

BRITAIN AND THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE OF 1994 IN A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

THE MAJOR ARGUMENTS OF HAZEL CAMERON'S BOOK

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Although numerous volumes have been published about the roles played by different international actors in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, there are still missing information about the full picture. In particular, when the analysis is directed to a deeper and clearer understanding of why the genocide occurred. Hazel Cameron based her book on thorough fieldwork, which helped her gather authentic insights from the informants she interviewed, together with the cables, archival and other sources she collected. Her clear intention was to present the different views that show the many contradictions connected with the horrible events. In *Britain's Hidden Role in the Rwandan Genocide* Hazel Cameron presents a sharp logic and offers a balanced scholarly argumentation, revealing a number of connecting issues, which are needed for the reader to get the story right. The volume is also a good contribution to understanding power in international politics, therefore, is an important academic piece for those studying and researching International Relations.

The first chapter of the book is an Introduction to the history of genocide mentioning the Herero, “probably the first ethnic group subjected to genocide in the twentieth century” (p. 3) by the then German rulers in present-day Namibia. Already in the first pages we learn about the author’s stance – apart from her acknowledgment that the entire international community failed to handle the situation in Rwanda – that the attitude, behaviour and policy actions of the United Kingdom “illuminate hidden relationships and findings that assist in pushing back the boundaries of the genocide template” (p. 5).

The volume undertakes a socio-legal approach to analyze the influence of different institutions and the complicity of the genocide, in particular, the concept of complicity as a bystander to genocide. The book is therefore a significant account that adds to the literature on the ‘elite bystander’, the theoretical framework of which is presented in Chapter 2. According to Cameron, elite bystanders to genocide are “liable to charges of complicity in genocide should they fail to undertake their positive obligations, such as the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide” (p. 118). She considers Britain as a global bystander to genocide in Rwanda, which had as much involvement in shaping conditions in the country as France, as she proves, albeit its “actions were much more hidden from scrutiny” (p. 119).

In building her arguments, Cameron allows the reader to get exposed to the historic relationships between the Hutu and the Tutsi, together with how much impact the socially constructed racist categories of the European colonizers could possibly have on the Rwandan genocide, as well as the complex history of post-



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independence Rwanda, within which she neatly interprets the violence (Chapter 3). She draws attention to avoid the oversimplifications of Rwandan history.

Chapter 4 addresses the spectre of genocide in Rwanda and its aftermath, focusing on internal and external responsibility for genocide. Via the analysis of General Dallaire's 'genocide fax' of 11 January 1994, the readers are put into a broader global and highly complex picture, in which very important international events were happening in parallel: during February and March of 1994 the renewed

conflict in Bosnia, the US leaving Somalia, and the tense Asian region caused by the North Korean nuclear issue (p. 45). With regard to strengthening UNAMIR, based on one of her interviews, Cameron also underlines the lack of political will (p. 51). In addition, the Western press did not really help the world understand what was about to burst out in Rwanda, as they themselves did not understand its very context (p. 56).

While Chapter 5 looks at the hidden French political and geostrategic interests, Chapter 6 and 7 talk about Britain making a clear statement about the British government not having taken action to stop the genocide. One of the strongest parts of the book is the micro case study of French complicity in the region of Bisesero, in south-west Rwanda in 1994 – result of an academically strong fieldwork and empirical research. One of her sharp conclusions is that “from 1990 onwards, France performed an integral role in the architecture of the Rwandan genocide”, and “there is a potential for prosecution in terms of the concept of state crime” (p. 78). A major issue of misinterpretations is discussed in chapter 7 (How Britain Responded), revealing from interviews recorded with former member of the British government that the decision-makers were “largely uninformed, lacking in any semblance of reliable or relevant information about events in Rwanda” (p. 109).

Although the last chapter (8) provides a fine conclusion, more should have been said about the post-genocide government of the country. In particular, as Cameron also signals that there are references to illegal resource exploitation being undertaken by Rwanda in the DRC since the genocide, and some other possible cases of violations of British businesses (pp. 116-7). I agree with her, however, that further research is required to have a deeper insight into the circumstances and in general the political economy of any of such violations.

Britain's Hidden Role in the Rwandan Genocide. The Cat's Paw is a fine research piece to point out the limitations and problems of state crime in existent international law presenting the case of the Rwandan genocide in its complexity. Hazel Cameron firmly indicates some of the next possible dimensions of continued research, which hopefully will result in a few more such neatly written publications. ✨



Klemensits Péter

Páncélos háború Észak-Afrikában (1940-1943)

A háborús hadszínterek közül mindig is az észak-afrikai volt a legkülönlegesebb, különösen az európaiak számára. Az ókori titkok, a hatalmas ismeretlen, a kietlen sivatagok, a kutatók és a hadtörténet rajongók figyelmét is felkeltették az évek során, korántsem véletlenül. A második világháború során olyan parancsnokok szereztek maguknak hírnevet ezen a hadszíntéren, akiket előtte kevésbé ismert a közvélemény, mint pl. Erwin Rommel vagy Bernard Montgomery. A harcok, páncélos pedig nem véletlenül lett az afrikai harcok emblematikus harceszköze.

A kötet tudományos igényességgel foglalja össze mindazon összetevőket, melyek végigkísérték brit páncélosok alkalmazását Észak-Afrikában 1940-1943 között, különös tekintettel a brit észak-afrikai hadvezetés hadászati és hadműveleti tervezésére, a főbb hadműveletek bemutatására és a páncélos csapatok alkalmazásához köthető tanulságok összegzésére. A páncélos fegyvernem alkalmazásán túl viszont az egész észak-afrikai hadszíntér legfontosabb – de kevésbé feldolgozott – stratégiai problémái is megjelennek a kötetben, nevezetesen, hogy az olaszok feletti győzelem után miként változott meg a hadászati környezet a britek hátrányára 1941 tavaszán, majd pedig 1942 elején, ez pedig milyen következményekkel járt Észak-Afrikára és a Közel-Keletre nézve, továbbá melyek voltak azok a hadászati döntések, melyek az 1943-as hadműveletek befejezéséhez vezettek.

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