

Court of Remorse: Inside the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Thierry Cruvellier

Chari Voss, Translator

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In just three months' time, from April to July 1994, Hutu extremists in Rwanda conducted a killing spree of Tutsis so widespread and deadly that it became the third recognized genocide of the twentieth century. To its shame, the United Nations withdrew its troops only two weeks into the violence and the international community left Rwandans to face their fate alone. Four months after the genocide ended, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). It was a court formed out of remorse.

Cruvellier—an investigative journalist who covered the ICTR from 1997 to 2002 and founded the online magazine *International Justice Tribune*—attended many of the trials, gaining a familiarity and trust with key players at the ICTR. He was able to conduct surprisingly open interviews that went beyond simply gathering the facts of the trials and revealed the emotional and psychological catalysts that drove the people involved. This book presents these trials in the context of three histories: that of Rwanda, of the individual people in the trials, and of international justice.

Justice is a tricky thing. It is affected by many variables: the motives behind it, whether they be remorse, vengeance, or something else; the reliability of testimony given by people with something to gain or lose; and deals brokered between lawyers, prosecutors, accused, and witnesses. The ICTR has been affected by all of these variables in its almost twenty years of existence, and Cruvellier exposes the complexity that is inevitable in the situation. Everyone agrees that when there is a crime against humanity, there needs to be justice. The difficult thing is to hand it out fairly, evenly, and objectively.

This book will be of value to readers interested in human rights, international law, politics, African studies, and crime. Though it covers a heavy and complex subject, the inclusion of personal stories and interesting descriptions of the people and events draws the reader into the work, and Cruvellier's writing style is fluid and easy to follow. He presents a view of the tribunal that shows the good as well as the bad and admits that a perfect solution may not be possible. "Just because convictions do not prevent repetition of the crime does not mean we should not convict," said Laïty Kama, one of the ICTR judges. "The illusion is that conviction will bring instant reconciliation. In all societies of the world, people expect too much from justice."

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (September / October 2010)

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