 'Pronk bepleit steun Nederland aan Rwanda', *NRC Handelsblad*, July 21, 1994; 'Nederland stuurt geen soldaten naar Rwanda', *Limburgs Dagblad*, July 22, 1994.

was based on requests made by representatives of UNHCR and of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that only national armies could take care of the logistics, the management and technical guidance of such enormous relief operations.<sup>171</sup>

On July 21, a few hours before the return of Pronk, the Council of Ministers again decided in his absence not to dispatch soldiers to UNAMIR II, but would send material to the peacekeeping force instead. The decision divided the parliament, with right-wing parties supporting it, and left-wing parties expressing that they found it regrettable that no troops were deployed. One member of the *Tweede Kamer* thought it was: 'disappointing that the cabinet adopts such a wait-and-see attitude'.<sup>172</sup> The Ministry of Defence stressed that an operation in Rwanda would be too dangerous for Dutch troops and that the Netherlands reached a maximum in terms of military deployment.<sup>173</sup> The Netherlands would instead make military material available, made surplus by the Defence reorganization, to a Zambian battalion of UNAMIR II. This included 50 heavy transportation trucks, 25 Land Rovers, 15 generators, 10 mobile canteens and the training of 125 Zambian military drivers and 10 service engineers.<sup>174</sup>

Dutch military historians Christ Klep and Richard van Gils wrote that in the debates whether-or-not to send troops to international peacekeeping operations is a question of *why* and *how* to participate.<sup>175</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation have a different way of reasoning than the Ministry of Defence. Whereas the former two Ministries largely think in abstract terms of political and moral benefits, the latter applies a more rigid cost-benefit analysis. Is the deployment of troops of real use, and is it reasonable that soldiers risk their lives in presumably dead-end missions? Secondly, *how* to implement a military operation. Which military units should be deployed for example? The reason why the Netherlands participates in peacekeeping operations is much less controversial than the question of how this should happen, because these missions make our wish to help fellow human beings in need tangible.<sup>176</sup> This comes down to the dilemma as put forwards by Klep and Van Gils: all practical arguments, for and against Dutch involvement considered, it came down to a preeminent abstract argument of moral responsibility. That was certainly true of humanitarian disasters, of which the shocking images reached the Dutch audience daily. Klep

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<sup>171</sup> Brief van de Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, 25-07-1994, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, vergaderjaar 1993-1994, 23 727, no. 5.

<sup>172</sup> 'Wel materieel, geen militairen naar Rwanda', *Leeuwarder Courant*, July 22, 1994.

<sup>173</sup> 'Pronk bepleit steun Nederland aan Rwanda', *NRC Handelsblad*, July 21, 1994.

<sup>174</sup> Berichtenverkeer, Onderwerp: Nederlandse bijdrage Rwanda/ transport, 04-08-1994, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01601.

<sup>175</sup> Gils, van, and Klep, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 26 - 28.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

and Van Gils rightly asked: 'Was in the end doing nothing not more worse or objectionable than participating?'<sup>177</sup>

Following more than a week of dramatic coverage of the crisis, U.S. President Bill Clinton initiated a military humanitarian intervention called Operation Support Hope on July 22. A force of just over 3,000 was the largest humanitarian undertaking by any of the militaries in the Rwandan crisis. 337 US-troops supported the humanitarian relief in Goma with activities such as water purification, water distribution and airfield services in Goma.<sup>178</sup> The other troops were dispatched in Kigali, or were part of the airhead and cargo distribution in Entebbe.<sup>179</sup> Where the US response to the genocide was indifferent, cynical even with their blocking of sending reinforcements to UNAMIR, they now had to occasion to do good for the plight of refugees in full view of the world. On July 26, they staged an airdrop without adequate warnings to aid agencies. The goods landed well of the mark, damaging a banana plantation, leading aid officials - not shy of media attention themselves - to label it a publicity stunt.<sup>180</sup>

On the same day that President Clinton initiated Support Hope, he sent a letter to the Prime Minister of the Netherlands Ruud Lubbers, urging him to be involved in humanitarian aid. The letter states:

'I write to inform you of our efforts to assist in the international response to the Rwandan refugee crisis and to urge you to support a greatly enhanced international effort to deal with this tragedy. (...) If you have military units that can operate with ours and the French to deliver these [UN service-] packages to which the U.S. has already committed, and/or provide other humanitarian relief (such as medical care and engineering services), I urge you to have your military commander immediately contact the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and General George Joulwan at U.S. European Command.'<sup>181</sup>

To accept the request by the U.S. is not only responding to their call by stepping in for an important Dutch ally, or falling for diplomatic persuasion, or showing good-will to the world. Accepting is also explained by the bandwagon-effect: if there is an increasing uptake of the belief in humanitarian military intervention by partnering nations, then it was increasingly

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<sup>177</sup> Gils, van, and Klep, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 185.

<sup>178</sup> Guillot and Minear, *Soldiers to the Rescue*, 115.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>181</sup> Message to the Prime Minister Drs. R.F.M. Lubbers from Bill Clinton, 22-07-1994, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage Rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01602.

likely that the Netherlands would do so too. America vowed to send troops to Zaire, France already had troops present, and Germany was keen to send military forces as well. What also might have played a role is that the presence of military forces of two permanent members of the United Nations Security Council created a sense of safety, with France and America able to protect in case of an eruption of violence.

Since the beginning of the mass-exodus of Hutus, there had been an exponential increase of concern for the Rwanda crisis. News reporting not only influenced politicians and public opinion, it also had an effect on staff within the Defence organization, resulting in a genuine - albeit emotional - concern for the crisis, and the wish to become involved without a profound understanding of the conflict.<sup>182</sup> A final plea by Pronk and the request by America led to a high sense of urgency in Dutch politics. On July 22, prime-minister Ruud Lubbers, the Minister of Defence Relus ter Beek and Jan Pronk held an emergency meeting. It was then agreed upon to send troops for a strict humanitarian mission in Zaire. This decision was the origin of a humanitarian mission that later became Operation Provide Care.

On July 25, a meeting on the upcoming mission took place. Present were representatives of the Royal Netherlands- Army, Airforce and Navy, and directors and representatives of the directorates of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation.<sup>183</sup> The Ministry of Defence decided that a relatively small group could be deployed for five weeks. Because it remained unclear of how to exactly provide assistance on the ground, it was decided to send a military reconnaissance-team (recce) to Zaire.<sup>184</sup> Generally speaking, once the government decides that participation is desirable, the armed forces will make sure that it can present an achievable military operation. Political desirability triumphs over practical or operational objections. Practical difficulties are being disregarded and risks minimalized.<sup>185</sup> Klep calls this the 'Yes sir, can do!'-Mentality of the military. With such an attitude it was very difficult for the armed forces to concede in advance that a specific operation is unfeasible.<sup>186</sup>

Ter Beek made clear to the *Tweede Kamer* that the main party was expected to be deployed a week later. The *Tweede Kamer* unanimously agreed to dispatch troops in Zaire, but also stressed that deployment took too slow. All the political parties insisted the Minister of Defence to make haste. 'We have known for days what is required. Why can't we send all

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<sup>182</sup> Interview with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army, 03-03-2017, in the author's collection of interviews.

<sup>183</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 92.

<sup>184</sup> *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, NIMH, 6.

<sup>185</sup> Kristić, *De Staten-Generaal en de Inzet van de Nederlandse Krijgsmacht*, 211.

<sup>186</sup> Klep, *Somalië, Rwanda, Srebrenica*, 180.

the troops immediately instead of sending a recce first?', asked a distrustful member of parliament.<sup>187</sup> The sense of urgency was demonstrated by the fact that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter Kooijmans, returned from vacation for this debate in the *Tweede Kamer* on July 28.<sup>188</sup>

Dutch politics were not naïve to the political context of the refugee crisis. The Dutch cabinet was aware of the fact that FAR-soldiers and militias were reorganizing and rearming in the camps.<sup>189</sup> Members of parliament stressed that only a political solution was of worth, and they thought that disarmament and demobilization were valuable measures to guarantee camp safety. One member of the *Tweede Kamer* asked how banditry and armed soldiers in Goma influenced the effectiveness of aid distribution. Another politician remarked that whether or not to send troops to UNAMIR depended on the question if the safety risks are acceptable for Dutch personnel.<sup>190</sup> That question - regarding to the risks of Provide Care - was strikingly absent during the same debate. Neither the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Cooperation, nor members of the *Tweede Kamer* discussed the dangers to Dutch soldiers. Members of the *Tweede Kamer* emphasized that the reaction to the crisis had been too meager and that haste was crucial.

In a letter to the *Tweede Kamer*, Pronk also recognized the threat of thousands of FAR-soldiers who could seriously destabilize the region, especially when they would go hungry. He described the FAR-soldiers as just a small portion of the total refugee population, not understanding the fact that the soldiers and their military leaders were the primary cause of the refugee crisis, as was shown in Chapter 1. After consultations with WFP in Goma, Pronk vowed to financially support the relief operations with an extra 20 million guilders, mainly directed for the UNHCR and WFP, the latter receiving 8 million.<sup>191</sup> He also included 20 metric ton of high-protein biscuits, and vowed to cover the cost of WFP's food-for-work. The food-for-work program would provide food for the FAR-soldiers if they would hand in their weapons and if they would help in humanitarian relief, such as constructing camps and burying corpses. Another solution Pronk mentioned to the *Tweede Kamer* was the detention of FAR-soldiers, which, he added, was impossible because of uncooperative Zairian authorities. The only real solution to this humanitarian disaster according to Pronk, was a

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<sup>187</sup> 'Kamer verdeeld over vredesmacht Rwanda', *NRC Handelsblad*, July 29, 1994.

<sup>188</sup> 'Kooijmans komt terug voor Ruanda-overleg', *Nederlands Dagblad*, July 28, 1994.

<sup>189</sup> Brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en van Defensie, 27-07-1994, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, vergaderjaar 1993-1994, 23 727, no. 4.

<sup>190</sup> Verslag van een algemeen overleg, 28-07-1994, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, vergaderjaar 1993-1994, 23 727, no. 7.

<sup>191</sup> Berichtenverkeer, Onderwerp: Rwanda, 01-08-1994, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01601.

political solution, meaning that the situation inside Rwanda should be safe so that the refugee could return.<sup>192</sup>

The recce-team boarded an Antonov 124 at the Soesterberg Air Base on July 29.<sup>193</sup> The group consisted of nine members, including medical officers, logistics officers, a transportation officer, a marine officer for security and a representative of The Ministry of Development Cooperation. A small medical team of the Dutch army joined the recce, consisting of two doctors and four nurses. A large amount of relief items destined for MSF-Holland went as well. Given the sudden decision to dispatch soldiers, the recce-team members Van Leusden and Wertheim noted that they had very little time to prepare. No preparations had been made because of the prior decision not to provide military support.<sup>194</sup> Moreover, it was advised to the Chief of Defence Staff not to send soldiers to the region. As a result, the Dutch armed forces did not collect sufficient information on geography and climate, nor did it analyze the ways in which it could contribute to the aid efforts. A detailed analysis of the security situation of Zaire was lacking as well. In the evaluation report of Provide Care it was written that: 'there was absolutely no form of plan adapted to the situation in Goma'.<sup>195</sup>

If the Dutch armed forces had made a detailed analysis, the question remains whether it would be possible to bring order to the perceived chaos of the mass-exodus. The main coordinator on the ground, UNHCR, was unable to coordinate and lead the aid efforts in a region that was in a state of perpetual confusion and disorder. The UNCHR could not provide with an overview of supply and demand of aid assistance. This was one of the factors that caused that the recce-team found it difficult to find work for the medical team.<sup>196</sup> The recce-team nevertheless succeeded in making contact and arrangements with MSF-H to deploy a medical team in one of their field hospitals. Their work also led to insight in the demand of a movement control unit that could handle the logistics of incoming goods at the Goma airport. Likewise, the recce found a location for the military tent camp, which was situated next to the headquarters of MSF, in the garden of Hotel Karibu along the shores of Lake Kivu.<sup>197</sup> The

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<sup>192</sup> Brief van de Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, 25-07-1994, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, vergaderjaar 1993-1994, 23 727, no. 5.

<sup>193</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 92

<sup>194</sup> Leusden, van, and Wertheim, 'Humanitaire hulp door Nederlandse militairen in Zaire', 309.

<sup>195</sup> Evaluatierapport Operatie Provide Care – Humanitaire steunverlening aan Rwandese vluchtelingen in Zaire, The Ministry of Defence, Koninklijke Marine, VN-Operaties, UN-Mission Defensiestaf-Ops, Zaire-Ruanda, div. onderwerpen. Periode: 1994 t/m 1996, doos 13.

<sup>196</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 97.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 99.

recce-team also noticed the presence of Hutu-soldiers and militias in camps. The recce-team reported to the Netherlands:

“Generally speaking, the population is friendly. There is a lot of theft. In the evening, drunken Zairean soldiers can be aggressive. Killings happen regularly. Westerners are largely spared from this. (...) It is reported that there are groups of captive soldiers. These are medically supported by the Red Cross.”<sup>198</sup>

After a few days it appeared that, without the feedback or consultation with the reconnaissance unit, the main party would arrive sooner than expected.<sup>199</sup> Already on Saturday July 23, personnel who would compose the main party were approached to see whether they were available for a humanitarian mission. The summer vacation in the Netherlands made it hard to compile a list of personnel, which meant that a driver of a general was deployed to transport goods and water in Zaire.<sup>200</sup> Even though the Ministry of Defence decided that only volunteers could participate, an Airforce driver was voluntarily chosen by his commander.<sup>201</sup>

A recce-team member had explicitly advised not to send young personnel. He thought it was unwise to expose them to the extreme misery of the region, given the likelihood that they may suffer psychological trauma.<sup>202</sup> Young soldiers were included nevertheless. An older colleague recalled:

‘There were young girls deployed. I had a daughter of that age. I would find it terrible if my daughter would have been there. Those girls went swimming in the lake until a few corpses floated by. You don't do this to eighteen year-olds. They say they're soldiers, but this is of a different order.’<sup>203</sup>

On Monday August 1, members of the main party from the Royal Netherlands- Airforce and Army received a briefing that was primarily focused on safety issues. Topics included the dangers of HIV and other infectious diseases, the huge masses in the camps and the dangers

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<sup>198</sup> First Impression Report Geneeskundige Zaken Nederland Detachement Zaire, 04-08-1994, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage Rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01601.

<sup>199</sup> Leusden, van, and Wertheim, ‘Humanitaire hulp door Nederlandse militairen in Zaire’, 309.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with the Commander of the Transport Unit in Zaire of the Royal Netherlands Army, 10-02-2017, in the author's collection of interviews.

<sup>201</sup> Leest, van, Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care, 11.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army, 03-03-2017; Sitrep nr 1. Recce-Party Zaire, 31-07-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with the Spokesman of the Information Department of The Ministry of Defence, 03-02-2017, in the author's collection of interviews.

for drivers to maneuver without running over refugees. It was also recommended that jewelry, wedding rings and chains, should be removed to offer no unnecessary incentive for robbery. A presentation included the question: 'What to do in a roadblock? Answer: if you drive on they might shoot you. If you stop they might shoot you too.'<sup>204</sup>

Regarding the civil war, the genocide and the refugee crisis, most soldiers got their information from sensationalistic news reporting.<sup>205</sup> 'Concerning the conflict: Yes, I was naive. I only knew the images of television,' explained a navy doctor.<sup>206</sup> Military drivers who on the day of departure were suddenly told that there was no place for them onboard, cried after hearing this. Their tears as a water-clear symbol of Dutch compassion, but also as a salty obstruction of vision, so that it blinded the darker side of the refugee crisis.<sup>207</sup> Another example of the unawareness of the violent context of Rwanda and Zaire can be found in an information bulletin of the Marine Corps, who deployed a small contingent for safety:

'The shocking reports about the situation in Rwanda and in the refugee camps in Zaire, which you have read and seen in the media, make it clear that humanitarian aid is necessary. (...) The strict humanitarian mission is conducted in an area declared safe.'<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Leest, van, *Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care*, 15.

<sup>205</sup> Leest, van, *Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care*, 12; Interview with the Commander of the Transport Unit in Zaire of the Royal Netherlands Army, 10-02-2017; Interview with the Chief General Healthcare of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, 23-02-2017; Interview with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army, 03-03-2017, in the author's collection of interviews.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with a Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, 01-02-2017, in the author's collection of interviews.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with the Chief General Healthcare of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, 23-02-2017, in the author's collection of interviews.

<sup>208</sup> Voorwoord voor het info-bulletin, 02-08-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10.

#### **4. Save a soul, save a nation**

'We did not have maps. Well, virtually drawn maps, copied in black and white. The details of the area were more or less unknown. We knew where the camps were but many people knew nothing about the environment, nor about militant factions and warring parties. Our objective was unclear.'

- The Chief Security Officer of the Netherlands Marine Corps.<sup>209</sup>

A flock of refugees open in front and close behind the car when driving through a camp housing more than 200,000 people. Three Dutchmen drove through a camp when the engine of their Land Rover shut down abruptly. Hundreds of refugees enclosed them, including Hutu-men who greeted the Dutch - in the same way Hutu-militias greeted the Belgian commandos in Kigali - by making gestures of cutting their throats.<sup>210</sup> A spokesperson of the Airforce was seated in the back with a gun in his hand, but knew that they were helpless if something would happen. Luckily a French crew of tanker truck was near and approached them. 'It was not enjoyable to work there, it was not always safe,' the spokesperson recalled.<sup>211</sup>

This chapter reconstructs the five weeks that Dutch troops provided humanitarian assistance in Zaire. The international efforts, including the Dutch contribution, brought down mortality and suffering. Besides providing care to refugees, there was a separate world of war and genocide in the camps. From the start of the mass-exodus, while chaos reigned and international aid thrived, the Hutu- *génocidaires* had the goal to reorganize with the misuse of aid and the help of Zairian authorities, for the sake of reconquering Rwanda and continuing the genocide. Dutch soldiers worked mostly unaware of this political side of the crisis and were unprepared in this extremely violent place.

The main party of Operation Provide Care arrived in Goma on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August. The Dutch forces consisted of a transport unit from the Royal Netherlands- Army and Airforce, a medical unit (Army, Airforce and Navy), a seven man unit from the Marine Corps, a Movement Control Unit (Movecon) from the Army, and an interservice staff- and support group. It was the first time that an interservice operation was coordinated by the *Defensie Crisis Beheersings Centrum* from The Hague.<sup>212</sup> A total of 106 Dutch men and women participated in support of humanitarian relief around Goma. They focused on the

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<sup>209</sup> Interview with the Chief Security Officer of the Netherlands Marine Corps, 06-04-2017.

<sup>210</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 927.

<sup>211</sup> Interview with the Spokesman of the Information Department of the Ministry of Defence, 03-02-2017.

<sup>212</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 92.

transport of water and relief goods, medical aid, and logistical support at the Goma airport. A fourth group of seven marines was added for the security of the transports, of the goods at the airport and the safety of the main camp.

The doctors and nurses joined the field hospital of MSF in the Katala refugee camp, some 65 kilometers north of Goma with a population of 200,000-250,000. Another group of Dutch personnel worked at the field hospital of the NGO Memisa in the Mugunga refugee camp which was situated near Goma and housed 175,000.<sup>213</sup> Moreover, the Dutch assisted at an aid post at the Israeli field hospital. The medical unit also did vaccination campaign in the camps to counter measles and meningitis. Additionally, there was a transport group that transported refugees in need of acute medical help to the field hospitals. It sometimes happened that upon arrival 90 percent of the patients had died.<sup>214</sup> If they survived the trip, the best medical attention awaited at the Israelis. The Israelis had advanced medical equipment that was manned by a medical team that rotated every two weeks between Goma and Israel. Two Dutch soldiers reported that the Israeli were mainly interested in training their staff so that they could gain experience in sophisticated surgical operations.<sup>215</sup>

A Dutchman described the hospitals as 'absolute hell'.<sup>216</sup> Patients lay in puddles of bloody diarrhea in front of the hospital tents, unable to reach it.<sup>217</sup> Inside the tents: 'There are field beds on which five or six children are dying in their own feces which are as thin as water and often mixed with blood.'<sup>218</sup> Holes were later cut in the field beds so that excrements dropped through. Intravenous drips hanged on a wire stretching both ends of the tents. Medical personnel worked vigorously from dawn till dusk trying to save as many lives as they could, sometimes by first doing a triage of who could and could not be saved.<sup>219</sup> 'You work twenty hours a day running around like a headless chicken. You are completely overwhelmed, and trying to survive and cope,' a doctor of the Navy said.<sup>220</sup>

Dutch troops worked in support of Memisa and MSF. In the eyes of the logistician of Memisa, the Dutch and the NGO cooperated fantastically.<sup>221</sup> The soldiers felt welcome at

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<sup>213</sup> USAID Consolidated Rwanda Report #10, 1994, Website University of Pennsylvania – African Studies Center. [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Urgent\\_Action/CRR\\_10.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Urgent_Action/CRR_10.html) (27 June 2017).

<sup>214</sup> *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, NIMH, 9.

<sup>215</sup> Interview with a Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, 01-02-2017; Interview with the Chief Security Officer of the Netherlands Marine Corps, 06-04-2017.

<sup>216</sup> Leest, van, *Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care*, 26.

<sup>217</sup> Interview with the Spokesman of the Information Department of The Ministry of Defence, 03-02-2017.

<sup>218</sup> Leest, van, *Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care*, 26.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with a Logistician of Memisa, 03-04-2017, in the author's collection of interviews.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with a Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, 01-02-2017.

<sup>221</sup> Interview with a Logistician of Memisa, 03-04-2017.

Memisa, and the NGO was grateful for the support of the military.<sup>222</sup> Their collaboration resulted in the creation of a field hospital with an assisting Dutch medical unit. The transport group delivered medical goods. Dutch military personnel sometimes had dinner and lunch at Memisa, where they ate local foods, including fresh bread and cheese.<sup>223</sup> Because local food was considered hazardous, the Dutch were limited in their choice of canned military rations.

The cooperation between the Dutch armed forces and MSF-H, which explicitly requested military assistance, did not go as seamlessly. Wishing to guarantee its neutrality, MSF-H declined to receive Dutch soldiers in military uniform. Before entering the facility of MSF in Katale, Dutch military personnel had to change their attire and leave their weapons that they carried for safety in the trucks.<sup>224</sup> MSF's standpoint led to discussions and mutual distrust between Dutch troops and the NGO.<sup>225</sup> At one point MSF refused military drivers in the camps. The transport officer remembered the resulting sense of powerlessness and frustration of not being able to help people in need: 'Hundreds of thousands of people are in anguish from thirst, it is very strange that you are confronted with [the discussion of carrying weapons]. That has been confrontational and traumatic for many soldiers.'<sup>226</sup>

The transport unit transported relief goods and clean water, the latter being essential in combatting cholera. In the Netherlands, barrels, with a capacity of 7,000 liters, were provisionally welded onto DAF heavy transport trucks, which swayed from left to right because they did not have any stabilizing device.<sup>227</sup> The drivers picked the water up at a purification plant of the American army at Lake Kivu. They loaded their barrels or they mounted balloon-like water storage bladders onto the trucks.<sup>228</sup> Due to the enormous weight and hilly terrain, the drivers had to make speed on crowded and unsurfaced roads, with the danger of running over people.<sup>229</sup> When the drivers arrived in the camps, the refugees had been standing the whole day in the hot sun for food and water to arrive, anxiously waiting to fill their jerry cans.<sup>230</sup> Nothing was spilled as children scooped the muddy water from puddles with rusty cans.<sup>231</sup>

The Dutch were responsible for nearly 50 percent of the total water distribution in the

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<sup>222</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 116.

<sup>223</sup> Interview with a Logistician of Memisa, 03-04-2017.

<sup>224</sup> *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, NIMH, 8.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>226</sup> Interview with the Commander of the Transport Unit in Zaire from the Royal Netherlands Army, 10-02-2017.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*; , *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, NIMH, 9.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with the Commander of the Transport Unit in Zaire of the Royal Netherlands Army, 10-02-2017.

<sup>230</sup> Leest, van, *Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care*, 26.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with a Logistician of Memisa, 03-04-2017.

Goma region, which amounts to a total of 4690 cubic meters.<sup>232</sup> Additionally, 863 metric tons of goods and 453 patients were transported. The Movecon took care of the unloading of 609 planes and 1236 passengers. Medical staff treated 311 patients at the Israeli hospital, 631 in Mugunga and several hundred at Katale.<sup>233</sup> While some soldiers felt that the Dutch efforts were just a drop in the ocean, the total relief efforts of 200 NGOs and the armed forces of France, The United States, Canada, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Israel, Ireland and the Netherlands provided a positive contribution on the humanitarian front.

On July 29, the relief operations only were able to provide 1 liter of water per person per day, while UNHCR recommends a minimum of 15-20 liters per day.<sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, international organizations reached their initial goal to provide 5 liters of water per person per day in the first week of August.<sup>235</sup> Another positive effect was that malnutrition rates dropped. In November, the malnutrition rate in Katale was 10 percent, significant lower than the 23.1 percent at the end of July.<sup>236</sup> The crude mortality rate (CMR) dropped too as it went from 44.9 per 10,000 per day between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of July, to less than 10 per 10,000 per day by the second week of August.<sup>237</sup> By November, international aid resulted that the CMR dropped to 0.2 per 10,000 per day. The Zairian refugee camps had better mortality rates than an average developing country with a CMR of 0.5.<sup>238</sup>

A military humanitarian intervention is justified when it does more good than harm, according to the American political scientist Taylor Seybolt. He wrote: 'if in a humanitarian crisis some people would have died without assistance, but did not die because of the actions of military personnel, the intervention succeeded.'<sup>239</sup> Speaking of U.S. Operation Support Hope, he concluded that there was a correlation between the U.S. intervention and changes in mortality. The U.S. troops played a role in stopping diarrheal diseases - a major cause of death - by increasing water supply, instituting oral rehydration and improving sanitation. According to Seybolt Support Hope saved thousands of lives per day.<sup>240</sup> The Netherlands also played an important part in this, especially with their vital position in the transport of water. Applying this humanitarian standard on the declining mortality rates in the Zairian refugee

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<sup>232</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 111; Leusden, van, and Wertheim, 'Humanitaire hulp door Nederlandse militairen in Zaïre', 311.

<sup>233</sup> Leusden, van, and Wertheim, 'Humanitaire hulp door Nederlandse militairen in Zaïre', 311.

<sup>234</sup> Goma Epidemiology Group, 'Public health impact of Rwandan refugee crisis', 342.

<sup>235</sup> Waterman, 'Journey after Darkness', 21 & 28.

<sup>236</sup> Laurence Binet, *MSF Speaking Out: Rwandan Refugee Camps in Zaire and Tanzania 1994-1995* (Médecins Sans Frontières International Movement 2013) 55 & 30.

<sup>237</sup> Goma Epidemiology Group, 'Public health impact of Rwandan refugee crisis', 340.

<sup>238</sup> Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 95.

<sup>239</sup> Taylor B. Seybolt, *Humanitarian Military Intervention. The Conditions for Success and Failure*, 30

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

camps, the international efforts, including those of the Dutch armed forces, were successful.

Men, women and children, those who had nothing to do with the genocide, were saved. As the situation of the camps turned from chaos into reconstruction, an aid worker of Memisa noted that: 'While we were walking through the camp we could hear children sing again. A child's voice is the sign of future, of life.'<sup>241</sup> Most Dutch personnel expressed that they experienced the work as highly meaningful, emphasizing the individual lives saved. A military driver of the Airforce thought:

'If you can save a soul, then it is good that we have been there. We saved hundreds of thousands. It would have been much worse if we had not been there. We have unloaded a lot of planes, set-up the entire infrastructure and water supply.'<sup>242</sup>

In the early stages of the mass-exodus of Hutus, the camps were a destitute place of chaos and misery, its inhabitants displayed an almost bestial survival instinct when trying to acquire water and food. With international help normal life returned – almost too normal as it looked as if the refugee were not planning to return. On August 9, the recce-team reported that it appeared that Mugunga was arranged for permanent occupancy.<sup>243</sup> The aid worker of Memisa, who stayed in Zaire from July till October 1994, remembered seeing bars and restaurants being established, sewing machines with a generator attached and a cinema that screened *Rambo*.<sup>244</sup>

The Hutu-political leaders had moved into the lush hotels of Goma along the shores of Lake Kivu and discussed their strategies under Heineken parasols beside swimming pools.<sup>245</sup> Zaire was a welcome change of scenery for extremist Hutu-leaders who had orchestrated the most efficient genocide in history. They could see Rwanda across the pond and their FAR-soldiers fishing with grenades.<sup>246</sup> The Hutu-government in exile held six cabinet meetings in Zaire in July and August.<sup>247</sup> A trip through the Goma might have been a welcome distraction for them. Two Dutch soldiers saw the political leaders and generals riding around in a convoy of ten to twelve cars, Mercedes Benz's and SUVs, escorted by motorcycles at the front and

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<sup>241</sup> Interview with a Logistician of Memisa, 03-04-2017.

<sup>242</sup> Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Transport Unit of the Royal Netherlands Airforce, 24-02-2017, in the author's collection of interviews.

<sup>243</sup> Eindrapportage verkenningseenheid, 09-08-1994, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage Rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01601.

<sup>244</sup> Interview with a Logistician of Memisa, 03-04-2017; Polman, *De Crisiskaravaan*, 28.

<sup>245</sup> Polman, *De Crisiskaravaan*, 30.

<sup>246</sup> Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brothers. At War in Somalia, Sudan, and Rwanda* (New York 2000) 308.

<sup>247</sup> Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide*, 243.

back.<sup>248</sup> From their Zairian lair the Hutu- *génocidaires* initiated the rearmament and reorganization of their troops to take back Rwanda.

The general command of the FAR settled in the banana grove at Lac Vert, a crater lake approximately 10 kilometers from the Dutch base camp, while most FAR-soldiers lived in camp Mugunga nearby.<sup>249</sup> The FAR had emptied the banks of cash belonging to the Tutsi and took with them some \$30-40 million worth of local currency and another \$30-40 million in foreign currency. Buses, trucks, machinery, fuel and coffee worth of millions were taken as well.<sup>250</sup> The FAR also had 35,000 light weapons and 1,000 artillery pieces at their disposal.<sup>251</sup> Confiscated weapons were sold back by the Zairian Army and arms were clandestinely supplied via the Goma airport.<sup>252</sup> In July and August 1994, while the Dutch Movecon were busy unloading planes, eyewitnesses saw four planes landing at Goma which carried weapons for the FAR.<sup>253</sup>

In September, the *génocidaire* leadership controlled some 22,000 FAR soldiers in Zaire.<sup>254</sup> Estimations on the Hutu-militias, including the *Interahamwe*, range between 10,000 and 50,000. HRW estimated that due to vigorous recruitment and the absorption of militia members, the Hutu-forces in Zaire boasted the strength of 50,000 men.<sup>255</sup> The commander of the marines was certain that children were recruited too. The FAR and *Interahamwe* indeed went from door to door forcibly abducting children, and recruiting youths from 10 to 20 years old.<sup>256</sup>

'Rwandan soldiers avoided us like the plague,' a member of the Dutch recce-team recalled.<sup>257</sup> The Dutch nevertheless saw former Rwandan soldiers congregating, standing up straight and recognizable by their camouflaged jackets, and the blue emblem on their

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<sup>248</sup> These reports from Dutch veterans are consistent with new reports. See for example: Stephen Buckley, 'Camp Die-Hard: Rwandan Resists Returning Home', *The Washington Post*, June 26, 1995; Interview with the Chief Security Officer of the Netherlands Marine Corps, 06-04-2017; Interview with the Spokesman of the Information Department of the Ministry of Defence, 03-02-2017.

<sup>249</sup> Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca 2002) 157.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, 160.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*, 161.

<sup>252</sup> Amnesty International, *Rwanda: Arming the perpetrators of the genocide* (online PDF-edition on the website of Amnesty International; 1995) 2.

<sup>253</sup> Human Rights Watch Arms Project, 'Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity', 1995, Website Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Rwanda1.htm> (11 April 2017).

<sup>254</sup> Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?*, 159.

<sup>255</sup> Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 81.

<sup>256</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *The Democratic Republic of the Congo 1993-2003 UN Mapping Report* (online PDF-edition on the website of OHCHR; 2010), 347; Binet, *MSF Speaking Out: Rwandan Refugee Camps in Zaire and Tanzania*, 45.

<sup>257</sup> Interview with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army, 03-03-2017.

barrettes - although some Dutch soldiers were unaware to which side they belonged.<sup>258</sup> If the soldiers had taken off their attire, their black army boots were the only sign of their line of work.<sup>259</sup> On July 27, FAR-soldiers were queuing in front of large military tents on the side of the road near Mugunga to collect their wages. A reporter of *The Independent* wrote:

‘The soldiers look fit and healthy. All are in uniforms, which, considering the amount of dust and filth in the refugee camps, are surprisingly clean. Unlike the 16 civilian refugee camps around Goma, there are few bodies piled up near the army areas.’<sup>260</sup>

The support of Zaire, international aid and the human shield of Hutu-refugees were useful means for the *génocidaire* leadership to stage their attack on Rwanda.<sup>261</sup> Zaire had close ties with former Rwandan president Habyarimana and continued to support the ousted Rwandan leaders in Zaire, facilitating the rearmament of the FAR and the militias.<sup>262</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW) determined that: ‘Zairian forces close to president Mobutu Sese Seko have played a pivotal role in facilitating the re-emergence as a powerful military force of those directly implicated in the Rwandan Genocide’.<sup>263</sup> Mobutu’s Zaire was unwilling to demilitarize the refugee camps and incapable to enforce security in its Kivu Region.<sup>264</sup> The Zairian president also helped to pretend that the Rwandan state-in-exile was still a major power to be reckoned with.<sup>265</sup>

The ousted Rwandan state benefited greatly from the billions of dollars in humanitarian aid to the refugee camps. International donors spent \$1.4 billion on relief contracts for Goma between April and December 1994.<sup>266</sup> According to Kenyon Lischer humanitarian aid exacerbated the Rwandan conflict by feeding militants and sustaining and protecting the militants’ supporters and families. Aid also supported a war economy because the *génocidaire* leaders levied tax on the refugee population and controlled food distribution. The logistician of Memisa had the impression that in Mugunga a certain power structure

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<sup>258</sup> Interview with the Medical Advisor of the Dutch contingent in Zaire, 13-03-2017; Interview with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army, 03-03-2017; Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Transport Unit of the Royal Netherlands Airforce, 24-02-2017.

<sup>259</sup> *Onder de Vlag van de Verenigde Naties. Deel I: De Grote Ramp*, Teleac Nederland 2, 1995. Seen in Academic Medical Center, April 2017.

<sup>260</sup> Robert Block, ‘Rwandan troops still on payroll: Robert Block in Goma sees defeated soldiers collecting their wage as part of a plan to keep the military intact in Zaire’, *The Independent*, July 28, 1994.

<sup>261</sup> François Saulnier, ‘The Human Shield Strategy’, *The World Today* (1996) 52:1, 18-19.

<sup>262</sup> Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?*, 156.

<sup>263</sup> Human Rights Watch Arms Project, ‘Rwanda/Zaire: Rearming with Impunity’, 1995, Website Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Rwanda1.htm> (11 April 2017).

<sup>264</sup> Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 84.

<sup>265</sup> Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 28.

<sup>266</sup> Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 90.

came to life as soon as darkness fell and assumed that a war tax was levied on the refugee population.<sup>267</sup> A report of the Dutch contingent confirmed that armed Rwandan soldiers threatened the refugees to hand over relief items.<sup>268</sup>

It slowly became clear to the Dutch military intelligence service that armed and hungry Hutu-militias also threatened aid workers to turn over food.<sup>269</sup> The Dutch troops had experienced the same in Bosnia two years earlier when warring parties claimed relief goods as a form of tax.<sup>270</sup> In Zaire, small incidents of theft occurred at the Dutch base camp and the airport.<sup>271</sup> During one incident, men - who entered by boat via the lake - tried to steal medicine from the Israelis but were then mercilessly shot by Zairian soldiers.<sup>272</sup> At water distribution points, male refugees armed with sticks were at the front of the queue, something which a Dutch transport officer interpreted as a kind of order police that coordinated the distribution.<sup>273</sup> Elsewhere it looked as if men collected water in barrels and sold quantities to Goma inhabitants.<sup>274</sup> Incidentally, it might have occurred that Dutch medical personnel treated Hutu-soldiers and militias.<sup>275</sup> In reaction to the appropriation of aid by Hutu-militants, a Dutch medical advisor emphasized that: 'It was naïve to assume that the causes of the disaster - the genocide - would not play a role in the camps anymore. It is a naïve thought that humanitarian care is neutral.'<sup>276</sup> Seybolt expressed the same: 'Aid is not politically neutral, as many humanitarian organizations insist it is. Aid is valuable and therefore has a political and economic impact in zones of conflict.'<sup>277</sup>

On August 5, a mere three weeks after the beginning of the crisis, a French newspaper reported that the Rwandan military almost had complete control of the Mugunga refugee

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<sup>267</sup> The aid worker's assumption was found to be true, see for example: Binet, *MSF Speaking Out: Rwandan Refugee Camps in Zaire and Tanzania*, 77; Roger Winter, 'Lancing the Boil: Rwanda's Agenda in Zaire', in Adelman, Howard and Govind C. Rao (ed.), *War and Peace in Zaire/Congo: Analyzing and Evaluating Intervention: 1996-1997* (Trenton 2004) 112; Interview with a Logistician of Memisa, 03-04-2017.

<sup>268</sup> Aantekening betreffende de veiligheid van Nederlandse militairen en Nederlandse hulpverleners in Rwanda, 26-08-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Koninklijke Marine, VN-Operaties, UN-Mission Defensiestaf-Ops, Zaire-Ruanda, div. onderwerpen. Periode: 1994 t/m 1996, doos 13.

<sup>269</sup> Infomap Goma "Provide Care". Directie Operatie. Koninklijke Landmacht, afdeling Inlichtingen en Veiligheid, Sectie Inlichtingen, The Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10.

<sup>270</sup> Gils, van, and Klep, *Van Korea tot Kabul*, 110.

<sup>271</sup> Interview with the Chief Security Officer of the Netherlands Marine Corps, 06-04-2017

<sup>272</sup> Ibid; Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Transport Unit of the Royal Netherlands Airforce, 24-02-2017.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Interview with the Commander of the Transport Unit in Zaire of the Royal Netherlands Army, 10-02-2017.

<sup>275</sup> The *Herrineringsboek* of Provide Care includes a photo of a wounded man, being treated in the Israeli hospital, who had killed a few people before he was taken out himself, presumably with a machete. See: *Care Provided*, the Ministry of Defence (Reusel 1994) 26.

<sup>276</sup> Interview with the Medical Advisor of the Dutch contingent in Zaire, 13-03-2017.

<sup>277</sup> Seybolt, *Humanitarian Military Intervention*, 279.

camp.<sup>278</sup> An aid worker of the NGO Médecins du Monde said: 'They [FAR-soldiers] divert entire truckloads of food and head off who knows where. Their rule is law.'<sup>279</sup> Besides military authority, the Rwandan administrative structures - the prefectures, communes, sectors and cellules - were restored in the camps in Zaire.<sup>280</sup> Through these power structures, the first pick for food and health treatment was given to the former elite and the FAR-soldiers - to people connected to the implementation of the genocide.<sup>281</sup> On August 26, a situational report of the Dutch contingent stated on Mugunga:

'There is a clear hierarchy, both military and civilian, present in the camp. Soldiers control the entrance of the camp and have established guard posts on elevated locations, while at least two prefects are present in the camp who seem to have plenty of influence.'<sup>282</sup>

The leaders realized that controlling information available to refugees was extremely valuable. The *génocidaires* exaggerated horror stories about the RPF in order to discourage refugees to return home.<sup>283</sup> 'Stories circulated that returning Hutu have had their eyes gouged out and worse', wrote a journalist of *The New York Times*.<sup>284</sup> Leaflets and radio stations propagated the idea that Hutus were the main victims of the genocide and the war.<sup>285</sup> The propaganda in the camps reinforced the already deeply seated believe of Hutu-Tutsi stigmatization. Some camp inhabitants genuinely believed in the justness of mass murder. A translator of a Dutch medical officer, a rich Kigalian finely dressed rich in a white suit, openly expressed to the shock and disbelief of the medical officer that: 'the job was not yet finished', meaning the extermination of the Tutsi.<sup>286</sup>

Auguste Ngendanzi, a camp leader, is an example of how Hutu leaders controlled the information flows. He told a Dutch television crew in Zaire:

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<sup>278</sup> Binet, *MSF Speaking Out: Rwandan Refugee Camps in Zaire and Tanzania*, 32.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Johan Pottier, 'Relief and Repatriation: Views by Rwandan Refugees; Lessons for Humanitarian Aid Workers', *African Affairs* (1996) 95:380, 410.

<sup>281</sup> Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 25.

<sup>282</sup> Sitrep, 26-08-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Koninklijke Marine, VN-Operaties, UN-Mission Defensiestaf-Ops, Zaire-Ruanda, div. onderwerpen. Periode: 1994 t/m 1996, doos 13.

<sup>283</sup> Pottier, 'Relief and Repatriation', 426; Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 101.

<sup>284</sup> Bonner, 'Rwandans Say the Victors Kill Many Who Go Back', *The New York Times*, August 5, 1994.

<sup>285</sup> Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries*, 101.

<sup>286</sup> Interview with a Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, 01-02-2017.

'I think that the corpses that were found in the churches are victims of the Tutsi army (...). I saw it with my own eyes. They rounded up a group of fifty people and killed everybody. It is not strange to find bodies in church. This is how the RPF operates.'<sup>287</sup>

If propaganda was not sufficient in compelling Hutus to flee and stay put in the camps in Zaire, coercion and intimidation within a system of organized terror surely were. When the refugees had arrived in Zaire and understandably wanted to return, they were violently intimidated and even killed by the *Interahamwe*.<sup>288</sup> A correspondent for *The Independent* wrote: 'Refugees who try to leave [Zaire for Rwanda] are systematically accused of being spies and are often lynched by the suspicious crowds, urged on by the militiamen.'<sup>289</sup> A Dutch military driver wrote in his diaries that killings were the order of the day. He described seeing a body of man alongside the road in Katale, his skull cut open, his brain next to his head and two arms in the air as if he was screaming for help. The *Interahamwe* had left the corpse to set an example while refugees walked passively by.<sup>290</sup> In another instance he wrote that two men were tied together, the soles of their feet burned and their throats cut.<sup>291</sup>

In addition to these political murders, killings were also carried out for vengeance or out of fear that somebody could be a RPF spy.<sup>292</sup> Dutch soldiers recalled that when they returned to the hospital tents the next day, the drips, used to intravenously rehydrate cholera patients, were sometimes torn out causing the patient to die.<sup>293</sup> The hospitals also received patients with machetes wounds, their backs severely injured, presumably because they had fought over food.<sup>294</sup> Murders for the purpose of robbery, or for the protection from it, occurred too. On August 9, refugees killed two Zairian soldiers in Katale and one Kibumba out frustration over food theft.<sup>295</sup> A female refugee recalled that the notorious bandits from

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<sup>287</sup> *Onder de Vlag van de Verenigde Naties. Deel I: De Grote Ramp*, Teleac Nederland 2, 1995. Seen in Academic Medical Center, April 2017.

<sup>288</sup> African Rights, *Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance*, 660; Binet, *MSF Speaking Out: Rwandan Refugee Camps in Zaire and Tanzania*, 35 & 63.

<sup>289</sup> 'Banditry takes hold in Rwanda camp', *The Independent*, July 29, 1994.

<sup>290</sup> These reports from a Dutch source are consistent with the sources in footnote 294 and 295; Leest, van, *Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care*, 33.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>292</sup> Umutesi, *Surviving the Slaughter*, 79-81; 'Banditry takes hold in Rwanda camp', *The Independent*, July 29, 1994.

<sup>293</sup> Interview with the Chief General Healthcare of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, 23-02-2017; Interview with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of The Royal Netherlands Army, 03-03-2017; Interview with the Spokesman of the Information Department of the Ministry of Defence, 03-02-2017.

<sup>294</sup> Interview with the Spokesman of the Information Department of the Ministry of Defence, 03-02-2017; Interview with a Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, 01-02-2017.

<sup>295</sup> 'Situation update on Rwandan Refugees, 9 August 1994', 1994, Website MSF Speaking Out. <http://speakingout.msf.org/en/node/481> (21 June 2017).

Kigali had fled as well and were among the most dangerous in the camps.<sup>296</sup>

Besides intimidating Hutu-civilians, the *génocidaires* continued to target Tutsi. Three kilometers from the Dutch base camp lay the refugee camp of Kituku where 30,000 Tutsi of the first refugee influx lived.<sup>297</sup> A UN flag was flying over the site, the white refugee tents were protected by barbed wire and the water of Lake Kivu. Refugees and staff of the camp told a correspondent of *The Independent* that uniformed FAR-soldiers left their own centers almost daily for a short walk to Kituku. Smoking cigarettes, they waited outside their chance to strike. On July 23, two Tutsis left the enclosure to collect firewood when Hutu-soldiers attacked them with clubs and stones. One Tutsi was almost beaten to death, the other escaped with cuts and bruises.<sup>298</sup> The Rwandan and Zairian Tutsis were surrounded by thousands of Hutus. For the Tutsi of Goma, life became increasingly difficult as they had to fear threats, extortion, rape, pillage and murder.<sup>299</sup>

Situational reports show that Dutch troops were aware of the abuse of Tutsi.<sup>300</sup> There was little the Dutch could do in such instances; it was not their mandate, they did not have the possibilities, it was too dangerous.<sup>301</sup> On August 12, a Dutch marine witnessed the stoning of a Tutsi woman by a crowd, after which the mood in the camp remained calm, as if nothing happened.<sup>302</sup> He recalled:

I was standing at a distance of five meters. There was a Tutsi woman living in a Hutu camp, who was at the wrong place at the wrong time. We could not tell them apart, but they can. She was stoned to death. You see arms [of the assailants] going up, and then you look and see a body that is completely deformed and unrecognizable.<sup>303</sup>

Operation Provide Care occurred in an extremely violent place where according to a report of the U.S. Operation Support Hope: 'Lawlessness and massacres are the rule, not the exception'.<sup>304</sup> It is estimated that during the refugee crisis 4,000 people have been killed by

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<sup>296</sup> Umutesi, *Surviving the Slaughter*, 79-81

<sup>297</sup> Ferry Versteeg, 'Sterfhuis Goma', *NRC Handelsblad*, July 30, 1994.

<sup>298</sup> Block, 'Hutus keep on killing Tutsis in Goma camp: Robert Block in Goma finds Rwanda's genocidal conflict is being carried over to refugee camps in Zaire', *The Independent*, July 26, 1994.

<sup>299</sup> OHCHR, *The Democratic Republic of the Congo 1993-2003 UN Mapping Report*, 60.

<sup>300</sup> Sitrep nr. 22 Operatie Provide Care, 27-08-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10.

<sup>301</sup> Interview with the Chief Security Officer of the Netherlands Marine Corps, 06-04-2017.

<sup>302</sup> Sitrep nr. 12, 12-08-1994, The Ministry of Defence, The Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10.

<sup>303</sup> Interview with the Chief Security Officer of the Netherlands Marine Corps, 06-04-2017.

<sup>304</sup> JTF Support Hope to Entebbe, 28-08-1994, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Crisisrapportage Rwanda; dav / 1985-1994 / 01601.

violence at the hands of the militia, undisciplined soldiers and other refugees.<sup>305</sup> Aid workers were also targeted. On August 9, a Médecins du Monde doctor was shot at and journalists were attacked.<sup>306</sup> In October, when most international troops were gone, Hutu-militias armed with machetes and clubs executed 30 adolescent local guards employed by CARE, after which the NGO withdrew more than 80 aid workers.<sup>307</sup>

This leads us to question whether Dutch troops were at risk from Hutu-militants and other armed parties in the region. The Ministry of Defence was worried about troop safety when they declined to provide soldiers for UNAMIR II, because Rwanda was a violent place and Dutch looked too similar to Belgians. 'We didn't go to Rwanda, we went to Zaire. If we would have been sent to Rwanda, they would have included operational soldiers who had to keep order', a medical officer explained.<sup>308</sup> But the war was over and Zaire considered safe for the Dutch to provide care. The perpetrators of the genocide and the murderers of the Belgian commandos were however at large in refugee camps. Distrust of the Belgians continued to exist. So when refugees asked if they came from *Belgique*, Dutch soldiers heartily answered: *Pays-Bas*, and pointed to *Pays-Bas* painted on their truck - and all things settled.<sup>309</sup> This might be a naïve measure but the *génocidaires* had no reason to frighten aid workers out of the area, since they were a good source of income.

Besides painting *Pays-Bas* on the trucks, other preparations concerning safety had been made. Outside the Dutch main camp, soldiers carried a Browning handgun with thirteen rounds. What was 'terrifying' according to one soldier however, was the fact that the majority of the Dutch contingent did not receive weapon training in how to use this sidearm.<sup>310</sup> Another measure was that after sunset - it was pitch-dark at six - soldiers had to be back in the main camp. Also seven men from the Marine Corps were added to the Dutch contingent for safety, although it was a much smaller group than the one hundred twenty that the Marine Corps had offered for deployment during a meeting at the *Defensie Crisis Beheersing Centrum* on July 26.<sup>311</sup> The marines had suggested this large company because: 'this would

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<sup>305</sup> Overseas Development Institute, *The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda. Study III*, 11.

<sup>306</sup> 'Situation update on Rwandan Refugees, 9 August 1994', 1994, Website MSF Speaking Out. <http://speakingout.msf.org/en/node/481> (21 June 2017).

<sup>307</sup> Binet, *MSF Speaking Out: Rwandan Refugee Camps in Zaire and Tanzania*, 43; Richard Dowden, 'Killer gang in Goma camps could halt food aid for 1.' *The Independent*, October 1, 1994; Dowden, 'Hutus plot to regain Rwanda', *The Independent*, August 3, 1994.

<sup>308</sup> Interview with a Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, 01-02-2017.

<sup>309</sup> Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Transport Unit of the Royal Netherlands Airforce, 24-02-2017; Interview with the Spokesman of the Information Department of the Ministry of Defence, 03-02-2017.

<sup>310</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 108.

<sup>311</sup> Aantekening Hulpverlening Ruandese vluchtelingen in Zaire, 27-07-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10.

provide protection on site in the case of disturbances caused by groups of desperate people or Rwandan militias'.<sup>312</sup>

Before but also during the mission, the marines were much more aware of the risks than the rest of the Dutch contingent. They were aware of the activities of FAR-soldiers as seen in their daily situational reporting. The commander of the marines was of the opinion that most of the soldiers had low awareness of safety and barely saw any risks.<sup>313</sup> Aside from low awareness of the dangers of the area, the operation did not have an intelligence group and lacked adequate communications equipment. The Dutch had to borrow walkie-talkies from Memisa to connect to the UNHCR radio network for example.<sup>314</sup> Regarding military intelligence, a medical advisor expressed that:

'We were very exclusively oriented to providing help without - that's a notion that I think is important - having the right intelligence service. Usually during a mission the situation is continuously analyzed and plans are modified accordingly. We have carried out our mission rather naively. We were thus running big risk on our way in and way out of the camps. We had no communication, there was no security. Anything could have happened.'<sup>315</sup>

The base camp on the terrain of Hotel Karibu was fenced off but did not have a sentry post or barbed wire to protect it from theft of personal items or other goods. The Dutch main camp remoteness and the lake provided most security to the Dutch base.<sup>316</sup> The commander of marines explained that in case of emergency:

'There was only one way to the airport. Then you can make plans but there is only one option to choose, pretty hard to accomplish with a hundred soldiers. It was my greatest concern that we had to break up camp and make a crash move (...) I had made an agreement with the Americans and French, purely on a personal basis, to jointly provide security if something would happen. (...) If violence erupts, the only thing to do is to retreat and gather in safety. You are chanceless against 100,000 rebels, Zairian soldiers and police.'<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Aantekening Hulpverlening Ruandese vluchtelingen in Zaire, 27-07-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10..

<sup>313</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 108.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid, 116.

<sup>315</sup> Interview with the Medical Advisor of the Dutch contingent in Zaire, 13-03-2017.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

Unpaid Zairian soldiers, completely drunk after 5pm, were a considerable threat in the region, mostly to refugees who suffered from their theft and occasional rape.<sup>318</sup> One of the most serious incidents involving the Dutch soldiers occurred with Zairian soldiers. On August 24, a Dutch convoy with relief items planned to travel three hundred kilometers south to Uvira, through the jungle, on muddy roads and steep cliffs. On the second day of the journey, between Bukavu and Uvira, the convoy was halted at a roadblock by Zairian soldiers who were smoking weed and drinking beer. They demanded a permit of the governor of Goma to pass through the area. The deputy chief of the transport unit described tense moments of feeling being taken hostage by drunk and aggressive Zairians:

‘While a Zairian soldier held a Kalashnikov under my chin, I had to step out and show *les papiers*. I dutifully showed him my driving license and pretended nothing was wrong. He became angry and an argument ensued. They ordered a local, whom we took with us [for translation] to step out, and then they beat him. Within twenty minutes, the group of soldiers had grown to about 30 men. They seized our weapons and rank insignia. (...) After four to five hours at the roadblock, our journey - now under guidance of Zairian soldiers - continued. They wanted to make sure that they were not dealing with terrorists. When we arrived in the refugee camp, they cut open our boxes to look for weapons.’<sup>319</sup>

Related incidents happened in the refugee camps, where the unpredictability of the refugee masses, including militias and soldiers, was commonplace. Two female chauffeurs in their early twenties were stopped because they had run over a child, something which on packed roads was indeed a possibility. According to their officer, an aggressive mob nearly lynched the two. The next day, a Dutch group headed to the camp to talk with anybody holding a prominent position and found men claiming to have it - not coincidentally refugees in military jackets. The Dutch conversed that they asked if it was still wise to transport water in this area. The refugee leader immediately made clear that they should continue the transportation. The Dutch transport officer found it somewhat doubtful that a child was indeed hit by a truck because nobody of the Dutch personnel had seen a body, and the two drivers were halted for something that had happened at quite a distance from where the

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<sup>318</sup> Umutesi, *Surviving the Slaughter*, 80

<sup>319</sup> *Inzet in het Grote Merengebied, Centraal Afrika (1994-1998)*, NIMH, 10.

incident took place.<sup>320</sup>

During the wet season, truck drivers got stuck in the mud in the middle of a camp. Refugees who had helped to pull the truck out demanded dollars and threatened the drivers with machetes. While buying the refugees off with rations a shoot-out broke-out nearby, without consequences to Dutch personnel.<sup>321</sup> The airport, guarded by Dutch marines, was sporadically target of shootings by warring parties, purely to intimidate aid workers, according to the Chief Security Officer.<sup>322</sup> Goma was at times a site of violence between mobs armed with machetes and drunk Zairian soldiers.<sup>323</sup> At the end of August, the deputy chief of the transport unit noted that shootings happened more frequently and bullets flew over the Dutch base camp and pierced their tents.<sup>324</sup> The upsurge of violence in the camps was a reaction to the announcement of Zairian authorities that refugees had to leave at the end of the month.<sup>325</sup> The Dutch became increasingly anxious as Zaire became more violent and other military contingents, the Americans and the Israeli, were packing to leave.<sup>326</sup> On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, the majority of Dutch contingent safely returned, the movement control unit returned at the beginning of November.

The dangers of the mission on mental health were an issue right from the beginning. The reconnaissance party had advised, bearing in mind the terrible conditions in the camps, to reckon with psychological traumas.<sup>327</sup> Two psychologists joined the main party to observe the Zairian work floor at the end of August. According to the evaluation report of Provide Care written in November 1994, 12 percent of the personnel had psychological problems and were scheduled to see psychological counseling.<sup>328</sup> While there was no research conducted on the soldiers of Provide Care, in line with research of 3,496 veterans, it can be expected that 4 to 5 percent of Goma-veterans suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder.<sup>329</sup> In another study on Dutch soldiers who were stationed in Central-Africa, 29 percent suffered from fatigue,

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<sup>320</sup> Interview with the Commander of the Transport Unit in Zaire from the Royal Netherlands Army, 10-02-2017.

<sup>321</sup> Niek van der Heijden, 'Helpende Handen in Zaïre', *Alle Hens. Maandblad voor de Koninklijke Marine* (1994) 47:10.

<sup>322</sup> Interview with the Chief Security Officer of the Netherlands Marine Corps, 06-04-2017.

<sup>323</sup> Leest, van, Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care, 32.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>325</sup> Binet, *MSF Speaking Out: Rwandan Refugee Camps in Zaire and Tanzania*, 40.

<sup>326</sup> Leest van, Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care, 52.

<sup>327</sup> Sitrep nr.1 Recce-Party, 31-07-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Hoofdkwartier Korps Mariniers Zaire/Rwanda doos 10.

<sup>328</sup> Rapport Afwikkeling Provide Care, 11-11-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Koninklijke Marine, VN-Operaties, UN-Mission Defensiestaf-Ops, Zaire-Ruanda, div. onderwerpen. Periode: 1994 t/m 1996, doos 13.

<sup>329</sup> Bavo Hopman, and Jos Weerts, 'De psychosociale problemen van oude en jonge veteranen' in Visser, Wim D., (ed.) *Hulpverlening aan Nederlandse veteranen* (Utrecht 2003) 17.

memory- and concentration problems.<sup>330</sup> On a positive side, the majority of the soldiers regarded Provide Care as very meaningful, not only with an eye on the improvements of the humanitarian situation, but also on a personal level, seeing that their experiences have enriched their lives.<sup>331</sup>

There is no data available whether Provide Care resulted in a disproportional amount of psychological syndromes or other types of grave problems, although some veterans believe that it indeed was the case, pointing among other things to two causative factors for stress: anxiety relating to safety and the sense of powerlessness in view of the humanitarian crisis.<sup>332</sup> Concerning the former, pressure came from working as a well-fed Westerner in a humanitarian crisis of catastrophic proportions, with the idea that something bad could happen when surrounded by masses of needy refugees.<sup>333</sup> Besides this threat, Dutch soldiers felt the violent tension of the crisis when they saw lynchings, heard nearby shootings, or became targets of intimidation themselves.<sup>334</sup> In the event of a possible eruption of violence the lack of security measures, such as a defense perimeter around the base camp, led to fear. 'Some soldiers slept with a pistol under their pillow for six weeks because they were so scared,' one of the officers said.<sup>335</sup> For two soldiers, who previously served in Yugoslavia, the psychological burden proved to be too high. They returned prematurely.<sup>336</sup> It is however important to note that not everybody experienced anxiety. Some felt perfectly safe and thought that the atmosphere in the camps was hostile at most.

The wretched conditions in Zaire resulted in the feeling of powerlessness. The medical staff specifically had trouble with the confrontation of dying children and the feeling of powerlessness that resulted from ongoing misery in place where Hutu-militants called the shots. A doctor explained:

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<sup>330</sup> Hopman, and Weerts, 'De psychosociale problemen van oude en jonge veteranen', 19.

<sup>331</sup> Rapport Afwikkeling Provide Care, 11-11-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Koninklijke Marine, VN-Operaties, UN-Mission Defensiestaf-Ops, Zaire-Ruanda, div. onderwerpen. Periode: 1994 t/m 1996, doos 13; Interview with the Deputy Chief of the Transport Unit of the Royal Netherlands Airforce, 24-02-2017; Interview with the Medical Advisor of the Dutch contingent in Zaire, 13-03-2017; Hopman and Weerts, 'De psychosociale problemen van oude en jonge veteranen', 10.

<sup>332</sup> Telephone conversation with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Airforce, 07-06-2017; Interview with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army, 03-03-2017; Interview with the Medical Advisor of the Dutch contingent in Zaire, 13-03-2017.

<sup>333</sup> Interview with a Reconnaissance Team Member/Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Army, 07-06-2017.

<sup>334</sup> Multiple veterans recall the anxiety and fears. Hans van Leest wrote in his diaries that the situation was especially tense at the end of August. See: Leest, van, *Ik ben even weg voor Provide Care*, 52; Interview with the Medical Advisor of the Dutch contingent in Zaire, 13-03-2017; Interview with a Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, 01-02-2017.

<sup>335</sup> Bollen, *Working Apart Together*, 109.

<sup>336</sup> 'Nederlandse militairen keren terug uit de ellende van Goma', *NRC Handelsblad*, September 5, 1994.

'Helping people on an individual level is very gratifying, but if you look at the bigger picture it is horrendously unsatisfactory. You have to work that out for yourself. In the West we have the idea of save a soul, save a nation. That is derived from Jewish-Christian philosophy. As a doctor, you are considered to save the individual, you should not leave anybody to his fate. Yes, that individual can also be Hitler or Stalin. It is the feeling of dubiety between powerlessness and still wanting doing something. You see the bigger picture and think: to what kind of place did I agree to go? Should I have made that decision in the first place?'<sup>337</sup>

Not able to intervene in the event of a violent incident among refugees again caused a great sense of powerlessness according to the evaluation report.<sup>338</sup> A relating factor was that despite seeing the positive effects of aid on the ground, a sense of powerlessness came from the bad prospects for the refugees. The transport officer recalled:

'You know that you cannot support for years. It was a very short mission. At some point, we heard that we had to leave in a few days. But who will replace us? You go to a camp and see women and children who are waiting with buckets and jerry cans. You board the plane in the morning, take off from Goma and many people are looking out the windows. You fly past where you've seen so much misery for five weeks. You wonder about the people who are waiting down there and are thinking: where are they and why is nobody coming? Then you find out that you are an instrument of politics. Of course that is true, but for soldiers this feels incredibly unsatisfactory.'<sup>339</sup>

For the ordinary Hutu-refugees who did not repatriate, the future was indeed somber. With an eye on a long lasting conflict, the effects of humanitarian intervention were overshadowed by the absence of a political solution from the international community. It was unwilling and unable to send a strong military force to demilitarize the refugee areas and separate genuine refugees from militants. Dutch policy circles discussed the feasibility of separating hardline Hutus from genuine refugees and knew from the beginning that repatriation was one solution to end the humanitarian crisis.<sup>340</sup> After the reorganization and rearmament, the *génocidaires* occasionally attacked Rwanda with cross-border infiltrations and killed civilians, but they

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<sup>337</sup> Interview with a Medical Officer of the Royal Netherlands Navy, 01-02-2017.

<sup>338</sup> Rapport Afwikkeling Provide Care, 11-11-1994, The Ministry of Defence, Koninklijke Marine, VN-Operaties, UN-Mission Defensiestaf-Ops, Zaire-Ruanda, div. onderwerpen. Periode: 1994 t/m 1996, doos 13.

<sup>339</sup> Interview with the Commander of the Transport Unit in Zaire from the Royal Netherlands Army, 10-02-2017.

<sup>340</sup> Pyt Douma, *The Netherlands and Rwanda*, 64.

were not really capable of fighting the RPF, a well-organized army.<sup>341</sup> In the short run the FAR did not have the military capacity to regain Rwanda. But as it kept making money out of the camps and continued to rearm, the FAR might be strong enough in the future.<sup>342</sup> The RPF warned that if the international community refused to tackle the problem of the militarization of the camps, it would do so on its own.<sup>343</sup>

In October 1996, the RPF invaded Zaire under the banner of a Congolese-led insurrection named *L'Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo* (ADFL). The RPF/ADFL broke up the refugee camps and then overthrew the regime of Mobutu. The defeat of the FAR, the evacuation of the camps and the lack of humanitarian aid induced more than 600,000 refugees to return to Rwanda.<sup>344</sup> Thousands of Hutu-refugee fled eastwards, further into Congo while being chased by RPF/ADFL forces. Between 200,000 and 230,000 refugees were killed at the hands of RPF soldiers and RPF-backed militant groups during the invasion of Zaire in 1996-1997.<sup>345</sup> The feeling of powerlessness of the Dutch transport officer regarding the future of refugees was partly justified. In the early 2000s, Hutu-rebel groups that had their origins in genocide, hardly consisted of genocidal perpetrators or ideological adherents. Violence was simply their only means of subsistence. Most of the rebels roaming in the deep forests of Congo arrived there when they were young. They grew up as refugees.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, 28.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>343</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 104.

<sup>344</sup> Abbas H. Gnamo, 'The Role of the Interahamwe in the Regional Conflict: The Origins of Unrest in Kivu, Zaire', in Adelman and Rao (ed.), *War and Peace in Zaire/Congo*, 101.

<sup>345</sup> Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations*, 103.

<sup>346</sup> Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo. Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge 2010) 61.

## Conclusion

It took two weeks, from the outflow of Hutus to the deployment of the recce-team, to initiate a military humanitarian intervention in Zaire – in an area considered safe. It was the first of its kind for the Dutch armed forces, which itself was reorganizing its ranks and reinventing its role in the world. Operation Provide Care was unique. Never before were Dutch units deployed in a humanitarian crisis as immense as Goma, nor deployed for such a short time - a Brigadier General explained to a Dutch newspaper just before landing in Soesterberg.<sup>347</sup>

For five weeks, 106 Dutch soldiers had provided humanitarian aid in a place where the Rwandan *génocidaires* found refuge. From Zaire the *génocidaires* had sought to continue war against the Tutsi. They reorganized with the help of Zairian authorities and incoming relief items. Millions of Hutu-refugees had been coerced or indoctrinated by their leaders to flee, or were simply frightened of the RPF. In the three months before, the *génocidaire* leaders had mobilized the Hutu-population as a last resort to fight the RPF and imposed a massive collective punishment on the Tutsi. 600,000 to 800,000 Tutsi and Hutu-moderates had been murdered. After ten Belgian commandos were brutally killed, the UN decided to withdraw the majority of the UNAMIR peacekeeping force, which meant that the genocide could continue unhindered. Once the UN realized that mass murders took place, it vowed to increase the size of UNAMIR, and approached the Netherlands for military support. But Rwanda was too dangerous for peacekeepers from the Low Countries because the Dutch and Belgians look alike. Besides, the Netherlands already deployed more than 3,000 soldiers on peace missions around the world.

In July, the genocide was presumably over; its perpetrators were just a leftover of conflict past, and merely a part of a massive number of refugees in Zaire. After ordinary Hutus arrived, a system of violence and intimidation - established by their leaders - kept them locked inside enormous camps. These *génocidaires* had plenty of reasons to flee and take Rwandans with them as a human shield and a form of income. Women and children paid the price. To counter widespread disease, thirst and exhaustion, the international community - armed with medicine and water trucks - came into action as soon as images of the suffering in Goma appeared on televisions worldwide.

The main research question of this thesis is: How did the presence of genocidal perpetrators affect the aid assistance of the Dutch military humanitarian intervention? Dutch studies of Provide Care do not go beyond a very succinct discussion about the nature and the

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<sup>347</sup> 'Nederlandse militairen keren terug uit ellende van Goma', *NRC Handelsblad*, September 5, 1994.

origins of the refugee crisis. There is also not much known about how the specific context of Rwanda affected the Dutch mission. It is not particularly interesting what these Dutch reports say. It is much more interesting to see what they do not say in regard to this issue. The main question of this thesis was formulated because of this gap in the Dutch historiography. As a corollary, five overlooked matters will now be discussed.

First of all was it unclear precisely how the decision-making process came about and what motivated the Netherlands to send troops to Zaire. Secondly, a particular historical reconstruction was absent, one that shows how the political context of war and genocide interacted with the Dutch soldiers on the ground. From describing the Dutch work in Zaire, and closely monitoring the developments concerning the political context of the Rwandan conflict, originates the third and the fourth issue. What were the safety risks for Dutch personnel? Fourthly, was Dutch aid was misused by Hutu-militants? From these two questions it is appropriate to ask the fifth: Was it wise and necessary to dispatch military personnel in the first place? These questions are largely overlooked or completely ignored.

Dutch historiography specifically dealing with Operation Provide Care - the works of Wim Wertheim and Albert-Jan van Leusden, Myriame Bollen and the Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIMH) - all touched upon the decision-making process. They pointed to the visit of Jan Pronk (the Minister of Development Cooperation) to Zaire, the suddenness of the decision and the haste of preparing. A more detailed look at the period between the starting of the refugee crisis and the decision by the Dutch government also shows other factors of influence. News reports of dying children made such a big impression on Dutch audiences and politicians that in their view it would have been inhumane not to respond. It is difficult to detect any secretive political interests behind the decision to commence an operation, because in terms of political benefits the Netherlands already deployed more than 3,000 soldiers on peace missions throughout the world.

The Netherlands felt sincere pity for the Rwandans in Zaire, with Pronk in the lead. The media had a tremendous effect, also on the staff within the Defence organization, resulting in a genuine but emotional concern for the crisis, and the wish to become involved without a comprehensive understanding of the conflict. After a final plea by Pronk and a request from the United States, Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, the Minister of Defence Relus ter Beek and Pronk held an emergency meeting and agreed to send troops for a strict humanitarian mission. What led up to the decision to send troops was characterized by urgency and motivated by empathy. At the same time, it was also empathy that blinded the even darker sides of the humanitarian crisis, namely the extreme violence intrinsically linked

to the refugee camps. Secondly, the context of the Rwandan conflict is mentioned in all four Dutch works, but is offered mostly as a historical background, something which precedes the Dutch mission or that in some cases led to minor incidents for the Dutch involved. In an article from two recce-team members Wertheim and Van Leusden it is stated that 'the mass-killings led to the outflow of refugees' - quite telling of the military staff's unawareness of the causes of the Hutu-influx. Contrary, the studies by the NIMH and Bollen do mention the ways in which the political side of the crisis – that is the presence of Hutu-militants in the camps - affected the Dutch operation. Bollen for example quotes Dutch soldiers who told that many things went amiss with aid because of Hutu-militants. NIHM concisely described recurring problems that the Dutch contingent had with Hutu-militants, including theft and an instance of intimidation.

Nevertheless, in the works of the NIMH and Bollen, the Dutch experience is not fully immersed in the violent context of crisis. This thesis is more prominently focused on the instances of violence among refugees or violence directed against the Dutch. It aims attention at the objectives of the Hutu-leadership, and at the interaction between the Dutch and Hutu-militants. The descriptive review of Chapter 4 is a synthesis of the Dutch involvement and the violent context by showing the dynamics of the camps, the terror and the lynchings. This all happened at the moment that the Dutch troops were actively combating the suffering. In hindsight, this thesis can be seen almost as the intelligence report that the Dutch contingent did not have. It is the first time - not only in Dutch historiography but also in comparison to the situational reports of Provide Care - that the violent side of the humanitarian crisis is covered extensively and its causes explained. The violence was seen and reported by the soldiers but most of them did not have a full understanding the exact background of the conflict.

By focusing on the violence intrinsically linked to the camps, it is in hindsight necessary to ask if the risks were unacceptably high for the Dutch troops. This question also springs from the ethical meditation of Van Leusden in the 1996 article 'Ethiek bij noodhulp. Reflectie op normen en waarden naar aanleiding van ervaringen bij recente (noodhulp)operaties'. He wrote that a military or political superior has to recognize that he has the moral responsibility to ensure that his staff is not put at more risks than is absolutely necessary. This is what the then Minister of Defence Relus ter Beek called *aanvaardbaar risico's*, a problematic term because it is unclear where to draw the line exactly. Answering the question of safety is weighing up arguments that suggest that it was dangerous against arguments saying that the risks were tolerable. Concerning dangers on mental health, the

outcome is inconclusive, since there is no data available whether Provide Care resulted in an excessive amount of psychological problems. Notwithstanding, according to some veterans the factors causing stress were disproportionately high. On a positive note however, the majority of the soldiers regarded Provide Care as very meaningful on a personal level.

There is more to be said about physical dangers. Dutch sources - such as documents from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence, the diaries of Hans van Leest, and the conducted interviews - show multiple instances of violence among refugees and a handful of cases of intimidation directed at Dutch soldiers. Because for this thesis only nine veterans were interviewed, it can be expected that intimidation happened more frequently than the four cases described here. Without a team for intelligence and with little understanding of the nature of the violence in the camps, it probably was the case that intimidation of Dutch soldiers by –genuine or armed - refugees was not always recorded in the situational reports.

Several arguments can be made that repudiate the idea that risks were unacceptably high for Dutch military personnel. First of all, Hutu-soldiers and militias, those who had perpetrated the genocide and had killed ten Belgian commandos, reorganized with the appropriation of relief items. They therefore had no reason to attack western troops who were assisting the humanitarian efforts. Violent behavior towards military or civilian aid workers was limited to intimidation or senseless aggressiveness. The entire relief operations resulted in no fatalities on the side of international soldiers. Only Zairians or Rwandans were murdered. Up until the end of August, a large number of western troops were situated around Goma, including 337 Americans and 500 well-armed French soldiers. It was for whatever reason highly foolish for Hutu-militants to plan a full-scale attack on military contingents. The presence of the Americans and French also provided safety for the less well equipped Dutch forces.

On the other hand, in May 1994 the Dutch government had decided not to send troops to UNAMIR II, bearing in mind the fate of the ten Belgians and the idea that Dutchmen and Belgians look alike. In Zaire, Dutch troops occasionally were asked if they were from Belgium and were greeted with signs of cutting their throats, the same way the Belgian commandos had been welcomed by Hutu-militias in Kigali. The intimidations by male camp inhabitants demonstrate the mistrust for foreign troops and the hostility that foreign presence triggered among some refugees. In the violent context of the refugee crisis, it is not unlikely that undisciplined Hutu-militias, desperate refugees, or marauding Zairian or FAR soldiers regarded themselves to be invulnerable in the masses. They might have considered the plan to

apprehend trucks, medicine and weapons, while killing Dutch marines, drivers or medical personnel. It is impossible to gauge how big the risks were. But risks for the Dutch were imaginable when driving in between camps, or being in the middle of a camp, thus being isolated and at a distance from Goma, without appropriate means of security and communication.

The sense of safety, created by the company of other Western forces, waned when the Americans and Israelis left near the end of August. At the same time, there appeared to be an upsurge of violence in the camps after Zairian authorities announced that refugees had to leave at the end of the month. The Dutch became increasingly anxious as shootings and riots in the camps became more frequent. If in the worst-case scenario Hutu-militants or impoverished refugees would have attacked foreign troops and aid workers, either at the Dutch base camp or elsewhere, a group of seven Marines was not a sufficient guarantee of protection. This was a much smaller group than the 120 men that the Marine Corps had offered.

Ultimately, Operation Provide Care had no fatalities. The risks were high but acceptable. Responding to the risks of sending a battalion to Srebrenica, the *chef-Defensiestaf* General Arie van der Vlis expected some fatalities, which he judged was acceptable. The commander of the Royal Netherlands Army Hans Couzy, answered to risks in Bosnia: 'I expected bullying, our troops being taken hostage, but not large-scale violence'. Well also in Zaire, large-scale violence did occur, as the U.S. forces notably wrote that 'massacres are the rule, not the exception'. To conclude, in such circumstances it would have been wise to add a larger contingent of marines or other security troops, and an intelligence group for vital situational awareness. These, together with other precautions, would have made the risks for Dutch troops far more acceptable.

Next the question comes to mind if Dutch aid was misused by *génocidaires* and their associates. The work of Lischer, wherein four ways in which aid can exacerbate conflict are extrapolated, leads us to this issue never raised before in the Dutch context. The Netherlands provided care, not material goods, it is thus difficult to ascertain to what extent Dutch efforts were directly appropriated by militants. Small incidents of theft occurred. Dutch drivers saw male refugees armed with sticks at the front of the line at water distribution points. Sometimes men also appeared to be selling barrels of water to the population. Incidentally, it might have occurred that Dutch medical personnel treated Hutu-soldiers and militias, but on a whole there is little reason to believe that Dutch aid was substantially misused.

On a more abstract level misuse means that international relief efforts, including the

Dutch, functioned as the infrastructure of a genocidal state-in-exile; providing food, healthcare, sanitation and water supply. The *génocidaire* leadership was successfully reorganizing and rearming in the month that the Netherlands had forces on the ground. In August, the Hutu-leaders had full military and civil control over the Mugunga refugee camp. International organization took over the care that was primary the responsibility of the former Rwandan government, because they had instigated their families, supporters and thousands of ordinary civilians to flee in the first place. This shows that aid is not politically neutral, but is valuable and therefore it has a political and economic impact in conflict zones.

The illicit appropriation of relief items by the Hutu-militants and the risks involved for Dutch personnel during a purely humanitarian mission leads us the final question. Was it wise and necessary to dispatch military personnel in the first place? Recce-team member Van Leusden was of the opinion that that defence assets should be used in emergency aid. The justification lies in the fact that the Ministry of Defence is an organization that can provide quick and effective assistance, and that it would be immoral not to intervene in case of a severe humanitarian crisis. All practical arguments, for and against Dutch involvement considered, it came down to a preeminent abstract argument of moral responsibility. Klep and Van Gils rightly asked: 'Was in the end doing nothing not more worse or objectionable than participating?'

Besides moral reasons, a military humanitarian intervention is also justified when it does more good than harm, according to the American political scientist Taylor Seybolt. He wrote: 'if in a humanitarian crisis some people would have died without assistance, but did not die because of the actions of military personnel, the intervention succeeded.' He concluded that the U.S. Operation was successful because the correlation between U.S. intervention and changes in mortality. The U.S. troops played a role in stopping diarrheal diseases and saved thousands of lives per day by increasing water supply, instituting oral rehydration and improving sanitation. The Netherlands performed the same type of help. The Dutch had especially a vital impact with the transport of water. Applying this humanitarian standard on the declining mortality rates, the international efforts, including those of the Netherlands, were successful.

But, skeptics will say, the effects of humanitarian intervention were partly overshadowed by the absence of a political solution from the international community. It was unwilling and unable to send a strong military force to demilitarize the refugee areas and separate genuine refugees from militants. The lack of a real solution lead to the first Congo War during which the refugees were pushed further into Zaire and thousands of Rwandans

were indiscriminately killed by RPF backed rebel groups. While it is undoubtedly true that humanitarian intervention should not replace a political solution, the long-term positive effects of the humanitarian relief operations should not be overlooked. Six hundred thousand refugees, some of whom were saved with the help of the Dutch intervention, eventually returned to Rwanda after the RPF invaded Zaire.

To argue against sending Dutch forces into Zaire it can be noted that Dutch authorities should have been aware that Hutu-militants would be eager to seize valuable aid supplies. Further evidence is provided in the fact that Dutch troops had already experienced this in Bosnia two years earlier when warring parties claimed relief goods as a form of tax. Another way of reasoning, also expressed by some veterans, is that the Dutch armed forces were too naïve, unequipped, untrained and unprepared to deliver aid efficiently. Bollen, for one, reported on the shortcomings of the teamwork of Dutch soldiers and of civil-military cooperation. But this thesis is not focused on the inner workings of the armed forces, nor on the question if the Defence organization was able to carry out a humanitarian mission or should be able to do so in the future. Having seen most documents from the archives of the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs, and having interviewed nine participants it is still hard to exactly measure the success and failures of Provide Care. Assessing the totality of the mission and offering a list of recommendations was not the scope of this thesis, although recommendations surely arise after reading.

The weighing of arguments - considering long-term effects, and the causes of the conflict, asking what would have happened if the Netherlands would have declined, or what if the international community decided to separate and disarm Hutu-militants – is a counterfactual mind game. What is certain is that for every positive effect of the intervention there seems to be a downside: the presence of Hutu-militants, the related misuse of aid and the risks involved for Dutch military personnel, the inconsistent decision-making of the Netherlands regarding Rwanda, the lack of a political solution from the international community and the senselessness of providing care in an presumably insolvable crisis. But the Dutch efforts most definitely mitigated the suffering of genuine refugees too. Provide Care was at the same time troubled and senseless as it was meaningful. Assessing the mission is an incredibly uneasy task, also for some of the soldiers involved.

What makes it even more uneasy is that Provide Care has similarities with the ill-fated mission of Dutchbat-III. There is something to be said about the mindset of the Netherlands in the early 1990s by comparing Goma to Srebrenica. Concerning a UN-intervention in Yugoslavia, the *Srebrenica-rapport* noted that Dutch policy was generally determined by two

factors: the desire to play a significant role in the international stage through moral politics, and the importance the Netherlands placed on human rights and humanitarian aid. Just as in the Balkan, during the Rwandan refugee crisis the public debate pushed the government into intervention on moral and humanitarian grounds. However, in-depth analyzes of the background of the crisis and measures adapted to the causes of the conflict did not play a major role.

Moreover, in both cases the Netherlands barely had intelligence of the area, so that the troops in Goma and Dutchbat were mostly ignorant of the hidden activities of warring parties surrounding them. This historical reconstruction of the Dutch mission in Goma and the dynamics of the genocide and the refugee crisis show that in the case of Zaire – just as in Yugoslavia - the Netherlands was getting involved without sufficient information of the status on the ground, overseeing neither risks nor long-term consequences. Dutch politics, media and public opinion overestimated their moral prestige - and more importantly underestimated the tenacity of the *génocidaires*. For five weeks 106 Dutch soldiers had to make up for the naïveté of the Netherlands. Fervent compassion and growing calls to make haste had cut off the soldiers' ears and eyes, leaving 106 Dutch humanitarian warriors to their own devices - unprotected from malevolence, vulnerable in a sea of human misery.

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