

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

By Roméo Dallaire



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For the first time in the United States comes the tragic and profoundly important story of the legendary Canadian general who "watched as the devil took control of paradise on earth and fed on the blood of the people we were supposed to protect." When Roméo Dallaire was called on to serve as force commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, he believed that his assignment was to help two warring parties achieve the peace they both wanted. Instead, he was exposed to the most barbarous and chaotic display of civil war and genocide in the past decade, observing in just one hundred days the killings of more than eight hundred thousand Rwandans. With only a few troops, his own ingenuity and courage to direct his efforts, Dallaire rescued thousands, but his call for more support from the world body fell on deaf ears. In *Shake Hands with the Devil*, General Dallaire recreates the awful history the world community chose to ignore. He also chronicles his own progression from confident Cold Warrior to devastated UN commander, and finally to retired general struggling painfully, and publicly, to overcome posttraumatic stress disorder—the highest-ranking officer ever to share such experiences with readers.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As former head of the late 1993 U.N. peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, Canadian general Dallaire's initial proposal called for 5,000 soldiers to permit orderly elections and the return of the refugees. Nothing like this number was supplied, and the result was an outright attempt at genocide against the Tutsis that nearly succeeded, with 800,000 dead over three months. The failure of the U.N.'s wealthier members to act as the tragedy unfolded obliged the author to leave military service to recover from PTSD (as well as the near breakdown of his family). While much of the account is a thickly described I-went-here, I went-there, I-met-X, I-said-this, one learns much more about the author's emotional states when making decisions than in a conventional military history, making this an important document of service—one that has been awarded Canada's Governor General's Award. And his descriptions of Rwanda's unraveling are disturbing, to say the least ("I then noticed large piles of blue-black bodies heaped on the creek banks"). Dallaire's argument that Rwanda-like situations are fires that can be put out with a small force if caught early enough will certainly draw debate, but the book documents in horrifying detail what happens when *no* serious effort is made. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review On June 27, 1993, Dallaire--a career man in the Canadian military--was informed that he might be asked to lead a UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, to which he replied excitedly, "Rwanda, that's somewhere in Africa, isn't it?" Fourteen months later, he would return from his service there a nearly broken man, having failed to prevent the unfathomable massacre of 800,000 Tutsis and Hutus, which took place over a mere 100 days. From meticulous diary entries he wrote during his service there, Dallaire pieces together the inside story of what went wrong. He puts unsparing blame on the circular failure of the UN: lack of support from member countries, especially the U.S and the Security Council, which led to lack of respect for the UN, which then led to lack of support from member countries. He blames the warring sides, especially extremist Hutus, for planning the genocide during peace talks, knowing the UN would not have the courage to enforce the peace: "They knew us better than we knew ourselves." And he blames himself for his political naivete and his inability to convince the UN of the gravity of the situation, which has now spread to neighboring Congo. For those who would understand the inexorable but entirely preventable unfolding of the Rwandan holocaust, this account, told from the eye of the storm, is indispensable. *Alan Moores*

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Review

Toronto Globe and Mail

"Almost certainly the most important book published in Canada this year."

Quill & Quire

"[*Shake Hands with the Devil*] is an affidavit for an indictment—an indictment of the murderers, the hamstrung, bureaucratized UN, and the self-absorbed developed world. ... Roméo Dallaire emerges as our post-Cold War hero."

Candy Crowley, CNN Chief Political Correspondent

"It's stark and it's horrible, but it's fascinating and very moving."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jack Crawford:

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Cesar Smith:

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