

Georges Martres, former french ambassador to Rwanda

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Georges Martres was the French ambassador to Rwanda from 1990 to 1993. He left in April 1993, a year before the genocide started. During his time there, he had had a sense that violence and massacres could reoccur but he was unable to imagine it could reach the scale that it did. Here he describes the overall political situation during his post and his feelings as he left Rwanda

I must acknowledge I talked about genocide from the start because a reading of the history of Rwanda and more recent events convince me that the risk of genocide was on everyone's minds.

It was on the mind of the Hutu extremists but also in the Tutsi community that had remained inside the country who hoped for a political balancing act that would enable it to survive. I myself used the term genocide without imagining that it could take such a shattering form. I envisaged instead a renewal or aggravation of some massacres.

Let's not forget that the massacres started already from the time of independence of Rwanda after a part of the Tutsi population fled and af-

ter they formed opposition groups in different parts of the country. This was when they called them "Inyenzi," which means cockroaches. Each time the Tutsi emigres carried out violent actions inside the country, the interior Hutus, at least the most extreme elements, carried out completely blind reprisals against the small Tutsi community still inside the country.

I understood the genocide as meaning reprisal massacres carried out by extremists, the most hardline members of Habyarimana's entourage. These massacres were already taking the form of an anticipation of the genocide. The situation only worsened as the military power of the RPF increased and as the Hutu masses were provoked by the propagandists, the Committee for the Defense of the Republic, which was created in 1991 or 1992.

As a result the massacres intensified until my departure in April 1993. I left with the conviction that it was not going to work out.

But I must say that I did not imagine that 800,000 people could be massacred in three months in such a methodical way and in the face of almost complete passivity of the international community.