

# Tracing the Rwanda ‘Genocide Fax’

January 14, 2014

By Karel Kovanda

NYT

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/15/opinion/tracing-the-rwanda-genocide-fax.html?hpw&rref=opinion&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/15/opinion/tracing-the-rwanda-genocide-fax.html?hpw&rref=opinion&_r=0)

Regarding “[The shroud over Rwanda’s nightmare](#)” (Opinion, Jan. 10): The crucial January 1994 “genocide fax” to which Michael Dobbs refers — warning of an “anti-Tutsi extermination” plot — was never shared with the United Nations Security Council in any way. But, in his preface to a major volume of Rwanda-related documents published by the United Nations in 1995, Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali asserted that the fax actually had been shared with the council.

Since I was president of the Security Council when the fax arrived, I confronted the secretary general on this issue toward the end of 1995. In a subsequent meeting also attended by Chinmaya Garekhan of the United Nations Secretariat, a right-hand man of Mr. Boutros-Ghali’s, the secretary general stuck to his position. In the end, however, Mr. Boutros-Ghali conceded that the Americans, at least, had been informed — which in his view should have been enough as far as the Security Council was concerned. It wasn’t.

Engaging in “what-if” history is rarely fruitful. But if the Security Council had been aware of Brig. Gen. Roméo Dallaire’s views on the impending genocide, it would at least have had a chance to react — and history might have taken a vastly

taken a vastly different turn.

*Karel Kovanda, Brussels*

The writer was the Czech ambassador to the United Nations from 1993 to 1997.