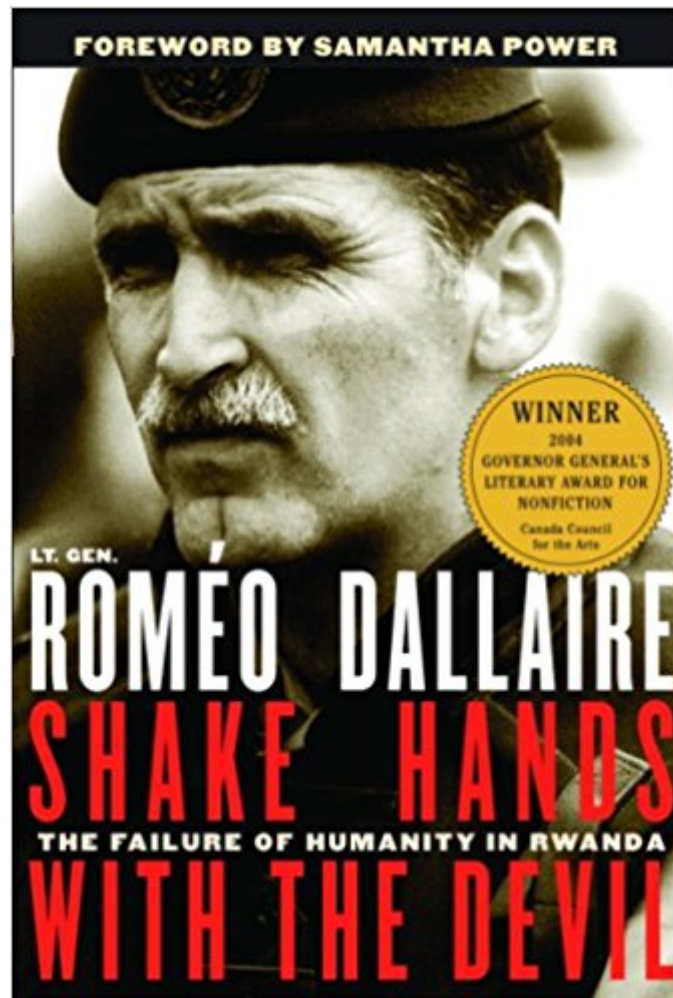




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Shake Hands With The Devil: The Failure Of Humanity In Rwanda



Synopsis

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 RomÃfÃ©o 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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Customer Reviews

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.

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 MooreCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

As the title says it's a book about a failure of humanity, a grim account of the 1994 civil war and genocide in Rwanda written by the head of UNAMIR (UN assistance mission for Rwanda) peacekeepers general Romeo Dallaire. While reading a detailed story of the events in Rwanda can be an eye-opener by itself, Dallaire's book provides a unique viewpoint. Being a highest-ranking UN military official stationed in Rwanda since 1993 he gives a first-hand account of the political events, which involved Rwandan leaders, UN officials and several major countries, showing the utter failure

to prevent the war before it erupted or to mitigate the subsequent horrible events. Dallaire's idealism (it was his first mission abroad) adds a constant sense of conscience to the story, making it a personal story and not just a chronicle of events. It's a story of a war and a genocide, of propaganda and hatred, of peacekeeping and postcolonialism, of heroism and resolve, of helplessness, trauma and indecisiveness, of tens of thousands women and children massacred. It's an engaging read, but far from a pleasant one, even if you exclude graphic details of the genocide. This is however the main point of the book, to face unpleasant truths and horrors of what happened in Rwanda 20 years ago and is still happening around the world this way or another.

This book starts out reading like a history book. It delves into Dallaire's roots and paints the picture of a man who grew out of a poor family into a marriage to the military. The book unravels into day-to-day accounts of everything that happened in Rwanda. I suspect many people will find this type of storytelling, boring and repetitive. It can definitely be these things at times but this book was not written to sensationalize what happened, it's written to tell you what happened. Dallaire describes the brutality he sees with an eerie calmness, you can definitely understand how one could become desensitized to the carnage given the frequency of it. It's not the easiest of reads, there are many names and factions at play throughout the book and it's easy to forget who is who. The book is well worth the read. If you're struggling to finish, READ THROUGH THE END. The conclusion is a searing summary of why the genocide occurred and does not mince words when placing blame. They are some of the best pages I have read in any book. They lay out exactly why we are doomed as a species, to repeat the same atrocities over and over again.

I put off reading this book for quite a while, because I wasn't sure how much I would be able to cope with. It is hard to read, but it is worth it. Dallaire and the people who helped him write this book have somehow managed to convey some of the horror and despair of trying to do something in an impossible situation, but Dallaire and his fellow UN people's determination to do what they could gives some hope. I really hope that some lessons have been learnt. Dallaire is extremely honest about where he feels he has failed. I don't think I could have done a fraction of what he did. Unfortunately, at the very end of the book, there seems to be a mix up between the acronyms RPF and RGF, which makes things very confusing. The book includes a helpful glossary.

My interest in the Rwandan Genocide was heightened when in 2012 I was sent to Rwanda in a partnership for Africa program with the US Air Force and stayed the Collins (Hotel from the Movie

Hotel Rwanda). When I was there I went to the Genocide Museum and Memorial and was both fascinated and appalled that this happened. Since I didn't have much knowledge of the incident, I was in 12th grade when it happened, I decided to read this book as it was highly rated. I'm very glad I did. This was/is an amazing book that goes into substantial detail of how and why this horrific incident happened. As is the case with most nonfiction books there is a bit of history on the author and where they came from, etc. This is kept fairly short in this book and is also relevant to the story and interesting. When Dillaire starts the story of what happened in Rwanda you can tell it's not going to end well and he does not hide the bitterness and pain that his 1 yr experience in living hell left him with. Be forewarned this book is very graphic and pulls no punches. The detail in which the actual genocide is detailed and how some of the acts were perpetrated is not for the faint of heart, no pictures are needed and thankfully not included. To be honest there were a few times that some of the details in this book kept me up at night and brought a sense how we "civilized" Nations could have just sat back and 800,000 people be slaughtered in 100 days. The detail in this book is not written simply to shock the reader, but rather to inform you (the reader) of the brutality and complete hatred that was so prevalent during this event. This book also does a phenomenal job of also describing the excruciating effects on the UN Peacekeepers and Dillaire that witnessing so much death and destruction had on them. I walked away from reading this book mad that the UN and the "leader" nations of the world didn't give a damn about Rwanda and as is continually demonstrated the African continent. If you decide to buy this book, and I highly recommend that you do, you will understand why I made that last statement. I enjoyed this book immensely and also came away better understanding the sense of abandonment that so many developing countries feel from Western culture and nations, and the continual issues that past colonialism in Africa is still causing today.

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