

**BOOK LAUNCH: THE MEDIA AND THE RWANDA GENOCIDE, EDITED BY ALLAN THOMPSON**

*The following is a transcript of the event, organized by the UN Correspondents Association (UNCA) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), which took place at 1 pm 20 April 2007 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the United Nations Secretariat Building. Allan Thompson is former journalist for the Toronto Star and Professor of Journalism at Carleton University. In the transcript, he explains the Media's role, both domestic and international, in the Rwandan Genocide. Romeo Dallaire, a Canadian Senator, was commander of the United Nations Observer Mission in Rwanda at the time of the genocide.*

**Romeo Dallaire, Allan Thompson, Mary Kimani, UNCA, April 2007**

Allan Thompson: I'll be relatively brief, because hopefully there would be a chance at the end to have some discussion or questions.

Maybe it seems sort of stating the obvious to come here, not just to the United Nations, but to come to this location and to talk to you about the role of the media in the Rwanda genocide. You maybe don't need to be told about the role of the media in the Rwanda genocide. But then maybe you do, which is I think in a sense the essence of this book and a project that's ongoing at Carleton University, where I teach journalism.

The book is a result of an effort to go back— at that point it was ten years after the events of 1994—and try to examine what had occurred in Rwanda, but through a prism of the role of the media. And the aspect of that, I think, that people were most familiar with, certainly when you mentioned media and Rwanda in the same sentence most people would immediately speak about the radio station RTLM, the role of hate media in Rwanda. That was perhaps reasonably well documented at that point.

But I think it was still very important to go back in the context of the conference that we held at Carleton University and then also the book that followed from that conference to go back and reexamine that saga in terms of the role of the media in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, May, June, July, because we missed the warning signs, clearly.

It was not just a case of examining what media did, domestic media in Rwanda. We failed to realize, particularly before but then in the early days of the genocide, how the media were playing a role, not just echoing the events in Rwanda. News media were a participant.

And media that had pretty much taken up a spot, tragically, in the center, in the mainstream of media in Rwanda, participated in the genocide actively. All these later, I don't think we still fully acknowledge or realize the role that news media played in the genocide in Rwanda.

What had perhaps received even less attention was the role of international media in the genocide. And some people, some people in this room perhaps who were reporting on those events, might say that they didn't play a role, they don't see themselves as having played a role on this events.

Many people, myself included, acknowledge that the role I played was in absentia. I was working for the Toronto Star newspaper at the time, not in Africa. The star had an Africa correspondent who was with everyone else locked in South Africa covering the end of the apartheid era.

I was working in the Toronto Star's Ottawa bureau covering foreign affairs. It should have fallen to me to volunteer to go to Rwanda to add to the Star's coverage of those events. And I have to admit that I can barely remember what I was doing in April, May and June of 1994. It was not writing about the Rwanda genocide.

I came to the story late, a couple of years later, in 1996, when I went there in the context of the refugee crisis in eastern Zaire, and became very engaged with the story, and, frankly, quite engaged with the story of Romeo Dallaire as a player in that drama. And certainly from that point onward, began to pay much more attention to the issue, albeit after the fact.

I left daily journalism in 2003 and started teaching journalism at Carleton University and organized this event, I think in an effort to draw attention back to these issues, and to build, I think, the sort of media equation that is reflected, to some degree, in the cover, where there are these two horrific images of sacks of human remains. There are, in a sense, two pillars of media responsibility.

And I'm not equating the role of international media with that of hate media in Rwanda. But I think it is important to acknowledge the role that international media played in the events largely by their absence. Those who were there who covered those events take exception to this because they know the incredible risks they took as individuals to report that story.

And yet most people, I think, will acknowledge we as journalists did a pretty bad job of recording the events in Rwanda in April, May, June of 1994, particularly in a crucial period in early April when greater understanding, greater comprehension, indeed greater public pressure and momentum around those events might well have made a difference.

General Dallaire has documented in his book how he had a plan of action, a military plan of action, in the early days that might well have mitigated or even stopped the genocide in its tracks. For that plan to gain public support, political support, the news media had to play a role. There had to be comprehensive, accurate, sustained coverage of those events in order for there to be political support to aid General Dallaire in his mission. The coverage wasn't there. The political support wasn't there.

And I think that is an equation that we really do need to go back and puzzle over. How could that be? In physics, there's a concept called the Heisenberg Effect, which the Coles Notes version of that is simply by observing a particle you can influence its behavior.

So I would suggest there could be a sort of journalistic Heisenberg Effect. Had journalists been present on the ground, physically present, recording those events, we might well have influenced events literally by our presence, let alone through the greater media coverage that would have resulted from that.

We weren't there in significant numbers, for all kinds of reasons, particularly early on. Now, does that mean we, as international media, had no effect on those events? That would be sort of a reverse Heisenberg Effect. And I would say, no, that's too easy.

Journalists need to acknowledge we had sort of an inverse Heisenberg Effect. We did influence the events in Rwanda by our absence. By failing to cover that story adequately we influenced events in Rwanda. And I would argue directly or indirectly contributed to the genocide in Rwanda.

And I think that's very important to acknowledge, very important to wrap our heads around and to try to unravel because Rwanda, we hope, is over. Other conflicts are unfolding all around us, not least Darfur. And 13 years later are we any wiser because of Rwanda? Perhaps marginally we are more aware, more cognizant of Darfur because of Rwanda, but are we very much more aware beyond the sort of shorthand of the Janjaweed and a dot on the map. When is the last time, maybe this week was one of those weeks when the story may have managed to claw its way above the fold briefly, but only very briefly.

So I think as journalists or those who are news consumers or are those who follow journalism, we really need to ask ourselves a lot of these questions. What did we learn from the role of the media in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, both domestic hate media, and international media coverage of those events? That's, in essence, the crux of this collection.

I would like to ask Mary Kimani to speak to the research that she did in Rwanda, and add the caveat that, because of her current employment, she'll speak about the research that she did and that's contained in the book.

Mari Kimani: I'll be very brief because I know, being a former journalist, that most of you are really keen to get to Senator Dallaire. So I'll keep this very brief.

The research that I--I was based at the tribunal for Rwanda from 1999 to 2003, and then subsequently in Rwanda until 2005. And I started my research as a young student, because I couldn't leave work to go to study. But because I was following the media [?] trial at that time, and it was disturbing for me as an African, the notion that a radio station told people to go and kill, for some reason they went out and killed.

And I couldn't understand what it is that makes people follow such instructions. And because I had access to the transcripts of RTLM, which were being used in trial at that time, what I did was a basic content analysis of what exactly did RTLM say.

Because it's one thing when you read it in the media all these short, catchy phrases RTLM is supposed to have said. But in trial, we found that the prosecutor actually had a very difficult time getting enough of this to show a direct incitement.

Through going through the transcripts and the court record and also partly because of the interviews I was doing in Rwanda of especially with Valerie Bemeriki, the only journalist from RTLM that was remaining, I came up with several things which are included in the chapter.

Basically RTLM wasn't successful in transmitting its message because of what it said but because of the context in which it said it. RTLM was born a few years after there had already been some extreme media existing in Rwanda, which could have been stopped at some point if somebody had seen the trend that was developing.

Most important was Kangura. Kangura had built the language which in 1993, when RTLM was set up, RTLM would take. And because it was a broadcast media, would have the possibility of popularizing it, distributing it over a much larger area than Kangura, which was a leaflet, could succeed in doing.

The message, if I can summarize, of both media was simple. Four hundred years ago, we were ruled by this group. We managed to get them out of the country. They have been out. And because they have been out, we have ruled ourselves.

They have invaded our country. They are perpetrating massacres. If they come back to power, they will rule over you the same way they ruled over you 400 years ago. The things they are doing in the zone that they control will be spread over our whole country. If you do not watch out for these people, if you do not deal with their collaborators amongst you, you and your families will be killed.

So basically RTLM created an impression of you do not kill, you will be killed. Whether this message was true or not, whether it was based on fact or not, it is that sense of imminent danger that convinced individual people to go out and massacre fellow civilians.

Now, this was an important lesson for some of us who were working not in private media but media NGO, because how do you reverse this? How do you get from a community that has been taught that this is what reality is to bringing more dialogue, more sources of information?

And I think this is the key lesson that media in Africa need to learn because we are living in a context of power between ethnicities. And when we liberalize media, quite unlike in the developed countries where this is already an established sense of what media's role is, in Africa we are having to discover this.

And we have to be careful how we do this, because if we are not careful then you find situations where extreme groups take advantage of ethnic cleavages and confirm a message that becomes very compelling to ordinary people and therefore can instigate similar massacres.

They don't have to be genocide, as we have seen in the situation in Cote d'Ivoire, which was slightly different. You can get a situation where media having partnered with extreme political groups then instigates murders and massacres very much in a similar way as RTLM because it has managed the frame the political situation in a language where the ordinary person feels threatened and therefore feels they have to act in a violent way.

So I think I'll stop there. If there are any questions, I'll be happy to answer.

Romeo Dallaire: Madames e monsieurs, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming out and encouraging Allan and this book, which is a compendium reflecting the discussions at that conference. And I will speak for a few moments.

A lot of the information that I have is in both my book and the chapter in Allan's book. But I would like to touch on the media in the following way. The pre-, during, post-, internal and external and try to run through just a few elements thereof, and then certainly open it up and be available for questions.

The pre-genocide internal was dominated by the extremist radio stations, both government and rebel, and also the creation, particularly of RTLM, which came in as a bit of a sleeper inasmuch as it at first created a following by having absolutely outstanding programming. I mean, it just sucked everybody in as being a great radio station in a society that was dominated by radio culture.

And it always surprised me then in the middle of these IDP camps, or refugee camps, that people still found ways of finding batteries to keep their radios going. And the RTLM was a powerful instrument of rallying attention from all sides, and subtly started to introduce the dimension of the ethnicities and what the ethnicities might and might not be doing in certain circumstances.

And so it is not foreign to us even in North America to watch some of our media and media companies who also tend to fiddle with the facts and provided great and outstanding programming and getting everybody sort of being nearly hooked on to the station, and then

start to give its own perspective and nuance to news or to information. That was a creep entity that was there.

The secondly, internally, is that the government radio and the RPF radio stations had their position, and sort of the government positions, and articulating a lot of history and a lot of background, but also was used to pass on information of both sides in regards to what they interpreted as being the interest of each group in this conflict or conflict resolution.

The radio stations essentially did not permit the UN to use them, apart from finally a few minutes a week near the end before the war started. And the UN refused to authorize us to have our radio station to be an instrument, if not a competitor, certainly as an instrument of passing on another angle in which we could have brought the sides together to talk and at least open a dialogue use [?] [ ? ]. But there was no budget for it, and no one was offering it, and essentially we were cut off from the whole realm of media.

The written media was dominated by the ethic perspectives, and so went to extremes and didn't seem to have any limit of what it could say or articulate of any type of tone from sexual to political and always hyperbole, and, as such, was an instrument of continuing keeping the pressure and the festering of the different points-of-view, both sides one against the other.

Inside the country and extending outside, none of those media from inside the country had an impact outside of Rwanda. I mean, very little was read or heard from inside Rwanda by the Rwanda media outside.

In regards to the foreign media, the foreign media was essentially a special event type of instrument. And so if you were raising a flag or opening a headquarters or if there was an assassination or a riot, you would attract people from Nairobi.

Apart from that, you had stringers. And, rather interestingly, stringers were not necessarily vetted for their objectivity, and so a number of Rwandan stringers actually threw their bent to the exercise to a number of international media from the BBC to Reuters and the like.

And so what was coming out was Rwandans writing often for foreign journalists who essentially stayed in Nairobi or covered other areas, like in fact the end of apartheid, although it was not extensive at that time in the pre-war time frame. And they had little depth grasp of what was going on.

And the example that I like to use is the fact that there were a number of human rights field studies, field work done in 1993, even before we got there, mostly before we got there, that had produced some incredibly stinging reports of mass graves, massive killings and so on.

And none of that stuff made it to any of the media. Or it was not covered internationally, and never really was covered. And so there was information that was there, but it just didn't get picked up. It didn't sell and wasn't of interest.

And so the force had no media capability and could rarely get its stuff published. The internal media was focused on one side or the other, and kept a stress [?] point [?]. And the international media was just coming in when they felt that something might sell or you might get some good pictures, or maybe simply monitoring what was going on.

And so up until the war I would say that a number of the international media had a superficial grasp of what was going on then. Maybe it had a lot of history of what was going on, but not necessarily a hard grasp.

The exceptions to that were the French media, I think Belgium and France in particular, a bit of Swiss, which had a lot more of a following in those countries, and the reporting was, I think, stronger, maybe nuanced, depending on how you look at it, left, right and all that good stuff. But at least it was there, and there was lots of it.

And I guess that's--one of the components is monitor the ex-colonial powers because you might get some pretty solid information, which was not necessarily a target that they [?] they had established at the time.

During the genocide internally well of course RTLM was an instrument of continuing the genocide and keeping that information. And so was the RPF, at least espousing its perspective as the campaign went on. And so the courts, I think, took care of that.

Interestingly enough, that RTLM was interviewing even me then like it never interviewed me before, in trying to move the story of the UN to one of essentially fundamentally supporting the other side in our actions and twisting and turning the information.

So it was a propaganda machine and not a media machine. It was nothing more than a tool of the extremist government in selling its product. There was nothing on the written side of any consequence.

The international media, I think, very rapidly--we could look at it at different angles. In North America it was interesting to find out that the three major televisions in that medium, the electronic medium, ABC, CBS, and NBC, showed less of the Rwanda genocide than they did of Tonya Harding kneecapping or O.J. Simpson's fetish with a glove. And that dominated.

And so we snuck in information every now and again, which then led me to wonder exactly what was being decided in regards to content that was actually coming to the people,

because the stories, the people in the field were getting them. They were getting lots of stories.

And we were using our troops to get the stories through the lines and into Kampala and so on with the other force I had, and Nairobi, and to get the stories to Atlanta and New York and London, Toronto and so on. However, the stuff never made it necessarily through.

And the question then comes is what about those editing floors [?] in those capitals and what's their role in the exercise? And I would contend that their role is dominant. It's not the stories that are not coming out. It's the stories that actually get published or get actually shown.

And there is the crux, in my opinion, particularly of Western media: the guys and girls who are sitting in those headquarters and what they decide goes on. And they will make or break the story. They will make or break the angle to the story. And they will massively influence the public opinion. And anybody who tells me they don't is in the wrong media. They massively influence public opinion.

To the extent what I would argue that the three major networks at that time frame, either simply said that they could sell a better product with O.J. Simpson and Tonya Harding or somebody told them not to sell this product.

And I still would say that the jury is out on whether or not the latter is not the dominant one. The United States decided it was not getting involved in the Rwandan genocide, and I'm just wondering to what extent it didn't want any pressure coming on it, and so did it or did it not influence those offices in which the editing was being done?

And I hope that some day an investigation or some rigorous intellectual academic work, research work is done on that side of this [?].

In the European context a different scenario: both BBC that had a solid player who was there who had a grasp of it before and stayed on in the presence of Mark Doyle and the French media were feeding a lot of data back.

And, again, there's been a number of studies, and have had a number of masters and doctoral papers come to me for comment from the French media, and you've got the spectrum there, you know, from one angle from the La Goche a la Droit [sp?] and from revisionism to attempting at reality.

However, during the genocide, the bulk of the Franco media, particularly Belgian, shifted to the ten Belgians, and then they packed it in, and the story [ ? ] twisted around that. And the

French media from France essentially [FRENCH PHRASE] and their involvement historic, their president and all that kind of stuff.

So there was a lot of intrigue. It was rather interesting that on the French media side you could see the tensions that we had noticed in the field between the president's office, the foreign office and the ministry of defense. It was like you had three foreign policies fiddling at each other. And you could see it in the media, as the different angles were come from the field in that regard.

Interestingly, during the war there was a lot of Asian media that was there. And they took a lot of data, but I never found out how much of that actually got published.

The post-side rapidly—and then I'll end—the post-Rwanda is an interesting exercise because you've got people publishing rapidly. A lot of journalists [ ? ] took you a long time to get your book out. But, I mean, there are people who punched out books in six months, journalists. Some do have a lot of depth and that, but a lot of media did interpretation of what was there and so I would contend that a bunch of that initial stuff is very weak.

And it started to get more serious as the years got on. But, of course, then all of a sudden we also saw a move on [?] to seek out as if there was something else to the story. And using the tribunal is an interesting instrument that international media have been using in regards to the whole revisionist exercise that's been going on. And I would contend that the tribunal and the defense side of the house has fed a lot of Europe-based journalism in regards to the revisionist situation.

North America is on and off, and depending on the flavor of the day, if not the month. I remember clearly that the tsunami dominated, and when that dominated we had an anniversary of Rwanda, and we also had Darfur going on, and you couldn't get anything of Rwanda or Darfur when the tsunami was on.

And so there seemed to be an inability to keep a couple of stories going at the same time. And the stories seemed to be incredibly dominated by one, and that saturates, and everything else gets blocked out. And it seems to me that that is a massive failing of our ability to, one, not only report a story but to sustain the report.

And so the second part of that in the international media, particularly in North America, was the inability [?] to sustain the story and keep it going and keep it evolving.

Internally to Rwanda, again, it's a growing exercise. Allan knows much more about that. But the question is, is how much will there be freedom of the press in that country and how many of them will get ultimately arrested before we actually see a full freedom of the press?

I'll end by saying the following: the media to me was the last weapon of possibly trying to shame the international community into action. Nothing else worked. And so when they were coming in by the platoons' and companies' work for days and flying them out, I guaranteed them food, water, lodging, protection and a story every day. And so one got shot in the ass in an ambush, and the other one got shot in the leg because he was on the balcony and he shouldn't have been.

But they all got stories, and the stories got out. The question is, is why wasn't it used? And so as a force commander I would contend that, one, the exchange of information between the journalists who were making it through the lines and seeking information was extraordinary. Two, my headquarters was totally open to the journalists.

Three, I learned very early on that you don't not only not lie to the media, but you don't [ ? ] sit and play cute either. And, four, if you are seeking to inform but you need an embargo for a time frame, you can get it if you establish your credibility with them.

Thank you very much.

Moderator: Thank you, General. Thank you, Allen and Mary for this very vital [?] speeches just not made [?] to us. Before I give the floor to the media and a question and answer, I would like to ask you if there were freedom of press in Rwanda at that time would--I am talking about local freedom of the press--if that situation existed at that moment, would the genocide have been prevented or maybe not have been as severe as it unfolded [?] and after three months, the world discover that 800,000 people were killed?

If the local media reported then and the government allowed them to report it, would it have been different?

Romeo Dallaire: Maybe it would have attenuated a bit, but the strength of the extremis was in the telephone system. Interestingly enough, a lot of it was set up by Canada. The telephone system was very well developed, and so the structure of the extremist movement was also well developed.

And so they were getting information out very rapidly to the lowest levels of their organization so they could implement things, rapidly pass on information, and so they could keep or do what their plans demanded, because they had that capability. Even though it was land line and not cellular, they had an extensively effective communications instrument. When it started previous to the war, and this is what we're speaking of, you know, previous to that [?]. So they were able to feed their organization continuously with that.

The media was the mass information, and it is not an insignificant question, because, as I said earlier on, the radio was the instrument of communication, and in some villages there

was nearly a perception of deity with the radio and those who spoke on the radio. And so it was not an insignificant factor in influencing them [?].

Mary Kimani: I just want to add one thing to that. I think there's a misconception outside in the developed world that in Rwanda there wasn't a lot of freedom of the press. Actually, the media in Rwanda had been liberalized in 1991, but it was liberalized a year after the war. And what happened was that every single newspaper that was set up was linked to one or the other political party.

And subsequently when RTLM is developed, although it is a "private" station in quotes, it is owned by political interests. So the question is when you liberalize media in such societies, how do you make sure that you actually have a free press which can actually do its work, rather than a press which is controlled by political interests of the type that can lead to ethnic or other type of conflict?

Alan Thompson: And I want to--I'm trying to apply hindsight to the present. Carleton University has this media capacity building project in Rwanda, which is slightly controversial because it's not the most fertile ground to be dealing on building the capacity of the media.

But the idea, I suppose, is if better journalism occupies some of the political space in the mainstream that leaves less room for the extremes. We'll never get rid of extremist, hate media. We have in North America. But we have it so much on the margins that it's not in a dominant position. And that's one rationale, I think, to continue to work with media organizations in Rwanda regardless of the situation on the ground.

Moderator: Sylvia, go ahead.

Q: I was here at the time covering the genocide. I'm French. Nobody told me what to say. I was covering the Security Council [ ? ] non-reservation [?]. I have to say that [ ? ] time when I asked some of the diplomats why aren't you doing something, people are dying and we all know it, [ ? ] and I'm sorry if you're shocked. We don't care. They're black. They don't have [ ? ]. They don't have diamonds. They have nothing, not even potable water. And if you don't believe me, at the time I was with [ ? ], it seemed my story, that was the end of my story.

But that was the truth. Nobody cared if--I mean, at the same time we had Angola. But Angola has diamonds and petrol and so many things. Two weeks for the Security Council to find people, member states, to send peacekeepers. Angola, Rwanda, not even for the [ ? ] water. That's the [ ? ]

Romeo Dallaire: What you're saying is, of course, the truth. And the truth was also told me right in my face in the first days when I was told that there was nothing in Rwanda except human beings, and there's too many of them anyways.

Q: Absolutely.

Romeo Dallaire: And, secondly, they are sub-Sahara black Africans, and they just don't count. And so as they are pulling troops out of Rwanda, they are pouring by the tens of thousands into ex-Yugoslavia. And so that's the other side of the coin, is people had their eyes elsewhere also. The big missions, Cambodia slowing down, Mozambique was there, Yugoslavia was dominating.

And so those who had the capacity of doing something, simply had their minds elsewhere. And there was a good story on the continent, and that was Nelson Mandela.

And so what could have also maybe a little vacuum was filled by Nelson Mandela, which was extraordinary. And that's a bit of the irony of history is you get this incredible story of stopping apartheid and the election there, and at the same time you've got one of the worst catastrophes going on in the middle of it. Thank you, no. [SPEAKS IN FRENCH], madame.

Moderator: George, go ahead.

Q: Thank you. I have one small question for each of you, and I'll try to run them together as briefly as possible. To Ms. Kimani, do I understand correctly that there was propaganda afoot during this period or before this period that was leading the people to believe that the Belgians or allies of the Belgians were coming back?

To General Dallaire, I'm interested in the character of this elusive Monsieur Booboo [sp?], whom I remember when he was--I was in the travel business for many years catering to the diplomatic community. When we were trying to pitch [?] him and this mission [ ? ] it was the second secretary in 1981-82. And we know what [ ? ] he did in the decade and a half thereafter. Is he very possibly the unsung villain of this whole business?

And to Professor Thompson, if I may, what can we as media, as journalists do, what can we as human beings do to see perhaps that Darfur, which is with us as we speak, doesn't turn into another Rwanda?

Allan Thompson: I want to hear Romeo, but we'll go in order.

Mary Kimani: I think I didn't make my point very clear. In 1990 when Kangura, the first real identifiable extremist [ ? ] set up [?], that paper puts across a certain hypothesis, which says 400 years ago Tutsis ruled this country, and it alleges that they were responsible for a

lot of the oppression of the Hutu people and several different things like slavery, use of them to farm--several allegations of the kind of torture that Hutus underwent under that rule.

And then it says in 1959, when the power turned over, we got rid of them. We forced them into exile. And it's because we forced them into exile we've lived happily. And now in 1990, a Tutsi force has invaded the country. They are coming back to re-implement the 400-year rule that they had before.

And then in 1993, when RTLM is [ ? ] takes up this type of coverage that Kangura has. And because it's a radio station it makes it more popular because, as he said, radio is everything in Rwanda. So RTLM repeats this argument repeatedly over and over in the year and a half before the genocide.

And it also adds several other things. It says RPF are committing atrocities in the area that they control. They are killing off all the Hutus. They plan to kill off all the Hutus so that we become equal. They stop being 80 percent of the population, and they become ten percent like the Tutsis.

So these allegations, combined with that historical frame which had been created, then creates a picture for the ordinary person if we do not watch out for these people, if we do not deal with the collaborators in our midst, these people are planning to kill us. They are planning to take over. We have to kill them or they will kill us.

Romeo Dallaire: That's rather an interesting question the way you put it. And I applaud your bluntness in doing that because Mr. Booboo has published a book, of course, this last year I think. It came out a year, a year and a half ago, in which--

Moderator: It's not out in English, is it?

Romeo Dallaire: I don't know if it's translated yet. And in the book he essentially accuses me of having taken over the mission and side stepped him because he is a African, and the white-dominated North American sort of ran the show, and he was nothing but a pawn. So you've got that side that's out there in the argument.

And my writings indicate that I think the gentleman what was not necessarily the most effective SRS in regards to moving the political agenda and could have, in fact, maybe created more tensions and frictions in trying to move the political agenda than solutions.

And so, you know, I'm not going to use the term you're using, but I think it's rather interesting that in the height of the actual genocide he gets fired, and I'm still there.

Allan Thompson: I know there's a lady in the back who's really anxious to answer [SIC] a question. But I'll try to answer this quickly. Because of where you work, you'll be accustomed now to hearing Canadians talk about their responsibility to protect. I borrowed that concept and called the epilogue of this book "The Responsibility to Report."

I think there is a responsibility for individual journalists to take it upon themselves to write these stories. And I know that's pretty simplistic, and it sounds like something that you'd expect to hear from an undergrad journalism student, but I believe in it deeply.

And I don't think we will ever figure out--I worked at the Toronto Star of 17 years. I could never figure out what got a story on the front page. One day your story was on the front page. The next day a mediocre story was on the front page, and a good story was buried or on the spike.

I don't know if we'll ever figure out how the gatekeepers make these decisions. But I think we underestimate the power of individual journalists cumulatively, taking it upon themselves, to continue to pursue these kinds of stories.

And you can gain a reputation for being the kind of journalist who does these kinds of stories. I know. That happened to me at the Toronto Star. And you can, to some degree, become pigeonholed because of that. It might even compromise your career that you are somehow seen as being an advocate rather than a journalist.

And I think that's nonsense. I think journalists all make decisions about what they believe in, where they stand, when they decide what story they are going to devote themselves to. They shelve those things when they actually do the story, do the research, and produce the journalistic product.

But I think we need to come to this much more driven about the responsibility to report and go out and just do these stories and then use our resources to prevail upon the gatekeepers to get them in the paper. And if they don't do it the first day, do it again the next day.

Q: [ ? ] what would you describe as your [ ? ] revisionist [ ? ] when the genocide revisionist [ ? ] I was also covering the [ ? ] and [ ? ] Somalia, which is [ ? ] [ ? ] [ ? ] every [ ? ] which suited [?] everybody's [ ? ] [ ? ] the way I wrote the stories [ ? ] And I'm curious what you mean by the [ ? ]

Romeo Dallaire: That's a very interesting--I think first of all that Somalia had a major impact on decisions that were going on here be Mogadishu on the third of October and white soldiers, or American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu put everybody else gun-shy. And when the world power gets a bloody nose and runs, how do you expect anybody else to stay and defend that position politically, at least politically [ ? ]?

And so Mogadishu created a scenario that influenced significantly decisions in DPKO, in the Security Council and in a number of countries, and exacerbated, of course, the ability of any of them to want to come back into Rwanda or into Africa into a difficult situation.

So you're absolutely right, that is a major factor. And that fear of casualties has remained. And I'm absolutely amazed at the resiliency of the American people, who are able to handle all those casualties in Iraq and haven't gone nuts yet. So some of us had estimated you wouldn't be able to handle more than 500. And we are astounded at what's gone on.

And in regards to the revisionist scenario, and what we're seeing is a move ons [?] that is started--certainly in France and Belgium. There's been some here in the United States in regards to, one, denying that the genocide actually happened; two, attempting to use the fact that exactations by the RPF during the campaign and after negate or equate to the actual genocide; three, that the fundamental argument is that there was no plan, but it essentially was just a debord [?] de main. And I'm not sure how I can translate that in English. [PHRASE IN FRENCH]. You know, it's just a sort of all of a sudden mass hysteria. And so the planned genocide never happened.

And simply--and I'll use the term by a French officer that I met from Turquoise [?], who said, "You know, when these Africans, something bad happens, they lose all sense of proportion, and they slaughter and kill everything." So he said, "You just can't master them at all." And so that's the circumstance, and that's what happened.

And then you get the revisionism surrounding the shooting down of the plane. And the shooting down of the plane creates a genocide, because the president, who was the father of the country, and I acknowledge that cultural dimension, initiated the exercise.

Well, whether or not the RPF shot down the plane or the Belgians shot down the plane or mercenaries or the government shot down, it's irrelevant. It happened. It was going to-- something was going to happen. It was triggered there because, as somebody, and I would contend nearly all sides knew, that there was a plan.

And so do you start the plan because you want to win? Or did somebody else start the plan because you know it will go awry and you will win? And I'll move towards the end of my comments in regards--I remember Philip Gourevitch with his book, and we were at Harvard together and were debating this.

And in regards to the plan, and surely, you know, the concept of genocide and implementing a plan of that nature and seeing it through, is difficult to comprehend. And who would gain from that? And although we discussed the possibility of the Hutus wanting to solve the problem by eliminating 1.2 million Tutsis, I mean, they gauged the international community, and they gauged it right.

Their problem was that they couldn't sustain the fight, because if they had sustained the fight, they would have wiped them out. So they did a proper strategic assessment, but tactically they didn't have the tools to do it.

On the other side, the question is, is how come it took Kigami 100 days and nearly 700-odd days to secure the bulk of Rwanda? Did he really need that long? Did he really have to absorb 800,000 casualties? Did he have to absorb four million people [ ? ] and refugees [?]? Is there something behind there? And so you could throw up a whole bunch of these sorts of scenarios.

However the fundamental question is the following: was there a genocide, and was there a planned genocide? And there is absolutely no doubt in my military mind that that was there. We knew it. And anybody who was trying to belittle that because they want to hang Kigami is smoking dope.

Q: I was [ ? ] a weekly newsletter [ ? ] going on. And so I followed the [ ? ] week by week basis. And what struck me was that the story out of here was not covered at all. And the story here was that the Security Council had decided before anything ever happened that they were not going to do anything.

When you sent your famous memo to Kofi Annan saying shall we take some action, what happened to it [?]? They should have made a huge fuss about it. They didn't. They put it in a pile and said [ ? ] permanent members of the Security Council, and so nothing happened. So even before anything you happened, before a single person was killed, the decision had been made here [ ? ].

And so this particular angle has not been covered at all in the [ ? ] media.

Romeo Dallaire: Is that your question?

Q: The question is this: when you say, when you [ ? ] Tutsi and Hutu, it's never mentioned. That distinction is not [ ? ] the country. It was made by the Belgian colonists. So [ ? ] obey--it should be [ ? ] costs, the Hutus and the [ ? ] tolerance [ ? ] and you're [ ? ] you're a Hutu.

So this standard [ ? ] and this was very deliberately done. None of this [ ? ] the public.

Romeo Dallaire: Well, first of all, I think the Hutu-Tutsi scenario was dominant. And it drove the extremists. In fact, they were both extremists on both sides. One side thought there was a Tutsi hegemony going on in the Great Lakes region, and the other side thought it was a Hutu hegemony.

So the Hutu-Tutsi scenario was very true. And, as an example, I lectured at Boston College on the complicity of the Rwandan Catholic Church in the genocide, in which within the Church, its structure within its schools, they were nurturing the difference between the two ethnicities. So I would contend the ethnicities were a reality.

The fact that the people were more progressive than the extremists in fact, you know, intermarrying and reconciling, is a magnificent sign of the people coming to grips with that. However, many people died because they actually did that in that kind [ ? ].

Now, in regards to a conspiracy, that is to say that the UN decided it's not going in there, and that was decided earlier on, I won't agree with that in any way, shape or form. I would contend--and this is not in mitigation, but I would contend that the UN had at the time 15, 16 missions going on.

The UN peacekeeping operations headquarters was nothing more than ad hocery. No responsible government would ever organize an outfit like that and keep that many troops in so many complex missions around the world going. And it was ad hocery not because the people were ad hoc. It was because the tools that were given and the restrictions that were still ongoing here were restrictions of peacetime, when, in fact, the bulk of the world was going up in smoke and imploding nations.

And so the essence of the institution didn't shift is culture from peacekeeping being a sideshow in all of 20 years in the Golan Heights to actually a mainstream event of the most-modern era. And the imploding nations were happening all over the place, and you needed a whole new doctrine, you needed a whole new structure, to meet that requirement. Let alone try to handle the crisis, imagine even trying to prevent some of these crises.

So I would contend that they were in way over their heads in this headquarters. And in so doing were treading water and surviving and trying to move things.

And so the fax that came in, and I think I remember Iqbal Riza in some of the interviews and stuff saying that, listen, this is not the first time we've had a fax from a general in the field who is saying the sky is falling.

And I'll bring it closer to home. To me, to prove my argument, if I may, is that I was getting stuff back saying, you know, gee, Dallaire is a bit of a loose cannon maybe, you know. He doesn't have much experience in Africa. He doesn't really know the nuances there. It's his first command in peacekeeping. The situation is getting a little tense; is he pushing the envelope?

And that was reinforced by the fact that Booboo was low-balling the whole damn thing. And he was an experienced diplomat, African, known in the UN, known to Boutros-Ghali and so

on. And so those were factors that ultimately influenced the decisions in some of the information flow.

Now, whether there was a conspiracy behind that, now I end by--and I write it in my book, I always thought that there was a gang above the Security Council that was calling the shots. I still do today. There is another sort of realm of communications and discussions and debates and trade-offs that are done above.

I like the term "above". It could be "beside" or maybe, perversely, "underneath" it. But there is another body that flows with the situations and in and out whoever is there, that are setting up the scenes that ultimately influence those sitting in the Security Council, and particularly the permanent five and developed countries, so some of the developing countries, depending on what allegiances in certain areas. That is ongoing.

How do we get at that one? Because if we break the back of that sort of free-lancing of the international community above and outside of the UN, and how it influences in the Security Council, we're [ ? ] to break that and move all that into the Security Council in a structured fashion, then I think we've got a whole different way of responding.

And so I'll give you a bit of room in saying, yeah, there were guys talking at another level--

Q: [ ? ]

Romeo Dallaire: To what effect, to what extent that actually influenced the Security Council, well, we can see what the decisions--what effect did it have in the secretariat? I would contend no.

Q: But [ ? ] saying that this is happening but it's not being reported.

Romeo Dallaire: No, no, no. Those guys knew exactly what the hell was going on.

Mary Kimani: I just want to add one thing because I think we have to be picky about some of these things. It is true that the Belgians played a role in defining the Tutsis and Hutus as they are now. But we can't leave it there, because then that presents a population that is acted upon and doesn't do anything. It just takes on that definition and never does something about it.

That definition is not dangerous in itself. It is what the elites from both groups did with that def that created the conflict. We cannot leave it at the Belgians and the Catholics. The elites in Rwanda, the extreme groups in Rwanda, are the ones who took those identities and panned [?] them into something that can be used for conflict.

Moderator: Okay, Matthew.

Q: Yes, sure. Earlier this month there was going to be commemoration of the Rwandan Genocide here in the UN in the GA lobby, and it ended up being canceled on very short notice. It was reported as being related to Armenian--there was a line in it about Armenia and Turkey.

But yesterday the head of public information here said there was also some issues around the, quote, "language presenting the Rwandan genocide." And he listed three things. He said, "The way it dealt with the role of France, whether you can blame 100 percent on the Hutu, and the role of the church."

So I'm wondering, one, if you guys are aware of this, and also if you have any comment on the cancellation of that exhibit and the sort of politics around the language [ ? ]

Romeo Dallaire: I could use--my pills, sort of dry my mouth.

So I could use a scotch really, but I'll take a bit of water, if there's any.

On the first side, if you remember, the exhibit was organized by Aegis [?], and Aegis--I've worked with Aegis and we're in fact working with Aegis now in Canada. And the first exercise was stopped because of Turkey objecting to the genocide.

I think that's absolutely scandalous. I cannot believe that the UN backed down on that. I think if you want to demonstrate no spine you've certainly started in that fashion. I mean, what do you need? If the country objects to something [ ? ] fine, object to it, but that doesn't mean that the international community accepts your objection or will fold because of that objection. Which was sad [?].

The one happening in the last couple of days I have not got that, although if I look in my emails I probably will find it. And I find it fascinating that in fact the Catholic Church would object. The Catholic Church of Rwanda was intimate to the Habyarimana regime. I mean, the Pope was even in Rwanda in '92.

Its structures, its promotions, how it went about business--and I speak of the Rwandan Catholic Church, that is its internal. And so a number of priests and bishops and so on who did ultimately find themselves in a predicament there, it was due to some backdrop of supporting the Hutu structure and links with the extremist government.

I would also contend that while we were trying to negotiate implementing the peace, the broad-based transitional government, the bishops produced an option that was so pro-

Habyarimana that it oozed with his words, and so in itself was setting itself up to that. So I would contend that the Catholic Church is not in the most comfortable position.

And, lastly on that, is the Nunzio postulate [?]. Nunzio was the head of the diplomatic corps and was the first one to leave the country and left it the number two, who was the Belgian. And which didn't make it easier either.

Now, in regards to France, and I find it always fascinating that in France every year that we come close to the genocide, there's always a new angle that's published in France. It's a new book. It's a new revisionist scenario. It's a new report from an investigator from some judge or whatever. And you get every time a very interesting counter to the genocide. And it comes up always, you'll see, February, March, just in time to get published.

And so, again, with France it was absolutely extraordinary how a country as prepared to send in troops at the ebbing part of the genocide, bringing in its Franco-colonial countries under command with barely any representation and a platoon here, a platoon there, but having then compromised them.

And coming in with a force that essentially is prepared to fight versus a force that is actually there to protect and defensively be ready to move massive amounts of humanitarian aid and people that is actually [ ? ] coming forward with objections. I don't know what the objection is, but I've got a bit of problem with that.

What was the third thing?

Q: Whether things can be blamed 100 percent on Hutu--I'm not sure if Mr. Akasaka [?] meant that each of these three were the ones who complained, so much as they said that now they're very concerned with the wording of it and have been renegotiating the language of it.

Romeo Dallaire: Well, I mean, there is no doubt that the RPF when it conducted its sweeps and when it was conducting checks of people coming back into the country were doing things that we couldn't get at, and we only heard rumors that things were not necessarily being done in the most judicious fashion. But we never got hard data. We couldn't get close to do that.

And so the question is--and ultimately is the question, if I may just put it out there, do you have an army that is now undisciplined and is conducting rape, pillage and plunder behind the lines, and that the commanders haven't been able to stop them? Or do you have a deliberate plan to conduct these things? That is open to people who want to investigate it.

Moderator: Peter?

Q: Peter Heinlein, from Voice of America. As we sit here, I hear over and over echoing off the walls the words "Darfur, Darfur, Darfur." That's what's happening now.

Romeo Dallaire: Yeah.

Q: Are we going to be saying the same things years from now about Darfur that we're saying about Rwanda now? Do you feel the Security Council, for instance, is doing little or nothing about Darfur now? Should we be saying now more, "Why isn't something being done about Darfur?"

Romeo Dallaire: I think that we won't be saying the same because we've got Rwanda as a reference point, and so we've got less of an ability to hide behind history or not comprehending what's going on. We know and comprehend what's going on.

In regards to whether or not all these years of study and work and efforts to bring in a new doctrine-like responsibility to protect and things of that nature, whether that has shifted the political will for sub-Saharan black Africa? One would contend that it hasn't.

In fact, one of the perverse dimensions that have come up is that we all believe and we've sort of nearly instilled, I believe, in the African Union, the new African Union, that they should sort out their own problems. I mean, we might come in in support.

Knowing full well that the African stand-by force concept is barely five years in, and it still doesn't have the ability by each sub-region to produce the brigade and all the command and control and everything else.

And nobody wants to really give it the equipment to do the job because in the same time we're saying that, gee, we give them too much equipment, and what we're going to do is equip palace guards, and they're going to conduct coup after coup after coup. So we better not give them all the equipment.

So there's a treating them on one side of you're not being a responsible adult to sort your problems out, and on the other side we're treating them as a kid because we're worried he's going to take the toys and mis-use them.

In regards to Darfur, I would contend that when we started to raise it a few years ago we needed at the time, I estimated a deployment of about 44,000 troops to--before the situation has degenerated to what we have now. And that was not only to protect the people but was also to give them the protection to go back to where they ultimately will go once that's negotiated. And we haven't even come close to negotiating the return of these people with the frictions that created the problem in the first place.

And it was rather interesting that at that time when I was raising it, people were telling me that it is absolutely inconceivable that we'll move [?] 44,000 troops into Darfur. And I said it was rather interesting that before Dayton, the UN had 23,000 troops in Yugoslavia. We get a peace agreement and we put 67,000 in Yugoslavia. And now we've got a country that's at least 30 times the size, we've got millions more being moved around and so on, and that is not a factor that can be moved in.

So I would contend that we have taken a decision politically not to get involved. So in the interim what we've been doing is we've been buying off ourselves by throwing a whole bunch of humanitarian aid at it. And we've been fiddling with the books, and we have not called China's bluff, until somebody mentioned the Olympics. And then all of a sudden the whole world has changed.

It hasn't been proven yet. I mean, Bashir agrees, but there's a long way between his bureaucrats letting actually that happen.

And so we now come close to the UN and the Security Council. I think that a number of the resolutions that have been passed are good. I mean, the no fly zone one and so on. The problem is that none of the sovereign states want to play. No one who has the capabilities wants to play. And the AU is nearly maxed out in its capacities of doing what it's doing.

And so we have essentially let a country that was using and abusing the massive extent of its population slide into becoming a genocidal government. Because the day that the Sudanese government said that it's not going to let the UN come in to protect is the day it turned into a genocidal government.

And so you have it in front of you, and no one wants to come. No one even wants to do the contingency planning under R2P to maybe, maybe we might want to deploy. Now, to do contingency planning on that scale, the UN doesn't have the skills to do it. You need NATO or a bit of a coalition under a big power.

And so you sort of wonder, and I'll come back to Mes Amies a France [?], you sort of wonder why France hasn't taken the lead out of Chad, because it's a natural. With Liberia, Chad, why haven't they taken the lead in trying to at least establish a modicum of stability there and bring in a bunch of countries and push for a contingency plan at least?

Now, the Sudanese know full well that no one maybe has the tools to go in. That is to say, because of Iraq and Afghanistan, those who have the capabilities are fully committed. I say that's false. I say there are still tens of thousands of troops available in the European Union that are going nowhere. And so the culprit in the ability to respond to it is, in my opinion, the European Union followed by middle powers like Canada and Japan.

Now, what's my solution? My solution is you should squeeze the Chinese and you get them to put the peacekeeping force and put somebody above them to keep an eye on them.

Q: [ ? ] the United States--

Romeo Dallaire: You don't want the Americans there. Thank you very much.

[LAUGHTER]

Q: Allan, would you like to say something about the media and Darfur?

Allan Thompson: I mean, just quickly on the media, I think you'd have to do a content analysis to figure out are we paying more attention to Darfur than we did to Rwanda? I think anecdotally certainly we are. Do we have any greater degree of understanding? Has the media coverage of that issue translated into this magical nexus to momentum, political decision makers?

I think the famous media gatekeepers are still more interested in finding Madonna in a nursery somewhere or Brad and Angelina having a child. Those are the African stories that are deemed to be of more interest to a lot of news organizations than Darfur.

And the same issues come into play: it's far away; it's dangerous; it's difficult to file; it's complex, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Yes, those--and it's expensive. It's all true. And yet we have a responsibility to report.

Moderator: Okay, we are going more than an hour already so--

Romeo Dallaire: May I add just one last comment? There's an incredible desire for pathos in North America. And it's dominating reality. And until we sort of put that thing aside and start to become more objective, I think that we will continue to fiddle with some of the examples that we lived through in '94, and that Alan has just raised.

Moderator: Okay, [ ? ] can you please make short questions so we can finish up?

Q: Very short. [ ? ] time--I'm a political cartoonist. And at that time I had a regular page in Time magazine [ ? ]. I happened to see a picture [ ? ] picture was [ ? ] there. And [ ? ] for a week. As a result, I've started to do cartoons about that subject. No one told me yes; no one told me no. I was completely independent.

So what I'm saying are two things: instead [?] of hunting down the Security Council, the UN, countries, et cetera, go after independent columnists. They have a lot of power and they spread [ ? ] syndication. And they'll give you whatever they want. They're independent.

Every journalist here, wonderful people, but is obliged to the discipline of his or her organization. And rightfully so. I was also an editor, so I know that it's rightfully so, they're doing their work. But if you want to go and [ ? ] out of [ ? ] go after the columnists. This is one thing.

The second thing: we have a very cynical population that we have to counter [?]. Even poor victims need a PR agency if [ ? ]. [ ? ] to live [ ? ] a better PR agency, sorry.

Moderator: Okay, John [?] [ ? ]

Q: I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit more on what you think the French motive or their goals were in Turquoise, and if you're critical of that, wouldn't they repeat that going into Chad and Darfur? And we probably addressed the cable [?] [ ? ] an opportunity [ ? ]

Romeo Dallaire: No, we did the cable. But in regards to Turquoise, I refer you to my book, although I'm afraid that some of the drafts--I wrote 500 in the book. But in Turquoise when the initial information was coming in on Turquoise there was no doubt in my mind that there was a plan to things like, this is my estimate, parachuting in to Kigali to prevent it from falling, splitting the country in half, and ultimately then see a whole new sort of Cyprus maybe negotiating exercise going on between the interim government and the RPF and then having two sort of perceived legitimate governments evolve with time.

And with every passing day the line, the RPF moved, the French were coming in with their lines of separation, were always optimistic versus what was actually on the ground. And ultimately they only ended up in a little corner.

The other side is that--or not the other side. Another component is that the government forces, the officer corps was a lot educated in France, many of the senior officers. I had a lot of friends even in Turquoise. And I met them and talked with them and they expressed it.

And there was this incredible sense that a sort of decision was taken that we're not going to win this thing, so let's pull out and we'll re-group outside and come back some day. And this is going to give us a chance to do this by the presence of the French.

There was another component [ ? ] discussions in regards to the French are coming to reinforce us [?] a third time. We withdraw rapidly, reconstitute ourselves and conduct a counter-attack.

Q: What is the French interest in [ ? ]

Romeo Dallaire: That would be--they would not live with the consequence of a military and a political structure that they have nurtured and built to be defeated by another side which

they hadn't set up in the first place. And the other side of it being they were Anglo and probably American-based.

Q: [ ? ]

Romeo Dallaire: Well, I'm giving you what I think. I mean, you're--

[OVERTALK]

Q: --aren't there?

Romeo Dallaire: There's nothing there. I mean, it can become--in fact, if you look at the country right now it can become quite a hub in Central Africa, you know, technology, transport and stuff like that. But that was never in the cards at the time.

Q: I'm curious why you feature Kofi Annan on the cover of your book rather than General Dallaire, since Kofi Allan was the head of peacekeeping, was the head of DPKO [?] and one of the people who treated the General's cables as if the sky were falling and therefore many of us in this building--

[CUT]

Allan Thompson: --journalist students to Rwanda to do either training or to work as interns, in the case of students. Thirty Canadians went last year. Another 30 will go this year. Five or six are on the ground now.

I think those people address the other part of the equation. If they haven't had that kind of experience before, they come back from Rwanda changed, and they want to go back to Rwanda or to Africa again. And they will do more of those kinds of stories in the future.

Moderator: Well, I would suggest because of the late hour, that if you want to stay behind and talk to either of these three marvelous speakers, please go ahead. And thank you very much.

Allan Thompson: Guys, briefly, I want to thank you for the use of this space and--

[END OF AUDIO]