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Additional Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

The second part of this issue of *Genocide Studies and Prevention* presents an essential article on the debates in the UN Security Council in 1994, which determined whether or not to intervene in the Rwandan Genocide.

Karel Kovanda, who was the Czech Republic's ambassador to the Security Council during these debates, provides an insider's account of the fascinating and troubling discussions. The Czech Republic was a newly independent nation in 1994, and Kovanda participated in the debates as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

Kovanda's discussion relies on internal documents from the Czech Foreign Service as well as on his own private notes and published information. He lays out the step-by-step evolution of the Rwandan tragedy and notes how the UN Secretariat was receiving, and passing on to the Security Council, insufficient and biased information, while NGOs had more accurate accounts of what was taking place. For the most part, he demonstrates that the Security Council spent most of its time focusing on the war between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and paid little attention—about 20% of its time, he estimates—on UNAMIR. It took weeks, according to Kovanda, for the Security Council to finally come to grips with the genocide. Kovanda notes that he was the first to employ this term publicly at an official UN meeting.

Kovanda's discussion exposes the inner working of the Security Council during a time of crisis. He also describes the mechanisms that, as he notes, “play a role in the day-to-day workings of the UNSC, such as the role of the UN Secretariat, informal consultations, groupings of UNSC members,” and many other considerations. Kovanda's insider account exposes the weaknesses of the Security Council and the reluctance on the part of many members to forthrightly confront an ongoing genocide. As such, it may be taken as an important point of departure for analyses of potential reforms that are necessary to make genocide prevention a reality.

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