On May 17 the Security Council approved a watered-down version of my plan as Resolution 918, which officially created UNAMIR 2. While the resolution approved the concept of operations, the force structure and the phased thirty-one-day deployment, it was vague on the genocide and the role the force should play in stopping it. Colin Keating later publicly admitted, “The United States has gutted this resolution.” Even so, I was prepared to accept vagueness as permission to execute my plan so long as I was given the required troops—the resolution authorized an immediate change in UNAMIR’s mandate and the rapid deployment of 5,500 men. After nearly a decade of reliving every detail of those days, I am still certain that I could have stopped the madness had I been given the means.

But as the days went by and no troops arrived, it was clear that the Security Council had once again passed a resolution that did not truly represent the intentions of its member states. In this case, while most nations seemed to agree that something had to be done, every nation seemed to have a reason why some other nation should do it. So there we sat, waiting for a promise to be kept, reduced to the role of accountants keeping track of how many were being killed.

Madeleine Albright, the U.S. permanent representative to the UN, and Sir David Hannay, her British counterpart, had for some time resisted the use of the term “genocide” in UN debates, but now that their objections had been swamped in a deluge of factual reports out of Rwanda, the United States fell back on the argument that African security problems should be solved by African troops. A number of African states were willing to contribute: Ghana, Ethiopia, Malawi, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Tunisia, Nigeria, Zambia, Congo, Mali and others. But none of them had the logistical capacity to deploy and sustain their forces without help. The burden of sending troops eventually fell to Ghana, Ethiopia, Zambia, India, Canada and Nigeria. With the exception of the Canadians and, to a lesser extent, the Indians, these forces were logistically too weak to deploy themselves without First World assistance. None of the nations that eventually stepped forward had the capacity for the massive reinforcement that might have bought the UN credibility in the eyes of the belligerents.

The United States and the United Kingdom committed other acts of sabotage on deployment to Rwanda. For instance, I had long been arguing with New York that RTLM had to be shut down, as it was a direct instrument in promoting genocide. The UN did not have the means to stop the broadcasts, either through jamming, a direct air strike on the transmitter, or covert operations, but it made a formal request of the United States, which had the means to try all three. The issue was studied by the Pentagon, which in due course recommended against conducting the operation because of the cost—$8,500 an hour for a jamming aircraft over the country—and the legal dilemma. Bandwidth within a nation is owned by the nation, and jamming a national radio station would violate international convention on national sovereignty. The Pentagon judged that the lives of the estimated 8,000–10,000 Rwandans being killed each day in the genocide were not worth the cost of the fuel or the violation of Rwandan airwaves. The death toll, which was estimated at 200,000 by the end of April, reached 500,000 by the end of May and 800,000 by the last day of June.

I had judged that we needed one hundred APCs to be effective on the ground. The DPKO approached forty-four nations to give, lend or lease APCs to the troop-contributing African countries to equip their forces. The United States, with its vast unused Cold War stocks of APCs, eventually supplied fifty. As soon as the United States offered anything at all, the DPKO stopped searching for other donors. And then the stalling began: staff with the Pentagon were reluctant to put their vehicles into central Africa and seemed content instead to let them rust in
German depots. They badgered the DPKO with questions, and staff there passed the questions on to me. Then the United States decided that the APCs could not be given to the mission but would have to be leased and that the lease would have to be negotiated. Eventually they came up with the price of $4 million, which they insisted had to be prepaid. When the issue was raised of transporting the carriers to Kampala to link them up with the Ghanaians who needed to be trained to operate them, the United States insisted upon another $6 million to cover the cost of air transport. After the funding was secured—another time-consuming exercise—the APCs were airlifted to Entebbe; after much negotiation with Uganda, they arrived stripped of machine guns, radios, tools, spare parts, training manuals and so on. The United States, in effect, delivered tons of rusting metal to Entebbe. We were without trucks to transport the APCs to Kigali and had no drivers trained to operate them.

Not to be outdone by the Americans, the British offered fifty Bedford trucks—again for a sizable amount to be paid up front. The Bedford is an early Cold War-era truck, which in 1994 was fit only to be a museum relic. When I was told of this “most generous” offer, I sarcastically asked, “They do work, don’t they?” I was answered first with silence and then: “I’ll check and get back to you.” The British later quietly withdrew their request for payment and provided some of the vehicles, which broke down one at a time until there were none left. There were many more transactions like these, and they were not isolated to the great powers.

While the UN and the international community were dithering about the fate of UNAMIR 2, on the ground in Kigali we were picking up signs that the interim government was getting ready to launch a coherent counteroffensive in the city. The Interahamwe leaders had told my military intelligence officer, Deme, that they had been having extensive meetings with Bizimungu. They said they had made a deal with the RGF chief of staff that would allow the militias to carry on as they liked at night, but that required them to work with the RGF on local security operations in the daytime. Taking their cue from Bizimungu, the militias were continuing the genocide after dark with a free hand.

Apart from the inner core of the city, where Presidential Guard units were still running the show, on the barriers we saw more gendarmes working with the Interahamwe. Deme’s deduction was that a decision had been made to synchronize all the forces—the military, Gendarmerie and militias—in order to launch a counterattack in the city. A significant number of government forces were still inside Kigali: the army had seven battalions—four thousand troops—as well as the para-commandos, the artillery, the military police battalion and the reconnaissance battalions, who were the most highly trained troops and had heavy weapons systems.

The Interahamwe leaders told Deme that the militia was now split into two factions. The CDR-affiliated Impuzamugambi (in Kinyarwanda “those who have a single aim”) would offer no mercy to the Tutsis. The Interahamwe, represented by the leaders I had met with, described itself as the legitimate third force and as “more considerate of the situation.” The leaders also admitted that the chances of our transfers succeeding were very slim because they couldn’t guarantee that the other faction would respect any agreement they had made. Even if Bagosora said that the transfers would work, they couldn’t promise that they would. They advised UNAMIR not to negotiate with the government or the military because we wouldn’t get the real answer. “Co-operate with the people,” they told Deme, “and avoid the politicians and the heads of the military, for they are telling only lies.” I gave this report from my intelligence officer a lot of credence. It confirmed for me that there was going to be a last-ditch effort to save Kigali, and the Interahamwe were in on that plan. Negotiating a ceasefire was a secondary concern: we were about to see these bastards continue the fight, even as they were making nice noises at the negotiating table. Stopping the killing had to be UNAMIR 2’s primary mission.
July 5 was the start of a new phase in the civil war and genocide. Kagame wanted to meet me as soon as possible, but I spent a good part of the morning briefing the SRSG and then taking him on an orientation tour of our sites in Kigali. Shaharyar Khan described his first encounters with the genocide in his book *The Shallow Graves of Rwanda*: "As General Dallaire drove me past places where massacres had taken place, there were corpses and skeletons lying about picked bare by dogs and vultures. The scene was macabre, surrealistic and utterly gruesome. Worse was to follow. We went to the ICRC hospital where hundreds of bodies lay piled up in the garden. Everywhere there were corpses, mutilated children, dying women. There was blood all over the floors and the terrible stench of rotting flesh. Every inch of space was taken up by these patients. The day before, as government forces (the RGF) left, they had fired mortars indiscriminately and one had hit the casualty ward in the ICRC hospital, killing seven patients." (In fact, when we got there, the staff were still cleaning up body parts.) Khan continued: "I have never witnessed such horror, such vacant fear in the eyes of patients, such putrid stench. I did not throw up, I did not even cry: I was too shocked. I was silent. My colleagues who had lived through the massacres were hardened; they had seen worse, much worse.”

The scene was essentially the same at the King Faisal. That hospital tour, however, included a locked ward. When Khan asked James Orbinski why, James explained that these casualties had been identified by the RPF as having participated in the massacres, and the RPF wanted them to live to face the courts instead of lynch mobs. Khan considered this an extraordinary example of discipline from a victorious rebel force.

Khan had been in Afghanistan during the worst of Soviet and mujahedeen conflict. As a child he had lived through the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1947. In his book he wrote, "The fact is that never in living history has such wanton brutality been inflicted by human beings on their fellow creatures [as in Rwanda]. . . . even the killing fields of Cambodia and Bosnia pale before the gruesome, awful depravity of massacres in Rwanda." He chose one example from among many others to make his point. “The Interahamwe made a habit of killing young Tutsi children, in front of their parents, by first cutting off one arm, then the other. They would then gash the neck with a machete to bleed the child slowly to death but, while they were still alive, they would cut off the private parts and throw them at the faces of the terrified parents, who would then be murdered with slightly greater dispatch.” Khan was wrong when he wrote that the veterans of the genocide had become hardened to such things. We were simply putting off our feelings until later.

Kagame had moved his command post into a cottage inside Camp Kanombe, and after winning Kigali was trying his best to be magnificent. He told me he now fully supported the total deployment of UNAMIR 2 to help move the French out of the HIR; he promised that the airport would be opened in a few days; and he was ready to announce a unilateral ceasefire. If the RGF didn’t accept the ceasefire, Kagame vowed to push the fight to the Zaire border.

He informed me that he and his political advisers would soon be setting up a broad-based government founded on the Arusha framework—with some modifications, of course. No one who had had any part in the genocide would be included, and despite the fact that the RPF was calling for a ceasefire, it would not enter into negotiations with the interim government. The country, as he saw it, was now divided in three: the RPF zone; the Turquoise humanitarian zone, which UNAMIR 2 needed to monitor and then take over in order to evict the French as soon as possible; and in the northwest, the relatively small RGF zone, which he would have no scruples about attacking if the former regime’s forces didn’t lay down their weapons. There we had it, the victor’s map.

I asked Kagame to wait until he could meet the new SRSG before going public with his plans so that UNAMIR could have some time to react to the new circumstances, and he agreed.
On August 2, I made my way to Entebbe to meet Schroeder in his HQ. The visit from Defense Secretary Perry and General Shalikashvili and their large entourage had changed nothing, though Khan and I had taken our best shot at explaining the region's imperatives. Once again, General Schroeder was most welcoming and he immediately had his staff bring me up to date. More of his forces were moving into Goma and he had sent Nix there semi-permanently. He would be sending a total of three hundred military police and airfield staff with off-loading equipment to Kigali over the next few days, and I could expect the C5 military cargo planes to start carrying in my troops by August 6.

We then spoke privately as there were far too many busy people and boards and charts and crackling communications systems arrayed around us. When we were alone together in his office, I didn't even have to ask the question. His orders, he said, were to operate out of Entebbe with his main effort concentrated on Goma. His people at the Kigali airport would not be allowed to leave the airfield perimeter. The political heat was on for him not to take any risks that might lead to the injury or death of his troops. When I left him to go visit my UNMOS in their unassuming quarters I was incensed, and Schroeder, who had criticized the course his bosses had decided upon, was ashamed. His political masters were being suckerized into Goma and into a no-risk approach—shades of Mogadishu haunting us still. Such actions helped ensure lasting conflict in the area.

I climbed to the top of the decrepit old terminal and looked out from the bullet-riddled tower. My camp at Entebbe looked like a tiny, amateur operation against the bustle of the American enterprise here. I could not believe that the outside world was finally coming into the Rwandan catastrophe en masse and screwing it up so totally—and for the same reasons that had prevented them from reacting properly to the genocide in the first place. I flew back to Kigali that night, knowing that without the Americans’ support for the Homeward Bound plan the road ahead was near-impassable.

And so for the last weeks of my command the Americans, with all their resources, sat inside the perimeter of the Kigali airport, and though they helped us bring our troops in and out, they did little else.
There were still casualties in Kigali as a result of crime (our UN civilian police were working hard with the new government, but there was a ways to go yet) and people were stumbling across land mines or other unexploded ordinance. The Americans had several well-equipped ambulances on the ground with medical staff, while we were making do with vans, pickup trucks, four-by-fours and sometimes even dump trucks. But when we asked the Americans if they could do emergency casualty evacuation to the hospitals in Kigali, they refused, evoking their standing orders.

Then there was water. With the help of British and Canadian engineers, we were able to establish water purification points around the city but we did not have any bulk-water carriers to move the water to our locations or to the civilian population. As a result, we had to make endless water runs, which ate up fuel and time. Rwandans had to walk long distances to the water points each day to fill up buckets and cans. One day an American C5 landed at the airport and unloaded several huge bulk-water carrying trucks, some even painted in UN colours. Even though we knew about their restrictions, we asked if they could please drive the vehicles, under our escort and protection, and begin moving potable water to distribution sites for the population and UNAMIR within Kigali. They refused. We then asked if we could “borrow” the vehicles, as we suspected they were destined for us. They again refused, stating they had no authority to loan the vehicles and no, they weren’t coming to us, but were destined for Goma. Apparently, the water carriers had landed in Kigali by mistake.

The original U.S. assessment for UNAMIR 1, which the Americans committed to pay to the UN but never did, would have been no more than $30 million. The cost of UNAMIR 2 would have been only slightly more. By deciding to support the refugee camps in Goma, the U.S. paid ten times that amount—$300 million—over the following two years. If we reduce to the petty grounds of cost effectiveness the entire argument over whether the U.S. should have supported the United Nations in Rwanda, the United States government could have saved a lot of money by backing UNAMIR. As to the value of the 800,000 lives in the balance books of Washington, during those last weeks we received a shocking call from an American staffer, whose name I have long forgotten. He was engaged in some sort of planning exercise and wanted to know how many Rwandans had died, how many were refugees, and how many were internally displaced. He told me that his estimates indicated that it would take the deaths of 85,000 Rwandans to justify the risking of the life of one American soldier. It was macabre, to say the least.

A solicitous Canadian signals officer had found me a cot to replace my flimsy old mattress on the floor, but I found it difficult to sleep the night I came back from seeing Schroeder. I was haunted by the feeling that no matter how fast we moved we would never be a match for all that was required of us. Morning prayers that day showed that the rhythm of activity had increased exponentially. My daily list of things we had to accomplish had gone from an average of fifteen to a high of forty-nine. Looking back now at those daily lists, I see that I was often repeating myself and becoming unrealistically demanding. I was also continuing to lose my temper.

Near the end of prayers I exploded again over our continuing difficulties in securing the basics for the mission, especially the water supply. Major John McComber, our harried chief logistician, had already solved so many problems so unobtrusively some of us had taken to calling him “the silent miracle worker.” He and his young partner, Major St-Denis, had worked hard to meet impossible milestones, but since the Canadian logistics base was just opening up and contracts were still being negotiated, there were some problems we still couldn’t adequately fix. McComber felt I was attacking him directly, but he said nothing. Looking at my orders group, I realized that my manners and my sense of humor, two essentials of leadership, were fading fast.

After prayers I climbed into my vehicle and took off without telling anyone. It wasn’t the first time. I had begun to suffocate in the headquarters, with its endless stream of problems and demands. I had been inventing trips to get me away from it, deciding that I had to see the troops in the field or just tour the country. In every village, along every road, in every church, in every school were unburied corpses.
centre. One day my Ghanaian batman came running into my office and said for me to come quickly—a pack of wild dogs was attacking my goats. Without stopping to think I grabbed my pistol, raced outside and started shooting at the dogs as I ran across the parking lot. I fired my entire clip at them. I missed them all, but still the dogs fled and I felt satisfied that I had saved my goats. When I turned to go back to my office, I saw at least fifty pairs of surprised and concerned eyes staring at me intently: Khan, the civilian staff, my staff officers and my soldiers. They said nothing but the message was clear: “The General is losing it.”

I informed Maurice on the night of August 3 that I needed to be relieved of my command sooner than planned. He checked with Annan and Riza, and they recommended that Maurice pursue the matter directly with the Secretary-General. He told me later that he warned Boutros-Ghali that if I wasn’t replaced, I would be dead in less than two weeks. Unknown to me, Phil had been laying the groundwork for Maurice’s swift response by keeping him informed as to my deteriorating state of health. Phil did this out of love and loyalty to his old friend and commander. When close subordinates realize that their commander is becoming a liability, the act of passing such information to the chain of command is not disloyal, but the epitome of loyalty. To have subordinates with the courage to act in such a way is a reward in itself.

The next morning I told Khan I had to leave. He was sorry but also not surprised. The guilt I felt was incalculable.

On August 4 I was given a copy of a code cable received in the night from the DPKO, which contained notes from the Security Council deliberations of the day before. Sometime during the meeting, the U.S. representative announced that General Dallaire would shortly be replaced by another Canadian of equal rank. This was the first I’d heard of it. Back home, Beth was on a trip to Halifax and when she returned to Quebec City with our two youngest children, the answering machine was blinking like a Christmas tree with messages from family and friends telling her how happy they were that I was finally coming home. None of the calls were from official channels, however, which didn’t impress Beth. She called the CDF operations centre herself, and they confirmed the news.
CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this book I told the story of meeting a three-year-old orphan on a road lined with huts filled with the Rwandan dead. I still think of that little boy, who if he lived would be a teenager as I write. What has happened to him, and the tens of thousands of other orphans of the genocide? Did he survive? Was he reunited with any members of his family, or was he raised in one of Rwanda's overcrowded orphanages? Did anyone care for him and love him for himself, or was he raised with hate and anger defining his young life? Did he find it in himself to forgive the perpetrators of the genocide? Or did he fall prey to ethnic hate propaganda and the desire for retribution and take his part in perpetuating the cycle of violence? Did he become yet another child soldier in the region’s wars?

When I think about the consequences of the Rwandan genocide, I think first of all of those who died an agonizing death from machete wounds inside the hundreds of sweltering churches, chapels and missions where they'd gone to seek God's protection and ended instead in the arms of Lucifer. I think of the more than 300,000 children who were killed, and of those children who became killers in a perversion of any culture's idea of childhood. Then I think of the children who survived, orphaned by the genocide and the ongoing conflict in the region—since 1994, they have been effectively abandoned by us as we abandoned their parents in the killing fields of Rwanda.

When we remember the Rwandan genocide, we also have to recognize the living hell these children inherited. My work after the genocide has intimately acquainted me with the circumstances in which the children of genocide and civil war are forced to survive. In December 2001, as part of my duties as special adviser on war-affected children to the minister responsible for CIDA, I conducted a field visit to Sierra Leone to get first-hand information on the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers and bush wives—children who had been abducted from their families and had then fought for several years as part of the once powerful rebel force, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). I travelled deep into the heart of rebel territory, near the towns of Kailahun and Daru in the far eastern sector of the country. I remember a visit that my small team, which included retired Major Phil Lancaster, made to the local demobilization centre. Sitting down with a group of the boys, all around thirteen years of age, we were soon discussing tactics, bush life and the brutality of civil war. They were only a few days into the retraining process, and they fervently hoped—that they were permitted to hope—that they had a promising future in a country that could sustain peace. But, talking with them, it was clear that if things did not work out in the camp, they would return to the free and violent life of terrorism in the bush, where they would carry on taking what they wanted by force. The rehabilitation and reintegration period was scheduled to last at best three months, and they wanted to know what would happen next. Who would pick up the ball? Certainly not their families or communities, who had yet to accept them back, nor their devastated country in which teachers and other educated persons and potential leaders had been a favourite assassination target. Abducted at nine or even younger, a number of these boys had become RUF platoon commanders, and in terms of experience they were fifteen going on twenty-five; if laying down their weapons meant they had no future except to join thousands of others in displaced and refugee camps that dotted the countryside, they would not countenance it. Some of them were running camps within the camps for the younger children; if these combat-tested leaders were not specifically targeted for advanced education and social development programs, they would surely lead the children back into the bush. Simple, well-intentioned Dick-and-Jane schooling was not going to be enough to meet their needs.

Even worse off were the girls, who were much shyer about coming
forward for help. Many of them had serious medical problems caused by rape, early child-bearing and unassisted births. Their state of health was appalling. A high proportion had been infected with HIV/AIDS by the male adults in the rebel army, and were so emotionally scarred and so inexperienced with “normal” life that it was difficult for them to care properly for their children. Where would they find the necessary love to give their babies when they could not remember ever having received it themselves? In time, the boys were generally accepted back into the community, but the girls were often shunned and abandoned, since in this male-dominated culture they were considered to have been permanently sullied by the uses to which the soldiers had put them. If they tried to go home, they and their children became outcasts in their communities; if they went to the displaced and refugee camps, they again became the prey of adult males. Some of the girls had fought or held considerable responsibilities in the rebel formations; if properly supported, there was a chance they could become leaders—the forerunners of change on the gender-equality front. The demobilization and reintegration camps were their best chance, which was nearly no chance at all, especially if the aid community didn’t get behind them and help.

This was the fate that may have awaited the boy on the Rwandan road, the fate all the children of the Rwandan genocide would have been lucky to avoid. These disordered, violent and throwaway young lives—and the consequences of the waste of these lives on their homelands, and inevitably on the rest of the world—are the best argument to vigorously act to prevent future Rwandas.

Too many parties have focused on pointing the finger at others, beyond the perpetrators, as the scapegoats for our common failure in Rwanda. Some say that the example of Rwanda proves that the UN is an irrelevant, corrupt, decadent institution that has outlived its usefulness or even its ability to conduct conflict resolution. Others have blamed the Permanent Five of the Security Council, especially the United States and France, for failing to see beyond their own national self-interest to lead or even support international intervention to stop the genocide. Some have blamed the media for not telling the story, the NGOs for not reacting quickly and effectively enough, the peacekeepers for not showing more resolve, and myself for failing in my mission. When I began this book, I was tempted to make it an anatomy of my personal failures, which I was finally persuaded would be missing the point.

I have witnessed and also suffered my share of recriminations and accusations, politically motivated “investigations” and courts martial, Monday-morning quarterbacking, revisionism and outright lies since I got back to Canada in September 1994—none of that will bring back the dead or point the way forward to a peaceful future. Instead, we need to study how the genocide happened not from the perspective of assigning blame—there is too much to go around—but from the perspective of how we are going to take concrete steps to prevent such a thing from ever happening again. To properly mourn the dead and respect the potential of the living, we need accountability, not blame. We need to eliminate from this earth the impunity with which the génocidaires were able to act, and re-emphasize the principle of justice for all, so that no one for even a moment will make the ethical and moral mistake of ranking some humans as more human than others, a mistake that the international community endorsed by its indifference in 1994.

There is no doubt that the toxic ethnic extremism that infected Rwanda was a deep-rooted and formidable foe, built from colonial discrimination and exclusion, personal vendettas, refugee life, envy, racism, power plays, coups d’état and the deep rifts of civil war. In Rwanda both sides of the civil war fostered extremism. The fanatical far right of the Hutu ethnicity was concentrated in the MRND and its vicious wing in the CDR party, and was nurtured by an inner circle around the president, Juvenal Habyarimana, and his wife. The Tutsis also had their hard-liners, in the persons of some of the embittered refugees of the 1959 revolution, and sons and daughters raised in the poverty and double standards of Uganda, permanently gazing across the border to a homeland denied to them until they took it by force; among them also were vengeful Hutus who had been abused by the Habyarimana regime.

Together these extremists created the climate in which a slaughter of an entire ethnicity could be dreamed up—an attempt to annihilate
every Tutsi who had a claim on Rwanda, carried out by Rwandans on Rwandans. The violent extremism was nurtured over decades of an armed peace, but it could have been controlled or even eradicated before Hutu Power enacted its “final solution.” Through our indifference, squabbling, distraction and delays, we lost a great many opportunities to destabilize the génocidaires and derail the genocide. I can easily delineate the factors that might have guaranteed our success, beginning with having the political and cultural savvy from the start to ensure an effective military and civilian police presence on the ground in Rwanda as soon as the Arusha Peace Agreement was signed; providing UNAMIR with hard intelligence on the ex-belligerents’ intentions, ambitions and goals so that we didn’t have to fumble in the dark; providing the mission with the political and diplomatic muscle to outmanoeuvre the hard-liners and also to push the RPF into a few timely concessions; reasonable administrative and logistical support of the mission; a few more well-trained and properly equipped battalions on the ground; a more liberal and forceful application of the mandate; and to bring it all off, a budget increase of only about US$100 million.

Could we have prevented the resumption of the civil war and the genocide? The short answer is yes. If UNAMIR had received the modest increase of troops and capabilities we requested in the first week, could we have stopped the killings? Yes, absolutely. Would we have risked more UN casualties? Yes, but surely soldiers and peacekeeping nations should be prepared to pay the price of safeguarding human life and human rights. If UNAMIR 2 had been deployed on time and as requested, would we have reduced the prolonged period of killing? Yes, we would have stopped it much sooner.

If we had chosen to enhance the capabilities of UNAMIR in these ways, we could have wrested the initiative from the ex-belligerents in reasonably short order and stymied the aggression for enough time to expose and weaken the “third force.” I truly believe the missing piece in the puzzle was the political will from France and the United States to make the Arusha accord work and ultimately move this imploding nation toward democracy and a lasting peace. There is no doubt that those two countries possessed the solution to the Rwandan crisis.

Let there be no doubt: the Rwandan genocide was the ultimate responsibility of those Rwandans who planned, ordered, supervised and eventually conducted it. Their extremism was the seemingly indestructible and ugly harvest of years of power struggles and insecurity that had been deftly played upon by their former colonial rulers. But the deaths of Rwandans can also be laid at the door of the military genius Paul Kagame, who did not speed up his campaign when the scale of the genocide became clear and even talked candidly with me at several points about the price his fellow Tutsis might have to pay for the cause. Next in line when it comes to responsibility are France, which moved in too late and ended up protecting the génocidaires and permanently destabilizing the region, and the U.S. government, which actively worked against an effective UNAMIR and only got involved to aid the same Hutu refugee population and the génocidaires, leaving the genocide survivors to flounder and suffer. The failings of the UN and Belgium were not in the same league.

My own mea culpa is this: as the person charged with the military leadership of UNAMIR, I was unable to persuade the international community that this tiny, poor, overpopulated country and its people were worth saving from the horror of genocide—even when the measures needed for success were relatively small. How much of that inability was linked to my inexperience? Why was I chosen to lead UNAMIR? My experience was in training Canadian peacekeepers to go into classic Cold War–style conflicts; I had never been in the field as a peacekeeper myself. I had no political expertise, and no background or training in African affairs or manoeuvring in the weeds of ethnic conflicts in which hate trumps reason. I had no way to gauge the duplicity of the ex-belligerents. The professional development of senior officers in matters of classic peacekeeping, let alone in the thickets of the post-modern version (which I prefer to call conflict resolution), has often been reduced to throwing officers into situations and seeing whether they can cope. While the numbers of UN troop-contributing nations has increased well beyond the more traditional contributors (among which Canada was a major player), there are still no essential prerequisites of formal education and training for the job. As the conflicts grow increasingly ugly and
complex and the mandates fuzzy and restrictive, you end up with more force commanders like myself, whose technical and experiential limitations were so clear. There will continue to be a need for UN-led missions and these missions will continue to increase in complexity as well as have more international impact. As a global community, it is crucial that we develop an international pool of multidisciplinary, multi-skilled and humanist senior leaders to fill these force commander billets.

Still, at its heart, the Rwandan story is the story of the failure of humanity to heed a call for help from an endangered people.

The international community, of which the UN is only a symbol, failed to move beyond self-interest for the sake of Rwanda. While most nations agreed that something should be done, they all had an excuse why they should not be the ones to do it. As a result, the UN was denied the political will and material means to prevent the tragedy.

Like many governments and NGOs, the UN more or less muddled through the tumultuous 1990s, a decade marred by the proliferation of armed conflicts that defied the codes of former wars. My own country, Canada, was carried by altruistic impulses into operations in places such as the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Cambodia and Mozambique. During the Cold War, peacekeeping missions generally monitored the implementation of peace agreements and prevented isolated incidents from leading to a resumption of conflict. In the nineties the focus shifted: the mission aim was to bring about a form of order, whether it be a system of humanitarian relief or an agreement forced on warring factions. UNAMIR started out as a classic Cold War-style peacekeeping mission but then found itself in the middle of a civil war and genocide. In all these situations, a humanitarian catastrophe was either the catalyst for the security problem or the result of it. Displaced and refugee populations were on the move, in numbers rarely ever witnessed, and were prey to extremists, warlords and armed bandits. More often than not, peacekeeping missions had to make ad hoc responses, mounting tardy attempts to assist in the resolution of both the conflicts and the humanitarian crises.

How do we pick and choose where to get involved? Canada and other peacekeeping nations have become accustomed to acting if, and only if, international public opinion will support them—a dangerous path that leads to a moral relativism in which a country risks losing sight of the difference between good and evil, a concept that some players on the international stage view as outdated. Some governments regard the use of force itself as the greatest evil. Others define “good” as the pursuit of human rights and will opt to employ force when human rights are violated. As the nineties drew to a close and the new millennium dawned with no sign of an end to these ugly little wars, it was as if each troubling conflict we were faced with had to pass the test of whether we could “care” about it or “identify” with the victims before we’d get involved. Each mission was judged as to whether it was “worth” risking soldiers’ lives and a nation’s resources. As Michael Ignatieff has warned us, “riskless warfare in pursuit of human rights is a moral contradiction. The concept of human rights assumes that all human life is of equal value. Risk-free warfare presumes that our lives matter more than those we are intervening to save.” On the basis of my experience as force commander in Rwanda, I accuse.

We have fallen back on the yardstick of national self-interest to measure which portions of the planet we allow ourselves to be concerned about. In the twenty-first century, we cannot afford to tolerate a single failed state, ruled by ruthless and self-serving dictators, arming and brainwashing a generation of potential warriors to export mayhem and terror around the world. Rwanda was a warning to us all of what lies in store if we continue to ignore human rights, human security and abject poverty. The tens of millions of three-year-olds like the one I met on that Rwandan road deserve and must have nothing less than a chance at life as a human being and not as someone’s slave, vassal, chattel, or expendable pawn.

Are there any signs that we are prepared to take the higher road in international human relations? Not many. Look at the conflict that has engulfed the whole Great Lakes region of central Africa since the genocide. In September 1994, when I returned to New York for a debriefing after my mission, I arrived determined to argue one last time for Homeward Bound, my operational plan, which I personally presented to the Secretariat, to
the troop-contributing nations and to the media. UNAMIR 2 was designed to support the swift return of the more than 2 million refugees hunkered down in camps within kilometres of the Rwandan border, as well as to move 1.7 million internally displaced persons in the HFZ toward their homes. NGOs, UN agencies and the RPF would be called upon to sort out resources and the fair redistribution of land and homes, while UNAMIR 2 would guarantee the security and coordination of the return journey. With Shaharyar Khan's full support, I lobbied extensively to persuade people of the necessity of the exercise: the refugees could not be allowed to settle into the camps or disaster would follow. We needed to separate the displaced Rwandans from the génocidaires—arresting the perpetrators so they would face justice—and then get the Rwandans back to Rwanda.

We needed to mount this operation or face the consequences, I argued. The two million Rwandan refugees in neighbouring nations, still suffering in horrendous conditions in refugee camps under the thumb of the génocidaires, living on the scraps of international conscience, with no voice and little hope, were the fuel that could ignite the entire Great Lakes region of central Africa into an even larger catastrophe than the Rwandan genocide.

At the meeting of the troop-contributing nations, the French ambassador to the UN rose as soon as I had finished speaking, and pronounced my plan unworkable. He left before hearing my response. His attitude infected the other nations, who as a result suffered severe cold feet on account of the admittedly risky nature of my plan. Ultimately, however, it was the apathy of the United States, whose conscience had apparently been satisfied with the over-aid effort to Goma, that once again stifled any urge to act. From 1994 to 1996, the génocidaires in those camps launched raids in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. In 1996, Rwanda's RPF regime invaded Zaire in retaliation and forced most of the refugees to return home. Hundreds of thousands of others perished on the roads and in the jungles of the Kivu region, once again running from the RPF.

The result has been a continuing regional war. From the Rwandan exodus in 1994 until genocide broke out once again in 2003, it has been estimated that four million human beings have died in the Congo and the Great Lakes region and, until very recently, the world did nothing except to send an undermanned and poorly resourced peacekeeping mission. Five times the number murdered in Rwanda in 1994 have died and, once again, only when the television cameras of the world captured the event were nations embarrased into sending a half-hearted temporary mission to try and stop the killing. For the veterans and survivors of Rwanda, watching the recent events in the Congo has been like watching an instant replay of the horror we lived in 1994—only worse. It is heart-rendingly obvious that a decade after the disaster in Rwanda, we are once again witnessing human destruction on a grand scale, which is inspiring the same Pontius Pilate reaction from the developed world. The only difference this time is that the international media have been far more aggressive than they were in 1994 (whether because of the recent memory of Rwanda's genocide or the need to fill the proliferating twenty-four-hour news channels) and have been able to move public opinion. However, the mission, from its conception, has suffered the same financial, logistical and political deficiencies that UNAMIR faced in Rwanda. And as in Rwanda, once again France is sending in troops, ostensibly to keep the peace, but also insisting that they be kept outside of the UN command structure. They do not want to be curtailed in their initiatives and actions on the ground by the overly restrictive and still ad hoc DPKO military command structure, and I acknowledge that there is some wisdom in that. But the downside is that the new French intervention in central Africa is another example of the First World's growing tendency to work around the UN and take action either unilaterally or in concert with a small coalition to impose its will on others—which does absolutely nothing to reform or strengthen the UN's capacity to resolve conflicts that threaten international peace and security. The authority of the UN to conduct conflict resolution is being eroded, not strengthened.

What is the reason for this marche seul by the developed nations? In the last decades of the twentieth century, self-interest, sovereignty and taking care of number one became the primary criteria for any serious provision of support or resources to the globe's trouble spots. If the
country in question is of any possible strategic value to the world powers, then it seems that everything from covert operations to the outright use of overwhelming force is fair game. If it is not, indifference is the order of the day.

To imagine that these same world powers have magically leapt ahead in this new age of humanity (as Kofi Annan named it in his seminal speech at the millennium UN general assembly in September 2000) could not be further from the truth. It will take the world’s dedicated will and means to move from the twentieth century—the century of genocide—to the century of humanity.

Although often couched in the empathetic phrases of humanitarian aid and of supporting the right of persons to be free from tyranny, ephemeral interventions and relief efforts tend to dry up as soon as CNN puts yet another disaster on prime time to capture the fickle heart of the international community. Though I too can criticize the effectiveness of the UN, the only solution to this unacceptable apathy and selective attention is a revitalized and reformed international institution charged with maintaining the world’s peace and security, supported by the international community and guided by the founding principles of its Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN must undergo a renaissance if it is to be involved in conflict resolution. This is not limited to the Secretariat, its administration and bureaucrats, but must encompass the member nations, who need to rethink their roles and recommit to a renewal of purpose. Otherwise the hope that we will ever truly enter an age of humanity will die as the UN continues to decline into irrelevance.

At the Canadian Forces Peace Support Training Centre, teachers use a slide to explain to Canadian soldiers the nature of our world. If the entire population of the planet is represented by one hundred people, fifty-seven live in Asia, twenty-one in Europe, fourteen in North and South America, and eight in Africa. The numbers of Asians and Africans are increasing every year while the number of Europeans and North Americans is decreasing. Fifty percent of the wealth of the world is in the hands of six people, all of whom are American. Seventy people are unable to read or write. Fifty suffer from malnutrition due to insufficient nutrition. Thirty-five do not have access to safe drinking water. Eighty live in sub-standard housing. Only one has a university or college education. Most of the population of the globe live in substantially different circumstances than those we in the First World take for granted.

But many signs point to the fact that the youth of the Third World will no longer tolerate living in circumstances that give them no hope for the future. From the young boys I met in the demobilization camps in Sierra Leone to the suicide bombers of Palestine and Chechnya, to the young terrorists who fly planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we can no longer afford to ignore them. We have to take concrete steps to remove the causes of their rage, or we have to be prepared to suffer the consequences.

The global village is deteriorating at a rapid pace, and in the children of the world the result is rage. It is the rage I saw in the eyes of the teenage Interahamwe militiamen in Rwanda, it is the rage I sensed in the hearts of the children of Sierra Leone, it is the rage I felt in crowds of ordinary civilians in Rwanda, and it is the rage that resulted in September 11. Human beings who have no rights, no security, no future, no hope and no means to survive are a desperate group who will do desperate things to take what they believe they need and deserve.

If September 11 taught us that we have to fight and win the “war on terrorism,” it should also have taught us that if we do not immediately address the underlying (even if misguided) causes of those young terrorists’ rage, we will not win the war. For every al-Qaeda bomber that we kill there will be a thousand more volunteers from all over the earth to take his place. In the next decade, terrorists will acquire weapons of mass destruction. It is only a matter of time until a brilliant young chemist or smuggler obtains a nuclear, biological or chemical weapon and uses it to satisfy his very personal rage against us.

Where does this rage come from? This book has demonstrated some of the causes. A heightened tribalism, the absence of human rights, economic collapses, brutal and corrupt military dictatorships, the AIDS pandemic, the effect of debt on nations, environmental degradation,
overpopulation, poverty, hunger: the list goes on and on. Each of these and so many other reasons can lead directly to a people having no hope for the future and being forced in their poverty and despair to resort to violence just to survive. This lack of hope in the future is the root cause of rage. If we cannot provide hope for the untold masses of the world, then the future will be nothing but a repeat of Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Congo and September 11.

Several times in this book I have asked the question, “Are we all human, or are some more human than others?” Certainly we in the developed world act in a way that suggests we believe that our lives are worth more than the lives of other citizens of the planet. An American officer felt no shame as he informed me that the lives of 800,000 Rwandans were only worth risking the lives of ten American troops; the Belgians, after losing ten soldiers, insisted that the lives of Rwandans were not worth risking another single Belgian soldier. The only conclusion I can reach is that we are in desperate need of a transfusion of humanity. If we believe that all humans are human, then how are we going to prove it? It can only be proven through our actions. Through the dollars we are prepared to expend to improve conditions in the Third World, through the time and energy we devote to solving devastating problems like AIDS, through the lives of our soldiers, which we are prepared to sacrifice for the sake of humanity.

As soldiers we have been used to moving mountains to protect our own sovereignty or risks to our way of life. In the future we must be prepared to move beyond national self-interest to spend our resources and spill our blood for humanity. We have lived through centuries of enlightenment, reason, revolution, industrialization, and globalization. No matter how idealistic the aim sounds, this new century must become the Century of Humanity, when we as human beings rise above race, creed, colour, religion and national self-interest and put the good of humanity above the good of our own tribe. For the sake of the children and of our future. 

Peuex ce que veux. Allons-y.

GLOSSARY

Siéme Brigade-Group 5th Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (CMBG), an all-arms francophone formation, based in Valcartier, Quebec

Siéme Régiment d’artillerie légère du Canada (5 RALC) The francophone artillery regiment of the Canadian Army, Regular Force, based in Valcartier, Quebec, which General Dallaire joined and later commanded

ACABQ or Fifth Committee The UN General Assembly Committee, which meets in private closed session to establish and approve the budgets of peacekeeping missions

Lieutenant Colonel Joe Adinkra, CO Ghanaian Battalion advance party A small, select group of officers that is deployed prior to a main body to handle operation and administrative matters that will facilitate the deployment of the main body (mission)

Madame Agathe Agathe Uwilingiyimana, prime minister of the interim government

Aide-de-camp An officer assigned as personal assistant to a senior commander

Akagera Park (also known as Kagera Park) The last refuge of grassland wildlife in northeastern Rwanda. Due to its remote location, the only RGF camp in the area at Gabiro was a site suspected as a training centre for the Interahamwe. Also known as A’Kagera Park

Akagera River The river that divides Rwanda from Tanzania and flows into Lake Victoria

General Jean Victor Allard A famous World War II hero and subsequent Canadian CDS

Amahoro Stadium Complex consisting of a stadium, training facilities, parking lot and an athletes’ hotel located in the east end of Kigali; was the location of the UNAMIR headquarters. Amahoro means peace in Kinyarwanda