



*Lt. General Romeo Dallaire at Bisesero
Genocide Memorial, Rwanda.*

**SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL:
THE JOURNEY OF ROMEO DALLAIRE**
Peter Raymont, 2004

Our rating: ★★★★★

Review

When it came time for Canadian Brigadier-General Romeo Dallaire to find a fitting subtitle for *Shake Hands with the Devil*, his blow-by-blow account of the nightmarish months he spent as force commander of the 1993-94 UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, *The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* couldn't have been more appropriate. Dallaire's horrifying memoir casts the sudden, savage murder of 800,000 Rwandans as a foreseeable event that could have been easily prevented had any country in the international community cared to even try. Dallaire had been tapped by the U.N. to serve as the force commander of UNAMIR, a peacekeeping mission whose mandate was to assist in the implementation of the recently signed peace accord that would finally put an end to three years of fighting between Hutu government forces and the Tutsi manned Rwandese Patriotic Front. Not long after filing his first reconnaissance report, however, Dallaire realized that his biggest fight was going to be with the U.N. itself. Burned by recent events in Somalia and preoccupied with larger missions in Yugoslavia, the U.N. would not only fail to provide the basic personnel the mission required, but make the acquisition of even the most basic supplies nearly impossible. Most shocking of all, when Dallaire provided reliable information that Hutu extremists close to President Habyarimana's interim were not only stockpiling weapons around the capital city of Kigali but compiling the names of their intended Tutsi and moderate Hutu targets, U.N. officials in N.Y. insisted Dallaire refrain from taking any kind of direct action. Just three months later, the well-planned, swiftly executed genocide began. Shot ten years after those terrible months, this shattering documentary from Canadian filmmaker Peter Raymont follows Dallaire, who, despite the odds, managed to save the lives of thousands of Rwandans, and his wife, Beth, as they travel back to Rwanda for the first time since he left the mission in August, 2004, and succumbed to a harrowing case of post-traumatic stress syndrome that twice brought him to the brink of suicide. As Dallaire revisits key sites around the now quiet country, Raymont intercuts footage from 1994 and, unlike the more easily digestible HOTEL RWANDA, he pulls no punches when it comes to depicting the true nature of the carnage. And yet the most shocking footage of all still manages to be the poorly attended ceremony commemorating the 10 year anniversary of the genocide. The complete absence of world leaders is a bewildering sign that the world still doesn't care much about small African countries with no exploitable resources to speak of, and a troubling indication that such atrocities can, and no doubt will, happen again. — *Ken Fox*