



## **PKSOI Book Review**

Review of SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL, The Failure of Humainty in Rwanda

by Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire with Major Brent Beardsley

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***Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.***

***Matthew 5:9***

Thus begins Lieutenant General (retired) Romeo Dallaire's account of his 12 months as the commanding general of the United Nations (UN) Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR). While the book contains an illuminating forward by Samantha Power, an expert on human rights and foreign policy and a senior director for multilateral affairs at the National Security Council, General Dallaire is illuminating in his own right. He tells a very graphic tale without resorting to graphic photographs and his life own story touches issues of ethnic rivalry, civil-military relations, personal and command responsibility and mental and emotional health; quite aside from telling readers what went wrong from his perspective in Rwanda and what he feels we should do to prevent another such genocide.

In the introduction, Dallaire describes his own mental collapse in the wake of the failed UNAMIR mission and the slaughter in Rwanda. He gives the context of his larger life, beginning with his tumultuous childhood in a Montreal divided by language and politics. Examples includes his recollections of rescuing his sister when she was caught between groups of French and English speaking boys hurling rocks at each other as well as growing up in a Canadian Army that balked at sending "francophon" officers

to serve in Europe as part of Canada's contribution to NATO. He gives the reader a succinct report on the civil arrest in Montreal and the activities of the Front de liberation du Quebec (FLQ), which conducted a campaign of bombings and kidnappings throughout the province of Quebec in 1969 and 1970, the Canadian Army's response to that strife, and shares his personal feelings at the time.

. . . the government had invoked the War Measures Act, suspending civil law for the duration of the crisis. Our rules of engagement included the use of live ammunition to prevent acts of insurrection, which meant opening fire and shooting to kill were real possibilities. This situation presented me, at the age of twenty-four, with one of the most difficult ethical and moral dilemmas of my military career. Members of my own extended family, as well as friends from my old neighborhood, were supporting the separatist movement. At any time I might see faces I knew in the hostile crowd I was ordered to control. How would I react? Could I open fire on members of my own family?

Dallaire does not directly tie the experiences of his youth to his experiences in Rwanda, but these shared insights are, perhaps, windows into his character and may suggest that because he cared so deeply about "right and wrong," he may have been even more vulnerable to the shocks he would experience in Rwanda.

Dallaire establishes the context for Rwanda and UNAMIR, starting with his first visit to United Nations Headquarters in New York in July of 1993, his leaders' recons in August, and September followed by the arrival of his UN peacekeepers in October and November. He writes of requesting 8,000 Soldiers, yet being persuaded to ask for only 5,500 Soldiers and finally being told to accept a mere 2,500 Soldiers. He describes the UN Chapter 6 quandary of relying on the combatant forces for military intelligence to establish his own intelligence network when his instincts told him the Hutu and Tutsi combatants were not forthcoming. That same intelligence network would enable him to warn Kofi Annan almost three months in advance that Hutu extremists planned to murder ten peacekeepers from Belgium in order to force their withdrawal from UNAMIR, and that Hutu extremists had

prepared lists of Tutsis and moderate Hutus to be killed by extremist Hutu *Iterahamwe* militia members.

Dallaire then proceeds in numbing detail to describe all the horrors that he witnessed from April through July of 1994. He describes meeting repeatedly with *Iterahamwe* leadership as well as leaders of the chiefly Hutu Rwanda Government Forces and Paul Kagame's mostly Tutsi Rwandan People's Front. He writes of the frustration of the United Nations' bureaucracy and the perception of duplicity of western nations regarding the suffering of the people of Rwanda.

In his conclusion, Dallaire notes that the failure of United Nations' member states to properly resource his mission and to quickly intervene lead to instability and suffering in the Great Lakes region of Africa that has resulted in an estimated four million deaths between 1993 and 2004. He laments a lack of hope for those living in the Third World and warns that that same lack of hope will lead to a future that is "nothing but a repeat of Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Congo and September 11." Dallaire asks his readers: "Are we all human, or are some more human than others?" To illustrate, he recounts an American officer telling him that the lives of 800,000 Rwandans were not worth risking the lives of ten American Soldiers and from this concludes that "we are in a desperate need of a transfusion of humanity."

The experience of General Dallaire and UNAMIR detailed in SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL provides essential context to those contemplating peacebuilding and peacekeeping in the third world. This book has already influenced United Nations peacekeeping doctrine, laying the foundation for "robust peacekeeping" and the "responsibility to protect." A well written piece of modern history with lessons for soldiers and statesmen alike.

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### **Authors Biography**

COL Bryan Groves became Chief, Civil-Military Integration at PKSOI in July, 2008. Bryan worked with United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and various UN agencies during two tours in Kosovo as a member of the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) Civil Affairs Staff and later as commander, 443<sup>rd</sup> Civil Affairs

Battalion. He served in Iraq with the 304<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Brigade in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, where he worked with the Civilian Provisional Authority to help equip Iraqi Security Forces and fund repairs to public infrastructure. In Korea, Bryan served as Assistant Chief of Staff, Civil Affairs for 19<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Support Command and later 8<sup>th</sup> United States Army where he oversaw the implementation of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Head Start and Good Neighbor Programs. He served two years as Chief, Information Operations Division, United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command/United States Forces Korea, during which he completed research on civil military operations in support of counterinsurgency operations in Korea and Vietnam.