

Paula Silver, Kigali, Rwanda

THE AIR IS HOT AND STICKY. Upgraded, red-tiled streets wind past tiny stone houses with corrugated-tin roofs that peep out from behind one-room shops selling everything from raw meat to imported chocolates. An occasional modern-looking two- or three-story building punctuates the poverty. This is Kigali, capital of Rwanda, population 400,000.

A decade after the genocide in which close to a million people — over a tenth of the population — were killed in a hundred days, Rwanda is still struggling to rebuild itself. Most of the dead were members of the Tutsi ethnic group and moderate members of the rival Hutu group; most of the murderers were Hutu.

As the world prepares to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on January 27, a Jew visiting this sprawling city is almost automatically drawn to a hill-top overlooking it, where the Kigali Genocide Memorial serves as a reminder. Opened in April 2003, it is situated next to mass graves in which more than a quarter of a million victims are buried. Its pale pink walls and modern two-floor structure are surrounded by memorial gardens where visitors are invited to sit and reflect.

The ground floor of the museum documents the genocide and includes a large chamber in which glass cabinets exhibit skulls, bones, clothing remains and photographs of victims. Signs in French, English and the local language, Kinyarwanda, cater to the hundreds of local and foreign visitors each day. Upstairs, an exhibition entitled "Wasted Lives" tells the story of other genocides, among them the murder of the Hereros in Namibia in 1904, the Armenians in 1915-18, the Cambodians in 1975-79 and most recently, Muslims and Christians in the Balkans. Two rooms are devoted to Nazi Germany and the extermination of the Jews, with special reference to the Treblinka death camp, where almost the same number died as in Rwanda.

The themes of the museum resonate deeply for any Jew, including the brutal horror of the murders, the inaction of the international community, the need for education, reconciliation and rebuilding, the mandate to care for survivors, the desire to honor the heroes who saved innocent lives and, perhaps, the difficulty of dealing with the genocide except as a nearly endless series of separate, heart-wrenching details.

Two British brothers, Stephen and James Smith, are largely responsible, through their organization, Aegis, the



Dark Continent

As the world recalls Auschwitz, a museum in Rwanda looks to the Holocaust's themes of grief and hope

Genocide Prevention Research Initiative, for the museum's final configuration. Hired by the Rwandan government to create and operate it for three years (when it is expected to be self-sustaining and will be run by the Kigali municipality), the Smiths were asked to base the institution on the Beth Shalom Holocaust Memorial Center they created near Nottingham in northern England. And that museum, in turn, was inspired by the brothers' visit 10 years ago to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

In their early 20s at the time, they returned home and converted their parents' small non-denominational Christian conference center in the Nottinghamshire countryside into a historical museum that houses a permanent exhibition on the Holocaust, along with seminar and film rooms, a library and bookshop. "We realized that the Holocaust is not just a Jewish problem," says younger brother James Smith, Aegis executive director, now 33 and married to a Rwandan genocide survivor he met while

working in Rwanda. "It has consequences for us all."

Ironically, as the Nottingham Holocaust center was preparing to open in 1994, the genocide in Rwanda and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia highlighted the failure of the international community to either predict or respond effectively to these new tragedies. "Our responses to genocide and threats are characteristically reactive and too late," Smith notes.

JULIEN APOLLON KABARIZI, THE Aegis country manager in Rwanda, lost four members of his immediate family and most of his extended family in the genocide. He, too, cringes at the international community for its inaction 10 years ago and is anguished over his country's difficulty in coming to terms with its past. He points out that many of the schoolchildren coming through the museum — a large number of them children of survivors or perpetrators — know little



LIFE AND DEATH: (Clockwise) A director at the Kigali museum, James Smith and his Rwandan survivor wife, Emmanuel Mugenira; the scar of a bullet wound, above; left eye, at the school where his family was killed

about the genocide beyond what their parents have been willing to say. Although every year, during the three months in which the genocide occurred, media focus becomes intense, the genocide is not yet part of the school curriculum, largely because educators are uncertain how to present the material.

Emmanuel Mugenira, 48, lost his entire family during the genocide. Slightly lurching over and almost enervated, Mugenira utters across the vacant school yard in the southern town of Mubamba, where 50,000 people were killed. Left for dead himself by the killers, he still has a deep bullet scar on his forehead. The government told Tutsis to go to the schools for



Maubamba, a Hutu married to a Tutsi and a former soldier in the Rwandan army, risked his life to save his wife and her family. "I kept on telling Tutsis to come and hide in my house, especially the ones who were my wife's friends. I hid them under the bed, in the ceiling, in the cupboard. The first time the Hutus came looking, there were 40 people in my house. I was very scared hiding them, especially when I found out that outside, people were collecting money to pay someone to kill me because they suspected me." They had collected 26,000 Rwandan francs (about \$30), he recalls, but the killer wanted 30,000.

National reconciliation remains a crucial issue in Rwanda. Unlike Jews, who could leave Europe after the Holocaust, Tutsi survivors must live with their former killers, including neighbors and even family members. They know that not all the Hutus regret what occurred and that some may still dream of a world without Tutsis, as the Nazis dreamed of a world without Jews. Except for the hope that the brutality will not erupt again, many survivors in Rwanda would find it difficult to go on with their lives. Maubamba says he is convinced that another genocide could never again happen in Rwanda, that the lessons of the past have been learned — but he offers no reasons for his hope.

For Emmanuel Muvunyi, the 33-year-old director of the department of education's student financing agency, his department's efforts to include genocide in the required school curriculum are part of ensuring a peaceful future for Rwanda. Fluent in English and passionate in his speech, Muvunyi, who participated in a month-long educational program in Israel in 2002, insists that the lessons of the Rwandan genocide are the same as those of the Holocaust: that racism must be fought and that the intervention of international organizations is crucial.

But he sees important differences between the Rwandan experience and the Holocaust. "In Rwanda, the genocide was faster and there was the deliberate negligence of the United Nations," he says. After World War II, the Allies powers mounted the Nuremberg trials, but the ms of public tribunals to deal with war criminals was thwarted, and many murderers were never prosecuted. In Rwanda, "peace" (literally, "sit-on-the-grass") village groups are being held to answer the country to try the more than 80,000 alleged killers still in the country's prisons.

An estimated 2 million Hutus fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo. While many may merely fear Tutsi reprisals should they return, others are armed men-

bers of Hutu militias who dream of returning to Rwanda to continue the killing.

Eras Biririza in a Hutu pastor who infiltrated back into the country after four years in a Congolese refugee camp, is a group caught by Rwandan troops. He denies having killed anyone and insists that he fled the country only out of fear of Tutsi revenge. "I came back so that I could reach my home. Then I surrendered," he says.

After his capture, he was required, as are all his returnees, to take part in a course, organized by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), to learn "how to follow the rules of the new Rwandan government and not to start segregating" Hutus from Tutsis. Established in March 1999 by an act of parliament, the NURC hopes that national unity and reconciliation can be developed through social and economic projects. Among its initiatives are programs throughout the country that bring together survivors with perpetrators who have served time in jail.

JUST UNDER 8 MILLION PEOPLE live in Rwanda now, 90 percent of them engaged in subsistence agriculture. A fledgling democracy with few natural resources, landlocked and with only tea and coffee as important exports, it is a nation that was constructed by Western powers. Before colonization by Belgium began in 1916, Hutus and Tutsis lived side by side in peace. But the dynamics of colonization, with European manipulation and using the tribes to entrench their own power, ignited tensions and inequalities and jealousies that erupted when the country's Hutu president was killed, his plane shot down, presumably by Tutsi conspirators, in April 1994. Within hours, Hutus avenging his death began killing both Tutsis and moderate Hutus, who represented political opposition.

"Jews refused the phrase 'Never Again' as a refrain, after the Holocaust, ever to submit again to the centuries of persecutions and pogroms that had led to it. But in Rwanda the phrase is commonly used in a more universalistic sense. For example, survivor Kababizi, the Aegis representative, asks, "When they said 'Never Again' after the Holocaust, it was meant for some people and not for others." His is both a cry of grief for what happened to his own people and an accusation against those who could have helped but did not.

James Smith, too, understands the phrase to refer to a commitment undertaken long ago by the international community that genocide will never occur again. "The genocide in Rwanda and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia threw into relief the failure of the international community to either predict

Making the Choice to Heal

TALI NATES'S FATHER WAS A Schindler survivor; her mother fled Warsaw in the early 1930s. From childhood, says the Tel Aviv-born mother of five, she felt a calling to pursue a profession that taught the consequences of intolerance. Now 43 and living in South Africa, where she lectures and facilitates anti-prejudice and human-rights workshops, Nates, blue eyes flashing as she speaks and one hand continuously flicking back curls of reddish-blond hair that keep falling into her face, remains passionate about the mission she set for herself long ago.

"I felt a connection between the genocide in Rwanda and the Holocaust," she says. "I hoped that by exploring and understanding man's immense cruelty to his neighbors, I would perhaps find the key to educating future generations not to harm one another." For seven years she headed the education department at the privately-funded Foundation for

Ntarama church (where some 4,000 Tutsis were murdered with grenades and machetes) felt like Auschwitz. But do we need to compare the two genocides? They both ended in the silence of millions who could still have been with us. And after every genocide the world says, 'Never Again!' Until the next time, that is."

Nates moved to South Africa in 1985 to marry a South African she met while he was visiting Israel. In 1994, when the genocide was happening in Rwanda, she recalls watching a "helplessly" on the news in suburban comfort. "When I lectured about the Holocaust to students, I always devoted a few lessons to the world's reaction — to how little was done. And here I was, living in a world that was doing nothing about another mass murder. I felt that I betrayed my grandmother and aunts who were murdered in Belzec. If I stayed alone," At the Foundation for Tolerance Education in 1998, she decided to create a "tolerance

program" about Rwanda. Rwandan survivors and refugees in South Africa helped her put together a program "about people's choices — the perpetrators, bystanders, victims and rescuers — and the consequences of these choices," she explains.

Last year, she visited Rwanda at last. "I am alive because another man in another time made a choice and rescued my father. This was a different country, a different time, different circumstances — but so many things were familiar and similar. Holding hands with one of the survivors who lost all her family in the genocide, I felt we were sisters."

murdered by state-sponsored targeting of civilians in the last century. Another million lives are at risk today in Sudan. A hillside overlooking the poverty-stricken city of Kigali holds the most recent testimony to both human consciousness and human hope.