

Suffering and Survival in Central Africa

Catharine Newbury

In this remarkable book, Marie Béatrice Umutesi recounts what she saw and experienced in Rwanda before and during the 1994 genocide, and as a refugee in Zaire after the genocide. With its intense local level perspective, her study provides fresh insights into the Rwanda genocide and its antecedents, the massacre of Rwandan refugees during the war in Zaire of the mid-1990s, and the utter failure of the international media to understand what was happening there on the ground. Eschewing extremism of all sides, Umutesi records the experiences of ordinary people buffeted by violent events and broader political dynamics they could not control. She is a perspicacious observer—astute, courageous, engaged, and compassionate. One of the remarkable features of this narrative, however, is how little Umutesi appears in this text; it is about her experiences, to be sure, but not about “her.” It is as a testimonial to the times and the human experiences of those times that this tale has such force.

Antecedents to Genocide

The initial chapters of *Surviving the Slaughter* recount Umutesi’s experiences as a student in the 1970s and mid-1980s and (having completed her university education) as a young adult managing rural development programs. Ethnic distinctions between Hutu and Tutsi held little importance for Umutesi and her friends while she was growing up. Instead, as a Hutu

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from the north, she found that regional tensions among Hutu were important during the 1980s, under the Second Republic of Juvénal Habyarimana, when she witnessed regionalism in high school and college in Rwanda. Only later, when studying in Belgium, did ethnic distinctions and discrimination between Hutu and Tutsi come into play. The examples she describes show both the contingent nature of ethnic categorization and identities in Rwanda, and the importance of politics in shaping their salience.

Umutesi also depicts the changing social and economic conditions that created an explosive situation in Rwanda in the years preceding 1994: famine, rural impoverishment, and economic policies that exacerbated hardships for ordinary people; the plight of youth with no jobs and lack of access to land; corruption among high government officials; and the war that began in 1990 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), composed largely of Tutsi exiles, attacked northern Rwanda from their bases in Uganda. Like the late André Sibomana in *Hope for Rwanda* (1999), Umutesi indicates the political impact of these conditions by describing her own experiences and those of people she knew.

Ethnic polarization intensified during the war, placing constraints even on those who rejected such divisions. When the Habyarimana government imprisoned thousands of people (mostly Tutsi) on specious claims that they were linked to the RPF rebels, Umutesi visited her friends and colleagues who had been imprisoned to offer them solace and support. But such behavior placed her under suspicion. After her office was searched and she narrowly escaped imprisonment herself, a relative warned her to be more discreet about her contacts with Tutsi.

In February 1993, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were driven out of northern Rwanda by a major RPF offensive; they were relegated to living in miserable camps near the capital, Kigali. Umutesi was dismayed that the government and residents of Kigali and southern areas of the country showed so little concern for these dispossessed people—some of whom were neighbors and relatives from Byumba, her home region.

All lived under conditions of misery that are impossible to describe; only the humanitarian NGOs were worried about their fate. . . . The political, ethnic, and regional divisions were such that many Rwandans did not see them as human beings worthy of compassion and in need of help. . . . Every morning several thousand starving, half naked women and children descended on Kigali. They came to beg something that would allow them to live one more day. When a woman or a child held out an emaciated hand, more often than not instead of five or ten francs, they got insults or spit in the face. Most of the inhabitants of Kigali said that the refugees were responsible for their own misery. Others told them to go home because the supposed killings committed by the rebels were only propaganda to discredit the guerillas. These peasants, many of whom had been on the run for more than two years, did not understand why they were accused of being the architects of their own misfortune. (31)

Umutesi was skeptical of the multiparty politics introduced in Rwanda in 1991, in the midst of the war. To her mind, the party platforms focused too narrowly on the interests of ethnic and regional groups, giving inadequate attention to what she saw as more pressing problems that affected Hutu and Tutsi alike: "The principal problems of the day, such as the scarcity of food, rural and urban unemployment among the youth, and the war and consequent displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, were not the main concerns of the political parties. When these issues were addressed at all, it was only superficially" (36).

While working in Gitarama in the center of the country, Umutesi saw first hand some of the negative effects of multiparty politics. Local leaders of the Democratic Republican Movement (MDR) party organized "young delinquents" into militias and encouraged them to destroy crops, wreck roads, sabotage water systems, and threaten burgomasters loyal to the ruling party, the National Movement for Democracy and Development (MRNDD).¹ A group of rural dwellers in Gitarama, recognizing that "the area had become the battlefield for people from the cities, and the peasants were paying the price," tried to organize their own party that would "defend their interests and those of the rural areas in general" (38–39). When the main political parties opposed this initiative, the rural activists founded a peasant movement instead, incorporating both Hutu and Tutsi.

The last half of the book provides insights on several issues that have been, and continue to be, a subject of debate. Here I will address three of these. What do we learn from this narrative about the impact of the genocide in Rwanda on ordinary people such as Umutesi? What was the nature of life for refugees in the camps in Kivu region of Zaire, and what explains their reluctance to return to Rwanda? Finally, why did the death of tens of thousands of refugees during the 1996–97 war in Zaire receive so little attention from the international press?

Genocide in Rwanda

Umutesi was in Kigali on April 6, 1994. When she heard that President Habyarimana's plane had been shot down, she feared the worst. She hoped the U.N. peacekeeping force in Rwanda (UNAMIR) would intervene assertively, but doubted it would have the political courage to do so; after all, UNAMIR had not stopped attacks against Tutsi in March during riots in Kigali sparked by the assassination of several Hutu political leaders.

Although Umutesi is no ordinary person herself, her experiences show the fear and confusion felt by ordinary people caught up in these events. During an abortive attempt to flee on foot, she met with resentment and anger from rural people; they tended, she found, to regard all Kigali residents as "opponents of the regime" (48). Though in early April Tutsi and Hutu fled from Kigali together, Umutesi saw that many were afraid to stay

in the same place with those from the other group—each suspected that there were armed elements among the other group. After several hair-raising encounters with militias dominated by “juvenile delinquents,” Umutesi returned to her house in Kigali—where the murder of her Tutsi friends only heightened her fears. “We knew we were at the mercy of people who killed women and children in cold blood, but we didn’t know where to go” (48).

When militiamen came to search her house, Umutesi overcame her fear and negotiated persuasively to prevent the intruders from raping her younger sisters and nieces. One militia leader threatened to kill everyone in the house if he found that Umutesi was hiding someone. Nonetheless, Umutesi and her charges managed to convince him to spare the housekeeper, a Tutsi who had no identity card. Umutesi sought protection from the president of the militia in her neighborhood; she agreed to lend her car to the local health clinic, and in return he instructed his men not to bother her. But not all his subordinates honored the arrangement.

At the end of April, having managed to escape from Kigali, Umutesi took refuge in Gitarama, where she learned that several Tutsi colleagues had been killed by militiamen. By recording the deaths of these innocent victims in her book, Umutesi honors their memory and conveys the horror of the situation. But her family was from Byumba, in the war zone, and the reality was that death happened on both sides: it was not only the militias that she feared: “In addition to the Tutsi genocide, which was happening before our eyes, the rebels [RPF] undertook widespread killing of the civilian Hutu population in the zones that they occupied” (62). Umutesi and other leaders of development NGOs in Gitarama decided to take action: “As for those of us working for the Rwandan NGOs, we were aware of our inability to face this tragedy alone. Nevertheless, we were convinced that staying in hiding in our little corners and continuing not to speak up made us accomplices of the militias and the rebels. We began to meet in order to denounce the massacres of the Hutu and Tutsi populations and the resumption of the war and also to see how we could come to the aid of those who had been displaced” (62–63). But before they could submit these proposals to donors, the RPF arrived at Gitarama; after the murder of ten priests there, Umutesi had to flee again. Commenting bitterly on the failures of UNAMIR and the international community, Umutesi argues that decisive international action could have saved many lives:

Thinking about these events today... I am unable to explain to myself what the attitude of either the humanitarian NGOs, the United Nations, or the international community in general was. I remain convinced that if UNAMIR and the humanitarian NGOs had stayed in Rwanda, it would have been possible to avoid the genocide. The armed conflict could have been stopped and transitional political institutions put in place. The international community seemed more interested in gross acts of war than in

the plight of the people who were being killed every day, of those who were hiding in the ceiling, in woods, ditches, and swamps, and of those thousands who were wandering along the roads. (62)

Refugee Camps in Kivu

In early July 1994, when the RPF ended the genocide against Tutsi, won the war, and established a new, RPF-led government in Kigali, Umutesi fled to eastern Zaire—along with hundreds of thousands of other Rwandans, mostly Hutu civilians. During the next two years, despite difficult conditions in the camps near Bukavu, South Kivu, she stayed in Zaire because she did not believe it was safe for her to return to Rwanda. This, she argues, was the case for many of the refugees: the legacy of Kibeho, Kanama, and other places where killings had occurred within Rwanda weighed heavily. Although the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) tried to convince people that it was safe to go back, most of the refugees felt their security was not assured; they distrusted the new government in Kigali.

Umutesi's portrait of the refugees contrasts sharply with the dominant discourse embraced by policymakers in Western countries, officials at the U.N., and among many NGOs involved in humanitarian relief. By 1996, this discourse, encouraged by the new leaders in Kigali, held that refugees who did not return were either guilty of genocide or were being constrained by extremists who controlled the camps, deceived them with false propaganda about conditions in Rwanda, and threatened sanctions against anyone who tried to return.² Some of the camps were indeed used as bases for guerilla attacks against Rwanda during 1995 and 1996; in the eyes of the Western press and many international NGOs, that implicated all one million-plus refugees in all the camps. Many in the international community assumed that all the refugees must be *génocidaires*.

On the basis of what she learned while living with refugees in the camps, promoting programs to improve conditions, and engaging in dialogue with refugees of different ages and backgrounds, Umutesi challenges that view. She and other Rwandan NGO leaders created a Collective of NGOs in Bukavu not only to improve life in the camps, but also to combat negative images of the refugees propagated by the international press.

We provided information on the camps, which had been characterized in the international media as hiding places for the perpetrators of genocide, where the former officials held the other refugees hostage and prevented them from returning to Rwanda. We showed another view of the camps, the one that we saw every day. We did not want to deny the presence of those who were guilty of genocide among the refugees, we simply wanted

to remind people that the vast majority of the refugees in the camps had played no role whatsoever in the tragedy. We thought the best way to marginalize the guilty was to recognize the existence of the innocent majority, thereby lessening the appeal of the *genocidaires*.” (74)

Umutesi’s portrait of conditions in the camps effectively conveys the difficulties faced by refugees. Her account makes untenable any notion that refugees hesitated to return to Rwanda because life in the camps was too comfortable. In fact, as she amply demonstrates, life in the camps was harsh—humiliating, depressing, debilitating, and insecure. Food rations were seldom adequate and malnutrition was a problem, especially for pregnant or nursing women and young children. Women who went to fetch firewood in eucalyptus groves of local inhabitants risked being raped; lack of privacy and a breakdown in parental authority in the camps encouraged promiscuous behavior among young people, with a concomitant increase in rates of teenage pregnancy; alcoholism was a serious problem. People of different classes lived in close quarters alongside bandits and soldiers; robbery, rape, and small arms (grenades and guns) were common, especially in the first year. “Grenades exploded . . . every night,” she says, “and in the morning you mourned the dead, victims of jealousy or account settling” (79). Over time, the weapons gradually disappeared from the camps; as the refugees became impoverished, they sold their guns and grenades to Zairian soldiers and Burundian rebels. But, says Umutesi,

Of all the burdens in the camps, perhaps one of the hardest to bear was being deprived of one’s humanity: A refugee suffers, not only from having been torn from her land, her house, her work and her country, but also from having to beg to survive. . . . It is difficult to accept someone else deciding . . . what she should eat and how much. It is even more difficult to spend the entire day sitting around with nothing to do but wait for the distribution of aid. Feeling useless is the worst thing imaginable. (82–83)

Programs organized by the Collective attempted to mitigate these harsh conditions, providing assistance and activities for unaccompanied children, women, youth, and farmers. Umutesi and other women refugee leaders also founded an organization to advocate for women, *La Ligue des Femmes Rwandaises pour la Défense de la Droit de Vie*. The League published two magazines (one in French and one in Kinyarwanda) that served as a forum for women in the camps and in Rwanda, and also prepared pamphlets on issues such as repatriation of refugees, the massacres at Kibeho, and human rights conditions in the camps. The members also “denounced the crimes committed on the civilian population in Rwanda by the RPF and the ‘infiltrators’” (people who returned to Rwanda from the camps and attacked the population) (85). Umutesi was pleased that many women in the camps appreciated the League’s initiatives: “Even if recognition of

these actions remained limited to the refugee camps and the population of Bukavu, there was hope. After all, the pen and pencil were the only weapons available to the women, and it was a way to show that there were other ways to make oneself heard than through violence" (87).

With support from European NGOs, the Collective supported an effort to establish communication and renew ties between Rwandan refugees and Rwandans inside the country. Their hope was "to facilitate return, reintegration of the refugees with their communities, reconciliation, and the reconstruction of the NGO movement" (88). Unfortunately, this initiative failed.

The obstacles were insurmountable. It was impossible for someone living in Rwanda to maintain good relations with refugees who were living among the perpetrators of genocide. Many of the members of the interior Rwandan NGOs shared the opinion that all the refugees who did not come back to Rwanda had something to be ashamed about. They did not want to believe that we simply feared for our safety. It was truly difficult to have a common program or even to decide where to meet. (88)

Conditions for the refugees in Kivu changed drastically in August 1995, when the Zairian army forcibly repatriated more than six thousand people from camps near Bukavu. Fear swept through the camps, and those who could leave for safer countries did so; officials of the former Rwandan government left, and over the next year "the camps were emptied of the intelligentsia and businessmen" (93). While many of her colleagues left, Umutesi stayed on. But she and the other remaining Rwandan NGO leaders were discouraged to see the dismantling of programs that had helped alleviate the misery of living in the camps. The Zairian government and the UNHCR placed "a panoply of constraints on the refugees to force them into a return that would still qualify as 'voluntary'" (99). These included suspension of youth activities, including instruction in schools; prohibition of economic activities by refugees; and the abolition of markets in the camps. Meanwhile, the UNHCR reduced food rations, with the result that "malnutrition, which had nearly disappeared, resurfaced" (99). When these measures did not convince large numbers of refugees to return, in 1996 the Zairian authorities, with permission from the UNHCR, proceeded gradually to close some of the camps by force.

The majority of the refugees, lacking monetary resources or diplomas, had but one choice: return to Rwanda. Umutesi summarizes two main views about return among these refugees. Some, especially the youth, wanted to mount an armed struggle as the RPF had done in 1990. Umutesi opposed this option, as did some military men and most of the refugees, who, Umutesi argues, preferred "a peaceful return, one organized and carried out in a way that guaranteed security to those returning" (95). But many were reluctant to return because events in Rwanda made them fear for their safety. For example, Umutesi cites the massacre of some eight

thousand Hutu at Kibeho in Rwanda in April 1995 and the dismissal of several prominent Hutu from the government in August 1995: "The refugees knew about this situation thanks to the stories brought by the new refugees who still arrived daily in the camps as well as through the Rwandan and international media. Radio Rwanda was the most listened-to station in the camps" (93).

At this point Umutesi and the Collective shifted their focus to activities that would encourage the refugees to discuss and prepare for return to Rwanda:

With education in nonviolence and reconciliation, we were aiming to lead the refugees, particularly the youth, to understand the origins of the tragedy that had been shaking Rwanda since 1994. We also wanted to show them that it was possible to fight effectively against dictatorial and criminal powers, without resorting to the same weapons they used. Violence breeds violence. Since we wanted to contribute to a lasting peace in Rwanda, which would be the only guarantee of an equally lasting reconciliation, it seemed to us to be important to destroy the "logic" that had been preached to them since they were young through such slogans as "All power kills," or "Power that doesn't kill is like an empty gourd." (96)

Voluntary return was possible, Umutesi believes, but the international community did not do enough to facilitate this: "Rwanda's donor countries seemed to have opted for an immobility that looked like complicity. There was no pressure exercised on the government in Kigali to induce them to create the conditions necessary for a large-scale return of the refugees" (95). Meanwhile, Rwandan civil society was too divided, too weak, and too fearful to exert effective pressure on the government.

Fleeing From Death

During October and November 1996, the postgenocide army of Rwanda invaded Zaire to close the refugee camps in Kivu and eventually to overthrow the government of President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire. Also involved in this initiative were soldiers from Uganda and Burundi and Zairian rebels opposed to Mobutu. Grouped together in the hastily assembled Alliance for Democratic Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) headed by Laurent Kabila, this group of rebels included Zairian Tutsi who referred to themselves as "Banyamulenge." During almost eight months Rwanda vociferously denied its army was involved in Zaire, and for a long time much of the international media (especially the Anglophone press) went along with this claim. But the Rwandan refugees and Zairians attacked by these troops were well aware of Rwanda's role, as were U.S. diplomats and many other actors in the international community.

The 1996 offensive launched what came to be almost a decade of war and occupation in Zaire/Congo. During that time an estimated 3.8 million Congolese died and many resources of the country were looted. Umutesi's book records the plight of Rwandan refugees in Zaire during the first year of this conflict. When the camps in North Kivu were attacked, refugees from these camps could return to Rwanda by crossing the border at Gisenyi, a town on the north end of Lake Kivu opposite the city of Goma on the Zairian side of the border; Umutesi estimates that a half million refugees did return to Rwanda from North Kivu camps, while some two hundred thousand fled west toward Kisangani (257).

The options were different for refugees in South Kivu near Uvira and Bukavu. They could not cross directly into Rwanda because the border posts at the Ruzizi River were blocked by RPF soldiers.³ Therefore, if they wanted to return to Rwanda, refugees from these camps had to walk north for several days on a road along the western shore of Lake Kivu. Many took this risk, but there they were easy targets for armed marauders. Instead, Umutesi and more than a quarter million refugees from the camps in South Kivu fled, going northwest on foot across the Mitumba mountains into the forest and toward Kisangani.

Umutesi's account of this harrowing flight across Zaire is the most heart-rending part of her book. Many of the refugees died from starvation, illness, or exhaustion. Conditions were especially difficult for women, whose efforts to care for young children, the elderly, or a sick spouse would slow their flight. Meanwhile, the Forces Armées Zairoises (Zairian army) harassed and robbed the refugees and the ADFL and the RPF pursued them like prey. The international community, which at the very beginning of the war had considered, but then rejected, the idea of an intervention force to protect the refugees and ensure delivery of humanitarian aid, abandoned them.

During their flight the refugees periodically congregated in camps, hoping to receive food and medicine. While some aid did arrive, these way stations turned out to be death camps where the refugees' pursuers could easily attack and massacre them. Tingi-Tingi camp was especially notorious. From December 1996, one hundred thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand refugees congregated for several weeks in this swampy area south of Kisangani. But many who made it this far, finding no infrastructure to assist them and already weakened from hunger and fatigue, succumbed to malaria, dysentery, or cholera. "They died like flies," says Umutesi. "Every day we buried a good fifty people, mostly children and pregnant women. . . . [and] famine was in full swing" (144). Once airlifts of food did reach Tingi-Tingi, the supplies were insufficient and distribution was inequitable. "Why did the international community show so little compassion for the plight of the refugees?" Umutesi asks. "They knew that some of us had survived the rebels in the forest, but they seemed in no hurry to come to our aid. I had heard that some countries and international organizations had even

declared that there were no more Rwandan refugees in the eastern part of Zaire, apart from some Interahamwe and their families who deserved, it seems, their fate" (145). Once again, international media coverage reflected the dominant discourse of officials and the new leaders in Kigali, not the realities faced by the refugees. From listening to the international radio stations such as VOA, BBC, and RFI, the refugees knew that the international press focused mainly on the ADFL military offensive and Mobutu's response: "When they did mention the Rwandan refugees, when they finally accepted that we still existed, the journalists were only interested in the presence of members of the militia at Tingi-Tingi and in the recruitment of former members of FAR and FAZ. Of our daily life, of the Hell we had lived in since the destruction of the camps in eastern Zaire, of the horrifying death that awaited those lost in the forest, of the massacres perpetrated by the rebels, not one word" (148). The refugees were aware that Emma Bonino, the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Action, had spoken out about their plight. But "unfortunately her calls for compassion towards the Rwandan refugees didn't awaken any echoes in the Western press" (148).

Umutesi's book tells a harrowing tale, written from within. But it is not the only account. In *A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa* (2004), Howard French offers a critique similar to that of Umutesi's: "We in the press obligingly failed to cover what was arguably the war's most important feature, its human toll," he says (142). To explain this failure French notes the tendency of journalists to accept the simplistic good guy/bad guy dichotomy adopted by most American officials to characterize the war. Mobutu and the Hutu allied with him were seen as villains, while Kabila and the ADFL were the "good guys." All Hutu were viewed with suspicion as "a pariah population." Moreover, journalists uncritically believed "the flimsy cover story of an uprising in the east by an obscure ethnic group" as the explanation for the war. Because of an understandable sympathy for the Tutsi after the Rwandan genocide, French suggests, he and other journalists failed to realize that "from start to finish this war had been nothing less than a Tutsi invasion from Rwanda" (2004:142). Like Umutesi, French rejects the good guy/bad guy dichotomy: "There were no good guys in Rwanda's catastrophic modern history, and the same was true for Zaire's civil war. We in the press were far too slow in seizing upon the recklessness of Rwanda's invasion, and by the time the true dimensions of the tragedy it had unleashed could be discerned, almost no one cared" (2004:143).⁴

In February, three days after a visit to Tingi-Tingi camp by Sadako Ogata, head of the UNHCR, the ADFL attacked the camp. Thousands of refugees were massacred, and Tingi-Tingi camp was closed down. Shortly before this attack, Umutesi and her small group had fled the camp with many other refugees. After trekking through sparsely inhabited forest areas, Umutesi finally reached western Zaire near Mbandaka. During ten

months of flight she had walked more than two thousand kilometers. Some local villagers welcomed and assisted Umutesi (although some betrayed her), but even this partial respite was short-lived. As part of a campaign by the UNHCR and Kabila's ADFL, the U.N. agency offered a bounty of ten dollars to Zairian villagers for each refugee they delivered to the UNHCR for repatriation to Rwanda. Meanwhile, soldiers of the ADFL threatened to attack villages that harbored refugees.

Ultimately, Umutesi managed to escape to Belgium, with help from a European colleague who had come to look for her in Zaire. She survived thanks to her courage, resourcefulness, and, at times, sheer good luck. Most of her companions did not. Her book stands as a tribute to the many people she knew who perished in these violent events—and a call for those responsible to be brought to justice.

Presented in simple, direct prose, Umutesi's narrative inspires awe and admiration. This book is inspiring because of the humanity and caring Umutesi displays, despite the deprivation she experienced in the refugee camps and during the forced march across Zaire. As with other women in challenging circumstances elsewhere in Africa, Umutesi's raw courage and ability to improvise served her in good stead.⁵

However, it is important to note that Umutesi's account does not diminish the horror, the gravity, or the meaning of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994. Instead, her narrative places the genocide in a larger landscape of violence: the focus is on the plight of ordinary people in times of conflict, who become the targets of militias and armed forces over which they have no control. But it is more than a catalog of death; Umutesi's tale, told with honesty and eloquence, is a tribute to the human spirit, a searing indictment of the agents who perpetrated these horrors, and a reproach to those who turned away.

Stanlie James and Aili Mari Tripp, co-editors of the series "Women in Africa and the Diaspora" at the University of Wisconsin Press, deserve praise for making this extraordinary testimony available in English; Julie Emerson's translation captures the straightforward eloquence of Umutesi's story. *Surviving the Slaughter* expands our understanding of the violent conflicts in Central Africa and offers valuable insights for those interested in conflict, justice, and humanitarian intervention.

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Notes

1. This process of mobilizing violent attacks against the authority of local officials was referred to as *kubohozo*. For analysis of similar patterns in Nyakizu Commune of Butare Prefecture, see Des Forges (1999) and Wagner (1998).
2. For a critique of this discourse and a more nuanced treatment of conditions in the camps, see Pottier (2002:ch. 4).
3. After 1994 the army of the postgenocide government of Rwanda was referred to as the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). To avoid confusion, I am using RPF here to refer to both the political movement and the RPA, or army of the RPF.
4. See also Pottier (2002:ch. 5). Pottier relates the deficiencies of media coverage of the refugee massacres in Zaire to the broader question of why the U.N. did not intervene. He notes that "France's lead role in calling for intervention, the ghost of the disastrous 1992 U.N. mission in Somalia, the strongly felt need for an African solution, and Western interests in Zaire's mineral wealth were all crucial in arriving at that decision." But he also emphasizes the complementary role of "a sustained, well-directed strategy pursued by Kigali's authorities," who asserted "that only they had the right to determine how the Great Lakes region should be understood and rebuilt" (2002:151).
5. Umutesi's resourcefulness and ability to navigate threatening situations recall the story of Mwasi during the early 1980s in Kinshasa, Zaire. When her husband was conscripted into the army along with other university students, Mwasi used a range of stratagems to make contact with him and find help for herself and her children. See Vansina (1986).