

# THE ROAD TO GENOCIDE

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## A HISTORY OF THE RWANDAN STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

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## ABSTRACT

There is a significant gap in the otherwise sprawling literature on the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. While much has been written about the social and political dimensions of the Rwandan Genocide, its immediate context – the four-year Struggle for Liberation which predated it and ushered it in – has remained almost wholly unexplored. Writing in 2000, Rwanda experts David and Catharine Newbury pointed to the urgent need to reverse recent accounts of the Genocide. “Instead of seeing history exclusively through the genocide ... one can only understand the genocide through an understanding of Rwanda’s history.”<sup>1</sup> The Newburys’ plea to historians remains valid 19 years later. By taking up their call, this project seeks to pave the way for a fuller understanding of the Genocide, a catastrophe whose extensive ramifications will continue to shape central African (and world) politics for several generations to come. The second overarching aim of the project is to make a contribution to the study of armed conflicts in modern Africa, a field which remains altogether underdeveloped. This dissertation’s contention is that there is no reason why Africa’s modern wars should not be approached from the perspective of military historical analysis – one which takes into account the wider political, economic and social contexts of a given conflict.

Using interviews with protagonists of the Struggle for Liberation (1990-1994) and newly discovered archival material, this dissertation explores a broad sweep of Rwandan history. It begins with the antecedents of the conflict – the Social Revolution (1959-1964) – and the ensuing politicisation and militarisation of Rwandan refugees in Uganda. It then turns to the war between the Rwandan Patriotic Front and its military wing, the Rwandan Patriotic Army, on the one side, and the government of Rwanda and its armed forces, the *Forces armées rwandaises*, on the other. The tactics, strategies and internal politics of both organisations are explored, alongside the results of their actions on the Rwandan domestic scene. As “war is the continuation of politics by other means,” the interplay between the two receives ample attention. Important political developments analysed in the dissertation include the many failed attempts at peace and the rise of a strong internal opposition. The thesis ends with a history of the Campaign Against Genocide. Launched by the Rwandan Patriotic Army, this 100-day campaign consisted of the military actions which defeated the *Forces armées rwandaises* and their genocidal allies following the start of the Genocide.

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<sup>1</sup> Catharine and David Newbury, “Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist Historiography in Rwanda”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 105, no. 3 (2000), 833

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADL: *Association rwandaise pour la défense des droits de la personne et des libertés publiques*

APROSOMA: *L'Association pour la promotion sociale de la masse*

BBTG: Broad Based Transitional Government

BEM: *Brevet d'état-major*

CADA: *Commission d'accès aux documents administratifs*

CLADHO: *Comité de liaison des associations rwandaises de défense des droits de l'Homme*

CMF: Combined Mobile Force

CND: *Conseil national de développement*

CRAP: *Commandos de recherche et d'action en profondeur*

CRD: *Coalition pour la défense de la République et de la démocratie*

DAMI: *Détachement d'assistance militaire*

FAR: *Forces armées rwandaises*

FAZ: *Forces armées zairoises*

FGT: *France Génocide Tutsi*

FCO: British Foreign and Commonwealth Office

ICTR: International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

INMR: Institute of National Museums of Rwanda

JMO: *Journaux des marches et opérations*

MAM: *Mission d'assistance militaire*

MDR: *Mouvement démocratique républicain*

MRND: *Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement*

MSM: *Mouvement social muhutu*

NRA: National Resistance Army

NRM: National Resistance Movement

OAU: Organisation of African Unity

PARMEHUTU: *Parti du Mouvement de l'émancipation Hutus*

PL: *Parti libéral*

PSD: *Parti social-démocrate*

RADER: *Rassemblement démocratique rwandais*

REP: *régiment étranger de parachutistes*

RDF: Rwanda Defence Force

RPA: Rwandan Patriotic Army

RPIMa: *régiment de parachutistes d'infanterie de marine*

RPF: Rwandan Patriotic Front

SAP: Structural Adjustment Plan

SHD: *Service historique de la Défense*

UNAMIR: United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNAR: *Union nationale rwandaise*

TPDF: Tanzania People's Defence Force

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## I - INTRODUCTION

### A Neglected Topic

Since the mid-twentieth century Rwanda has experienced two civil wars. The first, known as the Social Revolution, lasted from 1959 to 1964. It coincided with independence and led to a campaign of ethnic cleansing. As a result, many, mostly Tutsi, Rwandans fled abroad. The second is the Struggle for Liberation, which started on 1 October 1990 and ran until 19 July 1994. During this war, the refugees who had been forced out of the country during the Social Revolution and in subsequent decades returned to Rwanda by military force under the aegis of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and its military wing, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). The RPF was opposed by the government of President Juvénal Habyarimana and its armed forces, the *Forces armées rwandaises* (FAR).

The Rwandan Genocide started on 7 April 1994, following the death of President Habyarimana; over the course of a mere 100 days, approximately 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed by Hutu Power gangs and militias supported by the FAR. Advancing from their zone in the north of the country, the RPA put an end to the Genocide by defeating the FAR, which had been shielding the ethnic militias. The total defeat inflicted by the RPA on the FAR forced the latter to flee into Zaire, initially taking the moniker of “ex-FAR.” With it went between one to two million Rwandan refugees, who settled in North and South Kivu. It was this exodus which paved the way for Africa’s Great War in Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo from 1996.

During colonial times, and considering its size and location, Rwanda was the subject of an extraordinary amount of historical research. The main focuses of interest for many of these early scholars were the ethnic stratification of Rwandan society (Hutu, Tutsi, Twa) and the importance of the royal court.<sup>1</sup> After independence, the study of Rwandan history became the domain of a handful of dedicated scholars interested in the societies living on the shores of the African Great Lakes.<sup>2</sup> Though some of these would only publish their most significant

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<sup>1</sup> For example: Jaques Maquet, *The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). The oeuvre of Alexis Kagame – *Un abrégé de l’ethno-histoire du Rwanda I* (Butare: Éditions universitaires du Rwanda, 1972) and *Un abrégé de l’ethno-histoire du Rwanda II* (Butare: Éditions universitaires du Rwanda, 1975), for example – is also relevant, as he acted as a key advocate for the role of the royal court in Rwandan history.

<sup>2</sup> Claudine Vidal, “Le Rwanda des anthropologues ou le fétichisme de la vache”, *Cahiers d’études africaines*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1969); René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (New York: Praeger, 1970); Alison L. Des Forges, *Defeat is the Only Bad News: Rwanda under Musinga, 1896-1931* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011); Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1988); David Newbury, *Kings and Clans: Ijwi Island and the Lake Kivu Rift, 1780-1840* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Jan Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); Jean-Pierre Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History*, trans. Scott Straus (New York: Zone Books, 2006)

work on Rwanda much later, it is their nuanced view of ethnicity which would go on to supplant and problematize the ethno-racist ideas held by their colonial counterparts.<sup>3</sup>

This changed after the Genocide, as researchers, journalists and human rights activists reported on one of the gravest human rights abuses of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> They documented the killings at the micro-level, analysed the international dimensions and identified the culprits. In this last respect, the work of Alison Des Forges and her testimony before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) are particularly noteworthy. Other scholars interested in exploring the origins of the mass murders also started writing about the role of the Church in the Genocide and the nitty gritty of Rwandan internal politics.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, the writing on Rwanda has turned away from the Genocide and its complex causes to post-war rule. Most of the literature written directly after the Genocide was informed by a positive view of the RPF; this was, after all, the organisation that had stopped the Genocide as the international community stood by and watched. However, the RPF's inexperience in ruling a country, combined with the almost insurmountable problems involved in rebuilding an utterly shattered nation still crawling with *génocidaires* caused friction with otherwise friendly researchers. As the best among them explained:

There was not a precise turning point, it was an evolution. I went back to Rwanda in February 1995 and soon started to hear stories about the killing going on. I tried to access some of the mass graves that were being filled and found rapidly that taxi drivers were scared shitless of taking me there. ... Later I found eyewitnesses to some of the massacres. By the time I left, I was under RPF security surveillance.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever goodwill researchers had left for the RPF dissipated during the First and Second Congo Wars (1996-1997; 1998-2003). In recent years, Filip Reyntjens, Susan Thomson and Timothy Longman have all written highly critical books on post-Genocide governance.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Catherine and David Newbury, "Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist Historiography in Rwanda", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 105, no. 3 (June 2000), 840

<sup>4</sup> Colette Braeckman, *Rwanda, histoire d'un génocide* (Paris: Editions Fayard, 1994); Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997); Human Rights Watch. *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. Written by Alison Des Forges (New York: March 1999); Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families* (New York: Picador, 2000); Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London: Verso, 2006); Linda Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (London: Zed Books, 2009)

<sup>5</sup> Bruce D. Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001); Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); André Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide: Criminal Politics in Rwanda 1990-1994*, trans. Don E. Webster (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> Author's correspondence with Gérard Prunier, 24 January 2014

<sup>7</sup> Filip Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Susan Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday Resistance to Reconciliation in Postgenocide Rwanda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013); Timothy Longman, *Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Susan Thomson, *Rwanda: From Genocide to Precarious Peace* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018). For the author's view on the subject, see John Burton Kegel, "Post-Genocide Rwanda", *Africa: Rivista semestrale di studi e ricerche*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2019)

Aside from one obvious answer to their criticisms – that there are no poor, post-conflict/genocide nations in unstable geopolitical areas which are doing significantly better than Rwanda, and many that are faring far worse – the existence of important gaps in the country’s recent historiography means that these works are all based on an incomplete understanding of the post-Genocide political scene.

The origins of the RPF and RPA, in particular, have been sketched, but not closely studied. Considering it was the RPF/A which started the war that ended in Genocide and that it was the same organisation which stopped the cataclysm, its trajectory deserves fuller attention than it has received so far. What was the background of significant RPF/A members? Why did the RPF/A decide that military return was the only viable option? How was the RPF/A able to prepare itself for the Struggle for Liberation? How did the RPA recover from its initial setbacks? Why were RPF cadres and RPA soldiers so motivated? How did the RPA manage to beat a French-backed FAR? All these questions warrant full discussion and unprejudiced consideration. The history of this “rebel” movement also informs how it governs Rwanda today. If we ignore its background, how can we understand the choices it has made, and continues to make, in the post-Genocide period? Going a step further, we should look at the history of the RPA and the FAR if we are to gain an insight into the workings and mentality of today’s Rwanda Defence Force (RDF), both in its military and nation-building roles. As Richard Reid has written, “war in itself ... [is] a major force for social and political and economic change; war and soldiery ... worked their way into African cultural, social and political narratives. Songs were composed for them, traditions developed around them, and identities forged through them.”<sup>8</sup> In present-day Rwanda, we can literally see this process taking place before our eyes.<sup>9</sup>

Another neglected aspect of Rwandan history is the Struggle for Liberation itself.<sup>10</sup> Though research has been conducted into the preparation of the Genocide and the international community’s role in it, no scholar has placed the Struggle for Liberation at the heart of their narrative.<sup>11</sup> However, the preparation of the Genocide, the rise and fall of moderate opposition, the degradation of the FAR from a respected fighting force to a genocidal militia, the role of the international community, the Arusha negotiations and the end of the Genocide,

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<sup>8</sup> Richard J. Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa* (London: James Curry, 2007), 3

<sup>9</sup> For more on this, see Josefine Kühnel Larsen’s outstanding “Peace by Peace: The construction of national-military identity in post-genocide Rwanda” (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2014); Marco Jowell, “Cohesion through socialization: liberation, tradition and modernity in the forging of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF)”, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2014); Chemouni, Benjamin and Mugiraneza, Assumpta, “Ideology and Interests in the Rwandan Patriotic Front: Singing the Struggle in Pre-Genocide Rwanda”, *African Affairs*, (2019) and Frank K. Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation: A History of the Military in Rwanda* (Kigali: Fountain Publishers, 2009)

<sup>10</sup> Some interesting, but basic, early attempts have been made. See, in particular, Adrien Fontanellaz and Tom Cooper, *The Rwandan Patriotic Front: 1990-1994* (Solihull: Helion & Company, 2015); Laurien Uwizeyimana, *Octobre et novembre 1990: le Front patriotique rwandais à l’assaut du Mutara* (Ruhengeri: Éditions universitaires du Rwanda, September 1992). There is also a sub-standard, “conspiracy theory” PhD, which claims those who were most responsible for the Genocide were, in fact, innocent. Barrie Collins, “The Rwandan War 1990-1994: Interrogating the dominant narrative” (PhD diss., SOAS, 2009). It was later turned into a book: Barrie Collins, *Rwanda 1994: The Myth of the Akazu Genocide Conspiracy and its Consequences* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

<sup>11</sup> Besides the works mentioned above, see Daniela Kroslak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: Hurst, 2007); and Andrew Wallis, *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France’s Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014)

all took place in the context of the war. My contention, in sum, is that the Struggle for Liberation should form the bedrock of any genuine understanding of Rwanda between 1990 and 1994, and indeed beyond.

The aim of this dissertation is to begin to address these two related gaps in Rwandan historiography: the origins and nature of the RPF/RPA, on the one hand, and the history and implications of the Struggle for Liberation, on the other. I will attempt not to fall into the well-known pitfall of military history, where research is reduced to no more than “a chronology of generals and battles.”<sup>12</sup> As such, particular attention will be paid to the roots of the war – going back to the Social Revolution of 1959-1964 – and its effects on Rwandan society and politics, showing how the conflict formed, moulded and informed every decision taken by Rwandan politicians and generals at the time. At grassroots level, the conflict also created an explosive atmosphere that was manipulated and exploited by the *génocidaires*.

Two works speak directly to this dissertation’s subject matter. The best single volume on the Struggle and the Genocide is Gérard Prunier’s *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*.<sup>13</sup> That this extraordinary book, written less than a year after the end of the Genocide, still holds pride of place in the current scholarship is a testament to the skill of the author, who also enjoyed exceptional access to key players in the events. Another book that looks specifically at the immediate antecedents of the Genocide is André Guichaoua’s *From War to Genocide: Criminal Politics in Rwanda 1990-1994*, originally published in French in 2010.<sup>14</sup> Guichaoua’s mastery of Rwandan internal politics is second to none and builds on the often forgotten, but high-quality *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda: 1993-1994*, which he edited in 1995.<sup>15</sup> Though these two books come closest to dealing with the questions this dissertation seeks to answer, each was written with other primary objectives. Prunier, moreover, lacked access to many documents on the war which are now available. In fact, as late as 2008, Claudine Vidal could still point out that

Not much is known about the military actions of the armies that fought the 1990-1994 Rwandan Civil War. The sources of all orders, documents, reports, testimonials are mostly inaccessible, be they Rwandan, French or Belgian. Even when they are in the public domain, they generally relate to the Rwandan Armed Forces [FAR]. The lack of documentation is even bigger in the case of the FPR [RPF].<sup>16</sup>

Given the ambitious research agenda outlined above, it is appropriate to clearly spell out what this dissertation does *not* attempt to cover. While the role of France in the military domain was crucial during the Struggle for Liberation, and I engage with it extensively, this PhD is not an investigation into possible human rights abuses committed by French soldiers and politicians in Rwanda in 1990-1994. As such, *Opération Turquoise* (23 June – 21 August 1994), the French-led military-humanitarian intervention in south-west Rwanda, falls outside

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<sup>12</sup> Mark Moyar, “The Current State of Military History”, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1 (March 2007), 225; Martin van Creveld, “Thoughts on Military History”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 18, no. 4 (October 1983), 549

<sup>13</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*

<sup>14</sup> Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide*

<sup>15</sup> André Guichaoua, ed., *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993-1994)* (Paris: Karthala, 1995)

<sup>16</sup> Claudine Vidal, “Les contradictions d’un lieutenant rwandais. Abdul Ruzibiza, témoin, acteur, faux-témoin” in *L’Afrique des Grands Lacs, annuaire 2008-2009*, eds., S Marysse, F Reyntjens, S Vandeginste (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2009), 43. My translation.

the scope of my research. Likewise, the RPF developed many methods during the Struggle which it later applied to its rule of post-Genocide Rwanda. The parallels, such as the clear separation of the political and military, the setting-up of organisational structures and committees, and the prominent role of women in decision-making, are obvious and important. Nonetheless, as a work of (broadly conceived) military history, this dissertation does not engage explicitly with these questions.

There are also several avenues for research which, while briefly addressed here, would undoubtedly deserve more attention. Two striking examples are the Arusha Accords and ethnic militias such as the *Interahamwe*, neither of which has been the object of a dedicated study. While some inroads have been made,<sup>17</sup> these are not as detailed as they could be. As time goes by, and declassified material is brought into the public domain, ground-breaking research on both subjects should become possible.

Another caveat should be introduced at this stage. Rwandans are, quite rightly, rather picky about the names of the wars they have experienced. During a conversation with an RPA veteran, I asked him about the “Ugandan Bush War.” His retort was that “[calling it a] ‘bush war’ is a denigrated description of a legitimate struggle that changed things.”<sup>18</sup> Following this exchange, I resolved to refer to it as the Resistance War. In naming the two Rwandan wars explored in this dissertation, I have followed the conventions of the victors. The Social Revolution was won by the pro-Hutu political parties which had been formed in the lead-up to independence in 1962. By overthrowing the Tutsi monarchy and installing a one-party dictatorship of the Hutu majority, they ensured they would remain in power until 1991. Equally, I call the second civil war the Struggle for Liberation, the name given to it by the RPF/A. The RPF sees the war it inaugurated on 1 October 1990 as a struggle waged by and for all Rwandans, inside and outside the country, to liberate themselves from the neo-colonial government led by President Juvénal Habyarimana.<sup>19</sup> This is particularly important in the context of post-Genocide Rwanda, where the RPF wishes to stress the unity of the people rather than their divisions. As a result, those who fought in the Struggle insist that their enemy was not the people of Rwanda or the Hutu, or even the FAR as a whole, but rather, President Habyarimana’s regime and, after that, the *génocidaires* and genocide ideology itself.

There is another reason why I have chosen to call the war the Struggle for Liberation rather than the Rwandan Civil War. The former is more encompassing than the latter and does more justice to the domestic opposition to the Habyarimana presidency – which was significant – as well as to the non-combatant projects of the RPF which made victory possible: the mobilisation of Rwandans living outside Rwanda (the Banyarwanda) and fundraising activities and the like. I also feel that the name goes some way towards honouring the memory all who fought for change in Rwanda and all too often gave their lives to stop the

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<sup>17</sup> Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda*; Jean Hatzfeld, *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide: Let the Killers Speak*, trans. Linda Coverdale (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2008)

<sup>18</sup> Interview Ndore Rurinda, 3 January 2018

<sup>19</sup> The RPF’s Pan-African-inspired, anti-neo-colonial, ideology is ably discussed by Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven, *Why Comrades Go to War: Liberation Politics and the Outbreak of Africa’s Deadliest Conflict* (London: Hurst, 2016)

Genocide: not only the RPA, RPF and domestic opposition, but also many ordinary Rwandans who helped save compatriots at great personal risk.

### **Military History in Africa**

This thesis also aims to make a contribution to African military history, a field which remains altogether underdeveloped for two main reasons. First, it is mostly political scientists, journalists and anthropologists who have engaged with Africa's conflicts. And these works, as Stathis Kalyvas has noted, pay scant attention to the actual experience of fighting.<sup>20</sup> It is unclear why this should be the case. Squeamishness about stories of bloodshed or slaughter can be ruled out, since books and reports on massacres and genocides abound.<sup>21</sup> Difficulty in accessing sources might be part of the problem, as veterans are not usually easily accessible, while documentary evidence, when it exists, is often under lock and key in military archives. However, as Richard Reid writes, the most important reason is probably that war is "simply not fashionable: African studies is as susceptible to the fad as any, and the kind of history produced in the last quarter of a century has had no place for men like Shaka, Mirambo or Mutesa. Their armies were redolent of the kind of high political history which a generation of scholars now eschewed."<sup>22</sup>

Second, the discipline of military history itself has been dismissive of African warfare. Military historians have long been aware of the ultimate Eurocentricity of their field, focused as it is on "the West" – Europe and the United States – and the way its societies wage and interpret conflict.<sup>23</sup> The "emphasis," as Jeremy Black put it, is "on the military history of ... the west ... ensuring that other states and societies appear primarily in order to be defeated – so that the 'non-west' is misunderstood when it is not ignored."<sup>24</sup> However, self-awareness has not helped remedy the problem. In the introduction to the revised edition of *The Cambridge History of Warfare*, Geoffrey Parker noted that, like its "precursor, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare: The Triumph of the West* (2008), the approach adopted in this volume lays its authors open to the charge of Eurocentrism."<sup>25</sup> Parker raised three defences against this accusation. First, that it would have been impossible to compress the history of warfare of all cultures into a single volume. Second, that to "merely pay lip service to the military and naval traditions of Africa, Asia and the Americas ... would be an unpardonable distortion."<sup>26</sup> Third, and most importantly, he pointed to the fact that

Over the past two centuries the western way of war has become dominant all over the world. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries remarkably few states and cultures managed to resist western arms for long – and the few that did so usually succeeded by imitation or adaptation. The rise and development of this dominant tradition, together with the secret of its success, therefore seems worthy of examination and analysis.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Warfare in Civil Wars" in *Rethinking the Nature of War*, eds Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (London: Routledge, 2005), 89-90

<sup>21</sup> Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*; Hatzfeld, *A Time for Machetes*

<sup>22</sup> Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa*, 9

<sup>23</sup> Richard J. Reid, *Warfare in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ix

<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London: Routledge, 2004), 67

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Parker, ed., *The Cambridge History of Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), vii

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

However, there are several problems with this statement. Hidden in Parker's reasoning is the implicit assumption that the study of defeated military cultures or structures is a somewhat worthless pursuit. This is both slightly hypocritical (military historians, it needs scarcely be observed, have extensively studied Western armies which suffered defeat, beginning with the German army of the Second World War) and intellectually problematic, since in many cases close analysis of failure is as, if not more, instructive than success. But the ostensible dominance of Western armed forces and their "way of war" in the twentieth century can be called into question as well. The French failed to defeat the FLN in Algeria in the 1950s, while in Vietnam they and, later, the Americans tried in vain to impose their political order. In the post-WWII period, the British sought to hang on to Palestine but failed, just like they did in Cyprus and Aden. For its part, the Soviet Union proved incapable of defeating the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Even in counterinsurgency campaigns which have traditionally been seen as successful – Mau Mau in Kenya and the Malaysian Emergency – victory was only obtained at the price of abdicating political hegemony over the colonies in which they were fought. The Dutch, Portuguese and South Africans (Namibia) also tried to hang on to their colonies and territories but failed as abysmally as the rest. Nor have the most modern of armed forces proved more successful in more recent times. The American-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s have been unmitigated disasters. Despite trying as hard as they did in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the coalition of Western states has been unable to impose its will by force on the two countries. In fact, the backlash created by the politically misguided decision to invade in the first place has engulfed the entire Middle East and North Africa in flames, from Mali and Libya to Yemen and Syria.

While historically untenable, the views expressed by Parker still command wide acceptance. The result, as the editors of the newly launched *Journal of African Military History* write, is that,

the very tropes of a primitive and barbaric Africa which have been dispelled within the political, social, and economic realms by expansive historiographies remain within the popular and sometimes even academic understanding of the military realm. While there are now nuanced portraits of complex and cosmopolitan civilizations present throughout African history explored within the body of academic work on the continent, the topic of military history is much more circumscribed.<sup>28</sup>

A good example is provided by celebrated military historian Martin van Creveld, according to whom "the entities" by which African modern wars "are waged resemble tribes – indeed they *are* tribes, or whatever is left of them under the corrosive influence of modern civilisation."<sup>29</sup> The problem with this characterisation is that it denies African military institutions the prowess and adaptability that many of them possess. Fighting under conditions of material scarcity unknown to western armed forces since the Second World War, African military groups have developed unique coping mechanisms. The same goes for military doctrine. In the case of the RPA, its commanders, led by Paul Kagame, drew

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<sup>28</sup> C.G. Thomas and R. Doron, "Out of Africa: The Challenges, Evolution, and Opportunities of African Military History", *Journal of African Military History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2017), 4; the thought is echoed by Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa*, 3

<sup>29</sup> Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (London: The Free Press, 1991), 197

inspiration from NATO, Soviet and Chinese military doctrine, and developed these to suit their own needs. The image of the African soldier as a thinking, constantly adapting, efficient and disciplined professional has been sorely lacking in the literature.

Finally, the folly of this Eurocentrism becomes clear when we consider that the vast majority of people touched by conflict since the end of the Second World War were not situated in Europe, but in Africa and Asia. If military history wants to survive in the twentieth-first century, it will have to engage with warfare in a more holistic way. It is only by moving away from an exclusive focus on Western armies and the Western way of fighting that military history can break out of its narrow confines and become a force that helps humanity understand its most destructive tendencies.

It remains to be added that a handful of Africanists have recently been championing the cause of African military history. Their work is a direct source of inspiration for this dissertation.<sup>30</sup> Particularly noteworthy in this regard are a series of books which are closely connected to the topic of this dissertation in both methodological and analytical terms.<sup>31</sup> Kennes and Larmer's *The Katangese Gendarmes and War in Central Africa*, together with Roessler and Verhoeven's *Why Comrades Go to War*, provide exceptional insight into the utter irrelevance of borders to warfare in Central Africa: a clear parallel to the Struggle for Liberation which lies at the heart of this thesis.<sup>32</sup> In turn Decker's *In Idi Amin's Shadow: Women, Gender, and Militarism in Uganda* is an important start in understanding the role of fighting women in the Great Lakes throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

To be sure, the present research will not contribute to reverse that "foreshortening" of African history that Reid rightly deplors; there simply is not enough room within a single PhD dissertation to attempt to tease out continuities and ruptures between the Social Revolution and the Struggle for Liberation, on the one hand, and earlier traditions of pre-colonial warfare in Rwanda, on the other. However, what this dissertation aspires to demonstrate is that there is no reason why Africa's modern wars should not be approached from the perspective of military historical analysis – one which takes into account the wider political, economic and social contexts of a given conflict.

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<sup>30</sup> Reid, *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa*; Richard Reid, "Past and Presentism: the 'precolonial' and the foreshortening of African History", *Journal of African History*, vol. 52, no. 2 (2011); Reid, *Warfare in African History*. See also John Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa 1500-1800* (London: University College London Press, 1999); Robert Smith, *Warfare & Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa* (London: James Curry, 1989); David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Phoenix, 2006); Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War and Decolonisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

<sup>31</sup> Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991* (Frank Cass: London, 2005); Alicia C. Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow: Women, Gender, and Militarism in Uganda* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Erik Kennes and Miles Larmer. *The Katangese Gendarmes and War in Central Africa*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016); Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven, *Why Comrades Go to War*

<sup>32</sup> A recent special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (vol. 43, no. 1 [2017]) dedicated to the "transnational connections of Southern African Liberation Movements" reinforces this point.

## Insights from Other Disciplines

Besides historians scholars from many disciplines have contributed to our knowledge of Rwanda.<sup>33</sup> And, just like historians, many of the political scientists, international relations theorists and sociologists have been drawn towards the Genocide rather than the war that preceded it.<sup>34</sup> However, there are some important exceptions.

In the direct aftermath of the Genocide, research focused on explaining the role of the international community during the Arusha negotiations. Scholars like Clapham, Anderson and Uvin showed how western diplomatic and economic interference actually exacerbated the problems which Rwanda experienced in 1992-1994.<sup>35</sup> Clapham even argues that if the RPF had refused to negotiate altogether, things might have turned out differently: “Had the RPF advanced [in 1993], the territory under the control of the central government, and hence the scale of the killings would have been greatly reduced.”<sup>36</sup> Though this scholarship has stood the test of time, it has raised questions which remain unanswered. For example, why did the RPF not take Kigali in 1993? The relevant section in Chapter VIII seeks to answer this question by looking at both the role of the international community and the RPF ideology. By doing so, it nuances the role of the former and emphasises that of the latter.

This thesis also challenges the scholarly consensus on the Arusha negotiations. René Lemarchand writes that, “It is easy to see why cooperation never materialized beyond a pro forma agreement known as the Arusha accords, signed under considerable pressure.”<sup>37</sup> This sentiment is echoed by Christopher Clapham: “The negotiations pursued at Arusha and elsewhere were supported by no pact between the major participants which could uphold the

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<sup>33</sup> For example: René Lemarchand, “Managing Transition Anarchies: Rwanda, Burundi, and South Africa in Comparative Perspective”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1994); Christopher Clapham, “Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking”, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 35, no. 2 (March 1998); Regine Andersen, “How multilateral development assistance triggered the conflict in Rwanda”, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3 (2000); Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; René Lemarchand, “Consociationalism and Power Sharing in Africa: Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, *African Affairs*, vol. 106, no. 422 (2006); Scott Straus, “Retreating from the Brink: Theorizing Mass Violence and the Dynamics of Restraint”, *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 10, no. 2 (June 2012). For an overview see: Peter Uvin, “Reading the Rwandan Genocide”, *International Studies Review*, vol. 3, no. 3 (2001); Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide*, 1-41.

<sup>34</sup> For example: Val Percival and Thomas Homer-Dickson, “Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict: The Case of Rwanda”, *Journal of Environment & Development*, vol. 5, no. 3 (September 1996); Mark Levene, “Connecting Threads: Rwanda, the Holocaust and the Pattern of Contemporary Genocide” in Roger W. Smith ed., *Genocide: Essays Toward Understanding, Early-Warning and Prevention* (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary Press, 1999); René Lemarchand, “Disconnecting the threads; Rwanda and the Holocaust reconsidered”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2002); Omar McDoom, “Predicting violence within genocide: A model of elite competition and ethnic segregation from Rwanda”, *Political Geography*, vol. 42 (2014); Omar McDoom, “Antisocial Capital: A Profile of Rwandan Genocide Perpetrators’ Social Networks”, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 58, no. 5 (August 2014); Nicole Fox and Hollie Brehm, “‘I Decided to save them’: Factors That Shaped Participation in Rescue Efforts during Genocide in Rwanda”, *Social Forces*, vol. 96, no. 4 (January 2018).

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Clapham, “Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking”; Philip Verwimp, “Foreign Intervention in Rwanda on the Eve of Genocide (1990-1993): A Game Theory Model”, Working Paper GS07, Yale Center for International and Area Studies (1998); Regine Andersen, “How multilateral development assistance triggered the conflict in Rwanda”.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher Clapham, “Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking”, 205

<sup>37</sup> René Lemarchand, “Consociationalism and Power Sharing in Africa: Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, 5-6

settlement once this had been reached.”<sup>38</sup> One of the fundamental arguments of Chapters VIII and IX is that the Arusha Accords were viable. A key element is that they were negotiated with a moderate government – which I believe negotiated in good faith and with the intention of seeing the Accords through. However, only days after the Accords were signed, Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye and his closest supporters were thrown out of government. It is their defeat, and the institutional weakness of Rwanda’s judicial and law enforcement bodies, that made the Accords untenable. The problem, I contend, was not the Arusha Accords *per se*, but the aforementioned elements, combined with the disengagement of the international community in the aftermath of their signing.

Besides the research on the role of the international community, scholarship rightfully focussed on the willingness of Rwandans to obey orders to kill during the Genocide. One of the answers which became prevalent was that Rwandans were particularly obedient people as history had predisposed them to trust and act on orders from above.<sup>39</sup> While this theory was developed to explain the Genocide, it can be easily refuted by studying pre-Genocide Rwanda. As the reader will see in Chapters VII and VIII, Rwandans were anything but obedient and passive. In this regard, my findings fully support Uvin’s, who wrote that,

Rwandans surely, like all other people, know how to resist orders from above, pretend to execute them while really opposing them, passively sabotage or undo obligatory programmes, and the like. They do so on a daily basis when it comes to evading taxes, smuggling, avoiding mandatory meetings, escaping from community labor, engaging in petty crime, or illegally migrating. If they chose to follow orders to kill – deeply dramatic orders – and not others, it needs more explanation than their supposedly obedient nature.<sup>40</sup>

Another subject of academic debate in the lead up to the Struggle for Liberation and the Genocide centred on land and economics.<sup>41</sup> Some of this literature is especially valuable because it predates 1994, ruling out any *post facto* bias. One common view is “that Rwanda’s

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<sup>38</sup> Christopher Clapham, “Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking”, 209

<sup>39</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 57, 141. Besides Prunier, see Filip Reyntjens, “Rwanda, genocide and beyond”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1996): 245 (“The state is present everywhere and every Rwandan is ‘administered.’ The structure is pyramid-like and orders travel fast and well from top to bottom.”); Peter Langford, “The Rwandan Path to Genocide: The Genesis of the Capacity of the Rwandan Post-colonial State to Organise and Unleash a project of Extermination”, *Civil Wars*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2005): 12, 15; and René Lemarchand, “Disconnecting the threads: Rwanda and the Holocaust reconsidered”, 513. For earlier challenges to the notions of conformity and absolute authority, see Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 199-200; and Timothy Longman, “Placing genocide in context: research priorities for the Rwandan genocide”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2004), 37

<sup>40</sup> Peter Uvin, “Reading the Rwandan Genocide”, 84-87

<sup>41</sup> See René Lemarchand, *The World Bank in Rwanda: The Case of the Office de valorisation agricole et pastorale du Mutara (OVAPAM)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Jennifer Maria Olson, “Farmer Responses to land degradation in Gikongoro” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1994); Val Percival and Thomas Homer-Dickson, “Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict: The Case of Rwanda”, *Journal of Environment & Development*, vol. 5, no. 3 (September 1996); Catherine André and Jean-Philippe Platteau, “Land relations under unbearable stress: Rwanda caught in the Malthusian trap”, *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organisation*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1998); Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1998); Andy Storey, “Economics and Ethnic Conflict: Structural Adjustment in Rwanda”, *Development Policy Review*, vol. 17 (1999); Philip Verwimp, “The political economy of coffee, dictatorship, and genocide”, *European Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 19 (2003); Isaac A. Kamola, “The Global Coffee Economy and the Production of Genocide in Rwanda”, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2007); Philip Verwimp, *Peasants in Power: The Political Economy of Development and Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Springer, 2013)

scarcity of ecological resources – with the highest population density in Africa for an almost entirely rural country, coupled with one of Africa’s highest population growth rates – constitutes the root cause of genocide.”<sup>42</sup> While this thesis does not subscribe to this Malthusian argument in its crudest form, the existing literature does make it clear that economic factors had a profound impact on the Rwandan population in the years leading up to the Genocide. Chapter III contains a lengthy discussion of the state of the Rwandan economy and the fall of its coffee exporting sector. This discussion is important for several reasons. Firstly, it explains the structural weakness of Rwandan state institutions – like the judiciary, gendarmerie and penal system – which would later prove incapable of protecting the Arusha Peace Agreement and multiparty democracy. Similarly, it allows us to understand why Rwanda was so poorly equipped to deal with internally displaced people or refugees from Burundi in 1990-1994. Secondly, it shows how divisions which reared their head during the Struggle for Liberation (such as North-South or Gisenyi-Ruhengeri rivalries) had relatively fresh roots in the presidencies of Kayibanda and Habyarimana.

There is also a vast international relations literature on, *inter alia*, genocide, civil wars, ethnic power relations/networks and peace negotiations.<sup>43</sup> Some books and authors have provided important insights. Firstly, there are Roessler’s *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap* and Kalyvas’ *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*.<sup>44</sup> In Chapter III I connect Roessler’s explanation of “violence specialists” with the political, military and regional network which surrounded President Habyarimana; this informs my analyses throughout the thesis. Naturally, as the introduction of multiparty politics diffused power away from Habyarimana’s clique, other violence specialists came to the fore: think of the organised crime networks, political party militias, AMASASU and deserters which are discussed in Chapter VIII. Two further books, Donald Horowitz’s *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* and Kieran Mitton’s *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in Sierra Leone*, helped me understand the dynamics surrounding the killings which took place before the outbreak of the Genocide.<sup>45</sup> While these four works, and many more besides, are specifically relevant to this case study, reasons of space prevent me from fully engaging with this material. A history PhD necessarily privileges primary sources and the Rwandan story. A truncated discussion

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Uvin, “Reading the Rwandan Genocide”, 81-82

<sup>43</sup> The broader literature on these subjects is vast. See, for example: I. William Zartman and M.R. Berman. *The Practical Negotiator* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1999); Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Barbara Walther, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Steven Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Frances Stewart, *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); I. William Zartman, *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on theory and practice*. (London: Routledge, 2008); Philip Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>44</sup> Philip Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

<sup>45</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Kieran Mitton, *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in Sierra Leone* (London: Hurst, 2015)

would not do justice to the other literature, although it is naturally hoped that the material relevant to international relations and political science that has been unearthed will be incorporated into future research in those fields. To paraphrase Mamdani, I hope other researchers can lean on my work and see beyond the horizon where my sights came to rest.<sup>46</sup>

## **Sources and Methodology**

### *Interviews*

One of the main problems with the existing primary source material on the Struggle for Liberation is its lopsided nature. Though many documents – most of which were collected by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda – provide insight into the actions of the Rwandan government led by President Habyarimana, as well as the international players, there is almost nothing on the RPF/A. It was thus clear from the start of the project that new evidence would have to be found.

Pride of place is taken by interviews conducted in Rwanda between 2017-2018. During two separate stints of fieldwork, I interviewed roughly twenty RPF political cadres and RPA veterans. These ranged from individuals who had held high positions during the Struggle (most notably, James Kabarebe, Caesar Kayizari, Tito Rutaremara and Christine Umutoni) to mid-level commanders, foot soldiers and grassroots mobilisers. In addition to the interviews in Rwanda, others were conducted in Europe with British, French, Dutch and Belgian diplomats and soldiers. Though some of them had been interviewed before, they had not spoken at length about their experiences during the Struggle.<sup>47</sup>

From the outset, I knew it would be difficult to meet the people I wanted to interview. My initial plan was to find official support for the research. However, both the Dutch Embassy in Kigali and the Rwandan High Commission in London proved either unwilling or unable to help. The one exception was the Dutch military attache stationed in Kampala who certainly tried. The situation did not improve when I tried to contact Rwandan government institutions (Rwandan Defence Force Command and Staff College, Foreign Ministry, etc.) or NGOs operating in Rwanda (Aegis Trust, Institute of Policy Analysis and Research, etc.).

After running around in circles for almost two years, I was lucky to be put in touch with two Dutchmen who had worked extensively in Africa. They had contacts within the RDF, which, in turn, helped me to approach Lt Col (ret) Ndore Rurinda. Without the help of Lt Col Rurinda, who is as much a historian as he is a soldier, I doubt I would have been able to carry out the interviews I eventually did. Shortly after communicating with Rurinda, I went to Rwanda for the first time in August 2017. In hindsight, this was not the best time to visit the country for research purposes, as a new government was being formed following the Presidential elections which had taken place on 4 August. Naturally, I was close to the bottom of the list of priorities, and thus the trip proved much less fruitful than I had initially hoped. However, it did lay the groundwork for a much longer and more successful stay the following year.

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<sup>46</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, xiv

<sup>47</sup> Roessler and Verhoeven, *Why Comrades Go to War*

I returned to Rwanda in June 2018 for what was to be a research internship with the Institute of National Museums of Rwanda (INMR). The INMR have long been looking to improve the Liberation Museum at the Mulindi Tea Plantation, and a collaboration seemed like a logical proposition. However, when I arrived in Rwanda, I found that priorities within the INMR had changed. In addition, Director Masozera insisted that I would need a research permit to continue my work in Rwanda. The staff at the National Commission for Science and Technology, where one applies for research clearance, were friendly and helpful, but also explained that, as I hoped to interview veterans, they could not issue my permit without the explicit approval of the Ministry of Defence.

It was at this point that I was introduced to Major General Ferdinand Safari by a mutual acquaintance. Thankfully, Major General Safari thought my project worthwhile and gave me his full support. However, he could not sign off on my research project himself, and I needed to obtain approval from Minister of Defence General James Kabarebe or Chief of the Defence Staff General Patrick Nyamvumba. Until I obtained official permission from the Ministry, my research was, in effect, stalled. In the meantime I was kept busy with visa concerns (the immigration office kept hold of my passport for the entire duration of my stay in Rwanda, and only returned it one week before departure), limited archival research at the National Archives of Rwanda, trips to museums, and visits to the battlefields of the Struggle for Liberation.

By the time I received official permission to carry out my research, I only had a month or so left to go in Rwanda. However, with the help of Major General Safari and Lt Col Rurinda, I was able to carry out most of the interviews I wanted. Once I received my official permission, the RPF cadres and RPA veterans I met were extraordinarily generous with their time. Some, like Lieutenant General (ret) Caesar Kayizari, Lt Col Rurinda and Christine Umutoni, spoke to me for a great many hours spread over several sessions. Towards the end of my stay in Rwanda, my collaboration with the INMR also picked up significantly, resulting, inter alia, in the preparation of a dossier on the repatriation of colonial-era human remains from the West. Deputy Director Jerome Karangwa ensured that I was warmly welcomed at the Liberation Museum in Mulindi. I was expertly guided not only around the Mulindi Tea Factory hill, the RPF/RPA headquarters for a large part of the war, but also around the whole sector, being shown the valleys in which the Combined Mobile Forces (CMF) had been formed, the routes used to smuggle supplies from Uganda, the old location of Radio Muhabura and some of the northern battlefields.

Interviews, of course, pose challenging methodological problems, but oral testimony has been crucial to Africanists for a long time.<sup>48</sup> While there are obvious differences between “oral tradition” and life stories, there are similarities as well. Oral traditions come into existence when the people who experienced history pass it on to later generations. In a sense, this is what is happening in Rwanda today. Although no academic book has been written on the Struggle for Liberation, it is common enough for veterans to tell their stories to children and

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<sup>48</sup> Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). This is an expanded version of his earlier *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1961)

teenagers in schools and at public events. After having heard about my research, one RDF officer who was waiting alongside me at the Ministry of Defence volunteered that written work on the Struggle would be useful because “in Africa, we don’t write things down, but we tell them to each other.”<sup>49</sup>

Jan Vansina noted that “there exists quite a range of situations of performance depending on what is performed.”<sup>50</sup> I would argue that an interview is one such performance. As Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven, who interviewed many of the same people I did, explain,

From the onset, we never perceived of the set of elite interviews we hoped to conduct as merely neutral exchanges in which we as interviewers would somehow manage to extract information, recovering an “elusive truth” from a handful of gatekeepers. Rather, we see them as encounters in which knowledge was constructed and story-lines were spun, mediated through a range of human emotions, motivations, and foibles, including political calculus, personal biases, fickle memory, confusion, a tendency to rationalize one’s actions retrospectively, and so on. Given the subject at hand, subjectivity was inevitable ...<sup>51</sup>

In my experience, careful listening quickly builds trust and, while taking the above into consideration, I found my interviewees remarkably candid and open. Some allowed me to record the interviews, while with others I took notes. I left this to the discretion of the person being interviewed. Never was I asked not to take notes. The best way of ensuring the accuracy of the information learnt from interviews is to crosscheck it with other interviews and archival material. As the reader will notice, this basic philological principle has been deployed throughout the present work. One case of subjectivity that I did notice regarded Uganda. The once strong relationship between Rwanda and Uganda deteriorated markedly in the lead-up to, and during, my visits. As such, quite a few of those I interviewed were, I suspect, more dismissive of the Ugandan role during the Struggle for Liberation than they would have otherwise been.

I was also able to interview Belgian, British and French soldiers and diplomats in Europe. Usually, potential interviewees came on my radar as the original authors of archival documents. I was then able to contact them, either through their parent institution (British Army, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, etc.) or through social media and websites. Most reacted graciously to my requests and spoke, or emailed, with me at length. The French – I am sad to say – were the only exception. Just as with the archival records in their possession (more on which below), I repeatedly ran into metaphorical defence lines made up of belts of barbed wire and trenches covered by machine guns and heavy artillery. The French Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to relay my requests to people who had been active in Rwanda. Those I found through other channels were usually deeply reticent to speak about their connection to Rwanda for fear of opening themselves up to character assassination by the media. Their fears are somewhat justified: while there is a wide body of literature criticising the actions of French soldiers in Rwanda, no coherent defence has been

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<sup>49</sup> RDF officer. I am paraphrasing from memory here, as this was an off-the-cuff remark.

<sup>50</sup> Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, 35

<sup>51</sup> Roessler and Verhoeven, *Why Comrades Go to War*, 420

mounted. Documents which might exonerate soldiers from the accusation of having helped prepare and carry out the genocide have not been released by the French government. In addition, books like Bernard Lugan's *François Mitterrand, l'armée française et le Rwanda* and General Didier Tauzin's *Rwanda, je demande justice pour la France et ses soldats* are too biased to be taken seriously.<sup>52</sup> I have tried to make up for the dearth of interviews with French personnel by paying special attention to the documents released in the context of the 1998 French Parliamentary Enquiry, also known as the Quilès report, and others which have been leaked or released over time.<sup>53</sup> The declassified Foreign and Commonwealth Office reports and US diplomatic cables have also been useful in this respect, as they often dwell on the opinion of their French counterparts.

### *Digitally Available Documents*

Catherine and David Newbury have argued that “recent accounts need ... to be reversed. Instead of seeing history exclusively through the Genocide [as much of the current scholarship does] ... one can only understand the Genocide through an understanding of Rwanda's history.”<sup>54</sup> In studying the formation of the RPF/RPA and the Struggle for Liberation, this dissertation seeks to take up their call. One of its main goals is to examine the history of the 1990-1994 war in its own right, that is to say, without working backwards from the Genocide. This is not an easy task, as historians cannot simply detach themselves from their *ex post facto* knowledge. As such, wherever possible, I have used documentary evidence dating to the period before the outbreak of the Genocide.

A large amount of useful documentation is available online, if one knows where to look. There are two indispensable websites in this regard. The first is *France Génocide Tutsi*, which is run and maintained by Jacques Morel.<sup>55</sup> Morel is an independent researcher who has written extensively on France's role in the Rwandan Genocide.<sup>56</sup> Though his work has received little attention, perhaps due to the way he takes France to task, it is the best-researched account of the French role in Rwanda currently available. Morel's website has a chronological list of many documents which are now publicly available (sourced from the ICTR, the French Parliamentary Enquiry, the Belgian Parliamentary Enquiry and many more). The second is the USA's National Security Archive, which has methodically worked at obtaining documents, especially from the US Government, through Freedom of Information Act requests.<sup>57</sup> It is invaluable for the US view on what was happening in Rwanda and at the Arusha Peace negotiations. As the US diplomatic corps in the Great Lakes at the time ranked among the best informed, these documents also shed light on many

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<sup>52</sup> Bernard Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l'armée française et le Rwanda* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 2005); Didier Tauzin, *Rwanda, je demande justice pour la France et ses soldats* (Paris: Editions Jacob-Duvernet, 2011)

<sup>53</sup> Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information par la mission d'information de la commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées et de la commission des affaires étrangères, sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d'autres pays et l'ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994* (Assemblée nationale, 15 December 1998)

<sup>54</sup> Catherine and David Newbury, “Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist Historiography in Rwanda”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 105, no. 3 (June 2000), 833

<sup>55</sup> France Génocide Tutsi, last accessed: 18 June 2019, <http://francegenocidetutsi.org/>

<sup>56</sup> Jacques Morel, *La France au cœur du génocide des Tutsi* (Paris: L'Esprit Frappeur, 2016)

<sup>57</sup> National Security Archives, last accessed: 18 June 2019, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/> and <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB117/index.htm>

otherwise rather obscure events. However, the work of the Archive is far from done, as there are undoubtedly many more diplomatic cables relating to the subject which have yet to be declassified.

Equally important is the online archive of the ICTR.<sup>58</sup> Although the Tribunal has come under attack from various sources, its archive must rank as one of its crown jewels. It is enormous and contains most of the transcripts and evidence – in English and French – of the major trials. While parts of the evidence of the ICTR have been consulted before, especially by Linda Melvern and André Guichaoua, the sheer size of the archive means that most of it has not yet been used for academic research. I, too, was forced to limit my scope to the transcripts and evidence produced during three of the most important cases: Military I, Military II and Government II.<sup>59</sup>

It should be pointed out that there are some problems with the material of the ICTR. Firstly, the website is not particularly user friendly and does not offer a quick way to download all the ICTR files in one go, a major headache for someone trying to conduct a rigorous analysis. Secondly, such ICTR material as has been translated is not always accurate. As lead trial attorney for the prosecution Barbara Mulvaney noted to one of the judges during the proceedings, “Your Honour, I would request that the witness be given an English copy of the transcript since she testified in English and we all know there are problems with translations.”<sup>60</sup> Her thoughts were echoed by Alison Des Forges:

We see, I think, a practical example of the problems with translation and transcription. The English text is far more complete. If you are able to use the English, you would be able to understand exactly my reasoning.<sup>61</sup>

Where I have used translated documents or transcripts, I have checked that the translations convey the meaning of the original. As long as this was the case, I have followed the original translations and have not corrected minor errors.

Other valuable online archives are those of the United Nations, which contain most of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) archive, and that of the World Bank.<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately, the UNAMIR archives mostly contain material relating to the period after the Genocide. However, although this archive proved of lesser value for a study of the war than I had initially hoped, it still contains some worthwhile nuggets of information. The website of the World Bank has a considerable number of reports on Rwanda from 1974

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<sup>58</sup> Judicial Records and Archives Database, *United Nations Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals*, last accessed: 18 June 2019, <http://jrad.irmct.org/>

<sup>59</sup> *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T; *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T; *The Prosecutor v. Nindiliyimana et al.* ICTR-00-56-T

<sup>60</sup> Transcript of, 19 November 2002, Testimony of Alison Des Forges, Cross-examination by Mr. Degli. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T., 61

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-105

<sup>62</sup> United Nations Archives Search Engine, *United Nations Archive*, last accessed: 18 June 2019, <https://search.archives.un.org/>

onwards, including those of the 1991 Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP).<sup>63</sup> The latter could form the basis for a desperately needed history. While many authors have presented the SAP as one of the key destabilising forces in Rwanda in the early years of the war, it has not yet received its own dedicated study.<sup>64</sup> Another website which I used extensively in chapter III, on the 1973 coup d'état, is the Access to Archival Databases of the United States National Archives.<sup>65</sup> This database gives researchers access to large amounts of diplomatic cables sent by US diplomatic missions all over the world before 1980.

#### *Archival Records and Other Written Primary Sources*

This dissertation also draws on previously untapped archival material originating from third-party organisations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The archives of the UNHCR in Geneva have not yet been used in relation to research on Rwanda or, as far as I know, the Congo wars. This is a shame, as they house large amounts of material in the forms of minutes and reports on high-level private discussions, as well as on the details of peace negotiations and the organisation's activity on the ground. UNHCR material proved especially valuable to explore the background of the RPF (see chapter IV).

Though the British National Archives do not hold much material relating to Rwanda in the early 1990s, the FCO does. Because they are not held in a public archive, these records, which consist exclusively of diplomatic cables, can only be accessed by Freedom of Information requests. Throughout my research, I filled in four such requests and received much documentation, some of which has now also been made available to the wider public online.<sup>66</sup> In total, I was granted access to between three and four hundred pages of hitherto unexploited material.

This PhD also makes some use of material from the Dutch National Archives and the Belgian Royal Museum for Central Africa (now the Africa Museum) in Tervuren. The documents which emanate from the Dutch Embassy in Kinshasa and the local honorary consul in Rwanda provide interesting insights into the period surrounding the 1973 coup d'état which made Habyarimana president, as well as the economic development of the country in the following years. As none of this material is classified, it is easily accessible to researchers. The team at Tervuren kindly let me into their enormous archive, where I was able to find documents which are not readily available elsewhere, especially a number of Belgian colonial reports without which the chapter on the Social Revolution would have remained incomplete.

The single most difficult archival work I conducted for this PhD took place at the *Service historique de la Défense* (SHD) in Paris. It was always to be expected that the French military archives would not roll out the red carpet for a researcher working on the Rwandan Struggle

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<sup>63</sup> Rwanda Reports, *World Bank*, last accessed 18 June 2019, [http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/research/all?qterm=&lang\\_exact=English&strdate=01-01-1970&enddate=01-01-1994&os=0](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/research/all?qterm=&lang_exact=English&strdate=01-01-1970&enddate=01-01-1994&os=0)

<sup>64</sup> See fn 41 above on the existing economic literature.

<sup>65</sup> Access to Archival Databases, *The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration*, last accessed: 18 June, 2019, <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-description.jsp?s=4073>

<sup>66</sup> FOI release: Rwanda 1992 to 1993, *Government of the United Kingdom*, last accessed: 18 June 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foi-release-rwanda-1992-to-1993>

for Liberation, but the effort that had to be made to access even a couple of boxes genuinely beggars belief. The first obstacle is that the archive's finding aid on Rwanda is itself classified. This forced me to travel to Paris, on 26 April 2016, to meet with the director of the SHD just to see what material was available. I had naively thought I would be given a copy of the finding aid to peruse at my leisure so that I could fill in a request form and send it to the archive. Instead, I was told this was impossible. Consequently I had to go through the finding aid at the archives and immediately fill in a request form to indicate which documents I would like to see ("Don't even try more than ten boxes at once, it will be immediately denied"). Having requested the nine boxes which seemed most likely to yield results, I went back to the UK ("There is no point in trying to ask for boxes marked *Secret Défense*; in all my years here I have never seen one declassified").

On 30 May 2016, I received my first reply, which allowed me to view two boxes at the SHD.<sup>67</sup> The same letter clarified that access to two other boxes had been denied and that access to the remaining five boxes depended on declassification procedures. In early September 2016, I decided to go to the SHD and view the documents contained in the two boxes to which I had been granted access. While some of these records had clearly been consulted by Bernard Lugan in preparation for his *François Mitterrand*, seeing the material in its entirety proved very useful indeed.<sup>68</sup> After having completed my work, I put in another request for five boxes, carefully selecting material of the same kind as I had been able to access during this trip.

On 18 October 2016, I received another reply stating that access to the five boxes still in limbo was denied. Then, on 6 February 2017, my second declassification request was denied in its entirety.<sup>69</sup> Not willing to let things rest, I launched an appeal with the *Commission d'accès aux documents administratifs* (CADA). Several months later, CADA replied, upholding the earlier decision by the SHD that no documents would be released.<sup>70</sup> The absurd reason cited by CADA to turn down my appeal was that the requested documents had "no relevance" to the research I was conducting. On the contrary, the records in question could hardly have been more relevant to my purposes, as they consisted of several *Journaux des marches et opérations* (JMO), that is, the military diaries of the French units which served in Rwanda in the early 1990s. After a year and a half of mind-numbing official requests for declassification, letters and appeals, I gave up trying to extract any more information from the SHD. If the French government is seriously interested in reviewing its role in Rwanda in 1990-1994, as President Macron claims it is, then all the documents held by the SHD relating to Rwanda must be urgently and genuinely declassified.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> From: Neviaski, Alexis, Le chef de la délégation des patrimoines culturels, Direction de la mémoire, du patrimoine et des archives, Ministère de la Défense To: John Burton Kegel, 30 May 2016

<sup>68</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand*

<sup>69</sup> From: Morin, Nathalie and Achari, Myriam, Direction de la mémoire, du patrimoine et des archives, Ministère de la Défense To: John Burton Kegel, 6 February 2017

<sup>70</sup> From: Guichard, Christelle, Secrétaire générale, Commission d'accès aux documents administratifs To: John Burton Kegel, 1 August 2017

<sup>71</sup> Angélique Chrisafis, "Macron asks experts to investigate French role in Rwandan genocide" *The Guardian*, 5 April 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/05/macron-asks-experts-investigate-french-role-rwandan-genocide>.

Besides archival material, this dissertation also relies on personal memoirs and parliamentary inquiries.<sup>72</sup> Because of the methodological problems posed by personal testimonies written after the events – problems which are similar to those raised by oral interviews – I have always used these memoirs in conjunction with reports, cables or documents written by, or about, the author during the war. The problems which can arise if one does not rigorously verify the integrity of memoirs are amply demonstrated by the Ruzibiza affair.<sup>73</sup> A similar approach has been taken with the parliamentary enquiries. In general, the value of such enquiries lies not so much in the final reports which they produced, but rather in the sources, interviews and documents which accompany them.<sup>74</sup>

### *Missing Sources*

Despite the access I was given in Rwanda, I did not manage to interview everyone I would have liked to. Perhaps the most important gap in this respect is that I only interviewed one female RPF cadre and no female RPA veterans. Thankfully, I was able to contact Christine Umutoni at the start of 2019, and she has been extraordinarily generous with her time. Hopefully, her testimony will go some way towards redressing the balance, as women were an integral part of the RPF/A throughout the preparatory and military phases of the Struggle for Liberation. To obtain a more complete picture of the RPA High Command, I would also have liked to interview Sam Kaka, Ludoviko Twahirwa and Charles Kayonga. However, despite repeated, direct and indirect, attempts at contact, I never received any replies from them. Though my long discussion with Caesar Kayizari provided important insights into the battalion level experience, the aforementioned soldiers all held important positions during key events, such as the October 1990 invasion, its aftermath and the command of 3 Battalion in Kigali.

Besides members of the RPF I also tried to contact former public officials and soldiers who worked under the Habyarimana presidency. Many now live in the United States, Belgium, France and Switzerland. However, despite repeated emails, phone calls and third party interventions everyone who had been part of the Rwandan government before 1994 made it clear that they were not interested in speaking to me. Some referred to books which they had already published on the subject or to testimony in front of the ICTR but none wanted to be interviewed on or off the record.

It is easy to understand why these people, who were part of a government which committed Genocide, were reticent to speak to a researcher they did not know. However, their refusal

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<sup>72</sup> Henry Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1997); James K. Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État à l'État-garnison* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002); Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (London: Arrow Books, 2004); Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza, *Rwanda: L'histoire secrète* (Paris: Editions du Panama, 2005); Theogene Rudasingwa, *Healing a Nation: A Testimony* (North Charleston: CreateSpace, 2013); Johan Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal* (Kalmthout: Polis, 2016)

<sup>73</sup> On which, see Vidal, “Les contradictions d’un lieutenant rwandais”; René Lemarchand, “Controversy within the Cataclysm. Review of *Rwanda: L'histoire secrète* by Abdul Ruzibiza”, *African Studies Review*, vol. 50, no. 1 (April 2007); Filip Reyntjens “*Rwanda. L'histoire secrète* by Abdul Ruzibiza”, *Africa Today*, vol. 54, no 3 (2008)

<sup>74</sup> The most important are: Philippe Mahoux and Guy Verhofstadt, *Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda* (Sénat de Belgique, 6 December 1997); Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information*

created a methodological problem for this project: without a voice with which to juxtapose the interviews of the RPF how can one be sure to reach a historically accurate conclusion? As hinted at in other parts of this introduction this problem is remedied by the abundance of archival material which exists on the role of the Rwandan Government and the FAR during the period of the Struggle for Liberation. This material is used throughout the dissertation to help understand the actions of the Habyarimana presidency and the FAR. One advantage of relying on this source material is that it has not been coloured by more recent, post 1994, events. Particularly important in this respect is the archival material declassified by the French. As French soldiers and diplomats had close working relations with their Rwandan colleagues, they provide us with valuable insights.

On 4 February 2017, I submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to the United States Department of State with a view to being granted access to communications between the US and French Embassies in Kigali. However, and despite repeated indications that the documents would be provided, nothing has materialised as of July 2019. This is a shame, because I know the documents in question exist – reference to them being made in the few SHD documents that I was able to see – and might clear up a longstanding debate over what happened in Kigali on the night of 4-5 October 1990 (see chapter V).

There are two other archives which I was unable to consult on account of the length of the release procedure. The Swiss Federal Archives in Bern and the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry hold collections on the role of international organisations and the arms trade during the war, respectively. In future, I am planning to integrate this material into a book on the Struggle.

### *Bias*

In the course of writing a PhD or book every historian constructs what they believe to be the truth and present it to their reader. Their version of the truth is hopefully informed by their sources rather than their emotions. However, the way researchers view their sources is moderated – consciously or unconsciously – by their ethics, life experience, politics and a host of other factors.

While both (former) RPF, RPA, FAR and government functionaries who served under the Habyarimana regime were given the chance to be interviewed for this project it was only the first two groups who seized this opportunity. The result is that when I went to Rwanda, I spoke to many RPF and RPA members at length. In this context it is impossible not to develop personal bonds and friendships (or quite the opposite) with those who take the time to speak with you. Awareness of these relationships, and reliance on other sources, is the best way to moderate the effect they have on one's research.

Even though I was unable to interview everyone I would have liked and to gain access to every potentially relevant archive, I believe the material uncovered by my research is more than sufficient to tell the story of the Struggle for Liberation and its antecedents in a much more comprehensive and empirically sound way than has previously been attempted. It will be up to the reader, equally informed by their life experience and beliefs, to decide whether they agree on this.

## The Structure of the Thesis

This dissertation is organised according to a loose chronological structure and each chapter contributes to its overall argument. Its first substantive chapter explores the antecedents to the Struggle for Liberation. It lays out the causes and effects of the Social Revolution and shows the clear links connecting the violence of 1959-1964 to that of 1990-1994. Chapter III deals with the history of Rwanda from the Social Revolution up to 1990. In particular, it examines the rise to power of President Juvénal Habyarimana in 1973 and the steady decline of the Rwandan economy over the course of the successive two decades. While the objective of this PhD is not to go into the nitty gritty of the Habyarimana regime – even though it constitutes a gaping gap in the current historiography – it does describe in detail the events surrounding his coup d'état. This is important because current interpretations of the coup d'état are lacking. Until now it has been argued that Habyarimana's coup was carried out, in part, to protect the Tutsi minority in Rwanda.<sup>75</sup> However, diplomatic correspondence which has never been used in this context makes it seem more likely that Habyarimana acted to protect his country and the Hutu state. As with all the periods of Rwanda's pre-1990 history discussed in the PhD, this one also makes it easier to link the country's past to the Struggle for Liberation. Another important part of this chapter is a lengthy discussion on the state of the Rwandan economy.

Chapter IV looks at the Banyarwanda, that is, Rwandans living outside of the country. It details how these refugees became, by force of circumstance, a force to be reckoned with in Uganda. The same chapter also shines light on the protracted negotiations between Presidents Yoweri Museveni and Habyarimana over the possible repatriation of Banyarwanda refugees. These negotiations have never received the attention they deserve. After all, they represented the last chance to avoid an outbreak of war. The RPF's decision to return to Rwanda *manu militari* is set in the context of these same negotiations.

Following this extensive investigation into the background of the conflict, Chapter V outlines the start of the Struggle for Liberation and the initial setback experienced by the RPA in October 1990. Chapter VI explains how the RPA, its initial defeat notwithstanding, was forged into one of the most disciplined rebel groups Africa has ever seen. The defeat of the French-supported FAR and the groundwork necessary to bring the warring parties to the Arusha negotiating table are then addressed in Chapter VII.

Chapters V, VI and VII – the detailed chapters on the Struggle for Liberation – serve two main purposes. Firstly, their blow-by-blow description of the military operation hopes to provide a bedrock for further research on this period. Secondly, they reveal the effect of the military operations on the Rwandan domestic scene. War does not take place in a vacuum, but rather interacts with every other sphere, be it political, economic or social.

Chapter VIII deals with the collapse of both the Rwandan social fabric and the Arusha peace accords. Finally, Chapter IX explores the polarisation leading up to the Genocide, the Genocide itself, and the Campaign against Genocide, which put an end to the massacres.

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<sup>75</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 75

## II - THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE WAR

Ethnicity was important to social process in these two societies [Rwanda and Burundi], but in ways very different from the popular image. Ethnic identities were not primordial, they were contextually created; they altered over time, and they evolved differently in different places and contexts. Thus ethnic groups cannot be seen as internally homogeneous, externally distinct, and constantly in confrontation with other such groups. Like many other social categories, ethnicity was not an institution but an identity, and hence ethnic categories were contextually defined. ... The tendency has been to extrapolate to an entire cultural category the characteristics of an unrepresentative sample – if the ruling lineage was Tutsi, then all Tutsi were presumed to have been powerful; if some Hutu were landless, then all were said to have lived on the edge of poverty. Such generalisations deny logic and belie the empirical record.<sup>1</sup>

To understand the roots of the Struggle for Liberation one has to go back to Rwanda's first civil war, which is also known as the "Social Revolution." In turn, the causes of the civil war are to be found in the process which led to national independence in the early 1960s and in the nature of ethnic relations between the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. The last detailed study of the Social Revolution, by René Lemarchand, dates to 1970.<sup>2</sup> Building on this still unrivalled work, this chapter seeks to map out parallels between the Social Revolution and the later Struggle for Liberation.

### Colonial Rwanda

When the first German explorers arrived in Rwanda in the late 1890s, they quickly realised that the country was run differently from the other African polities they had come across in the broader region. At the centre stood a Tutsi King, the Mwami, whose influence over the land that encompasses modern Rwanda waxed and waned over time, depending on his strength and ability. Mwamis presided over a series of more or less independent chiefs and notables who were also mostly Tutsi. Together, they ruled over the vast majority of the population, which consisted of a majority of Hutu and a minority of not so well off Tutsi. This, however, is a much simplified picture. As the quotation with which this chapter begins suggests, Rwanda's pre-colonial politics were in constant flux.

It is crucial to note that the Hutu and Tutsi are not "tribes," or cohesive cultural and political units, even though they are often described as such.<sup>3</sup> For centuries, both groups have spoken the same language, lived intermingled with each other, espoused the same beliefs and intermarried. The distinction is much more subtle, and its origins go back to the deep pre-colonial past of Rwanda. The difference might well have originated from a division of labour

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<sup>1</sup> David Newbury, "Precolonial Burundi and Rwanda: Local Loyalties, Regional Royalties", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2001), 271-272

<sup>2</sup> René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (New York: Praeger, 1970) though Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 175-200 does also look into the period in some detail.

<sup>3</sup> The following sections are based on two unpublished country papers I wrote for use in a large database by London Business School: John Burton Kegel, "Rwanda and Burundi Concessionary Companies Overview" and John Burton Kegel, "Rwanda and Burundi Introduction"

between warriors connected to the royal court and cattle herders (Tutsi) and porters, farmers or servants (Hutu).<sup>4</sup> Most authorities agree that social distinctions became more pronounced during the reign of Mwami Rwabugiri (1860-1895).

Rwabugiri introduced a series of obligations and duties which targeted Hutu. By so doing, his policies polarised what had hitherto been a relatively minor divide. “From this point on, ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ would no longer designate a relative category with respect to class or dependency or occupation but became an absolute one.”<sup>5</sup> One of these duties, *ubureetwa*, forced Hutu to spend time working for a local chief or notable. The tasks assigned to Hutu included the “collecting and drying firewood for the use of the hill chief’s household, serving as his night watchman, fetching water, [or] cultivating the hill chief’s fields.”<sup>6</sup> However, even in Rwabugiri’s time, Tutsi power was not absolute, and there were various important checks and balances on the power of the Mwami.

In addition, “the categories Hutu and Tutsi were ... relatively flexible; social mobility and ‘passing’ from one category to another did occur (though opportunities for mobility out of the Hutu category apparently diminished later in the colonial period).”<sup>7</sup> Mixed marriages were not uncommon, and the Hutu-Tutsi divide was not always, and necessarily, the most important form of self-identification. As Vansina explains, in the nineteenth century, Hutu “distinguished themselves as the ‘people’ of Bugoyi, Kinyaga, Nduga ... not as ‘Hutu.’”<sup>8</sup> This was particularly important in places where the Court was unable to impose its will on account of distance. The Bakiga of the volcanoes of northern Rwanda, for instance, “did not always accept the Hutu-Tutsi social parameters of the Court; instead there was a greater shared identity among people in these regions as ... ‘the people of the mountains.’”<sup>9</sup> People also often identified according to their clan, lineage or chiefly allegiances.

Mwami Musinga (reign: 1896 – 12 November 1931) had just been crowned when Captain Ramsay arrived in Rwanda in 1897 to extend German protection over the country. Musinga was favourably disposed towards the new arrivals for several reasons. By allying himself with an external force, he was able to consolidate his contested position as the new Mwami. The Germans also offered him the opportunity of keeping the Belgians, advancing from the west, at bay. The horrors of the Congo Free State preceded them, and the Mwami must have deemed it preferable to throw in his lot with the Germans.<sup>10</sup> Cooperation with the Germans also suited the monarchy, as it allowed the Mwami to extend the control of the Court.

Musinga did not lose all of his authority. Rwandan elites retained more political autonomy than many of their counterparts in other African colonies. ... Germany helped

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<sup>4</sup> Jan Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 134-135

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 136

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 14; Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, 134-137

<sup>7</sup> Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 12

<sup>8</sup> Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, 139

<sup>9</sup> Alison L. Des Forges, *Defeat is the Only Bad News: Rwanda under Musinga, 1896-1931* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 49

<sup>10</sup> James J. Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 24; Des Forges, *Defeat is the Only Bad News*, 18

Musinga extend and strengthen central court authority in recalcitrant territories on Rwanda's northern, western, eastern and southern borders. ... Particularly contested regions included the Congo-Nile border area of northwest Rwanda, the Bushiru province in the northeast, and Bukunzi and Busozo in the southeast. Significantly, local Hutu lineage chiefs controlled all of these territories. Musinga's court also faced opposition from local Tutsi leaders in eastern Gisaka and the western territory of Kinyaga. ... German and then Belgian military support enabled Rwanda's central court to achieve sovereignty over these contested regions in the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>11</sup>

However, while the relationship between the German administration and the royal court proved useful to the latter, the Europeans contributed to worsen the already deteriorating relationship between the Hutu and Tutsi. Social-Darwinist thought hit Rwanda especially hard in the form of the so-called "Hamitic Hypothesis," which posited that the Hutu were an "inferior" Bantu race which had been subjugated by "superior" Tutsi from Ethiopia at some point in the distant past. The result was that the Tutsi, in the racist lingo of the time, were seen as differing "absolutely by the beauty of their features and their light colour from the Bantu agriculturalists of an inferior type. Tall and well proportioned, they have long thin noses, a wide brow and fine lips. They say they came from the North. Their intelligence and delicate appearance ... their capacity to adapt to any situation seems to indicate semitic-origin."<sup>12</sup>

Belgium took over control of Rwanda from German as a League of Nations Mandate Territory at the end of the First World War. Like the Germans before them, the Belgians administered the country through a system of indirect rule. The start of Belgian rule had been accompanied by the high-sounding promises of the "civilising mission." In particular, the administration wanted to consolidate "the authority of indigenous leaders, while ensuring they operate within the limits of equity and legality."<sup>13</sup> In other words, while the administration needed the power of the monarchy, chiefs and sub-chiefs to mobilise Hutu labour for the colonial economy, they initially tried to prevent those same chiefs and sub-chiefs from making excessive demands on the labour force for their own needs. However, the reality of the Great Depression quickly changed priorities. As Brussels made clear that the mandate would no longer be able to count on subsidies from the metropole, the importance of African labour and, therefore, of chiefly cooperation skyrocketed. As Catherine Newbury put it, the

famine of the 1920s ... mark[s] an important turning point for Belgian policy in Ruanda-Urundi. Ostensibly to counteract the famine, the administration introduced a series of programs that required vastly increased demands on rural manpower and set forth an explicit policy of reinforcing the power of the chiefs, who were responsible for seeing that each directive was carried out in all its details.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 24

<sup>12</sup> Mgr Le Roy, in J.B. Piolet, *Les missions catholiques françaises au XIXème siècle* (Paris: Les Missions d'Afrique, 1902), 376-377, as quoted in Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 8

<sup>13</sup> Gouvernement Belge, *Rapport présenté par le gouvernement belge au Conseil de la société des nations de l'administration du Ruanda-Urundi pendant l'année 1924* (Geneva: Société des nations, 1925), 12. "[...] consolider l'autorité des chefs indigènes, tout en veillant à ce qu'elle s'exerce dans les limites de l'équité et de la légalité."

<sup>14</sup> Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 153-154

The main consequences of this state of affairs have been summarised by Alison Des Forges in the following terms:

With no relief from the burdens imposed by the notables and with ever growing requisitions by the administration, some Hutu turned to the missionaries for protection. Others sought accommodation with the notables. Still others continued to resist under the leadership of their lineage heads or as followers of the prophets of Nyabingi. But for all their different pathways seeking redress, many Rwandans saw Belgian rule as the beginning of the ‘time of the whip.’ Hutu bore its sting most often, but Tutsi suffered from it occasionally as well.<sup>15</sup>

Chiefs and sub-chiefs often exploited their increased authority. They, for instance, might call up more people than demanded by the administration and set them to work on their own crops. On other occasions, they confiscated the small compensation set aside for those who had worked on infrastructure projects.<sup>16</sup> Similar abuses also occurred when local authorities pocketed the wages which had been paid to their subjects for work with European firms.<sup>17</sup> As the courts were controlled by these very chiefs and notables, exploited Hutu had very few avenues for redress.<sup>18</sup> Even though the Belgians knew about these abuses,

the abilities of Rwandan authorities to circumvent any controls were generally more effective than the controls themselves. In fact the system worked also to the benefit of the European community, including the administrators themselves. Consequently, the Administration was caught in the vice of assuring ‘adequate’ administrative authority in the hands of the chiefs on the one hand, and professing the desire to control the abuses on the other. The administrative system was predicated on the basis of chiefly power; only individual administrators were concerned about abuses.<sup>19</sup>

However, the cooperation between the Mwami, the aristocracy and the Belgians was not free from tensions. Musinga had never liked the Belgians and continued to profess traditional Rwandan beliefs rather than converting to Catholicism. This earned him the enmity of both missionaries and the colonial administration, which deposed him in November 1931, replacing him with his son Rudahigwa. Nonetheless, the “cohesion of oppression” based on the alliance between the Mwami and the Tutsi aristocracy remained in place until after the Second World War. Between the 1930s and 1940s, most Hutu farmers were not only second-class citizens, but were also forced to work for an increasingly demanding colonial administration, on the one hand, and their traditional chiefs and patrons, on the other.

The Second World War brought about both the most extreme exploitation that Rwanda had even experienced and – eventually – relief from it. As Belgium threw its colonies behind the Allied war machine, Rwandans were forced, from 1942 onwards, to contribute 60 days per year to the war effort.<sup>20</sup> Colonial exactions, failing rains and a variety of crop-killing diseases

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<sup>15</sup> Des Forges, *Defeat is the Only Bad News*, 183

<sup>16</sup> Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 167

<sup>17</sup> Catherine Newbury, “The Cohesion of Oppression: A Century of Clientship in Kinyaga, Rwanda” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975), 282

<sup>18</sup> Leathern, Dorsey, “The Rwandan Colonial Economy, 1916-1941” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1983), 218-219

<sup>19</sup> Newbury, “The Cohesion of Oppression”, 282

<sup>20</sup> Dantès Singiza, “La Famine Ruzagayura (Rwanda, 1943-1944) causes, conséquences et réactions des autorités” (PhD diss., Université de Liège & Musée royal de l’Afrique centrale, Tervuren, 2011), 36-47

caused one of the worst famines in the country's history. Known as Ruzagayura, it killed between 36,000 and 225,000 people in 1943-1944.<sup>21</sup> However, the aftermath of the war brought some solace. When the League of Nations was dissolved in 1946 and its duties taken over by the United Nations, Ruanda-Urundi, as the territory was then known, changed in status from a Class B Mandate under Belgian Administration to a UN Trust Territory. While not much changed in practice, with Belgium remaining in control on the ground, the long-term purpose of UN Trusteeship was to lead the country to independence on the terms "and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned."<sup>22</sup>

This promise ushered in a general liberalisation of the political space. In 1949 and 1954, respectively, Mwami Rudahigwa abolished *uburetwa* and *ubuhake*, the two most hated forms of customary obligation which tied clients to their patrons. Young Belgian missionaries influenced by the horrors of the Second World War and of a more social-democratic bent than their predecessors also "began to create opportunities for Hutu, increasing enrolment in church schools and cultivating educated Hutu."<sup>23</sup> This, of course, had been largely unthinkable before the Second World War. As the foundations which had supported the exploitative colonial system began to come undone, young liberal Tutsi founded groups like the *Mouvement Politique Progressiste*, which, as J.J. Carney ably explains, "charted a moderate course between nationalism and ethnicism, striving to improve relations between Rwandans and Europeans while avoiding 'anti-European nationalism' and ... 'social discrimination based on race.'"<sup>24</sup>

## Independence

The latter half of the 1950s saw a steady change in the Rwandan political scene. While the liberals of the *Mouvement Politique Progressiste* were trying to make headway, a growing Hutu elite (or, perhaps more appropriately, counter-elite) started to understand the power and "the electoral salience of ethnic labels."<sup>25</sup> This elite was led by men like Grégoire Kayibanda, Aloys Munyangaju and Joseph Gitera. Kayibanda had been a seminary and school teacher, but became really influential in 1953, when he took up the post of co-editor of *l'Ami*. This magazine was specifically geared towards the Catholic elites of Rwanda. Then, in 1955, Kayibanda gained the editorship of *Kinyamateka*, with a circulation of more than 22,000. However, its actual reach among the many non-literate Rwandans was much higher, as the magazine was read to them.<sup>26</sup> Under the leadership of Bishop Laurent Déprimoz, the missionary Arthur Dejemeppe and Kayibanda, *l'Ami* and *Kinyamateka* "shifted from a top down focus on the monarchy to a more grassroots emphasis on social justice, the Hutu

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. See also Bernard Lugan, "Causes et effets de la famine « Rumanura » au Rwanda, 1916-18", *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1976), 349; and Roger Botte, "Rwanda and Burundi, 1889-1930: Chronology of a Slow Assassination, Part 2", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, (1985)

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Charter, Chapter XII, Article 76

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 67

<sup>24</sup> Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 48

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 70

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 55

peasantry and democracy.”<sup>27</sup> Munyangaju had founded his own newspaper in 1956, but took on the editorship of *Temps nouveaux d’Afrique* in 1958. Gitera, a businessman, had been educated at church schools in Kabgayi and Nyakibanda. Rather than work as an editor for an established newspaper, he founded his own *Ijwi Rya Rubanda (Voice of the Little People)*.<sup>28</sup> Generally, he was more aggressive in his rhetoric than Kayibanda. According to the Belgian governor general, the views expressed by this small intelligentsia encountered the favour of a growing constituency, as they “reflected a tendency which in confused form was already part of the consciousness of a great many members of [the Hutu] social group.”<sup>29</sup>

For the Tutsi monarchy, the UN-supported road to independence and the steadily growing political awareness of the Hutu posed a problem. As a minority controlling the monarchy and the civil service in the country, they felt that any free and fair elections would fundamentally undermine their position of power. Consequently, when the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa came to visit Ruanda-Urundi in 1957, the High Council of Rwanda, which was fully controlled by conservative Tutsi, had an appeal ready. This *Statement of Views* argued that “Self-government is the normal culmination of trusteeship ... it would be difficult at the present stage to specify when it will be possible to grant us self-government, but we are anxious that we should be trained for self-government now.”<sup>30</sup> A well-educated elite, so the *Statement* continued, was the only vehicle which would allow a smooth independence for Rwanda. Perhaps the most interesting part of the statement is that it does not contain the words “Hutu” or “Tutsi” at all, in an apparent attempt to ignore the entire issue. Caught in the vice between the Hutu majority and the UN-supported wishes of the people, the monarchy and High Council believed that only accelerated self-government centred around a consolidated, Western-educated, Tutsi elite would permit the maintenance of the *status quo*.

However, the Hutu elite had also made preparations for the arrival of the UN mission. Their reply to the *Statement of Views* was the *Bahutu Manifesto*, written by Kayibanda and eight others, which clearly stated the grievances felt by the Hutu. In the preamble, it came directly to the point:

The indigenous racial situation is of course a domestic matter, but what can remain purely domestic or local nowadays? How can it remain hidden from view now that the indigenous and European political positions appear to confront each other? Political, social and economic conditions are complicated by a racial conflict which seems to grow increasingly acute. The advantages of modern civilization are, it would appear, being made available through education, predominantly to one recipient - the Mututsi - thus making for more difficulties in the future than are presented by what is often called today ‘the difficulties which divide us.’ No solution of the Mututsi-Belgian relations can be

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 55

<sup>28</sup> Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 192-193

<sup>29</sup> Trusteeship Council, *United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1957: Report on Ruanda-Urundi* (New York: United Nations, 1958), 5

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Annex II, “Statement of Views,” 42

lasting until the fundamental difficulties between the Hutu and the Tutsi are settled.<sup>31</sup>

So while the *Statement of Views* pretended that no Hutu-Tutsi problems existed, the *Manifesto* took a diametrically opposed view. In fact, it argued that a solution to these ethnic problems was the *sine qua non* for self-governance and independence. Having outlined the problem, most of the *Manifesto* goes on to propose numerous solutions/demands which might end this inequality. Firstly, the *Manifesto* recommended a change in the state of mind “which is sarcastically called ‘respect for the culture and customs of the country.’”<sup>32</sup> Secondly, in the economic realm, “the abolition of the *corvées* ... The legal recognition of individual land ownership in the Western sense of the word ... Freedom of expression.”<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, on the political plane, “that laws and customs should be codified ... that Hutu should in fact be promoted to public office.”<sup>34</sup> And, finally, that Hutu should not be excluded from secondary and tertiary education.

These statements of intent by both groups could have facilitated a dialogue and probably overcome many of the tensions. It has indeed been pointed out by various observers that the Hutu and Tutsi still had much in common and that not all differences were as significant as they sometimes appeared. Prunier, for one, argues that the income gap between the two groups on the eve of independence was, on average, negligible,<sup>35</sup> while the UN Mission itself noted that

Traditional conceptions are giving way and the elite of the old regime are coming up against a new elite. It will not be long - and indeed there are already indications of this - before the traditional political structure and the respect for feudal institutions will be as irksome to the rising generation of young educated Tutsi as to the new Hutu elite. In time, and perhaps in the fairly near future, the new generation of Tutsi or Hutu will have more in common than will the young generation of Tutsi with the old. In the same way the Hutu elite will become increasingly interested in ensuring that all enlightened elements of the population as a whole participate in the direction of the country's affairs, whether Tutsi or Hutu.<sup>36</sup>

By April 1958, even the Mwami could not continue pretending there was no Hutu-Tutsi problem, and a special commission on social relations was established to investigate the issue. If there was a time for reconciliation, it was then, and had the moderates on both sides of the divide triumphed, such a development would have had monumental consequences for Rwandan history. But extremists quickly moved to make constructive dialogue impossible. A group of old Tutsi close to the monarch drafted a note to the special commission, stating that “the relations between the Tutsi and the Hutu have always hitherto been based on servitude, so that there is no foundation for brotherhood between us ... As our kings conquered the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Annex I, “Manifesto of the Hutu,” 39

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 40

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 41

<sup>35</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 50

<sup>36</sup> Trusteeship Council, *United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1957*, Annex I, “Manifesto of the Hutu,” 7-8

country of the Hutu and killed their petty kings, how can they now claim to be our brothers?"<sup>37</sup> Then, when the special commission made its recommendations in June of the same year, both the High Council and the Mwami sidelined the advice being proffered and insisted, as in the *Statement of Views*, that institutional reform have top priority. On the opposite side, the aforementioned Gitera launched a diatribe against various elements most dear to the monarchy, which served only to inflame the situation. The main target for his attack was Kalinga, the royal drum, which Gitera thought should be abolished.<sup>38</sup> Legends of the dynastic drums, one of the key attributes of royalty, went back all the way to the founder of the Nyiginya Kingdom, Ruganzu Ndori, who found his dynastic drum Karinga after many tribulations, "a feat that in this region announces the birth of a new Kingdom."<sup>39</sup> As the eminent Africanist Jan Vansina explains, "in the ideology of the Great Lakes region a kingdom only exists when it has a dynastic drum"; if the drum is lost then the kingdom itself is also lost.<sup>40</sup> While there is no doubt that the drum decorated with the testicles of vanquished Hutu princes was an affront to the Hutus, it was also one of the key dynastic symbols of power which held enormous emotional, traditional and ceremonial value – something no Mwami could afford to give up.

In what had become a clear situation of tension with political tracts being vigorously exchanged between the opposing parties, the High Council asked for a working group to be dispatched from Belgium to study the political problems of Rwanda. This group arrived on 22 April 1959. As a similar group had ended up advising the granting of internal autonomy to the Belgian Congo in early 1959, its arrival was met with expectation in Rwanda.<sup>41</sup> The Belgian working group was strongly lobbied by the traditional Tutsi powers and, on 28 April, it concluded that full internal autonomy should be reached by 1960 "based on a healthy democracy."<sup>42</sup> This posed a problem to both groups. While the demand for rapid independence emanating from Tutsi elites had been satisfied, the Belgian experts envisaged an institutional dispensation based on mass participation, as opposed to elite privilege. For its part, the Hutu elite had achieved its goal of democratic participation, but independence would be coming much sooner than hoped. With both groups now readying for the final showdown, tension in Rwanda became electric.

On 25 July 1959, after having watched the movie *The Lords of the Forest* in Bujumbura, Mwami Mutara III visited his Belgian doctor. Shortly afterwards he died, probably due to an antibiotic allergy. The state of the country is summed up by Vansina, who was in Rwanda at the time.

The death of the Mwami was declared over the radio on Saturday evening. The public for the most part learned of it on Saturday 26 July through announcements made during

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<sup>37</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960: Report on Ruanda-Urundi*. (New York: United Nations, 1960), 44

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 43

<sup>39</sup> Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, 44

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 48

<sup>41</sup> Pierre Rijckmans, *Rapport du Groupe de Travail pour l'Etude du problème politique au Congo Belge* (Brussels: Chambre des Représentants, 20 January 1959)

<sup>42</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 49-50

Sunday morning mass. The reaction in the Astrida [Butare] region was a defence reflex. Everyone was immediately aware of the extent of the crisis. All stayed at home and there was no one to be seen.<sup>43</sup>

The UN mission added that “there were numerous highway incidents ... the bulk of the population was afraid and stayed at home or went out armed.”<sup>44</sup> While there was some discussion about a possible abolition of the monarchy or the introduction of a constitutional monarchy, a new Mwami, Kigeli V, was named during the burial ceremony of Mutara III.

It was at this point that openly political organisations started being formed. On the Hutu side, two political parties were founded. The first, the *Parti du mouvement de l’émancipation Hutu* (PARMEHUTU), the successor of the *Mouvement social muhutu* (MSM), was founded by Kayibanda on 9 October 1959. The second, the brainchild of Aloys Munyangaju and Joseph Gitera, was called *L’Association pour la promotion sociale de la masse* (APROSOMA). While there seems to be some confusion about which of these political parties was more extreme, both included radical elements. While PARMEHUTU was an exclusively Hutu party that framed the issues of the time in stark Hutu-Tutsi terms, this also applied to some elements of APROSOMA. APROSOMA generally tried to present itself as a party of the poor, including the *petits* Tutsi. Yet one of its most important members, Joseph Gitera, was described by contemporaries as “a veritable fanatic,”<sup>45</sup> and by later historians as “a populist, demagogue, a mythical Christian and somewhat unbalanced personality”<sup>46</sup> and as “devoutly Catholic and passionately anti-Tutsi.”<sup>47</sup>

On the Tutsi side, there were two main parties as well. The more important *Union nationale rwandaise* (UNAR), founded on 3 September 1959, stood firmly for the traditional system and supported the monarchy and Tutsi privilege come what may. This party was also the main force calling for quick independence, which gained it support from some unexpected backers. Communist China funded the party because it considered it anti-colonial and, thus, anti-Belgian. The party also made cross-border alliances with the MNC-Lumumba.<sup>48</sup> The moment UNAR accepted aid from the People’s Republic of China, the Belgian government definitively switched its support from the Tutsi monarchy to the Hutu parties. In the bizarre Cold War world, communist-supported monarchists became more of a threat to the established order than a mass peasant movement. A more moderate voice was the *Rassemblement démocratique rwandais* (RADER), founded on 14 September 1959. Led by the moderate and progressive Chief Bwanakweri, the party was happy, on occasion, to work with the PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA. However, it never became as popular as the other

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 57 Quoting an analysis “made on 31 July by Mr. Vansina.”

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 151

<sup>46</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 47

<sup>47</sup> Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 84

<sup>48</sup> From: Miss Solesby, Geneva To: Foreign Office ‘Indications of preparations for armed attack against Rwanda by refugees from Kivu Province of Congo, Burundi and Tanganyika’, 23 July 1964. “FO 371/177022, JR 1821/3” The National Archives of the United Kingdom. “One group in Albertville is said by European observers to appear to have been trained and armed by the People’s Republic of China”; Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 176, 200, 205; Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 138; Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 63; Frank K. Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation: A History of the Military in Rwanda* (Kigali: Fountain Publishers, 2009), 143

three big parties, and was thus often left on the sidelines. The party was also considered pro-Belgian by many RADER supporters, as it was not in favour of immediate independence.

With the political parties out in the open, a concerted campaign of intimidation got underway. People received death threats and coffee and banana plantations of individuals were destroyed at night-time. Both camps seem to have been guilty of this, and the moderates on each side quickly lost ground.<sup>49</sup> Moderates within a given party were treated as “traitors” to the cause and as allies of the opposition. On 27 October 1959, for instance, a note was found tacked to trees in the Nyanza district. The note named ten Hutu and RADER leaders.

These are the enemies of Ruanda, of the kingdom and of the Kalinga. ... People of Ruanda, all these are traitors. It is they who want to keep us in slavery under the Belgians, they who have gathered at Kabgayi under [Archbishop] Perraudin to plot the death of H.M. Kigeli V and the overthrow of the kingdom in Ruanda in order to make us slaves ... People of Ruanda, let us unite our forces and, whatever the cost, seek out these enemies of Ruanda and their offspring and purge Ruanda of this bad seed. Let us march forward and exterminate all these serpents, the enemies of Ruanda.<sup>50</sup>

### **The Social Revolution: The First Rwandan Civil War**

There must have been incidental violence since at least September 1959, as the destruction of property and death threats on a large scale cannot remain peaceful. But it was on 1 November 1959 that the first proverbial shots were fired of what is known in Kinyarwanda as the *Muyaga* or, in English, the “Social Revolution.” The *Muyaga* is “a strong but variable wind, with unpredictable and destructive gusts.”<sup>51</sup> While both “*Muyaga*” and “revolution” capture some of the severity of the events which swept through the country, I would argue that this period is best understood as a first Rwandan civil war.<sup>52</sup> This civil war lasted from November 1959 to early 1964 and culminated in a series of genocidal killings.

On 1 November, a prominent Hutu, sub-chief Dominique Mbonyumutwa, was beaten up by several young Tutsi. The next day, large crowds of Hutu protested in Gitarama and the day after that several Tutsi notables were killed while visiting the house of Chief Gashagaza.<sup>53</sup> That night, groups of Hutu went to Tutsi houses in Ndiza, setting them on fire and driving away the inhabitants. Between 4 and 13 November, arson attacks spread from Gitarama to Kigali, Gisenyi, Ruhengeri and Kibuye districts, roughly the north-western corner of the country.<sup>54</sup> According to the UN,

Incendiaries set off in bands of ten. Armed with machetes and paraffin ... they pillaged the Tutsi houses they passed on the way and set fire to them. On their way they would

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<sup>49</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 65

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 65

<sup>51</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 41

<sup>52</sup> This is in keeping with how contemporaries saw the events: Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 129; “Guerre civile au Rwanda”, *Centre de recherche et d’information socio-politiques – C.R.I.S.P.*, no. 42 (27 November 1959), 15

<sup>53</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 72; Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 162

<sup>54</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 73

enlist other incendiaries to follow the procession while the first recruits, too exhausted to continue, would give up and return home. . . . Generally speaking the incendiaries, who were often unarmed, did not attack the inhabitants of the huts and were content with pillaging and setting fire to them. The most serious incidents involving tragic wounding and death occurred when the Tutsi were determined to fight back, or when there were clashes with the forces of order.<sup>55</sup>

In his classic, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, Donald Horowitz describes a “deadly ethnic riot” as “an intense, sudden, though not necessarily wholly unplanned, lethal attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group, the victims chosen because of their group membership.”<sup>56</sup> The UN report concurs that the attacks were partly planned. “It seems that the incendiaries were in most cases people of simple mentality who committed the worst excesses without realizing what they were doing. They burned and pillaged because they had been told to do so and because the operation did not seem to involve great risk and enabled them to seize loot in the victims’ huts.”<sup>57</sup> However, the UN commission’s report shied away from naming possible culprits in the planning of the unrest.

Even though the UN report and others argued that the intent of the arsonists was to chase away Tutsi rather than to kill them, it is difficult to imagine that no widespread violence accompanied these bands intent on burning down houses. It would be naive to think that a fairly well organised and armed group like the Tutsi would allow their houses to be burned down without resisting at all.<sup>58</sup> Indeed British missionaries who found themselves at the heart of the *jacquerie* insisted that many of the arsonists went out to kill and burn.<sup>59</sup> In some districts, almost all Tutsi houses were burned down. Yet, one should also keep in mind that, in the context of this general breakdown of law and order, many personal scores were settled and that the divide did not always fall along the Hutu-Tutsi line. For example, on 6 November 1959, a group of Bakiga, who live in the mountains between Uganda and Rwanda, came down to participate in the arson. When they reached Rubengera, they found all the locals, Hutu and Tutsi alike, ready and waiting under the command of a local chief, and were promptly put to flight after having 58 of their group killed.<sup>60</sup>

By 6 November, the Mwami and UNAR had recovered from their surprise and were ready to strike back at those they held responsible: the PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA leadership. Having initially gathered several thousand armed men around Nyanza to protect the Mwami’s compound by reactivating “the almost forgotten system of army regiments,”<sup>61</sup> they now switched to offensive action. Groups were formed with the objective of killing or arresting specific Hutu leaders. As Lemarchand points out, these groups were far more organised than

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 73

<sup>56</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 7

<sup>57</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 74

<sup>58</sup> Even Belgian Colonel Guy Logiest wrote in his memoirs that “Il n’était pas rare qu’il y ait mort d’homme dans le cas où le Tutsi résistait.” However, he immediately qualified this by insisting that “de toute évidence, les Hutu ne cherchaient pas à tuer mais seulement à chasser les Tutsi.” Guy Logiest, *Mission au Rwanda: Un blanc dans la bagarre Tutsi-Hutu* (Bruxelles: Didier Hatier, 1988), 39; Peigneux, Malengreau, and Frédéricq, *Rapport de la Commission d’Enquête au Ruanda* (Bruxelles. 1960), 55

<sup>59</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 163

<sup>60</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 74

<sup>61</sup> Jan Vansina, *Living with Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 81

the arsonists plundering the countryside and were formed around the core of traditional military organisation.<sup>62</sup> Again nuance is important, as the UN report pointed out that “Each commando party amounted to some hundreds of persons or more, including a majority of Hutu, but the leaders were generally Tutsi or Twa.”<sup>63</sup> It seems that, in many cases, Hutu still supported the Mwami and other traditional authorities, something which must be kept in mind to form a clear idea of the composition of the refugee population (see below). These commandos roamed almost freely around the country, killing APROSOMA sympathisers. On 8 November, one of these groups entered Astrida (Butare) and assassinated Polepole Mukwiye and his brother, two important Hutu leaders, and abducted the former’s family.<sup>64</sup> Another group even crossed the Burundian border and surrounded the house to which Joseph Kanyaruka, a key APROSOMA man, had fled. There, they killed Kanyaruka and a relative, spearing them 53 and 51 times, respectively.<sup>65</sup>

From the outset, this widespread fighting, which the Minister of Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, August De Schryver, would later call “a small scale civil war,” proved impossible to control for Belgian authorities.<sup>66</sup> With only about three hundred police officers for the whole country, there was not much the Belgians could do to protect the victims of the violence. While an emergency plan was put in place and extra police called from Usumbura, it was not until reinforcements from Congo started arriving on 6 November that the Belgians – whose military operations were run by Colonel Guy Logiest – could act. However, the UNAR offensive in the south meant that these troops were moved to deal with that threat, leaving the arsonists in the north largely unchecked. This, combined with pro-Belgian sentiments among the Hutu, meant that it was the Tutsi and their allies who felt the brunt of the Belgian crackdown.<sup>67</sup> Between 8 and 9 November, four extra companies were called in from Congo, including Belgian para-commandos.<sup>68</sup> On 10 November, a slaughter was prevented on Save Hill, which was home to Joseph Gitera and the headquarters of APROSOMA. Several UNAR commandos comprising thousands of armed men surrounded the hill “in the hope of destroying the nest of APROSOMA.”<sup>69</sup> Only the timely intervention of the district administrator with several soldiers, hand grenades and a megaphone managed to convince the attackers to stand down and withdraw.<sup>70</sup> On the same day “sources close to the Belgian

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<sup>62</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 164-165

<sup>63</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 77

<sup>64</sup> “La Guerre Civile”, *Centre de recherche et d’information socio-politiques – C.R.I.S.P.*, no. 42 (5 February 1959), 19

<sup>65</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 76

<sup>66</sup> Kamer der Volksvertegenwoordigers. *Parlementaire Handelingen: Vergadering van dinsdag 17 november 1959* (Brussel: Belgisch Staatsblad, 17 November 1959), 3 “burgeroorlog op kleine schaal”; A rather bizarre article by René MacColl, who was in Nyanza at the time, also argued that what was going on was a war. *Daily Express*, 13 November 1959, 1-2

<sup>67</sup> Logiest, *Mission au Rwanda*, 45

<sup>68</sup> *The Times*, 9 November 1959, 8; Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 80

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 77

<sup>70</sup> Peigneux, Malengreau, and Frédéricq, *Rapport de la Commission*, 66, 68. It is interesting to note how different people experienced events differently. On 9 November, a missionary wrote that “the movement of [violence] is heard wherever the Hutu are numerous, except in the South and in the Territory of Biumba [Byumba].” (Quoted in Aya Tsuruta, “‘It is Difficult to Understand Rwandan History’: Contested History of Ethnicity and Dynamics of Conflicts in Rwanda during Revolution and Independence” (PhD diss., University of

authorities in Usumbura ... said ... that there were hundreds of dead in the fighting [throughout Rwanda], but no precise figures could be obtained.”<sup>71</sup> It is perhaps during these burnings, or maybe earlier, that Jan Vansina, the aforementioned young Belgian Africanist, was approached by fellow researcher Thomas Kamanzi,

[who] asked me to rescue his father and family, who had fled their home and were hiding in a papyrus swamp. We took a small Volkswagen Beetle and drove off without headlights. The hill was easy to find, for it was illuminated by flames shooting up from houses being torched and we could see shadows running around between them. We cut the engine and coasted down to the marsh at the bottom of the hill. Kamanzi got out and sometime later returned with five or six people, three of whom were adults. We managed to squeeze everyone into the tiny car and drive away undetected.<sup>72</sup>

By 14 November 1959, a semblance of order had been restored. This first phase of the civil war had been won by the PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA. The Belgian authorities were faced with the immediate problem of what to do with the chiefdoms which had now become vacant. Many of the former Tutsi chiefs had been killed or forced away during the violence and needed to be replaced. Others had been implicated in the counter-violence and had to be removed. Following “public opinion,” Colonel Logiest and the Belgian Resident-General filled up the vacant posts with mostly Hutu candidates.<sup>73</sup>

Chiefdoms in Rwanda	1 November 1959	1 March 1960
<i>Total number of chiefdoms</i>	45	45
Vacant chiefdoms	2	1
Tutsi chiefs	43	22
Hutu chiefs	-	22
<i>Total number of sub-chiefdoms</i>	559	531
Vacant sub-chiefdoms	-	17
Tutsi sub-chiefs	549	217
Hutu sub-chiefs	10	297

Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960: Report on Ruanda-Urundi*. (New York: United Nations, 1960), 86

While the Belgians had declared the country pacified, instances of violence and burnings continued. As the country prepared for the communal elections which the Belgian authorities had planned for June 1960, violence went on throughout the country. When the visiting UN

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Edinburgh, 2013), 150.) This is strange as the Save Hill episode happened just outside Butare/Astrida, the largest town in the south.

<sup>71</sup> *The Times*, 10 November 1959, 12

<sup>72</sup> Vansina, *Living with Africa*, 82

<sup>73</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 86; Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 127; Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 197; “Mission Criticisms Of Ruanda Authorities”, *The Times*, 7 December 1959, 8

Mission approached Nyundo parish in March 1960, it noted that most of the people lining the road were PARMEHUTU supporters, but that at the parish itself there were schoolchildren, nuns and others who were pro-UNAR.<sup>74</sup> After the UN Mission left, violence gripped the region and the huts of many Tutsi – and, presumably, UNAR supporters – were burned. Over 1,000 people took shelter at the parish until the arrival of soldiers eventually put an end to the ethnic riot.<sup>75</sup> At the end of March, when the UN Mission arrived in Cyangu, it was informed by the district commissioner that some huts had been burned there as well.<sup>76</sup> Other burnings took place around the same time in Byumba and Gisenyi, while between 10 and 16 arson attacks took place in the Butare district in April.<sup>77</sup>

Besides filling the vacant chiefdoms, the Belgians were faced with several other challenges in the aftermath of the November violence. The main issue came from the thousands of refugees whose huts had been burned and who had fled to other parts of the country, or were seeking to move abroad, for security. By April 1960, their numbers had reached 22,000.<sup>78</sup> Some were put in refugee camps in Nyamata, while others sought refuge in churches and parishes throughout the country. As large-scale resettlement was out of the question – the Belgians were reticent to use force to resettle the refugees – and the refugees did not want to return home while the perpetrators of the violence against them remained unpunished, many refugees started moving abroad to Uganda, Congo, Burundi and Tanzania. It is crucial to note that the refugee population was not solely made up of Tutsi. As Lemarchand writes,

Among the refugees were many Hutu, some of whom are now living in exile with their former lords. It is symptomatic of the persistence of traditional ties within the Hutu community that so many of them would rather go into exile than shift their allegiance to the new regime.<sup>79</sup>

What Lemarchand forgets is that many Hutu had come to the aid of their Tutsi compatriots during the fighting in November 1959 and had taken up arms against the incendiaries. It therefore seems likely that they would have been perceived as collaborators and would have been denied a place in the new regime. While it would take these refugees some time to get organised, for many, it was clear from the start that their objective should be a return to their home country, if necessary by force of arms.<sup>80</sup>

As interethnic relations continued to sour, one of the most contentious political issues was the role of the Rwandan Mwami in the post-independence state. On this score, RADER, APROSOMA and PARMEHUTU formed a common front and demanded that the Mwami relinquish much of his power and that some of the traditional symbols, like the Kalinga war drum, be replaced by more inclusive regalia. When Mwami Kigeli V refused outright, he was forced into exile under Belgian pressure. UNAR, incensed, boycotted the June 1960 communal elections, a strategic error which handed an enormous victory to the Hutu political

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<sup>74</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 15

<sup>75</sup> Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 136

<sup>76</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 15

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 84; Tsuruta, “‘It is Difficult to Understand Rwandan History’”, 157

<sup>78</sup> Trusteeship Council, *Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa, 1960*, 84

<sup>79</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 172

<sup>80</sup> Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation*, 142

formation, now known as the MDR-PARMEHUTU.<sup>81</sup> The MDR-PARMEHUTU victory was so significant that it alienated APROSOMA, which formed a new common front with UNAR and RADER. This, combined with UNAR success in swinging international public opinion in its favour, led to a UN vote supporting its goals, which in turn convinced Belgium that a reconciliation conference was necessary. The colloquy of Oostende pushed back national elections to 1961 and resolved that a separate vote would be held on the issue of the Rwandan monarchy.<sup>82</sup>

To prevent any possible reversal of its victory in the local elections, in January 1961, PARMEHUTU staged a gathering in Gitarama for Rwanda's elected officials, the majority of whom were MDR-PARMEHUTU. The assembly, contrary to the spirit of the referendum announced during the colloquy of Oostende, voted that Rwanda would become a democratic republic. This assembly and its resolutions were supported by Belgium and its most important man on the ground, Logiest.

The period between June 1960 and June 1961 was one of the lulls during this first civil war. Refugees outside Rwanda, though clearly wanting to return, had not yet had the chance to organise themselves into a real threat. The main possible flashpoint, the Gitarama meeting, had been patrolled by Belgian troops and had not provoked large-scale protests by either UNAR or RADER. The absence of a UNAR challenge might be explained by pointing to internal divisions: while UNAR supporters inside Rwanda were interested in working within the established political framework, the members who had taken refuge abroad had no interest in working with MDR-PARMEHUTU.

As Belgium released political prisoners in June 1961 – many of whom had presumably been held since November 1959 – and with the elections looming, violence again broke out in Rwanda. As the historian J.J. Carney explains, “clashes between Parmehutu, Aprosoma and UNAR partisans in southern Rwanda killed hundreds [and] destroyed over 3,000 homes ... Parmehutu and UNAR factions clashed ... in July 1961 culminating in a major battle east of Kigali that left 130 dead.”<sup>83</sup> When the general elections finally took place in September, they consolidated power in PARMEHUTU hands. In the separate referendum, the monarchy was definitively rejected. The fighting in late 1961 produced a significant number of refugees, and people were still fleeing Rwanda in January 1962.<sup>84</sup>

It was also at this point that Rwandan refugees in surrounding countries began launching attacks into Rwanda – primarily from Congo and Burundi. These attackers were called *Inyenzi*, “cockroaches,” a moniker which the *Inyenzi* themselves appropriated as a badge of honour due to the toughness and stealth of the creature.<sup>85</sup> A Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs circular puts the number of incursions into Rwanda between March 1961 and May

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<sup>81</sup> Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 137

<sup>82</sup> James Jay Carney, “From Democratization to Ethnic Revolution: Catholic Politics in Rwanda, 1950-1962” (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2011), 275-276. For a discussion of the Belgian decision to postpone the elections, see Tsuruta, “It is Difficult to Understand Rwandan History”, 127-129

<sup>83</sup> Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 156

<sup>84</sup> “80 refugees flee Ruanda in new terror drive”, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 January 1962, 7

<sup>85</sup> No thorough study of the *Inyenzi* exists, while few of their number are still alive. As such, it is almost impossible to write accurately about the organisation.

1962 at no less than thirty-six.<sup>86</sup> Whether all these attacks can be laid at the feet of the *Inyenzi* is questionable, as many included cattle rustling, while others occurred deep into Rwanda, rather than on the border. Still, this report, though clearly biased, shows that the *Inyenzi* posed a significant threat to the new Rwandan government and that their attacks were in all likelihood much more frequent and significant than has hitherto been assumed. It also sheds some light on the smaller *Inyenzi* raids, which targeted local MDR-PARMEHUTU party members or police and army posts. The report also indicates that the *Inyenzi* would burn Hutu huts on their forays into Rwanda. In July 1962, a French officer in Burundi confidently wrote the following:

Colonel Logiest explained to me his confidence in the National Guard [*Garde nationale*, as the Rwandan army was called until 1972] and the stability of the regime... The unit just annihilated two Tutsi gangs without incurring any losses. On 5 July a hundred men, of which only twenty had modern weapons, penetrated the area of Kisenyi: 50 of them were killed in the field. Moreover, during an attack on the Nyantare police station, the guards took ten prisoners and killed two Tutsi. Out of about sixty men only a dozen had modern weapons. In both cases the support of the population favourable to the regime was crucial in denouncing the rebel movements.<sup>87</sup>

After these kinds of raids, the local population often took revenge on the Tutsi living in, or close to, the area of the *Inyenzi* attack. They were routinely blamed for helping the *Inyenzi*, showing them the way or being the cause of the attacks.<sup>88</sup> A particularly bad case of revenge killing was recorded around Byumba towards the end of March, when between 1,000 and 3,000 Tutsi were killed.<sup>89</sup> In June and July 1962, *Inyenzi* groups crossed the border once more and attacked villages and *Garde nationale* patrols.<sup>90</sup> On 11 July a group of sixty attacked the *Garde nationale* post at Niakatale. However, the Belgian commander, who had served in Congo and Katanga, had been forewarned of the attack by British authorities. As the *Inyenzi* attacked, twenty-one were instantly killed by automatic weapons. Others surrendered after they had been injured and their leader killed. However, “most were so brave that even after

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<sup>86</sup> Services d’information du ministère des affaires étrangères du Rwanda, *Toute la vérité sur le terrorisme ‘Inyenzi’ au Rwanda: une mise au point du ministère des affaires étrangères du Rwanda* (Kigali, 1964), 12

<sup>87</sup> From: Barbey To: Etat-Major General de la Défense Nationale ‘Situation a Usumbura’, 12 July 1962. “Burundi: Juillet ‘62 – Mai ‘65” GR 6Q 50. Service Historique de la Défense. “Le Colonel LOGIEST m’a dit sa confiance dans la garde nationale et dans la stabilité du régime. ... Cette troupe vient d’anéantir deux bandes tutsi sans éprouver de pertes. Le 5 Juillet une centaine d’hommes, dont vingt seulement disposaient d’armes modernes, ont pénétré dans le territoire de KISENYI : 50 morts sont sur le terrain. Par ailleurs, à l’occasion d’une attaque dirigée contre le poste de Nyantare, la garde a fait dix prisonniers et tué deux tutsi, sur une soixantaine d’hommes, une dizaine seulement avaient des armes modernes. Dans l’un et l’autre cas l’appui de la population acquise au régime a été précieux pour dénoncer les mouvements des rebelles.”

<sup>88</sup> Services d’information du ministère des affaires étrangères du Rwanda. *Toute la vérité sur le terrorisme ‘Inyenzi’ au Rwanda*, 13

<sup>89</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 219; “Rwanda Calm In Face Of Civil War Threat”, *The Times*, 19 June 1962; Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide*, 157

<sup>90</sup> “Patrol ambushed”, *Daily Mail*, 9 July 1962, 5

capture they refused to give any intelligence.”<sup>91</sup> By mid-1962, it was estimated that there were 150,000 refugees from Rwanda in neighbouring countries.<sup>92</sup>

The latter half of 1963 saw the most serious and concerted effort by the *Inyenzi* to retake power in Rwanda. On 30 November, a force of 3,000 armed Tutsi, on their way to Rwanda, was intercepted and disarmed by the Burundian armed forces.<sup>93</sup> However, this defeat did not break the *Inyenzi* spirit, and they attacked again on 21 December 1963. Operating in smaller groups, they crossed the Burundian-Rwandan border undetected and carried out a surprise attack on the Rwandan army camp at Kibungo. “Early in the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, when the main attack was launched by 25 to 30 spear-bearing Tutsi, the Rwandan platoon at Kibungo consisting of 36 soldiers under the command of a sergeant turned and fled at the sight of the Tutsi invaders.”<sup>94</sup> After this successful attack, the *Inyenzi*, having captured a jeep, truck and some firearms, moved towards the large refugee camp around Nyamata to gather more support. From there, they moved on Kigali, but were confronted at the Kazenze bridge, situated only 20 kilometres from Kigali, by a Belgian-led platoon of the *Garde nationale*. A firefight ensued, and at least two Rwandan soldiers were killed before the *Inyenzi* were scattered. Around one hundred prisoners were taken by the *Garde nationale* after the battle.<sup>95</sup>

The response to this attack was particularly severe. Several Tutsi residents of Kigali were arrested, taken to Ruhengeri and executed by firing squad.<sup>96</sup> Other local Tutsi were immediately killed: “12 were machine-gunned by Bahutu National Guardsmen in the fortnight immediately following the foray from across the border with Burundi to the south on December 20.”<sup>97</sup> As other *Inyenzi* attacks took place between December 1963 and February 1964, the reprisals grew increasingly worse until the media worldwide started talking of genocide.<sup>98</sup> Impressions of the situation are best gleaned from newspaper reports from the area. The correspondent of *Le Monde* in Butare wrote in mid-January that

It is in the Gikongoro prefecture ... that this repression seems to have reached its peak. Encouraged by certain authorities, the Hutu attacked Tutsi huts: armed with spears and clubs, they massacred all the Tutsi they could find and threw their corpses in the river. Four thousand Tutsi managed to take refuge at Kadwa Mission and two thousand five

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<sup>91</sup> Emmanuel Coppieters, “Rwanda naar de Onafhankelijkheid” Overdruk uit *De Standaard*, 23, 24, en 27 Augustus 1962, 10

<sup>92</sup> High Commissioner for Refugees. *Report on the Situation of Refugees from Rwanda*. New York: United Nations, 1963, 1

<sup>93</sup> ‘Conjuration contre le Ruanda’, 3/279. “Ruanda: Décembre ’63 – Septembre ’64 GR 6Q 50” Service Historique de la Défense; “Découverte d’un dépôt d’armes clandestines à Usumbura”, *Le Courrier d’Afrique* (Léopoldville, Congo-Belge), 3 December 1963, 1

<sup>94</sup> From: John Bennett, Usumbura To: - ‘Appreciation of the Rwanda Armed Forces as expounded by Col. Alexander, the U.S. Military Attaché.’, 14 February 1964. “FO 371/177017, JR 1201/3G” The National Archives of the United Kingdom.

<sup>95</sup> From: Barbey, Bujumbura To: Affaires Etrangères ‘Evènement survenu à KIGALI’, 23 December 1963. “Ruanda: Décembre ’63 – Septembre ’64, GR 6Q 50” Service Historique de la Défense.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> “The aftermath of a massacre”, *Sunday Times*, 9 February 1964, 3

<sup>98</sup> “Genocide in the Heart of Africa”, *Financial Times*, 7 February 1964, 7; *Le Courrier d’Afrique*, 17 January 1964, 1 (“Plusieurs milliers d’entre eux, hommes, femmes et enfants ont été massacrés.”) Despite what some have argued, there was widespread media attention given to the situation in Rwanda. See Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda’s Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2008), 34

hundred at Cyanika Mission. The others, seven or eight thousand, are probably dead. The Nyabarongo carries their corpses. ... People speak of thousands of dead in the prefecture of Shangugu [Cyangugu] and of other massacres in the North.<sup>99</sup>

A correspondent for *The Times* reported that

Massacres are being carried out by groups of Hutu organised on a local basis and armed mostly with pangas. ... Since the Government's first reprisals on the refugee camps, the massacres have spread throughout the country and, as far as observers can tell, seem to be completely indiscriminate. Parties of panga armed Hutu arrive at a Tutsi hut and call for the head of the house. He gives himself up, hoping he will be taken to the local police station, but is seldom seen again, unless his savagely mutilated body is found. ... with killings going on at the rate of 1,000 a day for the past month it is feared that President Kayibanda's target is the whole 250,000 [Tutsi in Rwanda].<sup>100</sup>

Tom Stacey, a reporter for *The Sunday Times*, toured through Rwanda at the start of February and wrote that

Every figure from 8,000 to 15,000 has been given to me as the number of Batutsi ... slaughtered by the Bahutu ... The reprisals have been in two waves. The first was from late December to the first week of January – the more or less systematic slaughter at the behest of the government ... of any visible male Batutsi and often mothers of male children. The second wave, till last week, was the rounding up of any Batutsi of conceivable influence for good or evil. They were loaded into trucks and machine-gunned by the nearest river, where after mutilation the bodies were dumped. ... 142,000 refugees.<sup>101</sup>

A group of Dutch missionaries described what they saw upon arriving at a mission station:

a very young missionary, unshaved, covered in mud and totally exhausted opened the heavily barricaded door. He smoked incessantly. "That's how I stay awake," he said, "I have not slept in a week. We have 2600 refugees here, they are the survivors of the 15,000 refugees in our district. All the others have been murdered. 1900 refugees sleep in the church in shifts."<sup>102</sup>

These slaughters encouraged more *Inyenzi* attacks, none of which was successful. On 6 February, *Le Monde* reported that several thousand *Inyenzi* had launched an attack on Rwanda from Kivu province, in Congo, on the previous day. A Swedish missionary who

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<sup>99</sup> "De sanglants incidents auraient lieu au Ruanda", *Le Monde*, 17 January 1964, 3. "C'est dans la préfecture de Gikongoro ... que cette répression semble prendre la plus grande ampleur. Encouragés par certaines des autorités, les Hutus attaquent les huttes des Tutsi; armés de lances et de massues, ils massacrent tous les Tutsi qu'ils peuvent atteindre et jettent leurs cadavres à la rivière. Quatre mille Tutsi parvinrent à se réfugier à la mission Kadwa, deux mille cinq cents à celle de Cyanika. Les autres, sept ou huit mille, sont probablement morts. La Nyabarongo charrie des cadavres. ... On parle de milliers de morts dans la préfecture de Shangugu [Cyangugu] et d'autres massacres dans le Nord."

<sup>100</sup> "Rwanda Policy of Genocide Alleged", *The Times*, 3 February 1964, 10

<sup>101</sup> "The aftermath of a massacre", *Sunday Times*, 3

<sup>102</sup> "Burgeroorlog Rwanda heeft nasleep van ellende" *Friese Koerier* (Heereveen, Nederland), 14 February 1964, 15 "opende een zeer jonge zendeling, ongeschoren, bedekt met modder en complete uitgeput voor ons de zwaar gebarricadeerde deur van de zendingspost. Hij rookte zonder ophouden. 'Zo blijf ik wakker', zei hij. 'Ik heb al een week niet geslapen. Wij hebben 2600 vluchtelingen hier, die de overlevenden zijn van 15,000 vluchtelingen in ons district. Al de anderen zijn vermoord. 1900 vluchtelingen slapen in ploegen in de kerk.'"

witnessed the events said that “they launched a suicide attack ... they were massacred by Rwandan troops as soon as they crossed the border.”<sup>103</sup> The first Rwandan civil war came to a close in 1964, as *Inyenzi* attacks petered out following their failure to seize power.<sup>104</sup>

For a number of reasons we must understand this whole period as a single historical episode: the first Rwandan civil war. The most important consideration is that the struggle over who would be in power in post-independence Rwanda was not decided until 1964. Prior to this, the *Inyenzi* still believed they could win. In other words, the almost continued violence in Rwanda between November 1959 and 1964 had the same motive on both sides: the seizure of political power. Mamdani has argued that “the revolution was not a bloodbath.” Rather, it was “the attempted restoration that followed that opened the gateway to a blood-soaked political future for Rwanda.”<sup>105</sup> However, it was not the counterattack of the Mwami after the start of the Social Revolution which inaugurated the bloodbath. The killing had started immediately and lasted continuously until 1964. As the massacres against the Tutsi were, from a military point of view, unnecessary, they had another motive. Indeed they spoke to a crucial ambition of the Revolution: the total destruction of any Tutsi political force within the country. The Social Revolution was the bloodbath which opened the gateway to a horrific future.

Estimating the death toll of the first Rwandan civil war is difficult because of conflicting evidence. It is also difficult to know when double counting occurred or when reporting, as honest as it might have attempted to be, simply could not encompass the whole truth. Rwandan geography is extraordinarily rugged and large parts of the country would simply have been outside the gaze of European journalists or Belgian authorities, on whose evidence most of the casualty numbers are based. It follows that the number of people killed during this period could have been much higher, if many deaths were unobserved, or much lower, if massacres were over-reported. It is, however, safe to say that several tens of thousands died during the fighting, ethnic cleansing and genocide between 1959 and 1964.

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<sup>103</sup> “Trois mille Tutsis réfugiés au Congo-Léopoldville lanceraient une ‘attaque-suicide’ contre le Ruanda”, *Le Monde*, 6 February 1964

<sup>104</sup> *Inyenzi* attacks continued but would no longer pose a serious threat. On 2 July 1966, the Dutch consulate reported that “een laatste inval heeft een tiental dagen geleden plaats gehad vanuit Tanzanie.” From: P. Rijke, Bujumbura To: Ambassadeur, Kinshasa ‘Onafhankelijkheidsdagviering 1 juli 1966, Rwanda’, 2 July 1966. “Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief. Another attack took place on 20 July 1966, From: Ambassadeur Zeylstra To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken ‘Rwanda: Politiek’, 27 July 1966. “Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief. And again around 30 November 1966, From: P. Rijke, Bujumbura To: Ambassadeur, Kinshasa ‘Rwanda Politiek’, 30 November 1966. “Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief.

<sup>105</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 130. Nor does Mamdani’s body count seem very persuasive. While the Belgian official report on the November 1959 violence indicates that the commission heard of 150 deaths, it also notes that “the exact number of deaths is certainly greater.” The indication of between 5,000 and 15,000 death during the course of the Social Revolution appears to be similarly low, considering the reports from newspapers and missionaries at the time. Peigneux, Malengreau, and Frédéricq, *Rapport de la Commission*, 89-90 (“il est certain que le chiffre exact des morts doit être supérieur”).

## Conclusion

When we look at the entire period of the Social Revolution, from 1959 to 1964, the similarities with the later Struggle for Liberation and the ensuing Genocide are clear. Firstly, it was at this time that the idea was born of a possible regime change initiated by refugees from outside Rwanda. Secondly, the Tutsi within Rwanda were targeted as punishment for attacks originating from outside the country. The rhetoric which accompanied these killings would be echoed in the early 1990s. Thirdly, the climax of the conflict was, in both cases, an orgy of violence which dwarfed that which had preceded it. These similarities can only be explained by evoking the widespread, strong and enduring memory of the Social Revolution. The actors on the Rwandan scene in 1990-1994 were not operating in a vacuum, but in the context of the memories of the past. Juvénal Habyarimana was 23 when the Social Revolution started. This was a formative time for him and some of his colleagues who would go on to hold important positions in the FAR during the Struggle for Liberation.

By ejecting thousands of Tutsi and Hutu from Rwanda, the Social Revolution laid the foundations for the Struggle. These refugees would be stranded outside the country, all the while becoming increasingly intent on returning home. Come 1990, they decided to do so by force, as will be seen in chapter IV. But, first, the next chapter will look at the state created by Social Revolution, its internal dynamics, its economic strength and the two presidents who defined it.

### III - THE STORY OF RWANDA: FROM KAYIBANDA TO HABYARIMANA

The power of a nation-state by no means consists only in its armed forces, but also in its economic and technical resources; in the dexterity, foresight and resolution with which its foreign policy is conducted; in the efficiency of its social and political organisation. It consists most of all in the nation itself, the people; their skills, energy, ambition, discipline, initiative; their beliefs, myths and illusions.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter brings us from the start of the Kayibanda presidency right up to the eve of the outbreak of the Struggle for Liberation in 1990. Along the way, it looks at how Habyarimana became president, and using new source material, it interprets the events differently from the established historiography.<sup>2</sup> The chapter does not show Habyarimana's coup as having been triggered by the persecution of the Tutsi under Kayibanda's regime, but rather takes a wider perspective and positions the then minister of defence as a hard-nosed patriot intent on protecting his country and army from certain destruction. Another theme is the Rwandan economy and its steady decline, which is discussed in some detail for three reasons. First, an awful lot has been written about the economic background to the Genocide and this literature deserves attention. Secondly, while the "Malthusian Trap" explanation for the Genocide seems too simple, the economic deprivations which ordinary Rwandans faced on a daily basis were part of the context of the Struggle for Liberation. Had the Rwandan economy been in a better shape, there is no doubt that it could have acted as an escape valve for ethnic tensions, making political militias less attractive as potential employers. Third, a study of the economy reveals evident nepotism at all levels of Rwandan society, including the armed forces. As such, this chapter also lays the groundwork for understanding why the FAR (*Forces armées rwandaises*, as the *Garde nationale* was renamed after Habyarimana's coup d'état) would prove unable to defeat the RPF.

#### The Kayibanda Years

Following the end of the *Inyenzi* challenge, Kayibanda set about consolidating his grip on power. In the 1965 elections, he won 95% of the vote and PARMEHUTU a corresponding share of the National Assembly. This effectively marginalized APROSOMA and gave

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<sup>1</sup> Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), ix; Some might be surprised by the use of the nation-state concept when applied to Africa. After all it is usually considered a Eurocentric western concept. However, there is no doubt that Rwanda has a long history of centralised rule. When discussing the early 18<sup>th</sup> century Vansina writes that "Over the course of almost three quarters of a century, the king and the elite at court succeeded in creating a centralised kingdom ... Thus a system of government was elaborated here that was unique in the whole region of the Great Lakes." (Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, 67-68). David Newbury writes that, "this geographically diverse region was also politically diverse, and for much of its history included several dynastic units. Nonetheless over time one dynasty, associated with the Nyiginya clan identity, had come to dominate the politics of the region." (Des Forges, *Defeat is the Only Bad News*, 5-7). It is also important to note that Rwanda's borders were not determined by colonial machinations at the Berlin Conference. While colonialism had a slight effect on them, there were no significant geographic changes to the country's heartland. That national consciousness survived colonialism is amply demonstrated by the fact that there was never any doubt Rwanda and Burundi would go their separate ways after independence, despite having been grouped as Ruanda-Urundi for 40 years. Though Rwanda has of course experienced change, historical upheaval and revolution in its history since 1700, these are no different from, say, the French Revolution or the English Civil War.

<sup>2</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997), 61, 74-78

Kayibanda a free hand in appointing his cabinet. While the elections were conducted in a de facto one-party state, “there [was] no doubt that Mr. Kayibanda [had] a strong popular following throughout Rwanda.”<sup>3</sup> While it had been easy for Kayibanda to form a common front against the monarchy, once that common enemy disappeared, it became significantly more difficult to keep the Social Revolution going. With the monarchy ejected, and the former ruling classes of the country abroad, Kayibanda faced the task of forging a government which would allow him to consolidate his power. Usually, in Africa, this would be achieved by co-opting smaller ethnic groups into the government to assure their loyalty, as explained by Philip Roessler.

In order to win the support of power brokers embedded in different ethnic networks, rulers had to incorporate them into the dominant coalition to assure them of their “access to a share of the public resources controlled by the state.” By giving rivals a stake in their regimes, rulers seek to gain allies and reduce the relative benefits their rivals gain from trying to capture state power on their own.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of Rwanda, it was not ethnic networks that Kayibanda needed to co-opt, but their regional equivalents. Kayibanda’s home region, in the centre of the country, and the south were thus mollified economically.

Kayibanda had inherited one of the world’s poorest economies, in which the basic building blocks remained thousands of semi self-sufficient rural households scattered amongst the hills. Besides one or two small urban centres, it was these hills which housed the vast majority of the population. Cultivation included a mix of crops: beans, sorghum, sweet potato, cassava and maize, while some animals like sheep, goats or cows were also usually found on the farms. The Dutch Ambassador to Rwanda wrote in 1971 that Rwanda,

Burundi, and in Africa Mali and Upper Volta [belong] to the poorest countries on earth measured in income per capita, which is less than \$50 a year. On top of that we should not forget that in Rwanda of the roughly \$47 per capita \$30 is in kind and not more than \$17 is monetary.<sup>5</sup>

He further explained that most of the monetary income was earned by a small portion of the population and that “an average agricultural family of 6 people, in which everyone, as soon as they can walk, will contribute in one manner or another to the household economy, will not earn more than \$15 a year with which to fulfil their necessary purchases, taxes and other obligations.”<sup>6</sup> Much land became available after the Social Revolution, as the mostly Tutsi refugees abandoned theirs, taking their cattle with them. This meant that land previously used for grazing could now be used for agriculture. Some of it lay at the bottom of local valleys, but most of it was located in the east of the country. The regime of Grégoire Kayibanda

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<sup>3</sup> From: J.S. Bennett, Bujumbura To: West and Central Africa Department, FCO ‘Bujumbura Despatch no.9 of the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1965: Elections in Rwanda.’, 13 November 1965. “FO 371/181948” The National Archives of the United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 54

<sup>5</sup> From: C. Th. R. van Baarda, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken ‘Rwanda’, 22 February 1971. “Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief., 9

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

redistributed the land in the valleys to local farmers, and the rest to farmers from Rwanda's southern and central regions, the traditional PARMEHUTU powerbase, thereby causing an influx of settlers into "the core areas of the old Rwandan kingdom and the pastoralist heartlands."<sup>7</sup> One of the key government demands placed on these settlers on former pasturelands was to grow coffee crops.<sup>8</sup>

The main region which could rival Kayibanda, and which did not benefit much from these land redistribution policies, was the north. Northerners were key in the armed forces, the head of the army (the *Garde nationale*), Major Habyarimana, being the most prominent. There were several others as well, including Habyarimana's brother-in-law, Commander Pierre-Célestin Rwagafilita, and Major Alexis Kanyarengwe, who would become the head of the *sûreté*. Keeping these "violence specialists" within the dominant coalition would be crucial if Kayibanda was to remain in power.<sup>9</sup> This is why Kayibanda made Major Habyarimana the new minister of National Guard and Police, replacing Mr Calliope Mulindahabi, "a fat useless oaf," according to an unkind British assessment.<sup>10</sup> Another key factor in the relationship with the military were the Belgian advisors who remained in the country after independence. These advisors enjoyed an exceptionally good working relationship with their Rwandan colleagues and remained within the chain of command until 1973, which meant they actually commanded a significant part of the *Garde nationale*. The importance of this group from the north was borne out when, in 1967, Lieutenant Joachim Maramutsa, a Hutu from the north, attempted a coup d'état.<sup>11</sup> He was by all accounts an intelligent and aggressive man who had been educated at the Grand Seminary of Nyondo in Gisenyi, and he was known to Belgian military assistants as "the First Consul," a reference to Napoleon Bonaparte. The plan was for the police from Ruhengeri to advance on Kigali while the Kigali police took key points in the city. Maramutsa would then lead his company from Camp Kanombe and take the house of President Kayibanda. However, at the last moment, the Kigali police withdrew from the coup and exposed the conspiracy.

This failed coup attempt is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, Kayibanda had mollified northerners by making Habyarimana minister of defence in 1965; this had obviously been an effective move, given that the rest of the *Garde nationale* did not join Maramutsa in his coup attempt. Secondly, it raises questions about the political unity of the north. Habyarimana's refusal to join in the coup might well be an expression of the rivalry between Ruhengeri and Gisenyi. However, it seems more likely that between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s Kayibanda's and Habyarimana's aims aligned. Both were acutely aware of the fundamental economic and developmental challenges which Rwanda faced, and both realised that structural economic aid would not only benefit the country, but also their own clientelist networks. To keep aid flowing into the country two preconditions were paramount. First, a

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<sup>7</sup> Catherine Boone, *Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 236-237

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 237

<sup>9</sup> Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa*, 54

<sup>10</sup> From: J.S. Bennett, Bujumbura To: West and Central Africa Department, FCO 'Bujumbura Despatch no.9 of the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1965: Elections in Rwanda', 13 November 1965. TNA.

<sup>11</sup> From: G.A. Vijgeboom, Kigali To: Ambassade der Nederlanden, Kinshasa 'Berechting ingevolge staatsgreep van 1967', 28 September 1971. "Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162" Nationaal Archief.

stable political system, more or less oriented towards the West and, second, a minimum of corruption. Western diplomats were generally content with Kayibanda's rule. As a Dutch diplomat noted, "The first impression the President gave me at this event was an exceptionally friendly one; the ease and simplicity of this man do not obscure a deliberate personality, capable of discussing various subjects in surprising depth."<sup>12</sup> Kayibanda, moreover, was also seen as a "man of high character, incorruptible and frugal,"<sup>13</sup> who "at night and on weekends would return to his small farm."<sup>14</sup> Both the Dutch and the British diplomatic missions in Kigali also noted that several of his ministers were of a lower calibre. For instance, one report described "the [new] Minister of Public Works, Mr. Charles Kanyamahanga, until recently Director General of the Department of Mines, [as] unsavoury and it is widely rumoured that he finds difficulty in keeping his fingers out of the till."<sup>15</sup> The foreign diplomats also noted that Kayibanda was an "absolutist ruler,"<sup>16</sup> and that "Parmehutu today is the only organised political force in Rwanda. There are in the country no unions. There is no intelligentsia or bourgeoisie class. There is no press. ... Rwanda must be considered a one party state."<sup>17</sup>

As long as the relationship between the president and the minister of defence remained cordial, and the country stayed on course without too much disturbance, Kayibanda's rule was secure. However, on 29 April 1972, violence erupted in neighbouring Burundi, when Hutu rebels attacked the Tutsi government and army. While the complex causes of that violence fall outside the scope of this study, it should be noted that the Hutu-Tutsi dichotomy was the lens through which events in Burundi were seen in Rwanda. The initial outbreak of violence in April was followed by brutal repression by the Tutsi army.

What followed was not so much a repression as a hideous slaughter of Hutu populations. The carnage continued unabated until August. By then, almost every educated Hutu was either dead or in exile.<sup>18</sup>

In total, between one hundred thousand and two hundred thousand mostly Hutu people were killed in Burundi in 1972. Many of the Burundian Hutu fled to Rwanda and told their stories.

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<sup>12</sup> From: C. Th. R. van Baarda, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken 'Aanbieding geloofsbrieven te Kigali', 18 April 1969. "Inv.nr.: 2 Archiefbloknummer: Z162" Nationaal Archief, 3 "De eerste indruk welke ik bij deze gelegenheid van President Grégoire Kayibanda mocht krijgen is een uitzonderlijk sympathieke; de ongedwongenheid en eenvoud van deze man verbergt nochtans niet een doelbewuste persoonlijkheid die met verrassende kennis van zaken tal van onderwerpen weet aan te stippen."

<sup>13</sup> From: C. G. Verdonck Huffnagel, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken 'Rwanda's nieuwe bewind', 29 November 1973. "Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162" Nationaal Archief, 2 "Ofschoon de president algemeen beschouwd werd als een hoogstaand, onomkoopbaar, sober levend man te zijn, was hij tevens een radicale alleenheerser."

<sup>14</sup> From: W. G. Zeylstra, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken 'Rwanda: politiek', 26 May 1967. "Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162" Nationaal Archief, 3 "President Kayibanda, die 's avonds en gedurende het weekeinde naar zijn oude boerenhuisje terugkeert en ook in functie de grootste eenvoud nastreeft, is een waardig nationaal symbool."

<sup>15</sup> From: J.S. Bennett, Bujumbura To: West and Central Africa Department, FCO 'Bujumbura Despatch no.9 of the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1965: Elections in Rwanda.', 13 November 1965. TNA.

<sup>16</sup> From: C. G. Verdonck Huffnagel, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken 'Rwanda's nieuwe bewind', 29 November 1973. NL-NA, 2 "Was hij tevens een radicale alleenheerser."

<sup>17</sup> From: J.S. Bennett, Bujumbura To: West and Central African Department 'Elections in Rwanda', 28 July 1964. "FO 371/181948. JN 1018/2" The National Archives of the United Kingdom.

<sup>18</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 96-97

Soon, vigilante groups set up in Rwanda went about enforcing anti-Tutsi ethnic quotas in educational institutes and the business sector. It was a while before this movement took root, but it did end up gathering significant momentum, as the Dutch consulate in Kigali noted the following year.

In mid-January all the work and residency permits of foreign private citizens were revoked. ... At the same time pressure was exerted on all foreign entities to reduce their Tutsi staff to 10% of the total and appoint a Rwandan – read Hutu – as the second man in management. That this “Tutsi witch-hunt” was planned was proven by the fact that posters with the names of Tutsi employees who had to disappear were pasted onto foreign companies and education institutes at night. The world service of the DBR [German Federal Republic] in Kigali, Deutsche Welle, had to fire its staff which had been specially trained in the [Federal] Republic [of Germany]. The Sabena office was suddenly empty with the exception of the Belgian manager. In schools and at the university, students turned on their Tutsi classmates and teachers. These had to flee. Outside of the cities, Tutsis living in isolation were attacked by their Hutu neighbours and were forced to flee or killed. Official figures say 368 Tutsi lost their lives. The true figure is higher because many families were unable to escape from their huts which had been set on fire and countless numbers of bodies were thrown in lakes and rivers. ... it is certain that former president Kayibanda and, amongst others, his radical Minister of Foreign Affairs, the in the Netherlands well known former Rwandan ambassador Munyaneza, were behind the disappearance of the Tutsi.<sup>19</sup>

The US Embassy in Kigali told a similar story, especially concerning the persecution of Tutsi in the countryside. On 7 March 1973, it reported that the “Belgian estimate was that ‘systematic’ hut burning had occurred in about ¼ of the country’s 160 communes, but hardly at all in the rest of the country.”<sup>20</sup> On the same day, a report from Bukavu, just over the Zairian border, noted that the “Tutsi director of tea plantation outside Gisenyi told ... rep in

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<sup>19</sup> C. G. Verdonck Huffnagel, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken ‘Rwanda’s nieuwe bewind’, 29 November 1973. NL-NA, 3 “Medio januari 1973 werden plotseling de verblijfs- en werkvergunningen van alle buitenlandse particulieren ingetrokken. Zij moesten zich opnieuw laten registreren. Gelijkijdig werd op alle buitenlandse vestigingen druk uitgeoefend hun Tutsi personeelbestand tot 10% van de bezetting te verminderen en als tweede man in de directie een Rwandees – lees Hutu – aan te wijzen. Dat de “Tutsi Hetze” terdege was voorbereid bleek uit ’s nachts aangeplakte lijsten op de gebouwen van leerinstellingen en buitenlandse ondernemingen met de namen van Tutsi werknemers die moesten verdwijnen . De wereldomroep van de D.B.R. te Kigali, die Deutsche Welle, moest haar staf van speciaal in de Bondsrepubliek opgeleide Tutsi technici ontslaan. Het Sabenakantoor aldaar was plotseling op de Belgische manager na geheel ontvolkt. Op de scholen en de Universiteit keerden de studenten zich tegen hun Tutsi klasgenoten en leerkrachten. Deze moesten vluchten. Buiten de steden werden veelal geïsoleerd wonende Tutsi landbouwers door hun Hutu burens aangevallen, verdreven of vermoord. De officiële cijfers spreken van 368 Tutsi die het leven lieten. Het werkelijke cijfer ligt hoger omdat vele Tutsi families niet uit hun in brand gestoken hutten wisten te ontsnappen en ontelbare lijken in de rivieren en meren werden geworpen. ... het staat vast dat ex-President Kayibanda en o.a. zijn radicale minister van buitenlandse zaken, de in Nederland wel bekende oud-Rwandese ambassadeur Munyaneza, achter de verwijdering van de Tutsi stonden.”; More proof of the hard line of Munyaneza can be found in: From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘ethnic troubles’, 7 March 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>20</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘ethnic troubles’, 7 March 1973. US-NA.

Goma March 2 that twelve Tutsi killed on his plantation and 20 huts burned. Director was told by local authorities to either leave or be shot.”<sup>21</sup>

It took the government of Rwanda until March to restore order throughout the country.<sup>22</sup> It was only then that Kayibanda decided to deliver a speech to the nation. On 23 March 1973, he announced that the goals of the 1959 Revolution had to be pursued peacefully. He went on to say that discipline was crucial, that regionalism should be abandoned and that disloyalty would be punished.<sup>23</sup> While this speech was ostensibly aimed at those who had caused the troubles, it seems that the speech had another audience as well: northerners who might be thinking of taking advantage of the disturbances to launch a coup attempt. After all, bringing regionalism into the speech makes no sense, when one considers that Hutu and Tutsi lived intermingled throughout Rwanda. Ejecting Tutsi out of jobs and schools was not a regional affair. This is all the more plausible as, on 6 April 1973, the US Embassy in Kigali reported about “Rumours of recent coup d’état. ... Archbishop of Kabgayi, monsignor Perraudin, long-time resident with credible and varied sources of information told ambassador he believed there had been ‘small’ coup attempt thwarted by loyalty of National Guard and ‘most’ ministers.”<sup>24</sup> Soon after, Colonel Habyarimana was promoted to Major General and Major Kanyarengwe to Lieutenant Colonel. The initial storm had thus been weathered by President Kayibanda. While the country had been shaken and his rule had been challenged, the bulk of the *Garde nationale* had remained loyal and the president had managed to show that he was not “soft” on the Tutsi. However, there does seem to have been a perceptible shift in power from the office of the president to that of the minister of defence. The US Embassy cabled the State Department on 25 April that

In view of likelihood that young Rwandan officers will play important future political role, with resultant impact on US interests, embassy strongly recommends modest program for training military officers. GOR [Government of Rwanda] has informally indicated its strong interest in such program and we believe it highly desirable to try and meet limited Rwandan requests in this area.<sup>25</sup>

Only a fortnight later, the president was faced with another problem linked to the Burundi issue. On 12 May, Burundian Hutu refugees in Kigali and Refugee Camp Lilima “received a message telling them to prepare for an attack on Burundi.”<sup>26</sup> Major General Habyarimana was interrupted while at mass to deal with the situation. However, at such short notice, the *Garde nationale* was unable to prevent up to one thousand Burundians from heading to the border. As heavy fighting erupted in northern Burundi, close to the Rwandan frontier, the

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<sup>21</sup> From: US Consulate, Bukavu To: Secretary of State ‘refugees from Rwanda’, 7 March 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>22</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘ethnic troubles: request for emergency relief’, 14 March 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>23</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘Kayibanda statement on recent troubles’, 26 March 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>24</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘Rwandan Political Activity’, 6 April 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>25</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘Youth Para’, 25 April 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>26</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘Burundi Refugee Activity’, 14 May 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Burundian government led by President Michel Micombero warned Rwanda to move the Burundian refugee camps in Rwanda away from the border areas or face consequences.<sup>27</sup> It is hard to determine whether the Kayibanda government was actually trying to stop the incursion by the Burundian refugees into Burundi, or if some elements of the government continued to support them. The situation took an ominous turn when, on 14 May, President and General Amin of Uganda called a representative of the Burundian Embassy in Kampala and “asked him to send a telegram to President Micombero informing him that Uganda is ready to assist him to crush the invasion by rebels who attacked his country from Rwanda and Tanzania over the weekend.”<sup>28</sup> That night the Minister of International Cooperation, Munyaneza, attended a dinner at the Belgian Embassy and told the ambassador that “GOR worried over possibility of Burundi retaliation against Rwanda for refugee attack.”<sup>29</sup>

Rwanda was now caught in a difficult strategic situation. If Micombero attacked in retaliation for the raids emanating from Rwanda, and Uganda moved in at the same time, the small *Garde nationale* would not be able to defend the country. It would face a war on two fronts, with Belgian-trained Burundian troops in the south and the numerically superior Ugandan army in the north. Kayibanda was caught in a bind. If he addressed the nation, distancing himself and his government from the predominantly Hutu incursions into Rwanda, he risked the ire of the people. On the other hand, if he said nothing, the Burundi-Uganda threat would increase by the day. So, on 15 May, Minister of International Cooperation Munyaneza boarded a small plane to Goma with the intention of transferring onto a commercial flight to Kinshasa from there. As the US Embassy in Kigali noted: “logical to speculate GOR seeking Mobutu’s understanding GOR’s innocence in Burundi situation and possibly even intercession with Amin on account latter’s reported promise assist Burundi against outside attack.”<sup>30</sup>

To make matters worse, the Belgian government now threatened to end the Military Assistance Mission to the *Garde nationale* unless Rwanda agreed to certain specific terms. Belgians who were part of the Military Assistance team would be taken out of the chain of command, exempted from guard duty, and required to wear insignia which distinguished them as Belgians.<sup>31</sup> These measures seem specifically designed to ensure that Belgian military in Rwanda would not be on the front line in any conflict. Until then, Belgian officers had retained several command positions in the *Garde nationale* and carried out much of the operational planning. The Belgians might have been mindful of the fact that there were also Belgian officers training the Burundian army and that a possible conflict might see Belgians fighting Belgians. Thus, continuing Belgian support was based partly on Rwanda’s ability to

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<sup>27</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘Message to HCR Geneva’, 14 May 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>28</sup> From: US Embassy, Kampala To: Secretary of State ‘General Amin declares he is ready to assist Burundi’, 15 May 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>29</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘Burundi Situation’, 16 May 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> From: US Embassy, Brussels To: Secretary of State ‘Belgium may withdraw military technical assistance from Rwanda’, 28 June 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration; “Belgian Diplomats Fear Burundi Clash With Rwanda Force”, *The New York Times*, 17 May 1973, 10.

reconcile with Burundi. All these factors gave Habyarimana significant reasons to overthrow the Kayibanda government. Not only had Kayibanda put the country in mortal danger by allowing the tension with Burundi to escalate, but he had also been shown to be losing control during anti-Tutsi pogroms of 1972. On top of that, the withdrawal of Belgian military support to Rwanda would lead to the ruin of Habyarimana's *Garde nationale*.

It is unclear whether Habyarimana decided to launch the *coup d'état*, or whether the following account of Kayibanda making the first move is correct. Either way, the end result was the same. On 11 July 1973, the US Embassy in Kigali reported that

the bank governor Birara, General Habyalimana [sic] and other principal National Guard officers were to be called to the presidency one by one that night [4 July] and assassinated, with Captain Bizimana the trigger man. The next day the presidency would have announced that these men had come to assassinate the president and were killed in the attempt.<sup>32</sup>

Bizimana allegedly missed his mark as Habyarimana was leaving the presidency, which enabled the latter to flee to Camp Kanombe, where several Belgian officers were quartered. Habyarimana knew he could trust them to take his side in the affair. On arrival at the barracks, he put in motion a plan which had been designed by a Belgian officer in case of major insurrection throughout the country.<sup>33</sup> *Garde nationale* troops moved to capture key locations throughout Kigali and President Kayibanda was arrested. Though the Belgian Ambassador was immediately instructed to confine all Belgian military personnel to their houses,

he did not comply, permitting them to carry on usual technical functions like repairing equipment, and urgently requested approval of his position. He was relieved to receive approval. Ambassador Baekelandt believes it important not to drag feet on supporting Habyalimana [sic] in order to gain goodwill, or at least escape alienation, having in mind the long haul.<sup>34</sup>

Two days later, on 7 July 1973, Habyarimana had a meeting with Ambassador Baekelandt. Following the meeting, Baekelandt asked permission to travel back to Belgium where “he intends to argue for early and favourable response to Habyalimana's [sic] requests since takeover to regularize Belgian military assistance along lines desired by Belgium.”<sup>35</sup>

Internationally, the coup was well received. Besides Belgium, both France and the Federal Republic of Germany reported that diplomatic relations would remain unchanged.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State 'Rwanda Coup', 11 July 1973. "ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973" U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. From: C. G. Verdonck Huffnagel To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken 'Nieuwe Rwandese Regering', 9 August 1973. "Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162" Nationaal Archief.

<sup>33</sup> It was described to me by someone close to the events as “just like the German operation in World War Two – operation Valkyrie.”

<sup>34</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State 'Rwanda Coup', 11 July 1973. US-NA; From: US Embassy, Brussels To: Secretary of State 'New Rwandan Government: Recognition Issue', 12 July 1973. "ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973" U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Presidents Mobutu of Zaire and Micombero of Burundi sent telegrams of support to Habyarimana, and the radio in Burundi and Zaire broadcast in support of the coup.<sup>37</sup> Relations with Burundi quickly improved. A Rwandan delegation visited the country on 9 July to “spare no effort to improve fraternal and long-standing relations between Rwanda and Burundi,”<sup>38</sup> and President Micombero even visited Rwanda in October 1974.<sup>39</sup> Relations with Amin’s Uganda were also restored when Habyarimana met him in Kabale on 30 July 1973.<sup>40</sup> Thus, within the space of one month, General, now President Habyarimana had managed to reset relations with Burundi and Uganda, removing external threats to Rwanda, and to secure the support of Belgium – with its military aid – France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Zaire.

Internally the coup was justified by explaining that the *Garde nationale* thought Rwanda was “going down drain” and that this “would lead to ‘genocide’, not of type in Burundi [Hutu-Tutsi] but rather between North and South Rwanda.”<sup>41</sup> The coup was relatively bloodless, and besides Kayibanda (who died in detention in 1976) and his direct circle there were no victims. The lack of strong reaction in support of Kayibanda, especially among the farmers from the south, was probably a consequence of their disillusionment with the land and life they had been given in the east of the country.

The conversion of former pastures and land in the east of Rwanda was part of active government planning, and it was often carried out wholly by local authorities – down to the planning of the irrigation and partition of the land.<sup>42</sup> In theory, the land on which these *paysannats* were settled was carefully selected beforehand by the Ministry of Agriculture in cooperation with the *Institut des sciences agronomiques du Rwanda* (ISAR).<sup>43</sup> Plots of about two hectares were delineated, and each farmer was assigned a plot. Utilities, agricultural services and small-scale industries would then be built. The intended result was an egalitarian, high-intensity agriculture with supporting industries. In practice, few of the planned utilities were ever built, while local elites quickly developed. These were usually the

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<sup>37</sup> From: C. G. Verdonck Huffnagel To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken ‘Betrekkingen Rwanda met buurlanden’, 13 juli 1973. “Inv.nr.: 25 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief.; From: US Embassy, Kinshasa To: Secretary of State ‘Zaire Radio Commentary on Rwandan Coup’, 5 July 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.; From: US Embassy, Bujumbura To: Secretary of State ‘Burundi Reaction to Rwanda Coup’, 5 July 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>38</sup> From: US Embassy, Bujumbura To: Secretary of State ‘Micombero receives Rwandan Delegation’, 11 July 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>39</sup> From: I. Verkade, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken ‘Jaarrapport Rwanda’, 30 January 1975. “Inv.nr.: 24 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief, 6; From: US Embassy Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘Visit of Burundi President Micombero: Reconciliation at the top’, 4 October 1974, *wikileaks*, last accessed: 9 January 2018, [https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974KIGALI00543\\_b.html](https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974KIGALI00543_b.html)

<sup>40</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State ‘Generals Amin and Habyalimana meet at Kabale’, 30 July 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>41</sup> From: US Embassy, Nairobi To: Secretary of State ‘Rwandan National Guard dismiss government and National Assembly’, 5 July 1973. “ADD: Electronic Telegrams, 1973” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>42</sup> Jennifer Maria Olson, “Farmer Responses to land degradation in Gikongoro” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1994), 113

<sup>43</sup> Victor Silvestre, “Différenciations socio-économiques dans une société à vocation égalitaire: Masaka dans le paysannat de l’Icyanya (Socio-Economic Differences in an Equality-Oriented Society)”, *Cahiers d’Études Africaines*, vol. 14, no. 53 (1974), 105

managers of the project – people who were not involved in farming.<sup>44</sup> In addition, in these *paysannats*, the land itself still belonged to the government, which meant that “a farmer’s relationship (or bribing ability) with the local authorities” was key and that “access to much of the valley land was ... seemingly subject to authorities’ whim.”<sup>45</sup> Around 1972 roughly 5% of the Rwandan population lived on these kinds of government-planned agricultural sites and, in most cases, they were forced to grow a certain amount of coffee – regardless of the quality or suitability of the ground.<sup>46</sup>

However, for ordinary Rwandans, there was cause for optimism. Indeed, the rapprochement with Burundi and its Tutsi-dominated regime was a signal to Rwandan Tutsi that they would be safer now than they had been under Kayibanda. As long as they stayed out of politics, they would not be targeted for success in business.<sup>47</sup> In addition, Habyarimana’s accession to power gave new hope that progress was around the corner. For the new president himself it was another matter. While seizing power had proved simple, the prospect of governing Rwanda presented several interlocked problems. It is to these challenges that we now turn.

### **The Habyarimana Years**

President Habyarimana sat at the top of a clientelist network which allowed him to rule the country. As Philip Roessler explains,

In weak states ... politics revolves not so much over the rules of the game as over the distribution of power and wealth between competing networks of “violence specialists.” Thus the key ordering institution in weak states is ... “elite accommodation,” “hegemonial exchange,” and the shadow state respectively. This political institution rests on a series of informal bargains that violence specialists make, in which they agree to refrain from violence and work together to share exclusive access to the central government and the rents that come from controlling the state.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, members of Habyarimana’s extended family and other key allies, mostly from the north, occupied important positions within government, business and the military. This group of people was strong enough to protect their position from possible threats emanating from within Rwandan society – they were the “violence specialists” described by Roessler. The informal agreement between these individuals and Habyarimana was that they would rule the country, protect him from rivals and, in return, would benefit from the prebends, rents and power which could be gained by controlling the government (taxes on import and export duties, foreign aid, etc.). It follows that Habyarimana’s position was secure only as long as he supplied the means to “lubricate the system,” which was no easy task. As will be described in the following sections, Rwanda’s economy was no gold mine, and the most important resources upon which the president could count were the profits generated by

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 104-169

<sup>45</sup> Olson, “Farmer Responses to land degradation in Gikongoro”, 113

<sup>46</sup> Silvestre, “Différenciations socio-économiques dans une société à vocation égalitaire”, 166

<sup>47</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 74-76

<sup>48</sup> Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa*, 11. In the context of Rwanda, the expression “centralised authoritarian patronage” has also been deployed. André Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide: Criminal Politics in Rwanda 1990-1994*, trans. Don E. Webster (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 13-17

the coffee export, as well as foreign aid. When the coffee price collapsed, Habyarimana lost a key tool for keeping violence specialists on his side.<sup>49</sup>

### *Domestic Agriculture*

In 1974, a World Bank report, *Recent Economic Development and Prospects of Rwanda*, identified the main obstacles to economic development as excessive population growth, soil degradation, lack of natural resources, small domestic and regional markets, a poor transport network leading to ports in Kenya and Tanzania and very scarce “technical and managerial manpower.”<sup>50</sup> However, despite these problems, the report was happy to conclude that the Rwandan economy could sustain a growth in GNP from \$60 per capita in 1970 to \$70-75 in 1980, which “is likely to lead to a substantial improvement in the standard of living of the population, *especially its nutrition level* [my emphasis].”<sup>51</sup> This target could be achieved if “agriculture and rural development programs” were to “constitute the backbone of future development.”<sup>52</sup>

Agriculture in Rwanda was important for two reasons. First, it provided food for most of the Rwandan population and, second, it produced export crops which helped finance the country’s development. However, it would be incorrect to draw a strict distinction between subsistence and cash crops. Many people sold or traded part of what would be considered their subsistence crops, such as bananas, sorghum or beans, effectively turning them into cash crops.<sup>53</sup> However, these subsistence/cash crops rarely left the country, unless they were grown in border regions. Thus, it is helpful to see agriculture during the reigns of Kayibanda and Habyarimana as consisting of two sectors differentiated by the commodities’ final destination: one for domestic consumption and one for export.<sup>54</sup> The first consisted of food crops which were grown predominantly to feed the household; such surpluses as existed were then sold on the local market and traded for food which the household could not produce itself. Because this trade happened at the local level, there was little government interference in these transactions, and the farmers reaped the rewards. The second agricultural sector consisted of crops grown specifically for export, especially coffee, tea and pyrethrum (the latter used as a natural insecticide). These crops, through various mechanisms described below, not only earned Rwanda foreign currency, but also formed the mainstay of government revenue. While the state encouraged this second form of agriculture, Rwandan farmers preferred the first, as they did not lose a share to the government and their home crops could be consumed in bad times, unlike coffee, tea or pyrethrum. Other important areas to be targeted according to the World Bank report included public utilities, small and medium-scale industries and infrastructure.

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<sup>49</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 84

<sup>50</sup> World Bank, *Recent Economic Development and prospects of Rwanda Volume I the Main Report*. Written by Attila Sönmez, (Washington DC. 1974), i-ii, 1

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, ii

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, i

<sup>53</sup> Silvestre, “Différenciations socio-économiques dans une société à vocation égalitaire,” 124

<sup>54</sup> Peter D. Little and Michael M. Horowitz, “Subsistence Crops Are Cash Crops: Some Comments with Reference to Eastern Africa”, *Human organisation*, vol. 46, no. 3 (1987): 254-258

However, if we are to understand the problems which the Rwandan economy faced between 1973 and 1990, we must start with the country's balance of payments. While Rwanda needed to import all kinds of goods, ranging from dairy products and fuel to automobiles and typewriters, it never could count on a sufficient level of export earnings. Thus, Rwandan policymakers faced the constant problem of which imports to prioritise and how to boost exports. The drive to increase exports to pay for more imports was complicated by Rwanda's geographical location, population growth and lack of an educated workforce. In fact, additional exports could only come from cash crops, but the danger here was to displace such food crops as the country relied upon to feed its population. Pursuing this option to any significant degree would have precipitated the need for food imports – thereby defeating the very purpose behind the promotion of export crops.

As Verwimp has shown, Habyarimana was a big supporter of food self-sufficiency. In 1974, for instance, he announced that

manual labour, especially agricultural labour is the basis of our economy. We want to repeat that agriculture will stay the essential base of our economic system for the years to come. ... In order to attract the attention of the Rwandan population for this reality, we have named the year 1974 the national year for agriculture and manual labour.<sup>55</sup>

More than ten years later, on 21 May 1986, he further argued that

If it is true that the first objective of a national economy is to be able to feed the country ... one must absolutely be able to identify clearly the key factors our economy needs in order to attain the objective of a well understood food self-reliance.<sup>56</sup>

While Habyarimana might well have genuinely believed in food self-reliance, a reduction in food imports would also free up funds for other uses, including luxury goods for the lubrication of his patronage network. Yet food shortages remained prevalent. The aforementioned World Bank report noted that “the 1967-69 nutrition survey shows periodic and localized shortfall in food supplies in many places in the country.”<sup>57</sup> And while country-wide famines had been avoided since 1944, “local and seasonal shortages keep the threat of famine ever present. This threat should be viewed as a first priority.”<sup>58</sup> These worries were very real. On 19 September 1974, the Dutch Embassy in Kinshasa – which was also responsible for Rwanda – received a message from the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation explaining that the country was “currently experiencing great difficulties to ensure the supply of basic commodities to the population following a considerable deficit in food production.”<sup>59</sup> To combat famines, utmost priority should have been given to food production and distribution. Logic would dictate that it was only after food security had been

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<sup>55</sup> Philip Verwimp, “Development Ideology, the Peasantry and Genocide: Rwanda represented in Habyarimana's speeches”, *Yale Genocide Studies Programme: Working Paper GS13* (1999), 1

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 49

<sup>57</sup> World Bank, *Recent Economic Development and prospects of Rwanda*, 18

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

<sup>59</sup> From: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération To: Ambassade des Pays-Bas, 19 September 1974. “Inv.nr.: 20 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief. “Connait actuellement de grandes difficultés pour assurer l’approvisionnement de la population en denrées de base suite à un déficit considérable de la production vivrière.”

ensured that attention could be paid to more export-oriented crops, like coffee. As most agricultural work was done by hand, practically without working animals, mechanisation or fertiliser, these would have been obvious starting points for improvement.<sup>60</sup> In addition, the time saved on manual labour through mechanisation could have allowed children to go to school, or freed up adults to perform off-farm labour to increase their monetary income. However, by 1991, the World Bank was reporting that “production technology remains overwhelmingly traditional. Basic hand tools include the hoe, pick and machete; there is no use of animals for traction. ... Fertilizer has been used mainly on tea, and for research.”<sup>61</sup> In a word: the problems identified as early as 1974 remained unresolved almost two decades later.

While demographic increase was not a major concern during the pre-colonial or colonial periods, matters changed as the population began to boom in the 1950s, due to lack of birth control, in combination with

the adoption of new crops native to the New World (especially corn, beans, sweet potatoes and manioc, alias cassava) broadening the agricultural base and increasing food production beyond that previously possible with native African crops alone; improved hygiene, preventative medicine, vaccinations of mothers and children, antibiotics, and some control of malaria and other endemic African diseases.<sup>62</sup>

The result was that, by the early 1990s, Rwanda had “a population of 7.5 million, a population growth rate estimated at about 3% and a population density amongst the highest in Africa.”<sup>63</sup> The country is, after all, not one of Africa’s giants in terms of surface area; it is smaller than Denmark or roughly the size of the US State of Maryland.

Thus, an increasing number of people were forced to live off a finite amount of land. As land ran short, Rwandan farmers abandoned traditional methods for preventing soil erosion, which revolved around “long fallowing or migration and new land clearing,”<sup>64</sup> and were forced instead to extract as much from the soil as possible. As Percival and Homer-Dixon explain,

In terms of per capita food production, Rwanda was transformed from one of sub-Saharan Africa’s top three performers in the early 1980s to one of its worst in the later 1980s. Food output had risen 4.7% annually from 1966 to 1982, outpacing the average population growth rate of 3.4%, but much of this rise resulted from an expansion of cropland area and a reduction in fallow periods, not from an increase in technical inputs, such as fertilizer and improved seeds.<sup>65</sup>

The non-use of fertiliser seems particularly puzzling. A country wholly reliant on agriculture should have paid attention to the quality of its soil. But it was not out of ignorance that Rwandan farmers stopped using fertiliser. In fact, they probably discontinued its use as a result of land pressure: as pastureland ran out, or was brought under cultivation, there was no

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<sup>60</sup> World Bank, *Recent Economic Development and prospects of Rwanda*, 18

<sup>61</sup> World Bank, *Rwanda: Agricultural Strategy Review*. Written by Jacob Meerman, (Washington DC. 1991), 4

<sup>62</sup> Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking Press, 2006), 312

<sup>63</sup> Val Percival and Thomas Homer-Dickson, “Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict: The Case of Rwanda”, *Journal of Environment & Development*, vol. 5, no. 3 (September 1996), 270

<sup>64</sup> Eric Roose and Francois Ndayizigiye, “Agroforestry, water and soil fertility management to fight erosion in tropical mountains of Rwanda”, *Soil Technology*, vol. 11, (1997), 110

<sup>65</sup> Percival and Homer-Dickson, “Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict”, 278

longer room to sustain large herds of cows, which had in the past produced the manure used as fertiliser.<sup>66</sup> As a farmer remarked in the early 1990s, “the pasture lands have become rare. ... Look at that cow for example. She spent the day in the same spot, tomorrow she’ll be there again. Will she really give manure?”<sup>67</sup> Communal pastures had not just been used to graze cattle. Their long grass was also used as raw material for roofing and handicrafts, as well as for manure for the fields higher up the hills.<sup>68</sup> According to another farmer, speaking at a group meeting in Rwamiko in the same period, “before the valleys were completely cultivated, we would go there to gather a grass called *urukangaga* used for litter ... The cows would tramp on the litter with the manure and afterwards it would be brought to the fields. Then the sorghum, the beans would produce well.”<sup>69</sup>

Nor was there much progress in reducing Rwanda’s population growth rate. Though the worrying trend had been noted in the 1974 World Bank report, it was not subjected to special analysis, a rather inexplicable failing in an otherwise thorough survey. Perhaps it was hoped that improved education, something the government was working on when the report was published, might have a positive effect. But population control should have been a spearhead project from 1974 onwards (if not earlier).<sup>70</sup> Besides the impact of demographic expansion on food consumption and land usage, it also put a significant strain on every other development initiative, from healthcare to education.

The result of this failure in management was that the issue of overpopulation and land degradation reached a crisis point between the early 1980s and the 1990s. This had both direct negative results on national agriculture – the total output increased by 10% but per capita output decreased by 20% – and severe secondary effects.<sup>71</sup> Catherine André and Jean-Philippe Platteau carried out research into agriculture, off-farm income, land rights and inheritance in the north-western Kanama commune between 1988 and 1993. Their research is particularly interesting, because Kanama had only one Tutsi resident, thus eliminating ethnicity as a significant analytical variable. The two investigators came to the conclusion

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<sup>66</sup> Marijke Verpoorten, “Leave none to claim the land: A Malthusian catastrophe in Rwanda?”, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 49 (July 2012); Catherine André and Jean-Philippe Platteau, “Land relations under unbearable stress: Rwanda caught in the Malthusian trap”, *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organisation*, vol. 34, no. 1 (1998), 6

<sup>67</sup> Olson, “Farmer Responses to land degradation in Gikongoro”, 115

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 112

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 113

<sup>70</sup> According to World Bank, *Rwanda Economic Memorandum: Recent Economic and Sectoral Developments and Current Policy Issues*. Written by Alberto Eguren, (Washington DC. 1983), 8, it was “a serious shortcoming of Rwanda’s management in the 1960’s and 1970’s that a policy and program of national family planning were not pursued more aggressively, given the overriding importance of this issue in a longer-term perspective. During the past two years the Government has begun to focus on this problem, but there remains an urgent need to develop and implement a well-conceived action program for accelerating the adoption of family planning and otherwise coping with the country’s serious population problem.” World Bank, *Republic of Rwanda: Educational Sector memorandum*. Written by J. McCabe, (Washington DC. 1985), 3, explains that “studies have shown that increasing general participation in education (especially for women) represents the most effective action towards containing rapid population growth.”

<sup>71</sup> Percival and Homer-Dickson, “Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict”, 279

that the “extreme scarcity of land and ... the harsh realities of bare survival” were causing such severe tensions in the commune “that the social fabric was at a risk of falling asunder.”<sup>72</sup>

There were several causes for the dire situation in Kanama. First, the extremely small size of the farms: “36% of ... households owned less than one fourth of a hectare” in 1988, which meant that “only 77% of calorie, 73% of protein and 15% of lipid needs” were being met.<sup>73</sup> Second, there was an increase in the unequal distribution of land in the commune. By 1993, 45% of the households owned less than one fourth of a hectare, while in the same time span, the amount of land owned by the largest farmers – those with over one hectare – increased by 7%. By 1993, seven households, out of a total of 87, owned almost one third of all available land.<sup>74</sup> By 1991, a government report noted that, throughout Rwanda, 43% of the land was being held by 16% of landowners.<sup>75</sup> Rwanda’s GINI coefficient rose steadily between 1984 and 1994, from 0.29 to 0.44, and in some extreme cases to 0.53, marking a steady increase in inequality.<sup>76</sup> This increase in inequality, coupled with the high population pressure, caused a delay in marriage age, especially for young men, who were finding it increasingly difficult to obtain the land required to start a household.<sup>77</sup> In turn, this caused tensions over land inheritance between fathers and sons and was also one of the causes of gang formation, as the least privileged members of the commune turned to crime. Had there been ready opportunities to earn off-farm income, some of these problems might have been alleviated. However, in Kanama, those who had the smallest farms were the least likely to have access to off-farm employment because they tended to be excluded from patronage network and the opportunities that came with them.<sup>78</sup> In fact, off-farm work increased inequality by allowing those who had it to purchase more land with their earnings.<sup>79</sup>

Kanama was not the only commune in Rwanda which suffered from these problems. Johan Pottier notes that Kibuye Prefecture was already suffering from overpopulation and soil degradation in 1986.<sup>80</sup> This was also the case for Gikongoro province, in southern Rwanda, the subject of a brilliant, fieldwork-intensive PhD dissertation by Jennifer Maria Olson between 1990 and 1994. Olson’s research shows striking similarities with the findings of André and Platteau.<sup>81</sup> Olson writes of “limited nonfarm sources of employment, poor soils, rapid population growth, ineffectual government or donor investment in the agricultural

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<sup>72</sup> André and Platteau, André and Platteau, “Land relations under unbearable stress”, 37

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 8

<sup>75</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. Written by Alison Des Forges, (New York, March 1999), 45

<sup>76</sup> Data from World Bank, last accessed: 22 June 2019,

[https://www.google.co.uk/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9\\_&met\\_y=ny\\_gdp\\_pcap\\_cd&idim=country:RWA:BDI&hl=en&dl=en#!ctype=l&strail=false&bcs=d&nسلم=h&met\\_y=si\\_pov\\_gini&scale\\_y=lin&ind\\_y=false&rdim=region&idim=country:RWA:BDI&ifdim=region&hl=en\\_US&dl=en&ind=false](https://www.google.co.uk/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9_&met_y=ny_gdp_pcap_cd&idim=country:RWA:BDI&hl=en&dl=en#!ctype=l&strail=false&bcs=d&nسلم=h&met_y=si_pov_gini&scale_y=lin&ind_y=false&rdim=region&idim=country:RWA:BDI&ifdim=region&hl=en_US&dl=en&ind=false) (data from World Bank)

<sup>77</sup> André and Platteau, “Land relations under unbearable stress”, 12

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 17

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Johan P. Pottier, “The Politics of Famine prevention: Ecology, Regional production and Food Complementarity in Western Rwanda”, *African Affairs*, vol 85, no. 339 (April 1986), 213

<sup>81</sup> Olson, “Farmer Responses to land degradation in Gikongoro”

sector, lack of access to agricultural inputs, unequal distribution of land.”<sup>82</sup> The result was that “the South-Center, and particularly Gikongoro ... [have] the lowest incomes and experience the worst symptoms of stress, such as poor child nutrition in the country.”<sup>83</sup> When asked by Olson about the consequences of their predicament, one inhabitant of Gikongoro responded by talking about the fates of their children:

They will die, that’s all. They won’t make it to 20 years old because before reaching 5 most will be dead. The hunger will kill them. Notice that you can’t find work anywhere. Many have quit school because they had nothing to eat. Some were very intelligent. They don’t have enough strength to cultivate, but where to cultivate anyway? They will become delinquents or thieves. Others leave the village and go to the city because of hunger.<sup>84</sup>

Ordinary Rwandans made attempts to reverse these processes, but were fought every step of the way by a government with divergent interests. Rwandan farmers did not simply accept their suffering, and many tried, in different ways, to improve their lot. Two were particularly common. The first revolved around the cultivation of bananas and its subsequent conversion to beer; this reduced erosion and brought in money for the purchase of food.<sup>85</sup> Combined with other methods, the change allowed the “poorest quartile of households to increase its food availability by 15% through market transactions,”<sup>86</sup> no mean feat if we consider that the poorest quartile of Rwandans spent half their income on food crops.<sup>87</sup> The second – and related – response by farmers was to start importing food from abroad, especially beans from Zaire and Uganda.<sup>88</sup>

#### *Export Agriculture - Coffee*<sup>89</sup>

A fledgling coffee crop represented Rwanda’s biggest export. Coffee (and tea) had been introduced into Rwanda by German and Belgian colonists in the period 1905-1920, and its cultivation had been aggressively encouraged by colonial authorities. Coffee and tea were supposed to make the country more solvent and profitable, on the one hand, and to counter the dominance of Brazil on the international coffee market, on the other.<sup>90</sup> As a non-perishable, coffee had the additional benefit of surviving the journey from land-locked Rwanda to harbours in Tanzania, Djibouti or Kenya.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 160

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 190

<sup>85</sup> Jaakko Kangasniemi, “People and Bananas on steep slopes: Agricultural Intensification and Food Security under Demographic Pressure and Environmental Degradation in Rwanda” (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1988), ii-iii

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 156

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 155

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 169; Olson, “Farmer Responses to land degradation in Gikongoro”, 136; Pottier, “The Politics of Famine prevention”, 214

<sup>89</sup> See Appendix I for several related graphs.

<sup>90</sup> Isaac A. Kamola, “The Global Coffee Economy and the Production of Genocide in Rwanda”, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2007), 578

<sup>91</sup> Laurens van der Laan, “Boosting agricultural exports? A ‘marketing channel’ perspective on an African dilemma”, *African Affairs*, vol. 92, no. 367 (1993), 176; “An end to murder.” *The Economist*, 9 May 1981, 48

Since the late 1950s, the world had been overproducing coffee and large stocks had been built up by the most important producers, in particular Brazil. Overproduction had also been accompanied by a price drop – coffee prices in 1962 were less than half those of 1954 – and it was this which had spurred the international coffee community into action.<sup>92</sup> In 1958, a Coffee Study Group had been established in Washington to see if a permanent solution could be found for the volatility on the coffee market. A step in the right direction were various ad-hoc agreements signed by exporting countries in 1959, 1960 and 1961, but it was the United States that provided the impetus for a long-term solution.<sup>93</sup> On 13 March 1961, President Kennedy announced that,

At this very moment of maximum opportunity, we confront the same forces which have imperilled America throughout its history -- the alien forces [Communism and the Soviet Union] which once again seek to impose the despotisms of the Old World on the people of the New ... The United States is ready to cooperate in serious, case-by-case examinations of commodity market problems. Frequent violent change in commodity prices seriously injure the economies of many Latin American countries, draining their resources and stultifying their growth. Together we must find practical methods of bringing an end to this pattern.<sup>94</sup>

A conference at the United Nations Headquarters in 1962 proposed a solution whereby each coffee-producing nation would be limited to an export quota determined every year. This was intended to stabilise prices by preventing the dumping of overproduction onto the market. Normally such a cartel-based solution would have been unpopular with coffee-importing countries, as it would artificially increase the price of the commodity. However policymakers in the United States, the world's largest importer of coffee, quickly understood that by supporting the International Coffee Agreement (ICA), they could ensure the US had a big say in the International Coffee Organisation (ICO), the governing body of the ICA, thus preventing coffee-producing nations from dominating it. In addition, with the Cold War raging in the background, it was in the interest of the US to prevent economic instability which might open the doors of South America and Africa to the Soviet Union and Communism.<sup>95</sup> So, in 1962, the ICA was agreed by the majority of coffee-exporting and importing nations, successfully stabilising the price of coffee until the late 1980s.

The new stability on the coffee markets was an enormous boost for President Kayibanda. A state-run marketing system was introduced when the original Trafipro cooperative was enormously expanded. As economic historian Philip Verwimp explains,

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<sup>92</sup> Richard B. Bilder, "The International Coffee Agreement, 1962", *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 57, no. 4 (1963), 889

<sup>93</sup> 'The International Coffee Organisation 1963-2013: 50 Years Serving the World Coffee Community' *International Coffee Organisation*, 2013, 3

<sup>94</sup> John F Kennedy. Address at a White House Reception for Members of Congress and for the Diplomatic Corps of the Latin American Republics, March 13, 1961. John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, last accessed: 22 June 2019, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/latin-american-diplomats-washington-dc-19610313>

<sup>95</sup> Richard L. Lucier, *The International Political Economy of Coffee: From Juan Valdez to Yank's Diner* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 122-124; "America Signs On." *The Economist*, 18 January 1964, 233

The state as the monopsony buyer of coffee in Rwanda was not unique in Africa. Governments throughout Africa promoted the cultivation of export crops for taxation purposes: a government-run agency buys the coffee (or another cash crop) from the smallholders for a fixed price. The state agency then processes the coffee and sells it on the international market. The justification for this institution is to guarantee the farmer's income. The farmer is protected from shocks in the world market by a fixed price.<sup>96</sup>

However, in practice, the profit made by Trafipro, and later Rwandex, was not held in reserve to ensure continued payment to farmers in the event of a drop in the world coffee price. Instead, it was used to fund government expenditure, which was heavily biased in favour of its core ethnic clientele: southern and central Rwandan Hutu. The result was that, besides enriching certain politicians, Trafipro was also used to control and oust northern Hutu businessmen and politicians from their positions: “by 1968, Trafipro had become ‘le bras économique des révolutionnaires de Gitarama’, the backbone of an authoritarian regime, while northern businessmen found themselves pushed out of business and politics.”<sup>97</sup>

Coffee remained a political tool when Kayibanda was ousted from power in 1973, even though the benefits now flowed to Habyarimana's northern patronage network. While Trafipro was largely abolished, only surviving as a chain of state-controlled shops which sold basic consumables, the state continued to control the price at which coffee was bought in Rwanda through a marketing board called Rwandex.<sup>98</sup> A boom in the price of coffee between 1976 and 1979 allowed the Habyarimana regime to increase the price paid to farmers from 45 Rwandan Francs (RWF) in 1974 to 120 RWF in 1977. By setting the coffee price relatively high, the regime bound to itself the rural coffee producing population – many of whom were the valleys' settlers who were already beholden to the government for the land they lived on (see above).<sup>99</sup> In fact, the price that the government paid for coffee in Rwanda was so high that coffee was smuggled into the country from both Uganda and Zaire, where the state marketing boards bought coffee from farmers at a far lower price.<sup>100</sup>

Effectively, this system took the labour of Rwandan coffee farmers and transferred it to an elite patronage network – run by Rwandans from the south of the country before 1973 and by northerners afterwards – through biased government spending. While this system worked well enough in times of high coffee prices, the lack of capital reserves from which to absorb losses in times of low coffee prices spelt disaster from the mid-1980s onwards.

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<sup>96</sup> Philip Verwimp, *Peasants in Power: The Political Economy of Development and Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Springer, 2013), 85-87

<sup>97</sup> Johan P. Pottier, “Taking Stock: Food Marketing Reform in Rwanda, 1982-89”, *African Affairs* vol. 92, no. 36 (January 1993), 11, quoting Filip Reyntiens, *Pouvoir et Droit au Rwanda: droit publique et évolution politique, 1916-1973* (Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, 1985), 390

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>99</sup> Verwimp, *Peasants in Power*, 85-86; Philip Verwimp, “Agricultural Policy, Crop Failure and the ‘Ruriganiza’ Famine (1989) in Southern Rwanda: a Prelude to Genocide?” Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, *Centre for Economic Studies Discussion Paper Series (DPS)* (June 2002), 15

<sup>100</sup> “Green-gum booted Uganda on the banana standard.” *The Economist*, 20 September 1986, 52; “Percolates abroad”, *The Economist*, 9 May 1981, 94; From: I. Verkade, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken ‘Rwanda’, 19 November 1974. “Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief, 2; World Bank, *Recent Economic Development and prospects of Rwanda*, 13-14

As those in charge of the government stood to benefit from coffee exports, its cultivation was aggressively promoted using both encouragement and coercion. The former was based, as noted above, on the relatively high coffee price paid to farmers, while the latter relied on laws which made it punishable to uproot coffee trees without permission, or plant other crops too close to coffee plants, as well as the forced cultivation of coffee on the *paysannats*.<sup>101</sup> Coercion was necessary because coffee – its high prices notwithstanding – was not the most profitable crop for farmers.<sup>102</sup> When brewed into beer, the cash income from a hectare of bananas was more than the income from a hectare of coffee and would “have bought 1446 kilograms of beans.<sup>103</sup> This is 72% more than the estimated average national bean yield [per hectare].”<sup>104</sup> With reference to the late 1980s and early 1990s, Verwimp writes that

under population pressure, farmers prefer to grow bananas, brew and sell banana beer. With the money, the farmers buy food crops and finance other expenditures. Bananas are popular because they are not only a source of monetary income, they also provide income the whole year round, a significant difference with e.g. coffee. ... Banana cultivation is not labour-intensive, ... [it is] socially very important and provides protective cover against erosion.<sup>105</sup>

Or, in the words of one Rwandan, “In the old days sorghum did everything, but now it takes too long to grow and the yields are lower than they used to be. For us, the poor people of this town, it is the banana grove that provides the money that provides the rest.”<sup>106</sup> In addition there was only one buyer for coffee – Rwandex, which paid a standard rate. Other non-export crops could be bought and sold more freely, which allowed Rwandans to take advantage of fluctuations in the price of products.

#### *Diversifying Rwanda's Exports*

Both Kayibanda and Habyarimana made half-hearted attempts to diversify Rwanda's exports. Diversification would have made Rwanda less vulnerable to the price fluctuations of a single commodity. After coffee, the second most important exports for most of the 1960s and 1970s were minerals, especially tin and wolframite. The latter is the base of Tungsten – a very hard metal used in machine tools and armour-piercing ammunition. However, the *Société minière du Rwanda* (SOMIRWA), the company formed in 1973 through the merger of the mining companies which had been active in Rwanda since the inter-war period, immediately suffered from several problems. First, the infrastructure and ore reserves inherited by the company were in poor shape.<sup>107</sup> Second, a smelter built by SOMIRWA in 1980-81 to process the ore had a significant over-capacity (75%), driving the production cost of tin over the market price.<sup>108</sup> These factors, combined with the wild price fluctuations of tin, made it an unreliable

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<sup>101</sup> Peter D. Little and Michael M. Horowitz, “Author's Reply”, *Human Organisation*, vol. 47, no.3 (1988), 273

<sup>102</sup> World Bank, *Agricultural Sector Review: Rwanda*. (Washington DC. 1977), 33

<sup>103</sup> Little and Horowitz, “Subsistence Crops Are Cash Crops”, 256

<sup>104</sup> Kangasniemi, “People and Bananas on steep slopes”, 157

<sup>105</sup> Verwimp, “Agricultural Policy, Crop Failure and the ‘Ruriganiza’ Famine”, 9

<sup>106</sup> Johan P. Pottier, “Taking Stock: Food Marketing Reform in Rwanda”, 24

<sup>107</sup> World Bank, *Recent Economic Development and prospects of Rwanda*, 25

<sup>108</sup> World Bank, *Rwanda: The Manufacturing Sector: Performance and Policy Issues*. (Washington DC. 1985),

foreign currency earner.<sup>109</sup> On 22 October 1985, SOMIRWA went bankrupt, just before the collapse of the International Tin Agreement (ITA), which further depressed the market price of tin.<sup>110</sup> The cessation of mining in Rwanda caused the approximately 18,000 people employed in the sector to lose their livelihoods and robbed Rwanda of a significant chunk of its export earnings. By 1986, almost all Rwandan exports were agricultural, which is to say mostly coffee.

### *The Rwandan Manufacturing Sector*

Another measure taken by the Kayibanda government in its attempts to diversify its export base was to encourage the cultivation of Pyrethrum, a flower which could be used as a raw material for natural pesticide. Yet, as with coffee, pyrethrum was not particularly attractive for Rwandan farmers. Many of the growers were settled on *paysannats* and depended on the government for access to their land.<sup>111</sup> The entire crop of pyrethrum was purchased by ASPY, the Pyrethrum Planters Association, which dried the flowers.<sup>112</sup> It took until 1973 to build a plant – close to Ruhengeri and financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – which was supposed to transform the flower into export-grade pesticides.<sup>113</sup> The plant was owned by USINEX, which, in turn, was managed by a government company, OPYRWA. OPYRWA thus “became the sole exporter of pyrethrin extract produced.”<sup>114</sup> However, the plant ran into numerous problems. First, because there was no real reason for Rwandan farmers to grow the flower, the “high operation costs of the factory, owing to an underutilization of its capacity, were passed onto the flower growers.”<sup>115</sup> In addition, due to a lack of financing by the government, those who did grow the flowers were only paid sporadically.<sup>116</sup> Finally, the plant suffered from technical problems and was not able to “produce an insecticide (pyrethrum extract) of adequate quality for export.”<sup>117</sup> Considering these issues, it is not surprising that pyrethrum was exported “at a loss in every year of the period” 1981-1989.<sup>118</sup> A country already suffering from difficulties with its balance of payments would have done much better to cut its losses and shut down a clearly failing project. In effect, the last pyrethrum growers and ASPY were being subsidised by the government. The explanation for this self-defeating obstinacy probably lies in the fact that most of the insecticide growers and the refining plant were in the north of the country, the core of Habyarimana’s constituency.

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<sup>109</sup> From: C. Th. R. van Baarda, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken ‘Jaarrapport Rwanda 1971’, 2 June 1972. “Inv.nr.: 24 Archiefbloknummer: Z162” Nationaal Archief, 19

<sup>110</sup> World Bank, *Rwanda: Recent Economic Developments and Current Policy Issues*. Written by David Brodsky and Zeynep Taymas, (Washington DC. 1986), viii-ix; Ian A. Mallory, “Conduct Unbecoming: The Collapse of the International Tin Agreement”, *American University International Law Review*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1990), 835; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 84

<sup>111</sup> World Bank, *Agricultural Sector Review*, Annex 4, 6; Silvestre, “Différenciations socio-économiques dans une société à vocation égalitaire”, 109

<sup>112</sup> World Bank, *Agricultural Sector Review*, 6

<sup>113</sup> From: I. Verkade, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken ‘Jaarrapport Rwanda.’, 30 January 1975. NL-NA., 9

<sup>114</sup> World Bank, *Agricultural Sector Review*, Annex 4, 6

<sup>115</sup> World Bank, *Recent Economic Development and prospects of Rwanda*, 20

<sup>116</sup> World Bank, *Agricultural Sector Review*, Annex 4, 7

<sup>117</sup> Africa Project Department, ‘Rwanda: The Manufacturing Sector,’ 17

<sup>118</sup> World Bank, *Rwanda: Agricultural Strategy Review*, viii, 75

A similarly messy situation existed in the Rwandan dairy industry. Rwandans suffered from a chronic lack of protein and fats, even though Rwanda was home to large herds of cattle which could have helped alleviate the situation. As an animal-product calorie expends a much higher portion of land than its agricultural equivalent, it would have been better for Rwanda to only have small herds intended for household milk and cheese production and field fertilisation. In addition, the herds and associated industries which did exist were poorly managed. As the Dutch Ambassador explained,

Following the request of the Rwandan head of state and Minister of Foreign Affairs for bilateral cooperation between the Netherlands and Rwanda for the development of the Rwandan dairy industry (a million cattle, yet still importing milk and cheese), I visited the only dairy factory in the country at Nyanza. ... Calling it a factory already gives a distorted idea ... The company is a hotchpotch of very old and modern equipment, connected by poles and tubes, which have to be mounted and dismounted daily.<sup>119</sup>

Besides the problems at the factory, there were other basic weaknesses which, if left unaddressed, would make a dairy industry unviable. The roads of the country were of insufficient quality to allow for the quick distribution of milk, while the dispersal of the cattle made milking laborious.<sup>120</sup> Rwandan cultural norms meant that cattle was kept more as a store of wealth – like a bank account – rather than for productive means. This was the worst of both worlds for the inhabitants of Rwanda: the cattle did use land which might have served for agriculture, but did not deliver any significant economic or nutritional benefit. By 1990, Rwanda would still be importing milk, cream and cheese,<sup>121</sup> which, again, represented a serious issue for a country with an ingrained balance of payments problem.

### *Development Aid*

When Habyarimana came to power in 1972, he was successful in attracting large amounts of donor aid to Rwanda. This aid eventually reached such a staggering scale that it is important to discuss its impact on the Rwandan economy. By 1989, 11.4% of Rwanda's GNP came from development aid, which was more than the country's exports and incoming private investment; moreover, between 1982 and 1987, "foreign assistance financed over 70 per cent of public investment."<sup>122</sup> The main problem which accompanied this development aid was that uncaring donors did not follow the most obvious of guidelines when setting up their projects. In the early 1990s, Germany's Federal Ministry for Cooperation and Development

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<sup>119</sup> From: C. G. Verdonck Huffnagel, Kinshasa To: Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 'Zuivelindustrie in Rwanda', 10 June 1974. "Inv.nr.: 4 Archiefbloknummer: Z162" Nationaal Archief. "Naar aanleiding van het verzoek van het Staatshoofd van Rwanda en de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken om bilaterale samenwerking tussen Nederland en Rwanda voor de ontwikkeling van de zuivelindustrie, (een miljoen runderen, maar toch import van consumptiemelk en kaas) bracht ik een bezoek aan de enige zuivelfabriek van het land te Nyanza. ... Reeds het gebruik van het woord fabriek geeft een verwrongen beeld ... Het bedrijfje is een samenraapsel van zeer oude tot modern apparatuur, onderling verbonden met door dagelijks te demonteren buizen en slangen."

<sup>120</sup> From: I. Verkade, Kinshasa To: Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 'Ontwikkelingssamenwerking Rwanda.', 27 November 1974. "Inv.nr.: 23 Archiefbloknummer: Z162" Nationaal Archief.

<sup>121</sup> Livestock and primary Fish Equivalents, *Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations*, last accessed: 22 June 2019, <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/BL>

<sup>122</sup> Peter Uvin, *Development, Aid and Conflict: Reflections from the Case of Rwanda* (Helsinki: The United Nations University, 1996), 15; Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: the development enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1998), 40

(*Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung*) set up some basic ground rules for the recipients of German aid:

- (1) respect for human rights, (2) participation of the people in political decision-making, (3) the rule of law and a guarantee of legal certainty, (4) the creation of a market-economy and socially oriented economic order and (5) the orientation of government action towards development.<sup>123</sup>

Despite their seemingly obvious nature, these guidelines had hardly been applied over the course of the previous two decades. Most aid organisations – including German ones – were simply content with disbursing their funds without asking any questions. The result was that instead of improving the country, the aid, in some instances, actually compounded the negative trends already described in this chapter, especially the growth of socio-economic inequality. Indeed, it was nigh impossible for Rwandans to get a job with an aid agency or to benefit from its resources or facilities in the absence of a patron who could arrange it for them. A farmer from the southern town of Muku explained in 1991 or 1992: “We have only one project, that of the EEC [European Economic Community], which employs tens of people. No one gets a job without giving a bribe. We have been going there now for an entire week.”<sup>124</sup>

A good example of aid strengthening the existing clientelist system is provided by the World Bank-sponsored Mutara agricultural development projects studied by René Lemarchand.<sup>125</sup> The idea of the first project, dating back to 1975, was to relocate 7,000 families to “underpopulated areas,” where they would be given land or cattle ranches if they agreed to adopt certain land or animal husbandry techniques. But the project was a disaster. Firstly, the target area was already inhabited by 7,500 families and 34,700 head of cattle, compared with the World Bank’s initial appraisal of 3,400 families and 30,500 head of cattle.<sup>126</sup> Secondly, the project was managed by a semi-governmental organisation called OVAPAM and almost the entire first part of the project was dedicated to building houses, offices and warehouses, and buying office supplies and cars, for its employees. “After six years of studying, five years of working and spending 4.5 million dollars ... the projects sole output was” 760 kilometres of roads constructed and the creation of 160 jobs, 100 of which were unnecessary.<sup>127</sup> This was partly due to the fact that the Rwandan government had created a director’s post for OVAPAM, even though the initial project outline expected OVAPAM to be controlled by an expatriate project leader. This caused great chaos in the chain of command.<sup>128</sup> And these were

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<sup>123</sup> Stephen Klingebiel, “Impact of development cooperation in conflict situations: Cross-section Report on Evaluations of German Development Cooperation in Six Countries”, *German Development Institute*, Report and Working papers 6 (Berlin: 1999), 16

<sup>124</sup> Olson, “Farmer Responses to land degradation in Gikongoro”, 116

<sup>125</sup> René Lemarchand, *The World Bank in Rwanda: The Case of the Office de Valorisation agricole et pastorale du mutara (OVAPAM)* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982)

<sup>126</sup> World Bank, *Mutara Agricultural and Livestock Development project – Phase II, Staff Appraisal Report*. (Washington DC. 1979), 14

<sup>127</sup> Peter Uvin, *Development, Aid and Conflict*, 21

<sup>128</sup> World Bank, *Mutara Agricultural and Livestock Development project*, 14

just the first heads of the hydra. Despite a plethora of other problems – which ranged from advisors who could not advise because they spoke no French to the departure to Uganda of many of the people and the cattle who had actually lived on the “underpopulated land” – the World Bank decided to go ahead with the second project, because “the Mutara is in a precarious state. It is threatened with the heavy loss of production potential.”<sup>129</sup>

However, what Lemarchand and Peter Uvin – one of the foremost experts on Rwanda and development aid – make clear is that the first Mutara project was not simply an example of gross mismanagement, but rather a case of intentional corruption and state-backed ethno-racism. The people who benefitted from the project were mainly from Ruhengeri, the northern prefecture which Habyarimana favoured, while those who fled to Uganda were mostly Tutsi. But the World Bank, partly hoping for the best and partly saddled with the responsibility of preventing a potential disaster in Mutara, carried on with the second agricultural aid plan, which lasted from 1979 to 1986. This plan was focused on increasing agricultural and cattle productivity, setting up research centres and educational programmes for the local farmers, and implementing methods to reduce soil erosion and exhaustion. To support the project, schools, health clinics and a water system would be built, road maintenance carried out, and agricultural credit provided to local farmers.<sup>130</sup> However, this second phase of the project was as much of a failure as the first: most of the land developed for ranching went to politicians, civil servants and OVAPAM employees, who then rented it out to existing or new clients, who would have to rely on patronage from then on, in order to retain access.<sup>131</sup> The project was not an economic success either; erosion was not tackled, and the ranches proved to be unviable.<sup>132</sup>

Nor was this an isolated example of an aid package strengthening negative aspects of Rwandan society. According to Uvin, the Mutara project had the following effects in common with a host of other development initiatives:

increased inequality, favouring the same categories of the politically well-connected, the administration, the politicians, and the powerholders from the north; and few if any benefits to the masses in whose name the projects were undertaken, except if they are willing to engage in clientelistic relations with the former.<sup>133</sup>

German aid organisations had similar experiences. As a BMZ report noted in 1999, “in *Rwanda* ... particular attention was paid to the places where the elite lived when the locations for German projects were chosen.”<sup>134</sup> Besides strengthening and sponsoring clientelistic systems, development aid also worked towards legitimising the Habyarimana regime.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>130</sup> World Bank, *Mutara Agricultural and Livestock Development* project, 20

<sup>131</sup> Peter Uvin, *Development, Aid and Conflict*, 22

<sup>132</sup> World Bank, *Rwanda: Mutara Agricultural and Livestock Development Project – Phase II (Credit 937-RWA)*. (Washington DC. 1991), iv

<sup>133</sup> Peter Uvin, *Development, Aid and Conflict*, 22

<sup>134</sup> Stephen Klingebiel, “Impact of development cooperation in conflict situations”, 24

Bilateral ... development cooperation supports and stabilizes the government of the partner country. ... Countries such as *Ethiopia* and *Kenya* are heavily dependent on development cooperation funds, even – in the final analysis – for their ability to wage war. This means that, indirectly at least, Germany, as a donor country, “approves” the various practices and “rewards” the approach even of repressive regimes, as in *Rwanda* under Habyarimana.<sup>135</sup>

Development aid also let the Rwandan government offload the care of its people on to aid organisations, making it possible for the regime to reserve more money from the national budget for itself or to spend it on such repressive activities as defence, policing or intelligence. This became particularly relevant at the outbreak of the Struggle for Liberation, when, surprisingly enough, the amount of aid received by the Habyarimana regime grew higher than ever, despite increased and well publicised slaughters and human rights violations.

### **The Crash of Coffee Prices and SAP**

In 1989, the agricultural system in southern Rwanda collapsed under the pressure of draught, and a famine, the *Ruriganiza*, soon followed. Government reaction was slow, and according to Verwimp, genocidal.<sup>136</sup> His arguments are that the area was by and large anti-Habyarimana, predominantly Tutsi and that “Northern and Eastern Rwanda were not experiencing a decline in food production.”<sup>137</sup> However, as we have seen above, other prefectures in Rwanda were already suffering from malnutrition and other social problems.<sup>138</sup> In this sense, it is probably more instructive to see the *Ruriganiza* as the first clear symptom of the Rwandan government’s inability to cope with even basic problems. The government, meanwhile, was also faced with other pressing issues.

The International Coffee Agreement had been subject to periodical renewal, and the 1983 agreement “was due to expire on 30 September 1989.”<sup>139</sup> However, this time, renewal could not be taken for granted. The United States, with the Cold War ending, no longer had the same incentives to keep the agreement afloat. Technical disagreements also existed between member countries concerning the market shares of different types of coffee. Several countries, encouraged by “a World Bank Working Paper which purported to show that many ... producers would be better off without quotas,”<sup>140</sup> decided not to renew the agreement, which in turn led to a collapse of the ICA. “A price collapse of some 50% quickly followed, affecting all groups of coffee and lasting until a new Brazilian frost occurred in 1993.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>136</sup> Verwimp, “Agricultural Policy, Crop Failure and the ‘Ruriganiza’ Famine”

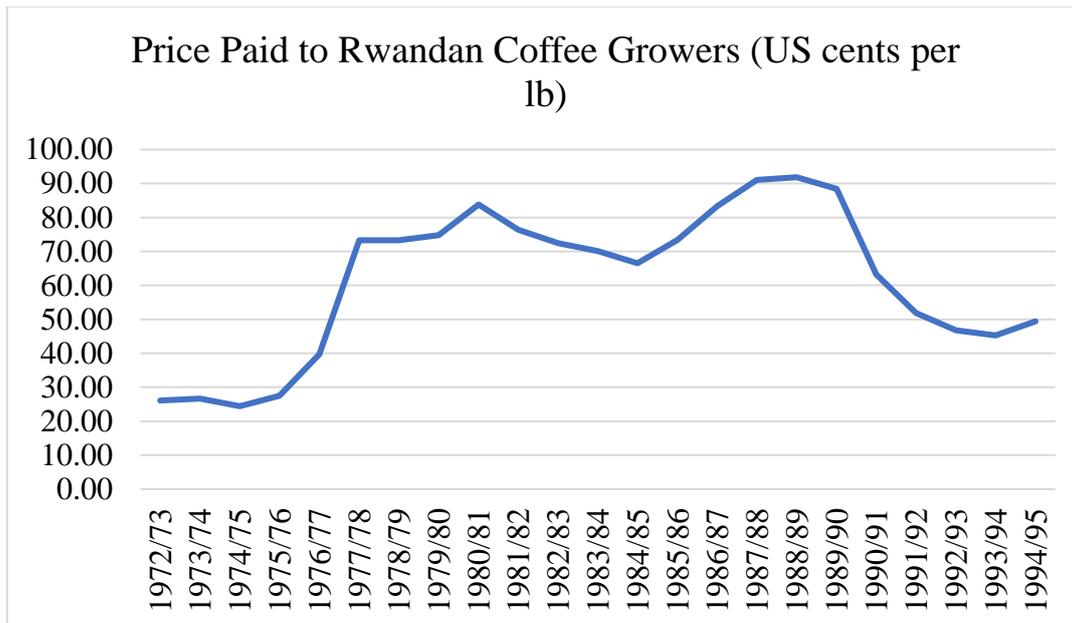
<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 46-47

<sup>138</sup> André and Platteau, “Land relations under unbearable stress”, 6

<sup>139</sup> ‘The International Coffee Organisation 1963-2013: 50 Years Serving the World Coffee Community’ *International Coffee Organisation*, 2013, 13

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.



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**Graph Explanation:** *This graph from the International Coffee Organisation shows the prices paid to Rwandan coffee growers between 1972 and 1994. As can be seen, by 1990/1991, prices had dropped to 1978 levels.*

As food shortages, land hunger, social dislocation and an inept system of development aid were causing increasingly intractable problems, the last strut keeping the Habyarimana regime in the saddle was removed when the ICA collapsed. When coffee prices collapsed from an all-time high in the mid-1980s, the only way the Rwandan government could continue to pay farmers their set price (145 RWF) was by borrowing money. As mentioned above, the government had neglected to build up its profits from the sale of coffee into an emergency fund, using them instead for government expenditure which had benefitted a select group of the population. Instead of profiting from the exports of coffee, the purchasing scheme started costing the government, as it tried to cling on to one of its tools for earning the loyalty of Rwanda's farmers. In October 1989, *Africa Confidential* could point to

an atmosphere of fin de règne in Rwanda. The corridors of power are the scene of a fierce power-struggle between on the one hand the Ruhengeri clan, which includes Foreign Minister Casimir Bizimungu, and on the other hand the clan of the presidential wife Agathe Habyarimana ... President Juvénal Habyarimana is seen as being dominated by his wife's clan and by the army. ... It is being widely speculated that the president may either be overthrown or obliged to submit to a palace coup which leaves him as the head of state while the real power lies elsewhere.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>142</sup> International Coffee Organisation Rwanda prices paid to growers. The ICO indicated that these are the prices that were paid directly to the farmers.

<sup>143</sup> "Pointers: Rwanda fin de Régime", *Africa Confidential*, 20 October 1989

In a bid to consolidate his position, and under significant pressure not only from elite actors but also from the Rwandan people, President Habyarimana set two processes into motion in 1990. Firstly, mounting deficits finally convinced him to accept a World Bank Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which would provide a large influx in aid to reduce the country's debt. However, the conditions of the SAP struck a major blow at every level of the Rwandan social fabric. Rwandan farmers were hard hit. The first and most immediate measure was the devaluation of the Rwandan Franc by 40% in November 1990, which, in turn, caused a 50% rise in the price of essential goods in Kigali. At the same time, farmers had also been forced to accept a reduction, from 120 RWF to 100 RWF, in the price they received for their coffee. This was followed by another 15% devaluation of the RWF in 1992. Taken together, these developments meant that coffee cultivators took an enormous hit in their income, much of which was used to purchase food. By 1993, 31% of the population had to survive on less than 1,000 calories per day.<sup>144</sup>

Other SAP-induced measures included cutting government budget deficit, which resulted in the laying off of many civil servants, the introduction of school and healthcare fees, and a restructuring or liquidation of government enterprises. However, these measures also undercut the strength of Habyarimana's position, both among his grassroots supporters and his elite clients, by reducing the ability of the president and his immediate circle to reward loyalty. Government expenditure – which had historically favoured certain regions, especially the north – and posts in the civil service and parastatal companies were crucial for ensuring popular loyalty in a country where 90% of the people were farmers. Nor would the farmers have been pleased with their enormous loss in purchasing power.

Secondly, on 21 September 1990, President Habyarimana created the *Commission nationale de synthèse sur les réformes politiques au Rwanda*. This was in response to President François Mitterrand's speech at La Baule on 20 June 1990. During the speech, Mitterrand had made it clear that French support for African states would depend on real attempts at democratisation. And now, with his position weaker than ever, Habyarimana needed French support. The Commission would look at the Rwandan constitution and would recommend such changes as were needed to make Rwanda more democratic. At the same time, it is important not to overstate the weakness of the head of state. The Commission was not made up of radical democrats. One of the soldiers advising was Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, a firm believer in the Hutu one-party state. And, considering what was to follow, it seems that Habyarimana was still able to count on significant support both within his party, the MRND, and the FAR.

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<sup>144</sup> The Nordic Africa Institute, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience, Historical Perspective: Some Explanatory Factors*. Written by Tor Sellström and Lennart Wohlgemut, (Uppsala. 1996), 37

## Conclusion

The chapter opened with the assertion that

The power of a nation-state by no means consists only in its armed forces, but also in its economic and technical resources ... It consists most of all in the nation itself, the people; their skills, energy, ambition, discipline, initiative; their beliefs, myths and illusions.<sup>145</sup>

If we look at Rwanda's human, technical and economic resources at the outset of the Struggle for Liberation, it can only be concluded that these were in an abysmal state. Chronic malnutrition and famine stalked the land, the main source of government revenue had just collapsed, and the life jacket keeping the country afloat was inefficient foreign aid. Nor could a well informed and energetic populace lift Rwanda out of its penury: literacy was low, management skills were practically absent, there was no industrial base of any importance, and institutionalised corruption flourished. In short, President Habyarimana had failed to deliver on the promises which had marked the beginning of his rule. His weakened position and the generalized state of deprivation in the country did not go unnoticed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which had been preparing a military return to Rwanda from their stronghold in Uganda.

More importantly the precariousness of Rwandan society and government had several important consequences. Firstly, it was one of the reasons for the country's ineffective military response to the RPA attack in October 1990. Secondly, it rendered Rwanda's civil society and key government ministries unable to rein in extremists which set out to inflame ethnic tensions, sabotage multiparty democracy and undermine the Arusha Peace Process. The rotten foundation that allowed for the process of state collapse towards the end of 1993 was laid throughout the Presidencies of Kayibanda and Habyarimana.

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<sup>145</sup> Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, ix

## **IV - THE STORY OF THE RPF: EXILE, ORGANISATION AND ARMED RETURN**

The previous chapter discussed political and economic developments in Rwanda between the Social Revolution and the eve of the outbreak of the Struggle for Liberation. This chapter will look at roughly the same time span, 1959-1990, but focusing on the paths taken by those who were forced to leave Rwanda as refugees, and on their desire to return home. These refugees settled throughout the Great Lakes region and played an extraordinarily significant role in Ugandan politics. Following a time of repression at the hands of the Obote II regime in the first half of the 1980s, they emerged victorious alongside Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM). This successful alliance provided them with the time and space to found the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and to begin preparations for an armed return to Rwanda. In its concluding sections, the chapter moves on to discuss the Habyarimana-Museveni negotiations on the possible return of the Rwandan refugees to their country of origin. A quick and successful conclusion to these negotiations, combined with political reform in Rwanda, would have represented a chance for lasting peace in the region. However, as the negotiations dragged on, the RPF saw a unique opportunity to invade Rwanda and enforce the return of the refugees on their own terms.

### **The Arrival of the 1959-1964 Refugees in Uganda, Congo and Tanzania**

The Rwandans who fled the violence in their country and crossed the borders into Uganda, Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi arrived in places with long ties to Rwanda. Although many of the refugees were Tutsi pastoralists, circumstantial evidence suggests that there were also many agriculturalists – Hutu – among them.<sup>1</sup> While the historical context in each country of resettlement was different, Rwandans living outside Rwanda – the Banyarwanda, as they were known – generally consisted of three groups.

First, there was the group of Rwandans who had lived in Uganda since before independence. While they had a close cultural affinity with Rwanda and spoke Kinyarwanda, the defining symbol of the Banyarwanda community, the members of this group had found themselves included into Uganda after the colonial powers delineated the border in 1910.<sup>2</sup> Technically, these Banyarwanda were Ugandan citizens; as will be seen below, however, they were often heaped together with the other two groups. The second group of Rwandans in Uganda consisted of economic migrants who had left their country of birth during the colonial era. Reasons for these migrations were varied, but one important motivating factor was that Ugandans did not have to face the same excessive labour demands as the peoples of Ruanda-Urundi. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, at this point still known as Zaire, similar dynamics were at play. Some of the Rwandans found there, mostly Tutsi, had relocated to South Kivu in the pre-colonial period and were known as Banyamulenge. In addition to this,

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<sup>1</sup> Elijah Dicken Mushemeza, "Politics and the Refugee Experience: The Case of the Banyarwanda Refugees in Uganda (1959-1994)" (PhD diss., Makerere University, 2002), 106

<sup>2</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 162

there were also, as in Uganda, economic migrants who had worked in Congo during the colonial period for companies like the *Union minière du Haut-Katanga*. The new 1959-1964 refugees were to form a third group. As they trudged across the border to escape the violence of the Social Revolution, they were initially settled in UNHCR-supported refugee camps, such as the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda, which would go on to become a RPF stronghold in the late 1980s. Combined, the whole Banyarwanda population was about one million.

The welcome the refugees received in Uganda and Tanzania was generally cordial. Tanzania had just become independent and was led by President Julius Nyerere. As a committed pan-Africanist, it would have been anathema for Nyerere to turn his back on Rwandan refugees entering his country in 1959-1964. Vianney Shumbusho, who would go on to become an RPF political cadre, remembers arriving in Tanzania when he was nine years old. In October 1961, the family house was burned down by a mob and his schoolteacher father arrested. To escape, the family first fled to a local mission before deciding to leave Rwanda altogether. According to Shumbusho, the reception afforded to the refugees was friendly and they were first housed in UNHCR refugee camps. He also recalls that, soon after they were settled, “Nyerere even came to visit the refugee camps.”<sup>3</sup> As the family had only covered about 80 kilometres during its flight, its members spoke the same language as the locals, and in 1964 the Tanzanian government gave the refugees some land to settle on permanently. Eventually, the refugees were also offered Tanzanian nationality, as “Nyerere could not understand how an African can be a refugee in an African country, it is not possible.” Although Nyerere offered to naturalise the Rwandan refugees, Shumbusho asserts that he also “knew it could never be a replacement [for home].”<sup>4</sup>

The family of the brothers Ndore Rurinda and Logan Ndahiro had a similar experience. As they lived on the Rwanda-Uganda frontier, they had the opportunity to move into Uganda with their cattle and to return afterward, whenever politics heated up in Rwanda. However, by 1963, the situation had become untenable, and the family moved to Uganda permanently. They first went to Nakivale refugee camp, but were then sent on to Kahunge and Kyaka I & II refugee camps, since there was more space for their cattle there. Generally speaking, the Ugandans around the refugee camps, though poor, are said to have been friendly towards the new arrivals from Rwanda. Thus it was that, over the years, the family was able to establish itself socially and gain a degree of economic security.<sup>5</sup>

Although the refugees were in the first instance keen to return to Rwanda as quickly as possible, the defeat of the *Inyenzi* (see chapter II) meant their exile became permanent. From the start, Banyarwanda refugees “expressed on many occasions their keen interest in their children being able to continue their education.”<sup>6</sup> This was mainly because Rwandan parents realised that if their children were ever to return to their country of origin, they would need an

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Vianney Shumbusho, 18 October 2018

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 10 September 2018

<sup>6</sup> High Commissioner for Refugees, *Report on the Situation of Refugees from Rwanda* (New York: United Nations, 1963), 3; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 65; Mushemeza, “Politics and the Refugee Experience,” 137; interview with Ndore Rurinda, 10 September 2018.

education. The refugees themselves quickly established primary schools in the refugee camps. With UN support, these schools ensured that rudimentary primary education would not be lacking for the young of this – or the next – generation.<sup>7</sup> Shumbusho vividly remembers his Rwandan primary teacher telling them: “Young men, come and start studying because you are the only hope for us to return home.”<sup>8</sup> Although Shumbusho got lucky and received a UNHCR scholarship for his secondary education, this was not the case for all Rwandan refugees, and the circumstances in Uganda, which is especially relevant to our story, merit special attention.

As the UN noted in 1964, there were “not sufficient places in secondary schools in the Kampala area [for the children from Rwanda] ... furthermore the financing of their education [could not] be met by the authorities nor by the students themselves.”<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the Ugandan Government indicated that it would endeavour to find places for Rwandan secondary school students if international funds were made available.<sup>10</sup> While the experience of poverty was obviously widespread, it is by no means true that all Banyarwanda refugees were destitute upon arrival. Many brought large herds of cattle with them, a clear indicator of prosperity. The refugees also included many aristocrats and successful businessmen. Besides the UN, the Rwandan refugees, especially in Uganda, could also count on a number of allies in their search for an education.<sup>11</sup> In the first half of the century, several of their compatriots had moved to Uganda and had been educated in missionary or colonial high schools. Some had become politically active, while others had become acquainted with Ugandan elites. At King’s College Budo, for instance, some Banyarwanda had been classmates of Mutesa II, the King of Buganda and the first president of independent Uganda.<sup>12</sup> Help also came from the churches. The shared piety between the Banyarwanda and Ugandans gave them a common point of reference and enabled “access [to] church resources, particularly training in skills and scholarships for higher education.”<sup>13</sup>

These circumstances and connections explain how some Banyarwanda refugees managed to secure access to the best secondary institutions in Uganda. For example, Paul Kagame, who later became chairman of the RPF and president of Rwanda, went to Ntare Secondary School, the same school as Yoweri Museveni, the current president of Uganda. Later, many key RPF members, such as James Kabarebe, Rose Kabuye, Aloisea Inyumba, Christine N. Umutoni and Kayumba Nyamwasa, attended Makerere University.<sup>14</sup> University education abroad was

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<sup>7</sup> High Commissioner for Refugees, *Proposal for Assistance to Refugees from Rwanda in the Kivu Province of the Congo* (New York: United Nations, 13 April 1964); UN support fluctuated over time. Refugee Policy Group, *Older Refugee Settlements in Africa – Final Report*. Written by Lance Clark and Barry Stein, (Washington DC. November 1985), 126-129

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Vianney Shumbusho, 18 October 2018

<sup>9</sup> High Commissioner for Refugees, *1964 Programme – New projects: Projects for the Settlement of Approximately 20,000 Refugees from Rwanda* (New York: United Nations, 10 April 1964), 14-15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> US Committee for Refugees, *Exile from Rwanda: Background to an Invasion*. Written by Catherine Watson, (Arlington, Virginia. February 1991), 8

<sup>12</sup> Author’s correspondence with former RPF member, 27 August 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Mushemeza, “Politics and the Refugee Experience”, 141.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172; Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven, *Why Comrades Go to War: Liberation Politics and the Outbreak of Africa’s Deadliest Conflict*. London: Hurst (London: Hurst, 2016), 116-117, 185-186

made possible both by UNHCR scholarships and informal aid.<sup>15</sup> For instance, Jean-Loup Denblynden, a colonel in the reserve of the Belgian army, belonged to an unofficial philanthropic network. Rather than supporting the UN or other NGOs, Denblynden and his colleagues convinced wealthy donors to help individual refugees by paying for their university education in Europe. While these students would often be registered as “Ugandans,” “Tanzanians,” “Burundians” or “Congolese,” they were actually Banyarwanda refugees.<sup>16</sup>

The Banyarwanda’s emphasis on education is illustrated by the trajectories of two refugee families interviewed by Catherine Watson in the early 1990s. They had fled Rwanda in 1962 and 1963, respectively. The former family had 14 children, four of whom went on to obtain university degrees; “Two have accounting diplomas, and one a diploma from a technical college. Two are teaching in Kenya. Three are officers, formerly in Uganda’s National Resistance Army, and now in the RPA.”<sup>17</sup> The latter family had five children, three of whom obtained university degrees; the other two worked as a nurse and a computer operator. Three of the children live in Canada, Switzerland and Tanzania.<sup>18</sup>

Despite their educational achievements, the Banyarwanda in Uganda and elsewhere did face significant problems on account of their origins and identity. Anti-immigrant stereotypes were rife, as attested by some of Mushemeza’s interviewees. For instance, one of them – an autochthonous Ugandan – accused the Banyarwanda refugees of “‘ha[ving] a language barrier. The old refugees had problems to learn the local language compared to the young. ... especially the Tutsi felt more comfortable in isolation.’” Another felt that “‘some were lazy. They did not want to join us in cultivation.’”<sup>19</sup> Distrust also took more malignant forms: “‘there was a belief that ‘Banyarwanda are not trustworthy. A Munyarwanda (singular [of Banyarwanda]) can entertain you and kill you. Therefore, when you are dealing with him/her be conscious and careful.’”<sup>20</sup> Because of these feelings, passing as a Ugandan, Burundian, Congolese or Tanzanian improved the Banyarwanda’s chances in their country of residence. This was especially true in the education sector. Uganda was also still a developing country, and many Ugandans felt that the few places in their schools should go to Ugandans rather than to refugees. Again, Watson’s research highlights the issue:

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<sup>15</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 165-166. My interviewee Vianney Shumbusho, for instance, studied in Addis Abbeba on a UNHCR scholarship.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with J-L Denblynden, 24 August 2017.

<sup>17</sup> US Committee for Refugees, *Exile from Rwanda: Background to an Invasion*, 8-9

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9

<sup>19</sup> Mushemeza, “Politics and the Refugee Experience,” 132-133. This is in some ways a contentious issue. For instance, Clark and Stein state that the Rwandan refugees “also experienced difficulties in changing from being primarily pastoralists to becoming farmers, which many viewed as a lower status occupation.” Refugee Policy Group. *Older Refugee Settlements in Africa*, 42.

<sup>20</sup> Mushemeza, “Politics and the Refugee Experience”, 133

“You change your name, you become meek, you lose yourself as a person, you hide away from your culture” said one refugee, who took on a Kinyankole name in order to get a place at a secondary school and then lived in fear that someone would expose her by addressing her in Runyankole, a language she did not know.<sup>21</sup>

This strategy, on the other hand, excluded them from UN aid. As a refugee explained:

I was a small girl when our family ran to Tanzania as refugees. I had my primary education in the refugee settlement. At primary seven, I was given forms to fill for secondary admission. I recorded myself as a refugee. The headmaster advised me to change my identity to a Tanzanian because being a non-citizen would limit my chances of admission. The day I joined the secondary school, the headmistress, who was a Tanzanian of Malawi origin, called me to her office. She asked me, are you Rwandese? I said yes. She then asked “Why did you claim to be a Tanzanian?” I told her my past experience. She changed my forms because she wanted me to benefit from UNHCR scholarship. The experience of identity crisis made me cry and I have never forgotten. Even when Tanzania naturalised us in 1978, I was always feeling that I am Rwandese, that is why I joined [the] RPF to fight for my return.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> US Committee for Refugees, *Exile from Rwanda: Background to an Invasion*, 9. This is echoed by other Banyarwanda refugees. Interview with Ndore 10 September 2018

<sup>22</sup> Anonymous RPF member, as quoted in Mushemeza, “Politics and the Refugee Experience”, 170



## The Banyarwanda in Uganda, 1971-1980

As the 1960s went on, the Banyarwanda refugees became involved in Ugandan politics. Their natural sympathy for the pro-monarchist Bahima, with whom they shared a close cultural connection, caused the second president of Uganda, Milton Obote – a fanatical anti-monarchist – to consider the Banyarwanda refugees as political enemies. In 1969, he planned a census to count and identify all the refugees with a view to expelling them at a later date. As one Ugandan People’s Congress government employee put it: “The Banyarwanda people are not trustworthy. You give them land, food, water and education and yet they support your opponents. Obote was right to find out how many they were in order to find an appropriate solution to them and rid the country of the problem once and for all.”<sup>23</sup> Another reason for the particular timing of the census might have been that the UNHCR indicated in 1967-1968 that support for the refugee camps would soon be ending and that the Ugandan government would now be expected to take responsibility for their upkeep.<sup>24</sup>

However, before Obote had the chance to expel the refugees from Uganda, he was overthrown by his army commander Idi Amin in early 1971. In an effort to bolster his regime, Amin sought the support of minorities.<sup>25</sup> In the case of the Banyarwanda, for instance, he allowed the exiled Mwami, Kigeli V, to come to Uganda and provided him with a house and a car. Amin’s pro-Banyarwanda policies, in turn, prompted many of their number to join his army and brutal secret service. It was at this time that many refugees moved out of the camps and into the surrounding areas, where they settled down as both pastoralists and agriculturalists.<sup>26</sup> Banyarwanda support for Idi Amin’s presidency is a somewhat contested topic, and it seems that the community was split over how to deal with Amin. Though his presidency coincided with a time of prosperity for the Banyarwanda and some, like Stephen Ndugute, joined his army, others, such as Emmanuel Gisa, opposed his regime.

Gisa is now better known as Fred Rwigyema, a Banyarwanda refugee whose parents had fled to Uganda around 1959. He was educated in Oruchinga Valley Refugee Camp and Mbarara High School, but in 1976 he left school to join a group of FRONASA (Front for National Salvation) recruits on their way to Tanzania. FRONASA had been formed in 1972 by Yoweri Museveni as an opposition group in exile with the goal of overthrowing the Idi Amin regime. Rwigyema’s motivations for joining FRONASA are uncertain. It is possible that he was intent on escaping the anti-Banyarwanda sentiments harboured by some Ugandans. He might also have been looking for adventure. In addition, he was a great friend of Museveni’s brother, Caleb Akwandwanaho (*nom de guerre* Salem Saleh).<sup>27</sup> Whether they had met at school or on their way to Tanzania to join FRONASA is unclear, though the former hypothesis seems more plausible. As Museveni had contacts with the *Frente de Libertação de*

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<sup>23</sup> UPC government employee, as quoted in Mushemeza, “Politics and the Refugee Experience”, 118

<sup>24</sup> Refugee Policy Group. *Older Refugee Settlements in Africa*, 128

<sup>25</sup> Mushemeza, “Politics and the Refugee Experience”, 118

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 136

<sup>27</sup> Joshua Kato, “Fred Rwigyema, the military genius from two countries”, *New Vision*, 10 April 2012. [https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1300804/fred-rwigyema-military-genius-countries](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1300804/fred-rwigyema-military-genius-countries)

*Moçambique* (FRELIMO), the young men were taken for training to Mozambique after joining – though they probably also took part in military operations against RENAMO.<sup>28</sup>

In 1978, President Idi Amin invaded Tanzania in an attempt to deflect the attention of Ugandans away from the terrible domestic situation. This turned out to be a strategic miscalculation, as Nyerere's Tanzania was no pushover; not only was the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF) more than willing to defend its country, but it was also joined in this by several groups of Ugandan dissidents. These groups included Tito Okello's *Kikosi Maalum*, Museveni's FRONASA, to which Rwigyema belonged, and the smaller Save Uganda Movement and Uganda Freedom Union. Though these movements had little in common other than a shared will to see Idi Amin deposed, they had agreed at the Moshi Conference of March 1979 that they would combine into the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF). In the event, not only did the UNLF and the TPDF expel the Ugandan invaders from Tanzanian soil, but, following a brief war, they also drove on to Kampala and deposed Idi Amin in June 1979.

After its victory, the UNLF ruled Uganda until the 1980 national elections. However, in the period between the deposition of Idi Amin and the 1980 elections, a new Ugandan army was being formed from the disparate anti-Amin groups and Museveni's FRONASA was largely dismantled. FRONASA cadres were instructed that they would have to be "re-trained." In the process, over half of the troops were barred from continuing to serve in the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). Significantly, all of the Banyarwanda in FRONASA, including Fred Rwigyema, were removed from their positions.<sup>29</sup> This process took place for two reasons. Firstly, Obote and others within the UNLF wanted to sideline Museveni to clear their own path to power. Secondly, although Fred Rwigyema's charisma had garnered many Banyarwanda recruits for FRONASA during the advance from the Tanzanian border to Kampala, the Banyarwanda were still seen as Idi Amin's stooges and significant anti-Banyarwanda sentiment existed within Uganda. This is probably why none of them were allowed to join the UNLA. Two historical processes now unfolded simultaneously: the persecution of the Banyarwanda in Uganda, and the Ugandan Resistance War launched by Yoweri Museveni. Both will be discussed in the pages that follow.

### **The Persecution of the Banyarwanda**

Milton Obote returned to power following the contested 1980 elections, from which many Banyarwanda had been excluded.<sup>30</sup> For Obote, the Banyarwanda were a piece of unfinished business. Not only had he been antagonistic towards them before he was removed from

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<sup>28</sup> Pascal G. Ngoga, "Guerrilla Insurgency and Conflict Resolution in Africa: A Case Study of Uganda" (PhD diss., Lancaster University, 1997), 67, 212, 394-395

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-217

<sup>30</sup> There is some debate as to whether the elections were free and fair: US Committee for Refugees, *Refugees in Uganda and Rwanda: The Banyarwandan Tragedy*. Written by Roger Winter, (Arlington, Virginia. 1983), 3; US Department of State, *Uganda, 4 Annual Human Rights Report submitted to Congress* (Washington DC. 1980); US Department of State, *Uganda, 6 Annual Human Rights Report submitted to Congress* (Washington DC. 1981); From: T.M. Unwin, Kampala To: UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva 'Evacuation to Third Country of Thousands of Rwandans', 24 June 1981. "100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.1] (1979-1981)" UNHCR Archive.

power in 1971, but many Banyarwanda had also supported his enemy, Amin. Within Obote's party, the Ugandan People's Congress (UPC), anti-Banyarwanda sentiment was rife and the Banyarwanda were considered responsible for many of the country's woes. In addition, Banyarwanda Catholicism also caused friction with the predominantly Protestant UPC.<sup>31</sup> The new president's first move against the Banyarwanda was to test the waters to see if it was possible to encourage them to leave Uganda. The "Govt is very keen on voluntary repatriation,"<sup>32</sup> reported T.M. Unwin, the UNHCR representative in Uganda, in May 1981. However, he went on, "discussions at all levels (also with Rwandan Ambdr) ... indicated that the Rwandans were dead against it."<sup>33</sup> As Unwin explained one month later,

before one of the recent "summits" in which President Obote took part he (Obote) received an envoy from the President of Rwanda. The envoy told Obote plainly that Rwanda did not want the refugees back: and Obote is said to have answered equally plainly that Uganda would like them to go. ... the security people must have compiled lists. ... He [the Permanent Secretary (and Director of Refugees) in the Ministry of Culture, John Assendri] added that the Government was definitely concerned about the nefarious activities of some Rwandans and said the Government said they had proof that many more Rwandans were concerned in such activities than their proportion of the population warranted.<sup>34</sup>

The "nefarious activities" in question had to do with the ongoing Resistance War. Following his election loss to Obote, Yoweri Museveni had taken to the bush to wage a renewed guerrilla campaign against the newly installed Ugandan government. Two of his earliest and most important supporters were the aforementioned Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame, who were both from Banyarwanda refugee stock. Their presence attracted Banyarwanda volunteers to the NRA, the army of Museveni's National Resistance Movement.

However, the Banyarwanda also provided an easy scapegoat and target against which Obote could mobilise his supporters. Following a meeting with the Ugandan vice-president in June 1981, Unwin again reported that

The Rwandans knew they could not hope for much from the UPC Government which, e.g., had opposed their being allowed to vote while the opposition had encouraged them to do so. ... He [the Vice-President of Uganda] did say that Govt. has a list of some (he thought) 10,000 people (souls, not heads of family) whom they wanted moved because they felt certain that these people constituted a security threat. ... He said ... the security risk at present was too much to face, and "time is running out." He warned that if nothing was done such was the ire of the people of Uganda against the Banyarwanda "who have

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<sup>31</sup> US Committee for Refugees, *Refugees in Uganda and Rwanda*, 3; US Committee for Refugees, *Human Rights in Uganda: The Reasons for Refugees* (Arlington, Virginia, 1985), 10

<sup>32</sup> From: T.M. Unwin, Kampala To: R. Kalberer, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva 'Discussion on various subjects.', 6 May 1981. "100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.1] (1979-1981)" UNHCR Archive.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> From: T.M. Unwin, Kampala To: UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva 'Evacuation to Third Country of Thousands of Rwandans.', 24 June 1981. UNHCR.

been killing us for years” that unless Govt. did something the people would take matters into their own hands with deplorable results.<sup>35</sup>

Rather bizarrely, in mid-July 1981, the Ugandan Army asked the UNHCR to make a list of Banyarwanda members of the Ugandan Army.<sup>36</sup> Clearly this list could only serve one purpose: to purge any remaining Banyarwanda from the Ugandan Army. Naturally the UNHCR could not, and would not, oblige with such a request. At the start of 1982, Unwin had the following to report to Geneva:

I also heard reliably a few days ago that Government was implementing some action against Rwandan refugees in an effort to sort out the “legitimate” from the “illegitimate” ones. No details were known to my informant. I have reported before that it is likely that an effort will be made to try to make the Rwandans into some kind of scapegoat for all the illegal action by the Ugandan Army which is taking place and continues to act in many places (though not most) in an undisciplined and vandal-like manner. .. Mr. Otai, Minister of State in the Vice-President’s Office, said words to the effect that something had to be done about the Rwandan refugees who were responsible for “all our troubles.” There was also an army captain who was very forceful and vituperative vis-a-vis the Rwandans.

The Minister of Rehabilitation told me over a drink on 31<sup>st</sup> January that out of 90 persons captured at a training camp for terrorists 78 were Rwandans. I pressed him for more details but he was not forthcoming. I have never been given any evidence that any refugee has been convicted of an offence of this kind.

You will therefore see that the long-feared campaign against our charges seems to be getting under way.<sup>37</sup>

In September, preparations were allegedly made by the Minister of State Security Affairs, Chris Rwakasisi, to evict the Banyarwanda from the south of Uganda. Local administrators were briefed to prepare the evictions, which would be carried out by the UPC Youth Wing, while a group of the Special Force would be on hand as back-up.<sup>38</sup>

In this situation of enhanced tension, many Banyarwanda sought shelter in the refugee camps and settlements in southern Uganda. Others started crossing the border into Rwanda. A UNHCR official, Patrick de Sousa, who went down to southern Uganda to investigate the situation, found “several groups of recently displaced Rwandese carrying a few belongings on their heads. Other groups were in hired vehicles piled high with mats, pots and pans, and

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.; Similar sentiments in From: T.M. Unwin, Kampala To: UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva ‘More background – Rwandan Affairs’, 8 May 1981. “100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.1] (1979-1981)” UNHCR Archive; and also in From: T.M. Unwin, Kampala To: R. Kalberer, UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva ‘Discussion on various subjects’, 6 May 1981. UNHCR Archive.

<sup>36</sup> From: Peter Matovu, Fort Portal To: T.M. Unwin ‘Rwandese refugees serving in the Ugandan Army’, 8 July 1981. “100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.1] (1979-1981)”, UNHCR Archive.

<sup>37</sup> From: T.M. Unwin, Kampala To: UNHCR Geneva ‘Rwandan Refugees in Uganda’, 8 February 1982. “100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.2] (1982-1983)” UNHCR Archive.

<sup>38</sup> US Committee for Refugees. *Human Rights in Uganda: The Reasons for Refugees*, 19

other hastily assembled personal belongings.”<sup>39</sup> After interviewing the displaced, de Sousa realised that they had been ordered to leave their homes, which were outside the designated refugee settlements, by a local chief. When de Sousa spoke to the chief, the latter told him that he

had received instructions to expel all refugees from his area. When questioned about the Bahutu who could not be presumed to be refugees – he said his instructions were to expel all Banyarwanda. I asked how many days’ notice were given to families who had been settled for several years, and was told that they were just told to leave, and if they refused the armed force was used to hasten evacuation.<sup>40</sup>

On the way to the border or the refugee settlements, the Banyarwanda were often forced to pay bribes or leave their cattle at roadblocks manned by the Special Force.<sup>41</sup> It is particularly important to note that no distinction was made between Banyarwanda refugees, most of whom had by this time been in Uganda in excess of seventeen years, and the migrants and nationals who had been settled in Uganda for much longer. This explains why support for the RPF would later come not only from the Banyarwanda refugees whose parents had left Rwanda in 1959-1963, but also from much longer-settled Kinyarwanda-speakers.

A lengthy justification for this coordinated persecution of the Banyarwanda was advanced by the Chairman of the Mbarara District Council. In his statement, he explained that the spark had been the deaths of the head and a member of the local para-military youth who had been pursuing cattle rustlers. Exactly what happened is unclear, but it seems the deaths were an instance of friendly fire.

The exercise seemed smooth and the situation cooled down. The Refugees seeing that their plans were defeated, went to a Army Unit in Rakai District, and faresly [*sic*] reported that gualillas [*sic*] have invaded the country. The consequence was that our boys were armbushed [*sic*] and two of them were killed in cold blood together with a Policeman.<sup>42</sup>

About the Banyarwanda in general the Chairman explained that:

Peace has two aspects that is life and death. It is difficult to keep a snake in the bed and you feel peaceful in your sleep.

I would like to give a small account on little history of the matter. For the last twenty years, we have been generous enough to accommodate the Rwandese Refugees and normal aliens of Rwandese origin not knowing that we were nourishing a vesper [viper?]

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<sup>39</sup> From: Patrick de Sousa, Uganda To: UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva ‘Mission to Mbarara District – 21-22 October 1982’, 26 October 1982. “100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.2] (1982-1983)” UNHCR Archive.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid; and From: Dr. Robin Biellik, UNICEF To: Thomas Ekvall, UNICEF, Kampala ‘Displacement of Banyarwanda from Rakai District’, 23 December 1983. “100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.3] (1983-1984)” UNHCR Archive; US Committee for Refugees. *Human Rights in Uganda: The Reasons for Refugees*, 19

<sup>42</sup> From: T.M. Unwin, Kampala To: UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva ‘Welcome Speech by the Chairman of Mbarara District Councils to the Councillors assembled to hear the President’s Message’, 23 November 1982. “100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.2] (1982-1983)” UNHCR Archive.

in our chest until recently we realized that they were dangerous criminals, killers, smugglers and saboteurs [*sic*]. We had to choose one of the two things:

1. Harbour them for further period was selling out our National integrity of Independence.
2. Cleaning them from our society was receiving International repercussions so we chose the latter to safe-guard integrity through the Universal decision based on the following points.<sup>43</sup>

This campaign of ethnic cleansing, which continued more and less intensively until 1985, quickly caused the two large refugee settlements of Nakivale and Oruchinga to double in population and livestock as Banyarwanda were concentrated into them.<sup>44</sup> Though massive starvation was averted due to the quick UN response, the atmosphere in the camps was one of fear. The experience of fear was also shared by urbanized Banyarwanda. Many had moved to Kampala while Idi Amin was in power, and others, mostly youngsters, were in the capital for their schooling. For these Banyarwanda, everyday life became very precarious, as Ndore Rurinda attests: “When you are on a bus, approaching a checkpoint, you don’t speak but you are tall and lanky and you can tell the people are watching you.”<sup>45</sup>

While up to 40,000 Banyarwanda were reportedly willing or able to get to Rwanda, the Rwandan government was not keen on their return – and neither were the majority of the Tutsi refugees. After all, Rwanda was at this juncture still ruled by a Hutu-dominated one-party system. The Rwandan refugees who did make it into Rwanda, rather than being repatriated, were confined to refugee camps.<sup>46</sup> One of the Banyarwanda to experience this was James Kabarebe, who would later go on to rise to the highest levels of the RPA. In late 1980, when the Obote II government started pushing refugees back into the refugee camps and over the Rwandan border, he was among the latter. His parents had gone ahead, while he was part of a group of boys who were to follow with the refugees’ cattle. As the group approached the Rwanda-Uganda border, which was demarcated by a shallow river, the Rwandan border guards would not let them cross. Rwanda, so they told the boys, was full. Kabarebe explains that this was the first time he was confronted with genocidal racism. “The guard told me: ‘You guys, Uganda hates you, Rwanda hates you, which means even God hates you. This river flows to Ethiopia, so you can take the river back to where you came from. To Abyssinia.’”<sup>47</sup> Kabarebe and his age-mates were stuck: behind them stood the Ugandans, who were driving them out of the country; before them stood the Rwandan border guards. Eventually, after spending a full day in the river with their cattle, the boys took advantage of the cover of darkness and were able to cross into Rwanda and Akagera National

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> From: T.M. Unwin, Kampala To: UNHCR Headquarters, Geneva ‘Summary of Trip Report, Mbarara, Kabale Districts, 27-31 October 1982’, 8 November 1982. “100.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [vol.2] (1982-1983)” UNHCR Archive; From: W. Karango To: UNHCR, Ottawa ‘Re: CAN HCR264’, 17 November 1982. “610.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [1972-1984]” UNHCR Archive.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 10 September 2018

<sup>46</sup> The history of this episode is very sketchy and could do with its own dedicated research. Many RPF members whom I spoke to have told me that at least some of the Banyarwanda who fled back into Rwanda in the early 1980s were killed. It seems that most of the refugee camps were either in northern Rwanda or in Akagera National Park.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with James Kabarebe, 16 October 2018. The interview with Kabarebe was not recorded, so I paraphrase rather than quote him directly.

Park. They walked until morning, when they were caught. Their cattle was put into a corral for quarantine, but food and water within the enclosure were insufficient, and dead carcasses were littered throughout.

The group now scattered to look for their families. James and a few others wound up at Kilondo refugee camp. Before being allowed to enter the camp, the boys were forced to dig the graves for some of their fellow refugees who had died the night before. No members of Kabarebe's family were among the corpses, and he found his father, mother and siblings in the camp. However, as he put it some 30 years later, "The situation was too hard, not good, it only was a place to die. And my siblings were getting sick with diarrhoea."<sup>48</sup> Thus, after staying in the camp for two or three nights, he decided to go back to Uganda and join Museveni in the bush. Leaving at night, he walked back through Akagera National Park alone. Near the border, he found people struggling to load cattle onto a truck. James offered to help in return for a ride to Kampala. In the capital, he found some of his old friends and headed for the bush. Later, in 1985, he would be sent back across the border to recruit youths from these camps for the NRA. After signing up about two hundred of them, he led them back across the border and to Museveni.<sup>49</sup>

For the young Banyarwanda in Ugandan refugee camps, living in squalid conditions and discriminated against by the government, joining Yoweri Museveni's rebels in the Luwero Triangle became an enticing option.

### **The Resistance War**

Before the 1980 elections, Museveni had insisted that he would challenge any electoral outcome which he perceived to be unfair. When Obote won the election under suspicious circumstances, Museveni decided he would indeed challenge the result. While initially contemplated, a *coup d'état* was eventually deemed impractical. The FRONASA members who had survived the purge (see section "The Banyarwanda in Uganda" above) were mostly stationed either in the North of Uganda or far away from the capital. Being unable to draw on a significant force of loyal troops, Museveni could not be sure of success. Instead, it was decided to take to the bush and launch a protracted insurgency campaign against the Obote II regime.<sup>50</sup> From Museveni's perspective, a protracted campaign had several advantages. First, it was the kind of fighting that FRONASA knew from their experiences in Mozambique; secondly, it would allow the FRONASA cadres scattered throughout the country to reassemble; and, finally, it would also prevent a possible collision with the Tanzanian troops which remained in Uganda.<sup>51</sup>

The attack which signalled the outbreak of the Resistance War was the raid on the Kabamba barracks – a training centre – launched on 6 February 1981 by the "Kabamba 27." While the attack was launched by 35 men, only 27 of them were armed, hence the name. Among these attackers were the aforementioned Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame. As the duo had been

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ngoga, "Guerrilla Insurgency and Conflict Resolution", 220-221

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 221-222

purged from FRONASA, they were not stationed far away like other Museveni loyalists and were therefore able to quickly join Museveni for the attack.<sup>52</sup> Rwigyema rapidly moved up the ranks: by May 1981, he was in command of one of the six units which made up the NRA. By 1985, he was put in control of a new NRA front around Fort Portal and, later that year, he even acted as overall commander, with Salim Saleh as his deputy, while Museveni was out of the country.<sup>53</sup> Paul Kagame also played a leading role within the NRA. Having received intelligence training in Cuba during the conflict, he was promoted to major by the time of its conclusion in 1986.<sup>54</sup> With such charismatic Banyarwanda in the NRA, and the ongoing persecution they faced in the south of Uganda, it is not surprising that many Banyarwanda youth signed up for the NRA.

Throughout the first years of the destructive Resistance War, Obote was able to hang onto power. But as the NRA insurgency steadily gained ground, squabbling increased within the UNLA – the government army – and undermined his position. In July 1985, in-fighting broke out in Kampala and, by the end of the month, Obote was deposed in a *coup d'état* by General Tito Okello. Okello had also been one of the members of the alliance which had deposed Idi Amin and could count on an especially strong backing from the northern Acholi ethnic group. However, he was unable to reverse the military gains being made by the NRA, which victoriously entered Kampala in January 1986.

The end of the war came as a huge relief to the Banyarwanda community, as the NRA's reputation preceded it. As Roger Winter explained, "when the NRA exited the bush and entered Kampala in early 1986, it was already a legend. Its reputation for discipline and the NRM's policy of no sectarianism were almost too good to believe. Its brain trust was highly educated, highly ideological, highly committed to Ugandan nationalism."<sup>55</sup> As *The Times* reporter William Pike also noted, "Morale, something which cannot be lied about, also appeared high. Soldiers, mostly young peasants from Buganda and Ankole, swiftly obeyed the orders of their officers, young university graduates and former government career soldiers."<sup>56</sup> In the wake of Museveni's victory over Okello, Rwandans within the NRA also suddenly found themselves catapulted into powerful positions in the new government. Fred Rwigyema was made deputy minister of defence and held various high posts in the armed forces. For his part, Paul Kagame held key positions in the Directorate of Military Intelligence. Many Banyarwanda who had not yet joined the NRA now flocked to its banners. In many ways, the NRA guaranteed their safety. The non-sectarian policies within the organisation and the key positions already held by Banyarwanda fighters meant they would be safe. In addition, an extra inducement came from the fact that they would now be the soldiers with the guns, and could no longer be wantonly stopped at checkpoints.<sup>57</sup> Besides the quest for personal safety, there was a general feeling among the Banyarwanda community

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<sup>52</sup> Ngoga, "Guerrilla Insurgency and Conflict Resolution", 222

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 243, 295

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 391

<sup>55</sup> Roger Winter, "Human Rights in Uganda: The Past, Present and Future" in *Three papers presented before the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*. Kampala. 15-16 February 1990, 40-41

<sup>56</sup> William Pike, "Conflict in Uganda" *The Times*, 24 August 1984, 4

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 10 September 2018

that military training would be useful in the future. While the idea of an armed return to Rwanda had not yet fully crystallised, the feeling that force might be required to return home was certainly present.<sup>58</sup> A generational consensus had been reached because of the Obote II years: while older refugees had always wanted to return home, many of their children who grew up in Uganda had been quite content. Obote II changed that, and when parents now told their children that “without your own country, you will always be persecuted,”<sup>59</sup> these words rang true.

### **The Founding of the RPF**

The Banyarwanda refugee community had always maintained internal links through cultural and political clubs and organisations. For example, one of these, the Rwanda Refugees Welfare Foundation (RRWF, founded c. 1980), was mostly dedicated to helping the plight of fellow refugees. Those who were fortunate enough to find themselves benefitting from advanced schooling at places like Makerere University would then go out to the refugee camps to help educate the children. They would ensure to take scarce basic supplies, like chalk. Other comparable societies included, for example, the *Intore* society for men and the Nyampinga group for women in Kenya, which provided a forum for Rwandan culture. While these associations were not overt political movements, they were probably founded with a view to promoting political awareness among the Banyarwanda community.<sup>60</sup> Undoubtedly the most important and most political of these refugee associations was the Rwandan Alliance for National Unity (RANU), founded 1979. It had two main goals: a) to discuss and address the problem of national unity in Rwanda, and b) to search for a solution to the plight of the Banyarwanda. However, by 1985, it had become clear that RANU in its current form had failed to deliver on its promises. The organisation lacked a clear vision and did not have the organisational structure which could have turned such a vision into action.<sup>61</sup> In response to these problems, a “task force” led by Tito Rutaremara was formed to gather information from the refugee community around the Great Lakes. As William Cyrus Reed explains, “RANU sent Rwandan university students directly to the refugee camps in Central and Eastern Africa to initiate contact and gather information which was reported back [...] to the task force.”<sup>62</sup> Tito Rutaremara adds:

Now, in 1985 it is when there was a debate in RANU asking how we could make RANU a mass movement, and a dynamic mass movement. When they asked us to write a paper, I happened to write one, telling them that if we don't organise ourselves [we won't achieve much] ... Then I proposed in my paper, which was accepted, when Kampala was taken and I came back to Uganda. RANU asked me to form a task force where there were two military people and two [political cadres] and I was heading that task force in order to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.; interview with Jill Rutaremara, 7 September 2018

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 10 September 2018

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Jill Rutaremara, 7 September 2018

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Cyrus, Reed “Exile, Reform and the Rise of the Rwandan Patriotic Front”, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3 (September 1996), 485

reorganise RANU, to make RANU a very dynamic and mass movement. ... so we created the RPF.<sup>63</sup>

In December 1987, during a general congress, RANU morphed into the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF's "8-point programme" expressed a much clearer vision than RANU had embodied. This, in turn, meant that the vision could be transferred to the mass of Banyarwanda refugees living outside Rwanda. The key to achieving as wide a constituency as possible among all Rwandans living outside Rwanda was to exclude no one. For that reason it was decided that the new organisation would be a "Front": as long as members agreed with the "8-point programme," their political bent, be it socialist, liberal or conservative, was irrelevant. In the same vein, the RPF argued that ethnicity belonged to the past and that all Rwandans, Hutu and Tutsi, were welcome to join. The programme was as follows:

1. Restoration of unity among Rwandans;
2. Defending the sovereignty of the country and ensure the security of people and property;
3. Establishment of democratic leadership;
4. Promoting the economy based on the country's natural resources;
5. Elimination of corruption, favouritism and embezzlement of national resources;
6. Promoting social welfare;
7. Eliminating all causes for fleeing the country and returning Rwandan refugees back into the country;
8. Promoting international relations based on mutual respect, cooperation and mutually beneficial economic exchange.<sup>64</sup>

An important part of this "big tent" ideology was opening up the RPF to women. RANU had been mostly dominated by older men, but the founding of the RPF changed that. Christine Umutoni, a Rwandan who grew up in Uganda from refugee parents, remembers that her struggle had not always been that of a return to Rwanda.<sup>65</sup> As a woman in a still very patriarchal society, her fight had consisted in getting an education and emancipating herself. She overcame the triple hurdle of being a refugee and a young woman and started a law degree at Makerere University in 1982, just as the anti-Banyarwanda policies of the Obote II regime were intensifying. Many of the young Banyarwanda men at the university were inspired by the war being waged by Museveni and Rwigyema and would slip away to the bush. However, Umutoni explains that, "though I was a rebel I was still apolitical."<sup>66</sup> Her sentiment changed when she lost touch with her parents as they were rounded up and forced back into a refugee camp by anti-Banyarwanda pro-Obote forces. Though Umutoni was able to find them with the help of the UNHCR, it was now clear to her that she did not belong in Uganda.

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Tito Rutaremara, 9 October 2018

<sup>64</sup> 'History', RPF, last accessed: 30 November 2018, <http://rpfinkotanyi.rw/index.php?id=24>

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Christine Umutoni, 14 May 2019

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

At the end of her degree, and with the fighting around Kampala reaching a peak, Umutoni went to Kenya to live with her uncle, Dr. Joseph Mudaheranwa Karemera, who was a fervent RANU supporter. The local RANU cell would meet in the evening and discuss their plans to fundraise or otherwise support the NRA. Eventually, Umutoni's uncle and many of his friends also disappeared to go fight with the NRA. However, despite her education, she had never been involved in any work related to RANU although the stay at her uncle had peaked her interest. Things changed when she returned to Uganda in 1987. One day two young Banyarwanda NRA officers came to the dorm where she and her friends were staying, looking for recruits for a political school run by the NRM. After some back and forth in which Umutoni told the two that she was more interested in returning to Rwanda, they ended up giving her the details of a RPF political school instead.

When Umutoni arrived at the school there was some discussion about whether, as a woman, she should be allowed to join. One high-up commented that, because she had permed her hair, she “looked just like a Muzungu” (white person), ready to go back to Nairobi and would not be very useful.<sup>67</sup> Tito Rutaremara overheard the conversation and having just spent two decades in France, was less intimidated by the sight of an assertive, intellectual woman; he thought Umutoni would make a good recruit. After completing the course at the political school, Umutoni joined the secretariat full-time and helped prepare the December 1987 congress in which RANU officially became the RPF. Though some Banyarwanda women had joined RANU, the RRWF or the NRA, they were only truly accepted after the founding of the RPF. As a consequence, many more started joining.<sup>68</sup>

The RPF leadership realised early on that if they were to turn potential political support into actual support, they would have to focus on mass mobilisation and education. An important part of this process was a sensitisation campaign, at the centre of which stood the Cadre Development Schools. As an RPF member explains,

To help in its mobilization strategy, the RPF set up permanent political schools in Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya and Congo. The political schools were organized clandestinely in members' houses and houses rented by the RPF. Members who were to attend the political school would secretly assemble at the venue and clandestinely stay for about a month while participating in rigorous political discussions. Under the guidance of cadres, who had been through political schools themselves, political activity would go on day and night in all the regions. The participants would prepare their own meals from supplies bought by the RPF. ... Those cadres who wished were clandestinely put into the NRA military training schools to later become Ugandan soldiers waiting for the D-day.<sup>69</sup>

Nor were these schools limited to big cities like Kampala or Nairobi. They reached throughout the refugee community, all the way to the grassroots in the refugee camps, and the small villages where Banyarwanda had settled. Every RPA soldier or RPF political cadre I spoke to had attended one of these political schools. The themes discussed there were broad,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Correspondence with former RPF member, 27 August 2017; interview with Jill Rutaremara, 7 September 2018; interview with Ndore Rurinda, 10 September 2018; interview Senator Tito Rutaremara, 9 October 2018

the intention being to develop the critical thinking skills of RPF trainees. The liberation struggles of Africa, the Vietnam War, Cold War politics and dialectical materialism were all on the menu. While the slant was slightly socialist, a main tenet of RPF philosophy was that all political doctrines, from socialist to conservative, were welcome, as long as they were consistent with the basics set out in the “8-point programme.” Often, cadres who had been through the Cadre Development School system would go on to teach themselves, on subjects in which they specialised. One of the problems with RANU had been that only a few of its members worked fulltime for the organisation. Their political work had taken place alongside other career and family pursuits. This, as Tito Rutaremara explains, was a serious shortcoming: “If there are no people who are politically professional, who make sacrifice and start mobilising, if you go and work on weekends then things won’t be.”<sup>70</sup> To tackle this issue, some graduates of the Cadre Development Schools were selected to become fulltime political mobilisers, spreading the message and objectives of the RPF not just in the Great Lakes region, but also among the diaspora in Western Europe and North America.

Cultural associations were another key part of the drive towards mass mobilisation. Many of these organisations were already in existence and served the cultural needs of exiled Rwandans throughout Africa and Europe. But as the RPF started mobilising, these associations became overtly political. On the one hand, they made the RPF’s political message known. They were a way to spread “the narrativization of the past glory of Rwanda ... in order to create a sense of belonging ... and history that transcended the experience of conflict.”<sup>71</sup> As a political cadre explained:

Cultural activities were regularly carried out in all regions by officially registered Rwandan cultural organizations pulling huge Refugee populations. Youth and women groups’ activities sprang up in all regions. The Front’s structures at all levels gained strength within the Refugee communities in all the regions.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, they were used as fundraisers for the cause. During cultural events, especially in Europe and North America, successful Rwandans were asked to make donations to the RPF, so that one day they might return to their country. However, for all their importance, these donations were insufficient to finance the newly formed organisation, with its political schools and fulltime political cadres. Thus, besides donations, “All members of the RPF in the region were making contributions to the Front depending on their levels of income.”<sup>73</sup> For prosperous businessmen, these contributions could be substantial; for salaried members, they might amount to pledging a percentage of their monthly income; for grassroots refugees, they might mean sacrificing a cow to the cause.<sup>74</sup> As one former RPF member explained,

Each Cell, branch, region had an elected Finance member. The Cell Finance member would collect and remit to the branch and the branch finance members would all remit to

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Senator Tito Rutaremara, 9 October 2018

<sup>71</sup> Frank K. Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation: A History of the Military in Rwanda* (Kigali: Fountain Publishers, 2009), 175

<sup>72</sup> Correspondence with former RPF member, 27 August 2017

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Vianney Shumbusho, 18 October 2018; interview with Jill Rutaremara, 7 September 2018

the region's finance member who would in turn remit to the executive, the Commission of Finance. The Commission had staff who would move through all regions collecting the funds and mobilizing for more, identifying well-to-do members and friends of the Front and specifically soliciting funds other than ordinary contributions from them.<sup>75</sup>

The RPF also established several business ventures in Uganda. One of its businesses involved the importation of cement from Tanzania to Uganda. Cement was relatively cheap in Tanzania, but in Uganda, which was going through an intensive phase of reconstruction in the aftermath of the Resistance War, demand was high, and cement could thus be sold for a handsome profit.<sup>76</sup> Companies controlled by the RPF and its sympathisers also supplied the NRA with its rations.

It supplied all the NRA battalions with foodstuffs: maize and beans. This was done through its network because by design all supplies officers, intelligence officers and finance officers in all the NRA brigades were Rwandan. RPF cadres would be awarded tenders to supply these units by tender committees made up of mostly of [these] officers and even if ... some Ugandans comprised the committees, they would not know what was happening. Moreover, the brigade commanders, who were all Ugandan would be in the know because they had been briefed by Major General Rwigyema [Rwigyema] who was their superior, comrade in arms and hero. The Finance and Audit department at the NRA headquarters was, again by design, controlled by Rwandan officers so payment to the RPF suppliers would be hastened so that more supplies to the units would be delivered. Since the RPF cadres delivered on time due to their prompt payment and the quality was always immediately found good, the few other competitors were thrown out. Even those who managed to struggle, their supplies were tested and found wanting in quality by the Rwandan supplies officers in the units. Since the NRA had to have supplies and there was an efficient supply system, for three years prior to the invasion, the RPF had a cash cow in supplies.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, grassroots collections, diaspora donations, percentages of members' salaries and some organisation-wide business ventures seem to have made up the bulk of RPF income in the years leading up to 1990.

Though the stated intention of the RPF was to find a peaceful way for Rwandan refugees to return to Rwanda, it was clear from the start that a military option was on the table. This was signalled most clearly by the election of Fred Rwigyema as Chairman of the RPF, and the immediate formation of its military wing, the RPA, in 1987. Thus, another important part of the sensitisation campaign was to reach and specifically prepare Banyarwanda in the NRA for a return to Rwanda. The lead in this effort was taken by those Banyarwanda officers who were already sympathetic to the RPF cause. They would speak to Rwandans in their units, showing their own sympathy for the RPF and convincing them that their cause was worthwhile. RPF members within the NRA would use the cover of their formal duties to go around the country and talk to potential recruits.<sup>78</sup> They would also communicate orders and

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<sup>75</sup> Correspondence with former RPF member, 31 August 2017

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 10 September 2018

directives from the RPF to Banyarwanda officers. Besides indicating which soldiers might be open to approach by the RPF, another role played by these officers was to train young Banyarwanda refugees, as well as the RPF recruits who came from around the Great Lakes region, in preparation for a potential military attack on Rwanda. As 1990 approached, and the military preparations of the RPF accelerated, more and more refugees came to Uganda in preparation for the eventual showdown. Some joined the NRA directly, but others were trained in small training camps set up throughout Uganda and run by Banyarwanda officers in the NRA. The following experience can be assumed to have been fairly typical. X came to Uganda from Zaire in mid-1990 when he was about 16 years old. His family had fled to Congo from Rwanda in the early 1960s. Having spent a month in a political school in Kivu, he was recruited by the RPF. When the agreed night came, he and others gathered near their village and were taken to the Zaire-Ugandan border, which they crossed at night. On the other side, Ugandan army trucks were waiting to pick them up and take them to a camp deep inside Uganda, where the recruits were trained for six months by Rwandan instructors. In December 1990, he joined the RPA at the front.<sup>79</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit Movement and the Insurgency in the North**

Soon after Museveni took power in Uganda, an insurgency developed in the north of the country. Led by Alice Lakwena, the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) exploited feelings of discontent among the Acholi and soon threatened the survival of the new government. This new conflict proved a godsend for the burgeoning RPF. The NRA needed troops to fight the HSM, so its leaders were happy to turn a blind eye to the fact that many recruits were Banyarwanda from outside Uganda. “As the NRM government was busy recruiting cadres and soldiers to prosecute its new-found duty of running a State and fighting an insurgency in the north of Uganda, it was also, by default, aiding the political agenda of Rwandan refugees.”<sup>80</sup> In return, Banyarwanda within the NRA fought hard against the rebels of Alice:

Most of the newly passed out soldiers of the NRA would be deployed to the North and all the young Rwandans would be so eager to go and serve under their Rwandan hero especially knowing they would acquire experience to use in Rwanda under the same commander. General Rwigema was very popular with the troops in the North. Indeed it was him who finally stopped the Alice Lakwena insurgency at a place called Corner Kilak.<sup>81</sup>

It is difficult to say the degree to which the war in northern Uganda proved a formative experience for the RPF. What is clear is that the core of the later RPA did fight in northern Uganda and that the war against the HSM was used as a kind of training ground. Caesar Kayizari explicitly made the point in an interview:

So, whenever we went to battle we said “let us excel, it is a battle yes, but it is also a school.” So cowards were identified then, in the beginning. “Come on, are you going to help us when you are a coward here?” All over in the North in the East. Jinja, Magamaga, Soroti, Corner Kilak. ... Whenever an opportunity to go for other training came, we

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<sup>79</sup> Interview, 13 May 2017

<sup>80</sup> Correspondence with former RPF member, 27 August 2017

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

found a way of putting our guys to benefit from this further training: officer cadet, company commander, platoon commander, artillery. Support guns, support services, like communication.<sup>82</sup>

However, it should also be noted that while many top-brass within the NRA must have known and condoned the actions of the RPF men within their organisation, it seems unlikely they grasped their full extent. The Rwandans who found themselves in the Ugandan military intelligence made sure that any discontent about the RPF's activities within the NRA was never made public. Kayizari continues:

So in 1989-90 the question on everybody's mind was when [will we cross into Rwanda?]. We were getting fidgety, because the intelligence information [was] that something was boiling under. The reason why it didn't go far was because we were in intelligence. So we knew how to drop it. It comes from the ground but doesn't reach the leadership because we put it in the freezer. I was the person in that department so I know how many reports I diverted and of course on instructions from my boss.

JBK: Kagame?

Yes, or Fred, all of them. We knew it was a military code that anything [that put] our mission in jeopardy we must do all effort to make sure it does not succeed. And one of the ways we had to do it was to stop the information flow which would be used against us. But, and this is the peculiarity of us, we had to excel in our undertakings for Uganda, so that they keep at least – so that they need us. They say: “these are the best officers we have, these are the best soldiers we have, we need them.” Because they had the war they were fighting.<sup>83</sup>

The relationship between the RPF and the NRA is full of nuance. Rwandans had been part of Museveni's inner circle since the first days of his fight against Obote. Fred Rwigyema was one of the best friends of Museveni's brother, Salim Saleh, and rose to top command positions both during the Resistance War and the war against the HSM. Major Paul Kagame, for his part, was close to Museveni himself, and held key positions within the NRA military intelligence. Besides these two, other high-level RPF members within the NRA included Lt Col Adam Wasswa and Major Chris Bunyenyezi, Major-Dr. Peter Bayingana, who was the head of the NRA medical services, Sam “Kaka” Kanyemera, the head of the military police, and Stephen Ndugute. Besides these elite connections, a web of friendship forged in combat bound the Rwandans inside the NRA and their Ugandan counterparts. It seems it was these personal ties that allowed the RPF to use the NRA to an astonishingly effective degree. As explained above, the RPF used the NRA to train its own armed wing, the RPA, and to fund its political and military agenda. However, there does not appear to have been an official, formal “pact” between the NRA and the RPF which allowed this to happen. Rather personal connections at every level of the NRA created sympathy among the Ugandans for the objectives of their Rwandan friends. The Ugandans also understood the worth of the Rwandans within their ranks in the fight against Alice Lakwena and the HSM. By 1990, the RPF had in effect created an army within an army, one which was ready to spring out of the

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

NRA box as the RPA. However, while the RPF prepared for a possible military return to Rwanda, diplomatic negotiations were also being carried out between the Ugandan and Rwandan governments on the right of return of the Banyarwanda.

### **Negotiating the Return of Rwandan Refugees**

Though the political situation had improved for the Banyarwanda in Uganda following the end of the Resistance War and the elevation of their patron, Museveni, to power, this did not mean that the anti-Banyarwanda sentiment on display during the Obote regime had simply disappeared. In fact, a deep suspicion of the Banyarwanda remained, as is borne out by the following letter, seemingly the brainchild of an ordinary Ugandan man from Mbarara in 1989.

While it is accepted by the UNHCR that refugees should be given freedom by the host country, it is dangerous to give too much of it. An example is seen here in Uganda where refugees from our neighbouring Rwanda were given asylum but now have become a burden to the government. ... The question is, where would they be if the Uganda government had not given them asylum? The problem is that the Uganda nationals themselves are facing scarcity of land and employment because of these expatriates. All government and non-governmental departments are filled by these refugees. Worse still, these refugees are always assuming higher positions in the government and they have even filled the army. Now I would request the UNHCR to send these people to their camps and have all the control over them. Those who wish to go back to their country of origin should be allowed to do so freely. Again these refugees should not be allowed in the state army.<sup>84</sup>

This anti-Banyarwanda sentiment gave Museveni a strong reason to negotiate for the departure of the refugees. By solving the refugee problem, Museveni would cement his position of power in Uganda. More specifically, he might have aspired to engineer the departure of Banyarwanda officers within the NRA, for while they fought bravely, they were becoming an increasing political liability in the face of their unpopularity with the Ugandan masses. It is also possible that Museveni was under pressure from the RPF, whose chairman, Fred Rwigyema, was close to him, to feel out the possibilities for a peaceful return of most Banyarwanda to Rwanda. However, a high level RPF political cadre said that the RPF was completely excluded from negotiations on the return of the Rwandan refugees.<sup>85</sup>

The Habyarimana presidency made its position clear to the new government in Uganda by broadcasting its “Position du comité central face au problème des réfugiés rwandais” on national radio on 26 July 1986. The main argument of the communiqué was that Rwanda was full and already lacked the resources to develop its existing population. In light of this, Rwanda could not possibly be expected to open its doors to the refugees. “Rwanda is absolutely unable to ensure even the food security of an increased population resulting from a massive return of Rwandan refugees. And the absence of food security generates, as we

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<sup>84</sup> From: Cliff Ruhemba, Mbarara To: Mr Chipman, UNHCR Switzerland ‘Too much freedom is dangerous’, 31 October 1989. “100.UGA.RWA [A] Ugandan Refugees in Rwanda” UNHCR Archive.

<sup>85</sup> Interview Senator Tito Rutaremara, 9 October 2018

know, all other insecurities.”<sup>86</sup> The communiqué further stated that the best solution to the issue of the Rwandan refugees was their naturalisation in their country of residence. In its conclusion, the Rwandan note finally stated that

Rwanda will continue to consider sympathetically requests for individual, free and voluntary repatriation in the light of the conventions to which Rwanda is a signatory and the regulations in force in Rwanda, which regulations provide, inter alia, that a refugee may be admitted to the country who;

- Never carried arms against the Rwandan Republic;
- Never participated in a subversive movement against Rwanda or any activities against the interests of the Rwandan Republic;
- Demonstrates ability to provide for their subsistence and fulfillment needs once back in the country.

That said, although cramped, overpopulated, and still on the list of the poorest countries in the world, Rwanda will always be a country of asylum within the framework of the Conventions it has signed. It now shelters thousands of refugees. However, whenever the conditions for their return to their countries of origin have improved, Rwanda will accede to their individual will to repatriate.<sup>87</sup>

Despite its ostensibly generous tone, this concession was nothing of the sort. In particular, it ruled out any possibility of a general return of Rwandan refugees, and spelled out a number of criteria by which virtually anyone could be excluded. What was considered a subversive movement? What was considered sufficient ability to “provide for subsistence and fulfilment”? The document also failed to set out any procedure for individual repatriations to Rwanda. In reality, this procedure, in which documents and evidence had to be presented to the Rwandan Embassy in Uganda, took so long as to be utterly impractical. The limited capacity of the Rwandan Embassy to process such applications also ensured that only a miniscule trickle of Rwandan refugees would ever be repatriated by this route. Thus, what the communiqué actually did was to shut the door on any prospect of mass repatriation of Rwandan refugees.

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<sup>86</sup> From: Anton Verwey, Délégué pour le Rwanda, Kigali To: Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés, Genève ‘Prise de positions du Comité Central du M.R.N.D. concernant le problème des réfugiés rwandais’, 5 August 1986. “0.10 RWA [A] Relations with external Governments – Rwanda.” UNHCR Archive. “Dans cette conjoncture, le Rwanda est absolument incapable d’assurer ne serait-ce que la sécurité alimentaire d’un surcroît de population provenant d’un retour massif des réfugiés rwandais. Et l’absence de la sécurité alimentaire est, on le sait, génératrice de toutes les autres insécurités.”

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. “Le Rwanda continuera pour sa part, à examiner avec bienveillance les demandes de rapatriement individuel, libre et volontaire à la lumière des conventions dont le Rwanda est signataire et des règlements en vigueur au Rwanda, lesquels règlements disposent notamment que peut être admis dans le pays un réfugié qui :

- n’a jamais porté les armes contre la République Rwandaise ;
- n’a jamais participé à un mouvement subversif contre le Rwanda ni à des activités quelconques contre les intérêts de la République Rwandaise ;
- démontre sa capacité de subvenir à ses besoins de subsistance et d’épanouissement, une fois rentré dans le pays.

Cela dit, bien que, à l’étroit, surpeuplé, encore sur la liste des pays les plus pauvres du monde, le Rwanda sera toujours un pays d’asile dans le cadre des Conventions qu’il a signées. C’est ainsi qu’il héberge des milliers de réfugiés. Cependant, toutes les fois [fois] que les conditions de leur retour dans leurs pays d’origine se seront améliorées, le Rwanda accèdera à leur volonté individuelle de rapatriement.”

UNHCR legal experts were also unconvinced by the communiqué. They set out their analysis in a legal report. To be sure, they conceded that “the demographic growth rate and living space being what they are in Rwanda, on the one hand, and, on the other, the economic potential of the country and its capacity for absorption being more than limited, the return of a population this size could, if we are not careful, degenerate into social unrest and create insecurity within the national frontiers.”<sup>88</sup> In addition, the UNHCR agreed that it was easy to understand the worry by the Habyarimana presidency that foreign governments would support the armed return of Rwandan refugees. Yet, considering the extreme restrictions placed on refugees who wanted to return, it seemed to the lawyers that

The examination of these conditions gives rise to the feeling that repentance or forgiveness are but empty words in the eyes of the Rwandan authorities! In addition, some vague and imprecise words, such as “subversive movement,” “any activities,” “interests of the Rwandan Republic,” etc ... seem to have been purposely used to give the Government of Kigali the broadest possible discretionary power which may be used without limitation or control.

As for the last of these three conditions, namely “the ability to provide for their needs,” it seems both difficult to demonstrate and to estimate, except perhaps for a refugee returning to Rwanda with millions of dollars, accumulated abroad, which they would plan on investing in their native country.

Those are not the kind of refugees you see everywhere!<sup>89</sup>

The UNHCR legal report adds in conclusion that the position taken by Habyarimana and the MRND was greeted with disquiet, if not outright hostility, by the countries which hosted large populations of Rwandan refugees. And this feeling was echoed by the refugees themselves.

That President Habyarimana and the MRND leadership would take such a hard stance on the issue, and risk the ire of both neighbouring countries and the refugees, is peculiar, as they were well aware that, if their claims were left unresolved, the Rwandan refugees in Uganda might attempt an armed return. In fact, the aforementioned communiqué states explicitly that the Rwandan people would not accept the return of refugees with weapons in hand – a clear

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<sup>88</sup> From: S.S. Wijeratne, Senior Legal Advisor To: The Representative UNHCR Office in Japan ‘Memorandum: Rwandan Refugee Policy (written by François-Xavier Doudou-Kiadila, Conseiller juridique pour l’Afrique)’, 2 July 1987. “0.10 RWA [A] Relations with external Governments – Rwanda” UNHCR Archive. “Le taux de croissance démographique et l’espace vital étant ce qu’ils sont au Rwanda d’une part et, de l’autre, le potentiel économique du pays et sa capacité d’absorption étant plus que limités, le retour d’une population de cette importance peut, si l’on n’y prend garde, dégénérer en troubles sociaux et créer des situations d’insécurité à l’intérieur des frontières nationales.”

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. “L’examen de ces conditions suscite a première vue le sentiment que le repentir ou le pardon ne sont que de vains mots aux yeux des autorités rwandaises! De plus, certains mots au contenu vague et imprécis, tels ‘mouvement subversif’, ‘activités quelconques’, ‘intérêts de la République Rwandaise’, etc... semblent avoir été à dessein employés pour donner au Gouvernement de Kigali, le plus largement possible, un pouvoir d’appréciation dont il peut user sans limitation ni contrôle.

Quant à la dernière de ces trois conditions, à savoir ‘la capacité de subvenir à leurs besoins’, elle semble tout à la fois difficile à démontrer et à apprécier, sauf peut-être pour un réfugié rentrant au Rwanda avec des millions amassés à l’étranger, millions qu’il entendrait investir dans son pays natal. Ce n’est pas le genre de réfugiés qui courent les rues!”

reference to the Rwandans within the NRA. Anton Verwey, the UNHCR delegate in Rwanda, explained that, “during our various interviews with diplomats posted in Kigali, the link between the moment chosen for the publication of the position statement and in particular its paragraph referring to the return of armed refugees, and the existence of a large group of refugees within the ranks of Museveni’s NRA, has been raised several times.”<sup>90</sup> Just a couple of months before the communiqué was issued, Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs François Ngarukiyintwali had written to the head of the *Service central de renseignements* about Rwandan refugees “operating in the NRA” who wanted to return to their country of origin by force.<sup>91</sup>

Habyarimana and his advisors must have come to the conclusion that the refugees were less of a threat in Uganda than if they returned to Rwanda. After all, the state which Habyarimana controlled in the late 1980s was not much different from that which the refugees had fled during the Social Revolution. Ethnicity and support of the one-party MRND government were crucial for success. Schools still maintained ethnic quotas, identity cards included ethnicity, while Tutsi were excluded from the armed forces. It was thus more than likely that returning refugees would disturb the political status quo in Rwanda and demand equality before the law. Many of their number were Tutsi, and few of them were likely to support the MRND. Domestic opposition groups could also potentially rally to the refugees and form a common front against the MRND government. In sum, inviting the refugees back to Rwanda posed a direct threat to the Rwandan establishment. Moreover, besides the political threat they embodied, the refugees were not a group which would be easily suppressed. They were well organised and many of them were experienced soldiers who had deposed Obote through a successful insurgency.

In December 1987, a 15-head commission of the Organisation of African Unity made a tour of Uganda, and a local UNHCR representative reported that the

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<sup>90</sup> From: Anton Verwey, Délégué pour le Rwanda, Kigali To: Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés, Genève ‘Prise de positions du Comité Central du M.R.N.D. concernant le problème des réfugiés rwandais’, 5 August 1986. UNHCR Archive. “Cependant durant nos divers entretiens avec des diplomates en poste à Kigali le lien entre le moment choisi pour la publication de la prise de position et en particulier son paragraphe faisant référence aux retours de réfugiés à main armée et l’existence d’un groupe important de réfugiés dans les rangs de la NRA de MUSEVENI a été soulevé à plusieurs reprises.”

<sup>91</sup> From: François Ngarukiyintwali, Ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la Coopération To: Chef Service Central de Renseignements ‘Regain d’activisme des réfugiés rwandais’, 5 March 1986. “Box: MIN – 237 MINAFFET” National Archives of Rwanda. “Il vous souviendra que le message en question a trait à la campagne de sensibilisation que le terroriste MUDANI Joseph, actuellement officier dans l’armée de Yoweri MUSEVENI, est en train de mener au sein du groupe de réfugiés qui évoluent dans l’Armée de Résistance Nationale (NRA) pour ce que ces derniers songent à leur retour au RWANDA par force. Ledit terroriste décourage la solution d’intégration de ces réfugiés dans la Société Ougandaise et suggère à ses collègues de faire pression aux nouveaux maîtres de KAMPALA pour que leur contribution à la victoire de Yoweri MUSEVENI, soit, en retour, récompensée pas une base arrière dans leur future armée contre notre pays. Il me revient par ailleurs de vous rappeler que le contenu du message précité a été confirmé par le télex No 133/04.A13/VI.1 du 20 février 1986, télex qui précise que lors de la réunion que les réfugiés rwandais subversifs de la région de Toro, ont tenue dans la ville de Fort Portal, ils se sont résolus à se lancer dans des entraînements militaires intensifs pour préparer leur retour forcé. D’après notre Ambassade à Kampala, les entraînements seront collectifs sans distinction d’âge ou de sexe et se dérouleront dans un camp militaire de la ‘NRA’ situé dans la région de TORO.”

Matter [of the refugees] was discussed at length in meeting with African Ambassadors and with Minister of Local Government who proposed a regional meeting at highest level with all countries concerned to solve this issue (main problem lying with reluctance of Rwanda government to take back its nationals). ... The ambassador of Rwanda approved the choice of a durable solution but warned that repatriation would have to be selectively applied.<sup>92</sup>

The subject was once more broached three months later, when President Habyarimana embarked on an official state visit to Uganda. He agreed with Museveni that the Rwandan refugees were, in principle, a Rwandan problem. However, as Rwanda would not be able to solve the issue alone, the two presidents agreed that a joint ministerial committee would be set up to find a solution.<sup>93</sup> The Uganda/Rwanda Joint Ministerial Committee on the Problem of Rwandese Refugees Living in Uganda met for the first time early in 1989.

While the Rwandan government had publicly agreed to find a durable solution, it proved unwilling to budge from the negotiating position set out in the 1986 communiqué. In early 1989, Habyarimana reaffirmed that

the refugees [...] must fully understand that it is not because RWANDA does not fervently want all refugees to be able to return someday, but because it does not at all see how it would be possible, the constraints of the country having grown so much - the extreme land shortage, the precariousness of our resources, not to mention the extraordinary demographic growth which poses almost insurmountable challenges for us - that reasonably, humanly speaking, it is simply not possible to imagine the massive return of our refugees.<sup>94</sup>

Indeed, the preferred solution for the Habyarimana presidency remained the naturalisation of Rwandan refugees in their countries of residence.<sup>95</sup>

Following their president's lead, the Rwandan delegation to the second meeting of the Uganda/Rwanda Joint Ministerial Committee, held in Kampala on 14-17 November 1989, maintained that despite the best intentions of the Rwandan government, any mass repatriation

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<sup>92</sup> From: UNHCR Kampala To: UNHCR Geneva, 'Re: uga/hcr/1062 hcr/uga/1065 and eth/uga/hcr/1005', 16 December 1987. "0.10 UGA [B] Relations with external Governments – Uganda" UNHCR Archive.

<sup>93</sup> 'Joint Communiqué issued at the End of State Visit of H.E. Major General Habyarimana Juvénal President of the Republic of Rwanda and Founder-Chairman of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) to the Republic of Uganda 4<sup>th</sup> February to 6<sup>th</sup> February 1988.' "100.UGA.RWA [A] Refugee Situations – Ugandan Refugees in Rwanda" UNHCR Archive; From: Anton Verwey, Délégué pour le Rwanda, Kigali To: UNHCR Genève 'Visite du Président Juvénal Habyarimana en Uganda', 15 February 1988. "0.10 RWA [A] Relations with external Governments – Rwanda" UNHCR Archive, 6

<sup>94</sup> From: République Rwandaise, Mission Permanente auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies, Berne To: UNHCR Geneva, 1 June 1989. "0.10 RWA [C] Relations with external Governments – Rwanda" UNHCR Archive. "[...] il faut qu'ils sachent parfaitement que ce n'est pas parce que le RWANDA ne voudrait pas, ardemment, que tous les réfugiés puissent revenir un jour, mais parce qu'il ne voit pas du tout comment cela pourrait être possible, car les contraintes de notre pays sont devenues telles – l'exiguïté territoriale extrême, la précarité de nos ressources s'y ajoutant, sans compter l'extraordinaire croissance démographique nous posant des défis presque insurmontables – que raisonnablement, humainement parlant, il n'est tout simplement pas possible d'imaginer le retour massif de nos réfugiés."

<sup>95</sup> 'Note pour Dossier: Solutions durables pour les Réfugiés Rwandais, Annex: 'Mémorandum de la Partie Rwandaise sur le Problème des Réfugiés Rwandais', 14 June 1989. "0.10 RWA [C] Relations with external Governments – Rwanda" UNHCR Archive, 13

of refugees was simply impossible. The minutes of the meeting show the sparring that took place. First, the Rwandan delegation presented a paper which set out their view for the umpteenth time:

The Committee examined a paper presented by the delegation of Rwanda which gave a detailed and substantial analysis of the constraints facing Rwanda and make it impossible to envisage a massive return of Rwandese refugees.

...

Talking about security, the Rwanda delegation observed that massive return of the refugees would add on to the population, which is agricultural, with inadequate land, the risk of destabilising the country.<sup>96</sup>

Because a return of the refugees was considered impossible, the head of the Rwandan delegation further insisted that

the government of Uganda ... consider the possibility of adopting the other solutions provided by the International Conventions on refugee matters in case the ideal solution of voluntary repatriation is not applicable.

He stressed that naturalisation as provided by Article 34 of the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees is one of the possible solutions.<sup>97</sup>

However, the Ugandan delegation was clearly prepared for these by now well-known arguments and comprehensively rebutted them.

In response to the Paper presented by the delegation of Rwanda, the delegation of Uganda noted the constraints of Rwanda in case of a massive return of refugees. These constraints were not unique to Rwanda and she should therefore not use them to abdicate from her obligations towards Uganda. Uganda also asserted that the concept of voluntary repatriation is based on the wish of the refugee to return to his country of origin once the circumstances that compelled him to flee have ceased to exist, regardless of the economic situation obtaining in his country of origin. Moreover, the grounds for refusing a refugee to return to his country of origin are clearly spelt out in the international Instruments on Refugees to which Rwanda and Uganda are parties. Those grounds do not include the constraints enumerated by Rwanda. If massive repatriation is problematic, a phased repatriation should be carried out over a given period of time once the magnitude of the problem is ascertained. What is important now is that we continue to work together in our efforts to find a solution to the problem, no matter what constraints.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the difference of opinion, the two sides were able to agree that an Independent Committee of Experts would be set up by the UNHCR. This committee would establish how many refugees were currently residing in Uganda, and what they wanted. Three options were

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<sup>96</sup> From: Marjon Kamara, Acting Representative UNHCR, Kampala To: Mr. E. Chipman, Head Desk V, RBA, UNHCR Headquarters Geneva, 'Uganda/Rwanda Interministerial Committee on Rwandese Refugees in Uganda, Annex: Agreed Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Joint Uganda/Rwanda Ministerial Committee on the Problem of Rwandese Refugees Living in Uganda Held in Kampala from 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> November 1989', 23 November 1989. "0.10 RWA [C] Relations with external Governments – Rwanda" UNHCR Archive.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

on the table: repatriation back to Rwanda, naturalisation in Uganda or resettlement in a third country. The committee would also try to establish the assets owned by each refugee.<sup>99</sup> Communications between the UNHCR representative in Kampala and members of the Ugandan government show that the latter considered this second meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee to be a breakthrough.

There is a known militant faction within the Rwandese refugee community consisting mainly of the younger generation of refugees, which advocates return to the motherland, as a matter of right and principle. This group is reportedly involved in harassment of other refugees who hold different views. Nevertheless it is expected that those refugees especially in urban areas who have integrated, intermarried with Ugandans and hold civil service offices as well as the aged refugees will opt for naturalisation.<sup>100</sup>

It seems the Ugandans expected enough refugees to opt for naturalisation that the number wishing to return could be managed by the Rwandan government.

Between 27 and 30 July 1990, the Joint Ministerial Committee met for a third time. The main news at the meeting was that the UNHCR had not yet been able to complete the agreed upon survey. This was partly due to differences between the Rwandan and Ugandan governments over the kind of questions that would be put to the respondents. After such differences were resolved, the deadline for the completion of the UNHCR report was set for 30 November 1990. As both governments would need time to digest the findings of the report, the fourth session of the Joint Ministerial Committee was scheduled for January 1991.<sup>101</sup>

Slowly but surely the Rwandan Government had been giving ground, and 1990 saw them make the greatest concession to date. Roger Winter, the Director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, wrote on 17 September 1990 that

The government of Rwanda has modified its heretofore persistent policy of limiting repatriation to very few individuals, admitted on a case-by-case basis. It had defended its prior policy publicly primarily in terms of Rwanda's poverty and serious demographic problems. In fact, "national security" considerations have been paramount.

Now, however, Rwanda has agreed with Uganda and UNHCR to embark on an exercise that would permit the 118,000 Rwandan refugees in Uganda to either repatriate or remain in Uganda and possibly pursue naturalisation there. I believe Rwanda has agreed to this because:

1. It now (I think correctly) believes that, although the refugees universally say they want the right to repatriate, most will not themselves do so. Most of today's refugees were born in Uganda, the refugees will almost certainly not be in a position to reclaim their

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<sup>99</sup> 'Note pour Dossier: Visite de Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères de la République du Rwanda.', 23 November 1989. "0.10 RWA [C] Relations with external Governments – Rwanda" UNHCR Archives, 1

<sup>100</sup> From: Marjon Kamara, Acting Representative UNHCR, Kampala To: Mr. E. Chipman, Head Desk V, RBA, UNHCR Headquarters Geneva, 'Uganda/Rwanda Interministerial Committee on Rwandese Refugees', 23 November 1989. UNHCR Archive.

<sup>101</sup> 'Agreed Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Joint Uganda/Rwanda Ministerial Committee on the Problem of Rwandese Refugees Living in Uganda Held in Kigali From 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July 1990', 30 July 1990. "100.UGA.RWA [A] Refugee Situations – Ugandan Refugees in Rwanda" UNHCR Archive.

properties or obtain compensation, and Rwanda retains some undesirable practices regarding ethnic Tutsi.

2. It recognises there will likely never be a government in Uganda more hospitable to the refugee population than the current government.

...

I recommend that the sub-Group on Africa give consideration to:

...

3. Asking Rwanda to reconsider its current practises of:
  - a. Requiring residents to carry identification cards which indicate the holder's ethnicity (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa)
  - b. Maintaining ethnic limitations on participation in certain education and employment.<sup>102</sup>

The third point made by Winter is crucial. While many of the Banyarwanda, both refugees and earlier economic migrants, wanted to return to Rwanda, they did not want to find themselves in a society where they would be structurally discriminated against. Thus, a mass repatriation would only take place against a backdrop of internal political reform.

Furthermore, this concession by the Rwandan government certainly did not mean that the negotiations were over or that a unanimous solution had been found. Just a couple of days after Winter's message, the representative of the UNHCR in Kampala wrote to Ibrahim Mukiibi, the Ugandan minister of internal affairs, that the

UNHCR is finalising arrangements to implement the various activities agreed upon culminating in the survey of the refugees during November/December 1990.

However, as you are aware, UNHCR has faced a serious financial crisis since 1989. These financial problems remain unresolved as a result of which UNHCR has no monies available to fund planned activities relating to the survey. It is therefore necessary to make special requests to donors, in particular the European Economic Community (EEC) for contributions to facilitate implementation of the survey.<sup>103</sup>

Considering the importance of the report of the UNHCR Committee of Experts to the negotiations, and the doubtful prospect it would be ready by the agreed deadline of 30 November, it must have seemed unlikely that the next Inter Ministerial Committee meeting scheduled for January 1991 would make much progress.

This rather lengthy discussion of the negotiations conducted between the Rwandan and the Ugandan governments under the auspices of the UNHCR is of particular importance, since many historians and commentators are under the mistaken impression that the negotiations for the return of refugees had actually been concluded. This has obvious implications for how the RPF's subsequent decision to invade Rwanda is judged. André Guichaoua, for instance,

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<sup>102</sup> From Roger P. Winter, Director US Committee for Refugees To: Jean Pierre de Walincourt, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, 17 September 1990. "100.UGA.RWA [A] Refugee Situations – Ugandan Refugees in Rwanda" UNHCR Archive.

<sup>103</sup> From: Marjon Kamara, Acting representative UNHCR Kampala To: Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs Ibrahim Mukiibi 'Information Campaign for Survey of Rwandese Refugees', 21 September 1990. "0.10 UGA [C] Relations with external Governments – Uganda" UNHCR Archive.

writes that “the aggressive move by Rwandan refugees based in Uganda took place at a time when negotiations on the refugee issue had just been concluded, in August 1990, under the auspices of international organisations.”<sup>104</sup> Prunier also argues that the RPF invasion took place to pre-empt the conclusion of the ongoing, but promising, negotiations.<sup>105</sup> Not only are these assertions incorrect, but they also fail to locate the negotiations in their proper context. Ugandan authorities had on and off been contemplating the return of the refugees since the Obote I presidency, and the refugees themselves had made their will to return to Rwanda abundantly clear for decades through organisations like RANU. Yet never had the Rwandan government, either under Kayibanda or Habyarimana, seriously entertained the possibility of a mass return. It is with this background in mind that the late 1980s negotiations must be measured. In the eyes of many Rwandan refugees, the long, drawn-out nature of the negotiations, and the fact that they still had not reached a settlement by the Autumn of 1990, were simply a reaffirmation of their deeply held belief that the Habyarimana presidency had no real interest in their return.

### **Choosing a Violent Return**

The choice of a violent return by the RPF can be explained by the coming together of two historical factors. On the one hand, Rwandan refugees had been agitating for a return to their home country since their departure in 1959-1964. While the negotiations described above were seemingly making progress, they had been grinding on for almost four years with no end yet in sight. On the other hand, they now held a unique position within the Ugandan government and army, a position that – it was reasonable to expect – would not last indefinitely. As stated above, Museveni was not negotiating for the return of the refugees solely because they had helped him overthrow Obote. He was also mindful of the strong anti-Banyarwanda sentiments that existed among many Ugandans. The popular support for the pogroms committed against the Banyarwanda during the Obote II government had not suddenly dissipated.<sup>106</sup> In this context in which (as it were) every minute counted, the RPF leadership had to make a decision: wait for the conclusion of the negotiations between Rwanda and Uganda in the hope of a positive outcome and face returning to a country as second class citizens, or seize the opportunity and start a military campaign to force a return on their own terms.

The background of the leading RPF members played a key role in influencing their choices. Most of the higher-ranking echelons had been part of the victorious insurgency against Obote and therefore knew that the path of armed struggle was a realistic option. In addition, the military preparations which the RPF had been conducting since 1987 meant that, by 1990, they were as ready as they would ever be. A deep distrust of Habyarimana’s motives was also common among RPF members. The Front’s cadres remembered Habyarimana’s argument

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<sup>104</sup> André Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide: Criminal Politics in Rwanda 1990-1994*, trans. Don E. Webster (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 24; James K. Gasana, “La Guerre, La Paix et la Démocratie au Rwanda” in *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993-1994)* ed André Guichaoua (Paris: Karthala, 1995), 220

<sup>105</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 91

<sup>106</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala to: Immediate FCO ‘Rwanda/Uganda’, 15 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO; Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation*, 176

about Rwanda being full – just like they remembered the treatment they and their families had received when they had fled Obote’s persecution in the early 1980s (see the aforementioned case of James Kabarebe). Equally important for the RPF was that its members feared the Ugandan government would turn on them eventually. As one former cadre explains:

We were doing it against time, because as the Uganda government consolidated themselves the first jacket that they put off was the Rwandese. Because politically they had to shed us off. So we said let’s do it quickly and take off the jacket first before they do it on us. Because that will give us a more and better way of doing it than when you are fired. When you are fired you are a vulnerable person.<sup>107</sup>

A good indication of the depth of concern of the RPF leadership were the precautions it took to keep unsympathetic elements within the Ugandan security services off its tail. Paul Whiteway, a British diplomat at the High Commission in Kampala, was told that

Security was a constant worry. If the RPA members had been discovered, they could have faced a court martial. However, the situation was made easier for them by the fact that Kagame was the Deputy Director of Military Intelligence. On at least one occasion, he received information that individual RPA members were under suspicion by the NRA. Forewarned, the suspects were able to escape before the net closed in on them. ... Karemera said that one month before the 1990 invasion, the plans were known only to six individuals:- Rwigyema [Rwigyema], Kagame, Baingana [Bayingana], Karemera and two others. He himself was based in Mbale.<sup>108</sup>

Fred Rwigyema and the other high-level commanders in the RPF must also have heard that the position of President Habyarimana was no longer as strong as it had been (see chapter III) and that he might be toppled in a lightning strike. Weighing all these factors, the RPF decided the time was ripe and set the date for “option Z,” a military return to Rwanda, for 1 October 1990.

## Conclusion

This chapter has described the journey of the Banyarwanda community, especially in Uganda, from one of mostly disenfranchised refugees to a formidable political and military organisation. Time and time again, forces beyond the control of the Banyarwanda influenced their actions: the repression of Obote II taught them how to fight, while the attitude of Ugandans – even after Museveni had come to power – convinced them that they would never be able to settle there permanently. Finally, the refusal of Habyarimana to countenance the return of the Banyarwanda refugees left a small window in which military action could open the door to return. If there had been more time, or if negotiations for the return of the Banyarwanda had been concluded more rapidly, this violent option might not have proved necessary. But with the

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>108</sup> From: Paul Whiteway, Kampala. To: African Section, Research and Analysis Dept, FCO ‘Rwanda: origins of the Civil War’, 19 September 1994. “FOI 1024-17\_Part\_1” FCO. Not that there are several habitual spellings of many Rwandan names.

Ugandan intelligence services breathing down their neck, the RPF leadership understood that they would not be able to maintain their underground network much longer, forcing them to make a choice.

## V - THE START OF THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION: OCTOBER 1990

Launching the Struggle for Liberation was the single most dangerous moment in the RPF's quest to overthrow President Habyarimana and enable the return of the Banyarwanda. If the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) had been intercepted and stopped by the NRA on the way to the border, the future of the RPF's cause would have been grim indeed. This chapter covers the start of the war both militarily and diplomatically. It also looks at the reaction of the Habyarimana presidency domestically and the first international attempts at mediation and ceasefire.

### *Abahungu Bambutse: The Boys Have Crossed*

As Fred Rwigyema prepared to give the order to cross the Ugandan-Rwandan frontier and attack the Kagitumba border post, he must have been feeling mixed emotions: excitement that the RPF struggle was about to enter its military phase, and marvel at how many RPA soldiers had turned up.

Maj Chris Bunyenyezi actually took two full companies (about 180 men) with all weapons in his 307 Bde HQ armoury, plus their personal weapons when they went. They were in the Soroti area ... Some anti-aircraft artillery, some "big guns" and at least one, probably two Katyusha (40 barrelled multi-barrel rocket launchers) went with Fred Rwigyema. He deployed them from the "reserve units" at Bombo. ... At least 10% are not Rwandan, but have gone in a spirit of adventure, or to be with their chums.<sup>1</sup>

Rwigyema must also have felt trepidation: while many had answered the call, significant numbers of the RPA had not yet arrived due to the secrecy of the preparations. These included many commanders and soldiers who were stationed in the north of Uganda. For instance, the later commander of the Bravo Combined Mobile Force, Ludoviko "Dodo" Twahirwa, only heard that the RPA had crossed the border after 1 October and immediately made his way south to join his comrades.<sup>2</sup> Peter Kalimba, who would rise through the ranks to become an RPA liaison to UNAMIR, had a similar experience. He heard about the attack on BBC radio, quickly packed his things, put his subordinate in charge of his NRA unit, and headed for the front. In Kampala, he met up with two other RPF stalwarts – Protais Musoni and Kamali Karegyesa – who were heading for the battlefield in a rented car. They all arrived on 4 October 1990.<sup>3</sup> Not only were many soldiers and key commanders missing, but the organisation of the RPA also left something to be desired. Secrecy had been key, and no

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<sup>1</sup> Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter, 'DA Report on Visit to Rwanda border Area – 18 October 1990', 22 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (part C), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO, 2; On Ugandans in the RPA see also, Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information par La mission d'information de la commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées et de la commission des affaires étrangères, sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d'autres pays et l'ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994* (Assemblée nationale, 15 December 1998), Annexes, 185

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Logan Ndahiro, 26 October 2018

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Peter Kalimba, 23 October 2018; Correspondence Peter Kalimba, 12 November 2018; For a similar story see Theogene Rudasingwa, *Healing a Nation: A Testimony* (North Charleston: CreateSpace, 2013), 66

proper units had been formed before the call to assemble. As troops and officers arrived, they were assigned to ad hoc units created just moments before.

Despite any problems that Rwigyema might have been considering, the operation got off to a good start. The border post at Kagitumba was lightly guarded and quickly overrun. Rwandan border guards put up minimal resistance and retreated after their commander was killed.<sup>4</sup> As RPA troops crossed into Rwanda, they tore the NRA insignia off their uniforms, signalling the operation was not an attack on Rwanda by Uganda. Following the capture of Kagitumba, the RPA consolidated and prepared to advance on two axes. The first thrust was aimed directly south to Gabiro and its Camp Mutara barracks, which stood guard astride the road to Kigali. The second drive was headed for Nyagatare, an important town just west of the Kagitumba-Kigali road. By the end of the day on 1 October, news had reached the FAR that the RPA had crossed the border. Some reinforcements were immediately sent to Kagitumba to assess the situation, and a battalion was prepared to launch a counterattack the next day.<sup>5</sup>

While resistance had not been significant on the first day, on 2 October, the FAR attacked the RPA with the intention of driving it back into Uganda. Rwigyema positioned his troops on a number of strategic hills to repulse this assault and was observing the fighting when he was shot and killed by a stray bullet.<sup>6</sup> Officers in the RPA immediately realised the potential for demoralisation if the news of Commander Fred's death spread throughout their force.

Rwigyema was far more than an able battlefield commander. He was a talisman, enormously respected throughout the Banyarwanda community, and the architect of the military return. Therefore, it was decided that the news of Fred's death would be initially kept secret. A committee of officers composed of Chris Bayingana, Peter Bunyenyezi, Steven Ndugute, Sam Kaka and Adam Wasswa was to hold everything together until Paul Kagame could return from the United States. While perhaps not on the fighting level of Rwigyema, or equipped with the strategic grasp of Kagame, these were all capable officers in their own right. Bayingana, Bunyenyezi, Kaka and Wasswa had all fought with the NRA against Obote and, later, in northern Uganda against the Holy Spirit Movement. Many were surprised when Wasswa joined the RPA, as he was not commonly known to be a Rwandan, despite bearing the facial markings commonly found in the Eastern Province. Ndugute had had a slightly different path. He had been a part of Idi Amin's army and had fought with the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) against the Obote II regime. However, after the victory over Obote, he had joined the NRA in service of the Rwandan agenda.<sup>7</sup>

It was decided that, although Rwigyema's death was a setback, the RPA had no choice but to push onwards. They still had the element of surprise, and if a decisive defeat were to be inflicted on the FAR, or if Kigali were to be captured, the war could still be won. So, after repulsing the FAR counterattack on 2 October, all units continued their advance. By the

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<sup>4</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Deskby 031100Z FCO 'Incursion into Rwanda', 3 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part A), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> There have been many rumours surrounding Fred Rwigyema's death and some suggest he was murdered by Bunyenyezi and Bayingana, possibly under orders from Paul Kagame. As far as I can tell, there is no truth in these rumours. Not a single interviewee gave credence to these theories.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

evening, Nyagatare had been captured, and fierce fighting was taking place around Camp Mutara and Gabiro. Gabiro Guest house was being used as a FAR HQ, and the elite paratrooper battalion had been tasked with its defence.<sup>8</sup> The British Embassy in Kinshasa reported that

Except for the Presidential Guard Company which remains in Kigali virtually all operational units are at the front. Rwandan troop strength is estimated at 3-4,000. Ground troops are supported by 3 Gazelle helicopters, 7-8 AML-90 armoured vehicles, 5 AML-60 armoured vehicles, 16 light armoured vehicles of which 2 are equipped with MILAN missiles. ... The American Embassy comments that the Rwandan Armed Forces are facing well-armed troops with combat experience. The consensus among European military observers is that the war has started badly for the GOR [Government of Rwanda].<sup>9</sup>

While the war had indeed started badly for the FAR, things were not all going the way of the RPA either. The chaotic nature of the departure from Uganda and the death of their inspirational commander were beginning to catch up with the rank and file. While the news of Rwigyema's death was not yet officially out, the troops felt that something was off. One veteran explained: "You could feel there was chaos but we didn't know why."<sup>10</sup> Others heard rumours but, "We had no time to sit and think, it was all go, go, go."<sup>11</sup> Caesar Kayizari, one of the officers who heard of Fred Rwigyema's death only hours after it occurred, explains that many became demoralised, while others became reckless; "If he can die, who am I to remain alive?"<sup>12</sup>

A distinct disadvantage for the RPA was their lack of air power. While the FAR had taken some time to organise their air wing, from 4 October onwards, air power started playing an increasingly important role in the fight. Two Britten-Norman Islander twin-engine utility aircraft flew reconnaissance missions, while French-built Gazelle helicopters armed with rockets and cannons attacked RPA targets on the ground. "Early on 4 October the Gazelles destroyed the invading force HQ at Kagitumba. It was thought unlikely that any occupants of the HQ would have survived."<sup>13</sup> While the RPA attack was still moving forwards, it was threatening to run out of steam.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO 'Military Incursion into Rwanda', 4 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part B), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

<sup>9</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Deskby 031100Z FCO 'Incursion into Rwanda', 3 October 1990. FCO.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 22 September 2018

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Peter Kalimba, 23 October 2018

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>13</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO 'Military Incursion into Rwanda', 5 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part A), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

<sup>14</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO 'Military Incursion into Rwanda', 4 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part A), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO. "An American sitrep from Kigali (1800Z 03 OCT) reported that fighting continued around Gabiro but the situation there appears to have stabilised with both sides tired and short of supplies."



Following the attack on 1 October 1990, French and Zairian troops were air-lifted to Rwanda (1). Flying from Kigali, French-supplied Gazelle helicopters repeatedly attacked RPA positions during the heavy fighting around Gaborone (2).

## Presidents Museveni and Habyarimana Respond

At this juncture, it is worth turning our gaze to the diplomatic front, which is key to understanding the rest of the military campaign. Early on the morning of 1 October, at a New York hotel, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda was woken up by aids and told there was an important phone call from home. The caller was the NRA's commander, Major General Mugisha Muntu. During the 1980s, Muntu had not agreed with the politics of his prominent pro-Obote family and had joined Museveni's rebels in the bush. He quickly rose through the ranks and became director of military intelligence – where one of his subordinates was Paul Kagame – a post he held until 1987, when he was sent to the Soviet Union for training. Following a two-year course, he returned to Uganda and was soon appointed army commander.<sup>15</sup> Known as an incorruptible, secretive and serious soldier, Muntu now told his president that the Rwandans had deserted their units and crossed the border. Museveni, who was attending a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, decided to call President Habyarimana, who was staying one floor below, to warn him about the impending attack and to reassure the Rwandan president that this was not an invasion of Rwanda by Uganda. While we do not know exactly what transpired between the two presidents, Tito Rutaremara suggests that they came to an agreement. Museveni pledged to close the border to prevent RPF reinforcements from joining their comrades, and, in return, Habyarimana was to open negotiations with the RPF/RPA who had crossed into Rwanda.<sup>16</sup> Despite the warning given by Museveni to Habyarimana, the question on everyone's mind was neatly formulated by *Africa Confidential*: “How much did President Museveni know, and when did he know it?”<sup>17</sup>

The Ugandan government made strenuous attempts to deny their involvement. The day after the invasion, the vice-chairman of the National Resistance Council “and consequently the highest ranking Ugandan currently in the country,” Alhaji Moses Kigongo, issued a radio statement condemning the RPF attack.<sup>18</sup> On 3 October, Major General Muntu himself briefed the defence attachés in Uganda. He explained that the Rwandans in the NRA had been interested in returning to Rwanda for a while, but that President Museveni had hoped a peaceful negotiated solution would be found. The British High Commissioner in Kampala, Charles Cullimore, reported that

The scale of the desertions which had taken place on Sunday had caught the NRA by surprise and the military intelligence staff were highly embarrassed. ... Once Muntu had been warned about the incursion he had notified the GOU who informed Museveni. Muntu had personally briefed the Rwandan Chief of Staff by telephone. Road blocks had been set up ... as of mid-day on 3 October, 80 NRA deserters had been captured. ... Muntu said he had no intention of giving support to Rwigyema nor of fighting against him unless Museveni pledged military support to Rwanda. Although there were contacts

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Mwanguhya Mpagi, “Muntu’s walk from Makarere to the bush war and back” *Daily Monitor*, 28 March 2010. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/888094/-/wjuys6/-/index.html>

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Senator Tito Rutaremara, 9 October 2018

<sup>17</sup> *Africa Confidential*, 12 October 1990, 1; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 97

<sup>18</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Deskby FCO ‘Ugandan Military Incursion into Rwanda’, 2 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part A), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

between the NRA and the Rwandan Army, the latter were not providing the NRA with any military information.<sup>19</sup>

The Ugandan Army commander closed the briefing with his own assessment of the campaign which was now unfolding in Rwanda. In his opinion, Rwigyema would need to rise beyond ethnic lines to win; he would need “popular support, a destabilised government and a Rwandan Army with grievances against its own government if he was to be successful. None of these factors were in his favour.”<sup>20</sup> High Commissioner Cullimore attended yet another briefing with a senior Ugandan government official on 4 October. During the briefing, the assembled diplomats were told that though the NRA had been aware of the activities and existence of non-nationals in its ranks, it had been reticent to expel them from the armed forces. This unwillingness to deal with the Banyarwanda within the NRA and the Ugandan government was partly a consequence of the fact that, as Prunier has suggested, there was “no way of stopping ... [them] without a major politico-military showdown.”<sup>21</sup> After the meeting, Cullimore reported to the FCO that

On balance I am inclined to discount suggestions that the Ugandan Government as such connived in the incursion ... We have had a wide range of contacts since the invasion with ministers, officials and senior army officers and other channels, all of whom have appeared genuinely taken aback by what has occurred. I doubt if the Ugandans could so convincingly orchestrate this kind of response. However, I believe that some of the exiles colleagues, especially in the NRA and in parts of the South-West may have a good deal of sympathy with their cause.<sup>22</sup>

However, Ugandan protestations of innocence were somewhat ambiguous. While the NRA posted roadblocks on the routes leading to the south of the country and arrested Banyarwanda who were suspected of going to the front, they were cagey with third-party observers. British Defence Advisor Lieutenant Colonel George Molyneux-Carter toured the Uganda-Rwanda frontier several times. On 1 October, after hearing that some Ugandan troops had deserted and left to fight in Rwanda, he immediately travelled south to the border.

I went via Kabale where I was stopped at a road block and was immediately reported to the NRA who did not want me there. I was told I should not be there as I had not been through the correct channels. I went on to Kisoro, where I slept in my Land Rover. The following morning I was joined by an NRA patrol which in effect became my escort/guide group. We motored for about an hour and then walked into the foothills of the mountains on the border. ... that night we kipped in the rain under poncho bashas. ... There was some sporadic mortar fire from the Rwandan side, but it was not effective. I did not see much, and the NRA patrol kept me with them. I assume they took me where they could keep me away from danger, and keep me away from noticing things.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 4 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part A), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997), 98

<sup>22</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 4 October 1990. FCO.

<sup>23</sup> Correspondence with Molyneux-Carter, 4 January 2019; correspondence with Molyneux-Carter, 29 May 2017

On 18 October, he repeated the trip, this time with several NRA colleagues, and was given much more access. “I discovered that NRA operations to control general movement to/from the main border towns were efficient and regular, but because of the nature of the terrain, operations to deny border crossing in the ‘bush’ areas were ineffective and in fact almost impossible.”<sup>24</sup> While the border closure could not seal the border, it made life difficult for the RPF. RPA members and recruits hurrying to the frontline were unable to travel in the open and were forced to waste precious time avoiding roadblocks. This often involved using poor quality roads and trails, hampering the transport of supplies and munitions. Caesar Kayizari explains: “Museveni closed the door. We never mentioned it because tactically and strategically it was not proper, but he did not give ... support.”<sup>25</sup>

While Uganda was busy controlling the political fallout of the RPF attack on Rwanda, Habyarimana was mustering his own response. On 2 October, he had first called the son of the French president, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand – a then advisor on African Affairs in the presidency – to plea for French intervention. Gérard Prunier, who was in the office at the time, recounts the episode: “I was sitting in Jean-Christophe Mitterrand's office and he stopped talking to me to pick up the phone from Habyarimana. He did not try to disguise the contents of the conversation which was openly about sending troops to bolster the regime’s defences.”<sup>26</sup> After hanging up, Mitterrand turned to Prunier and, with a wink, said: ““We are going to send him a few boys, old man Habyarimana. We are going to bail him out.””<sup>27</sup> President François Mitterrand himself heard about the situation around that time and, after a brief deliberation with his ministers, gave the go-ahead for a French military intervention destined to protect French expatriates in Rwanda and to secure the airfield for a possible evacuation.<sup>28</sup> Direct military action against the RPA was not part of the mission.

Having secured French support, Habyarimana’s next port of call was Belgium. He stopped there on the way back to Rwanda from the United States. On 3 October, he met King Baudouin and Prime Minister Wilfried Martens. He requested an immediate military intervention and received the support of the Belgian King, who wrote a letter to the government pleading for military assistance to Habyarimana. Belgian Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens supported the position of the King, but Prime Minister Martens did not want to be implicated in the internal affairs of a former colony and denied the request.<sup>29</sup> Yet, Habyarimana’s trip to Belgium was not wholly ineffective, as the delivery of a shipment of arms from FN Herstal, which had already been paid for, was expedited.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the

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<sup>24</sup> Lt Col G. B. Molyneux-Carter, ‘DA Report on Visit to Rwanda border Area – 18 October 1990’, 22 October 1990. FCO.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>26</sup> Correspondence with Gérard Prunier, 22 January 2014

<sup>27</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 100-101

<sup>28</sup> The exact timing of Mitterrand’s decision is unclear as Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 100, and Bernard Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l’armée française et le Rwanda* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 2005), 52-53, disagree on it.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Mark Eyskens, 22 January 2019

<sup>30</sup> Johan Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal* (Kalmthout: Polis, 2016), 42; Philippe Mahoux and Guy Verhofstadt, *Commission d’enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda* (Sénat de Belgique, 6 December 1997), 187-189

Belgian government did decide to send a military contingent to Rwanda to protect the expatriate community. When Habyarimana arrived back in Kigali on 4 October, he had reason to be pleased with his diplomatic efforts. French and Belgian troops were on their way and scheduled to land that evening and the next morning, respectively. On the other hand, the French government had refused to provide air support, and the RPF was still putting serious military pressure on the FAR around Gabiro.<sup>31</sup>

### The Events of 4 and 5 October 1990

As the events of the night of 4-5 October are contested, it is worth following in some detail the story of the French troops who departed for Kigali. The 4<sup>th</sup> company of the 2<sup>e</sup> *régiment étranger de parachutistes* (2 REP) – a crack Foreign Legion parachute unit which had formed the spearhead at Kolwezi in 1978 – was selected to lead the French intervention. It was put on a 12-hour alert at 17:00 on 3 October and departed for its staging post in Bangui, Central African Republic, in two airlifts at 03:00 and 05:45 the next morning. At this point 4<sup>th</sup> company was also joined by a radio-transmission-interception detachment from the 13<sup>e</sup> *régiment de dragons parachutistes* (13 RDP), a French special forces regiment which specialises in long-range reconnaissance and intelligence gathering.<sup>32</sup> At 15:00 this combined force set off for Kigali in two C-160 Transall aircraft. The French were unsure whether Kigali airport would be clear for landing, so the troops had all donned their parachutes in case an airborne assault proved necessary. By the time the aircraft approached Rwanda, the pilots had been able to establish communications with the control tower of Kigali airport and were assured by French military personnel who were already stationed in the country as advisors to the FAR, known as the *Mission d'assistance militaire* (MAM), that a parachute assault would not be necessary.<sup>33</sup>

After landing at 18:50, the officers of 4<sup>th</sup> company were briefed by the French military attaché and members of the MAM. They were told that the RPA was only 60 km from the capital, within striking distance. The French Embassy had also received “last-minute intelligence from the US Embassy that Kigali would be attacked that night.”<sup>34</sup> Alerted to a possible confrontation, Captain Streichenberger, the commanding officer of 4<sup>th</sup> company, divided his troops to cover the airport, the French school and the French Embassy. According to the military diary kept by the 4<sup>th</sup> company, fighting in Kigali started at 01:10 on the morning of 5 October.

01H10 Simultaneous attack by the rebels on the military installations in Kigali. The French embassy is in the line of fire between mobile rebel elements and Rwandan soldiers manning firing points in a military camp nearby.

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<sup>31</sup> From: Barateau, Kigali To: Ministère des Affaires Étrangères ‘Attaque de Rwanda’, 4 October 1990. Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information*, Annexes, 142

<sup>32</sup> “2e Régiment Etranger de Parachutistes, Journal des Marches et Operations 1 janvier au 30 juin 1991” GR7U 3440. Service Historique de la Défense; Lugan, *François Mitterrand*, 55

<sup>33</sup> “2e REP, JMO 1 juillet au 31 décembre 1990” GR7U 3440. SHD; Lugan, *François Mitterrand*, 56-57

<sup>34</sup> “2e REP, JMO 1 juillet au 31 décembre 1990” GR7U 3440. SHD. “Selon un renseignement de dernière minute en provenance de l’ambassade des Etats-Unis Kigali serait attaquée cette nuit.”

The same shots (small calibre and 14.5 mm) pass just over the French school ... The embassy is the target of the direct fire (most often coming from the Rwandans). A CRAP [*Commandos de recherche et d'action en profondeur*, i.e., an elite section for special missions] opens fire after being engaged. The French school is hit by stray bullets and is the occasional target of isolated snipers (Sk.S2.S4 did not open fire). Mortars are fired from around the industrial zone of Kigali (by Rwandans or rebels?). The situation at the airport is calm (S3). The shooting will last all night.

03H00 New attack on the same targets and on the airport where 3<sup>rd</sup> section takes fire from the rebels and especially from the Rwandan forces protecting the airport (particularly the control tower).

07H00 A CRAP patrol is challenged by Rwandan elements while escorting the Defence Attaché Colonel Galinié to his home. Corporals Bariat-Culliane are stationary. Sergeant-Chef Taikato is ordered by the colonel to slip away to the embassy to get reinforcements. He returns with Captain Ollagnon and his CRAP team but the Rwandan soldiers have disappeared.

08H00 Shooting stops in Kigali. No [French] injured.<sup>35</sup>

The following morning the British Embassy in Kinshasa, which was also responsible for Rwanda, reported that

Since 2 am this morning there had been fighting all over town. Armed civilians of both tribal groups had emerged in support of the rebels. They appear to have been well prepared. Significant combat was continuing in the industrial zone and at Avenue Paul VI near the honorary consul's residence. Habyarimana was entrenched at the military school. The French Legionnaires held the airport. There had been numerous casualties among the regular army. Mortars were distinctly heard during the night but not other heavy weapons.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. "01H10 attaque simultanée des rebelles sur les installations militaires dans Kigali, l'Ambassade de France se trouve sur la trajectoire des tirs entre des éléments rebelles mobiles et les militaires Rwandais disposés en point d'appui dans un camp militaire tout proche.

Ces mêmes tirs (petit calibre et 14,5) passent juste au-dessus de l'Ecole Française (S/K, S/2, S/4) l'ambassade est la cible des tirs directs (le plus souvent en provenance des Rwandais) un CRAP ouvre feu après avoir été pris à partie ; l'Ecole Française reçoit des balles perdues et se trouve être parfois la cible de tireurs isolés (pas d'ouverture du feu pour la Sk.S2.S4) des coups de mortiers sont tirés au niveau de la zone industrielle de Kigali (Rwandais ou Rebelles ?) situation calme à l'aéroport (S3) les tirs vont durer toute la nuit.

03H00 nouvelle attaque sur les mêmes objectifs et sur l'aéroport où la 3<sup>e</sup> section essuie les tirs des rebelles et surtout des forces Rwandaises en protection à l'aéroport (spécialement de la tour de contrôle).

07H00 une patrouille CRAP est prise à partie par des éléments Rwandais alors qu'elle escortait l'Attaché de Défense Colonel Galinié à son domicile. Les Caporaux Bariat-Culliane sont fixes, le Sergent-Chef Taikato reçoit l'ordre du Colonel de s'esquiver vers l'ambassade pour aller chercher du renfort. Il revient donc avec le Capitaine Ollagnon et son équipe CRAP mais les soldats Rwandais ont disparu.

08H00 les tirs cessant dans Kigali. CRN: pas de blessé."

<sup>36</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Deskby 051200Z FCO 'Incursion into Rwanda', 5 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part B), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

While these reports give the impression that a significant battle was fought, presumably between RPA elements and the FAR, this does not seem to have been the case. In fact, RPA veterans deny they ever got close to Kigali in October.<sup>37</sup> Exactly what happened that night remains unclear, and different hypotheses have been advanced. The first and most widely accepted is that President Habyarimana staged the attack on Kigali in an attempt to persuade the French troops on the ground to take an active anti-RPA position, rather than just protect French expats and property in Rwanda. Supporters of this theory also suggest that an additional reason for staging the attack was to justify the massive political repression and arrests which took place the next day. Another variant of this thesis suggests that the French actively participated in the masquerade.<sup>38</sup>

The second hypothesis, put forward by French historian Bernard Lugan, is that the fighting in Kigali was unintentionally triggered by nervous FAR troops, who started shooting, causing a cascade of other jumpy FAR troops to start shooting as well, in the mistaken belief that they were under attack.<sup>39</sup> A third hypothesis, proposed by Belgian Ambassador Johan Swinnen in his memoirs, is that a coup against President Habyarimana may have been attempted by elements within the FAR.<sup>40</sup> In this latter scenario, the shooting might have consisted of exchanges between loyalists and putschists. While there is little solid evidence to back up this last theory, it would certainly fit the FAR *modus operandi*. Coup attempts, or politicking within the officer corps, were not unusual, and the US Embassy had indeed been pre-warned of the attack (see above). The question then arises of how the US Embassy obtained its intelligence. Did the government of Rwanda provide it as part of its masquerade to justify its political repression the following day, or did a group of FAR officers intent on a coup warn the US Embassy in a bid to win the superpower's support?<sup>41</sup> Other circumstantial evidence in support of the attempted coup theory comes from the timeline. President Habyarimana landed in Rwanda for the first time since the RPF invasion either late on 3 or early on 4 October. This absence and his visit to Belgium before his return to Rwanda might have been interpreted as possible signs of weakness by rivals in the FAR.

The next day, 5 October, saw a spate of arrests throughout Kigali: "The Rwandan authorities had started an extensive round up of people suspected of complicity in, or sympathy with, the invaders including the heads of military intelligence and logistics, and numbers of prominent Tutsi civilians."<sup>42</sup> Thousands were arrested, and few groups were left unaffected: political opposition, business rivals of the ruling power, ethnic minorities, suspected RPF sympathisers and elements within the FAR were all rounded up. While the government insisted that ethnicity did not play a role in these arrests, about 75% of those detained were Tutsi. The arrests quickly drew the attention of the international media and diplomatic

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<sup>37</sup> Correspondence with Caesar Kayizari, 14 November 2018

<sup>38</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 102; James K. Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État à l'État-garnison* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 66

<sup>39</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand*, 59-60

<sup>40</sup> Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 44

<sup>41</sup> In early 2017, the author made a Freedom of Information Act request to the US Department of State regarding the warning sent to the French Embassy. Despite several follow-ups, no reply has been received to date.

<sup>42</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO 'Military Incursion into Rwanda', 5 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part A), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

community due to the horrific conditions in which the detainees were kept. In Kigali central prison, 1,500 detainees only had one toilet. Food and water were distributed sporadically, with inmates sometimes going without for days. These political prisoners also endured beatings and torture from both the military guards and “ordinary” prisoners.<sup>43</sup> The human rights report drawn up by Belgian lawyers Eric Gillet and André Jadoul at the behest of the *Comité pour le respect des droits de l’Homme et la démocratie au Rwanda* (CRDDR) found similar occurrences in the southern town of Butare. Between 3 and 5 October, dozens of people were arrested, held in poor conditions, and sometimes tortured.<sup>44</sup> What these arrests clearly show is that Habyarimana feared internal opposition as much as the outside threat emanating from the RPF. This aspect would remain crucially important throughout the Struggle for Liberation. As Prunier points out, the “game was not two-sided as the later tragic events in Rwanda have tended to make onlookers believe, but in fact three-sided, between the Habyarimana regime ... the internal opposition ... and the Tutsi exiles.”<sup>45</sup>

Later on 5 October, when the roundup was well underway, Habyarimana addressed the Rwandan people on the radio for the first time since the start of the invasion. After explaining the modalities of the attack, the president turned to the events of the previous evening:

But we soon realised that even before this concerted attack, guerrillas of this same group [the RPF] had already infiltrated our country, and especially Kigali. These guerrillas are not numerous. Nevertheless they can create disorder if we are not vigilant. This is how the few clashes occurred, of which the characteristic sound was heard by the inhabitants of Kigali last night ... These clashes allowed us, and still allow us, to annihilate these assailants.

Then the president turned to the arrests that were being carried out throughout Kigali:

It hurts me deeply to see that these rebels hoped to find accomplices within our country. Whatever the reason that pushes certain Rwandans to provoke blood and disorder in their own country ... this treason exceeds our comprehension.

Naturally, this is only a tiny fraction of individuals, obviously misled, we do not know how. But we must follow all leads to check the situation.

This is why possible arrests and interrogations in no way signify proven responsibility.

Nothing would be more unjust, nothing would be more harmful for our country, than if some among us were tempted to confuse things. There can be absolutely no question of considering our brothers and sisters, whatever their ethnicity or region of origin, as responsible for what happened, absolutely not. The political maturity, the fundamental humanity of the Rwandan people are the best guarantors of our continued attachment to national unity, so we may continue to experience every day the peace and understanding

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<sup>43</sup> Africa Watch, *Rwanda: Talking Peace and Waging War. Human Rights since the October 1990 Invasion*. (Washington DC. 27 February 1992)

<sup>44</sup> Comité pour le Respect des droits de l’Homme et la démocratie au Rwanda (CRDDR), *Rwanda: Rapport de deux missions effectuées par Eric Gillet & André Jadoul, avocats au barreau de Bruxelles au Rwanda du 9 au 17 janvier et du 2 au 5 février 1992* (Brussels. May 1992), 5-7

<sup>45</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 99

that we have known for so long, and that no one, or nothing can, nor will want to endanger.<sup>46</sup>

Habyarimana's speech is a masterpiece of ambiguity. On the one hand, he warns the Rwandan people that there are infiltrators on the loose who are beyond redemption. On the other, he insists that ethnicity should not be brought into the equation. For any listener with a knowledge of Rwandan history, the spectre of ethnic violence is clear. However, for those not fully aware of the events surrounding the 1959-1964 Social Revolution as well as Habyarimana's coup d'état, the speech must have sounded reassuring. In short, it pandered to the needs of ethnic Hutu extremists and the international community, while at the same time warning the domestic Tutsi population: "Support the government and you will be left alone, step out of line and you will be punished."

5 October also saw the arrival at the airport of a second French company from the *3<sup>e</sup> régiment de parachutistes d'infanterie de marine* (3e RPIMa), followed by troops from Belgium and Zaire. While the mission of Belgian troops was similar to that of the French, the Zairians had been ordered to directly support the FAR in combat. The British Embassy in Kinshasa reported that

President Mobutu has acted as a good neighbour in response to what appears to have been a direct telephone appeal from Habyarimana, possibly from New York. He did not send his troops until after the French and Belgians but this could well have been for practical reasons since the Zairians do not have a military airlift capability. Unlike other foreign troops the Zairians are not there only to protect their nationals, and their presence, although requested by Habyarimana, will not be popular with all Rwandans, many of whom object to Mobutu's "big brother" attitude to their country.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> From: French Embassy in Paris To: International Organisations 'Message à la Nation du Chef de l'Etat le 5 Octobre 1990 à la suite de l'attaque perpétrée contre le Rwanda (1/10/1990)', 8 October 1990. "JWW 014/2, 'Rwanda: Internal Political Situation'" FCO. "Mais nous nous sommes vite rendus compte aussi qu'avant même cette attaque concertée, des maquisards de ces mêmes troupes s'étaient déjà infiltrés dans notre Pays et surtout à Kigali. Ces maquisards ne sont pas nombreux. Néanmoins, ils peuvent créer le trouble si nous ne sommes pas vigilants. C'est ainsi que les quelques affrontements dont les habitants de Kigali ont entendu les bruits caractéristiques cette nuit ont eu lieu. N.B. (il s'agit de la nuit du 4 au 5 octobre 1990).

Ces affrontements ont permis et permettent encore d'annihiler ces assaillants. ...

Cela me fait très mal de constater que ces rebelles ont espéré jouir de complicités à l'intérieur de notre Pays.

Quelle que soit la raison qui pousse certains Rwandais à provoquer dans leur propre pays le sang et le désordre, cette trahison, Militantes et Militants, cette trahison dépasse notre entendement.

Bien entendu, il ne s'agit que d'une infime fraction d'individus, de toute évidence induits en erreur, on ne sait pas comment. Mais nous nous devons de suivre toutes les pistes afin de vérifier la situation.

Voilà pourquoi, interpellations et interrogatoires éventuels ne signifient nullement responsabilité démontrée.

Rien ne serait plus injuste, rien ne serait plus délectère [*sic*] pour notre Pays qui si certains d'entre nous étaient tentés de confondre les choses. Il ne peut absolument être question de vouloir considérer nos frères et sœurs, quelle que soit leur ethnie ou leur région, comme responsables de ce qui nous est arrivé, absolument pas. La maturité politique, l'humanité foncière du peuple rwandais sont les meilleurs garants pour que nous continuions à chérir la concorde nationale, pour que nous continuions à vivre tous les jours l'entente et la paix que nous avons connues depuis si longtemps déjà, et que personne, ni rien ne pourra ni ne voudra mettre en péril."

<sup>47</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO 'Incursion into Rwanda', 9 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part A), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

## President Mobutu Intervenes

The troops sent by President Mobutu were commanded by General Donatien Mahele, widely regarded as one of the few Generals in Zaire to have achieved his rank on the basis of merit rather than nepotism. But his force was made up of a hodgepodge of units. There were elements from the *Division spéciale présidentielle* (DSP), the 31st Parachute Brigade and the *Service d'actions et de renseignements militaires* (SARM). Technically these units were the best Zaire had to offer, and the Parachute Brigade was especially highly rated as “one of Zaire’s most effective Army units.”<sup>48</sup> The DSP was Mobutu’s praetorian guard, and its troops were the best paid soldiers in the country. However, according to a CIA assessment, “growing discipline and more problems suggest that even the DSP has begun to feel the effects of the country’s general economic deterioration.”<sup>49</sup>

While the build-up took some time, there would eventually be about 1,400 Zairian troops in Rwanda. On 8 and 9 October, the Zairians and the FAR made their first concerted effort to push the RPA out of Gabiro.<sup>50</sup> Heavy fighting ensued both at Gabiro, which changed hands several times, and around Nyagatare. While the arrival of the Zairians and their counterattacks were not enough to break the RPA, they took pressure off the FAR. However, relations between the FAR and the Zairians quickly soured. The British Embassy in Kinshasa noted that “Zairian troops stationed in Kigali controlled the checkpoint at the entrance to the city and both expatriates and Rwandans complained of harassment, intimidation and theft.”<sup>51</sup> By 13 October, the French defence attaché in Kigali reported that “the retreat of the Zairians from urban zones seems most probable,” because “the behaviour of Zairian troops is a matter of concern for the Rwandan population as well as for the expat community. Indeed, traders, motorists, or simple passers-by, are fleeced daily at Zairian checkpoints.”<sup>52</sup>

Relations on the frontline were hardly better. Looting was widespread, and most of the contents of the Gabiro guesthouse were trucked back to Zaire. Consequently, when the Zairian forces ran out of ammunition, the FAR refused to replenish their stocks.<sup>53</sup> However, most detrimental to the relationship between the FAR and the Zairians was a fratricide incident in which 46 Zairians were killed by friendly fire from the FAR. According to the French, the Zairians had failed to establish proper radio communications before going into combat and had been misidentified by a Gazelle helicopter which had consequently rocketed

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<sup>48</sup> ‘Zaire: The Military under Mobutu.’ “0000267101” CIA Library. Accessed: 24 June 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/0000267101>

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 17

<sup>50</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 9 October 1990. FCO.; From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 10 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part A), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>51</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 12 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part A), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>52</sup> From: Col. Galinié and Martres To: AD SEGEDEFNAT ‘Situation générale le 13 octobre 1990 à 12 heures locales’, 13 October 1990. FGT. “Le comportement des troupes zaïroises constitue un sujet d’inquiétude pour les populations rwandaises comme pour les colonies d’expatriés. En effet commerçants, automobilistes, ou simple passants, sont quotidiennement rançonnés aux postes de contrôle zaïrois. ... Le retrait des Zaïrois des zones urbaines serait le plus probable.”

<sup>53</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 17 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

them.<sup>54</sup> There were also rumours of infighting within the Zairian contingent. Apparently General Mahele was shot by one of the members of the DSP, and Zairian members of parliament later speculated that Mahele had been sent to Rwanda to die.<sup>55</sup> By 17 October, Habyarimana could no longer tolerate the embarrassing behaviour of his allies and asked Mobutu to withdraw Zairian troops from Rwanda. Again, we can count on some insightful commentary from the British Embassy in Kinshasa.

This whole episode has been an embarrassing debacle for Mobutu. His supposedly elite troops appear to have been guilty of widespread looting and worse and their military performance is said to have been abysmal too. They used up their ammunition too rapidly, and carried out little reconnaissance before engaging the rebels, thus suffering serious casualties.<sup>56</sup>

For all their shortcomings and unpreparedness, the Zairians did buy some breathing room for the FAR and stabilised the front.<sup>57</sup> Without the Zairian intervention, the RPF would probably have broken through the front line and captured Kigali. Indeed, throughout the first days of fighting, the performance of the FAR troops had also been very poor. The head of FAR military intelligence, Anatole Nsengiyumva – who interestingly had also been arrested on 5 October, but was quickly released – had the following to say shortly after the invasion.

In terms of the preparation of our soldiers, it is showing its inadequacies. Indeed, our men no longer respect fire discipline, many panic when they hear the first shots fired by the enemy, others lose their heads and shoot right and left, and, more serious still, others simply desert their UNITS, change sides and go away. These are some of the phenomena that show that our men are not at all prepared for the task at hand.<sup>58</sup>

The report continued:

The causes for this lack of preparation are multiple. First there was the economic situation. Due to the meagre budget, the country was NOT able to earmark sufficient funds to ensure a decent training of our men. Often practise cartridges were lacking, as were real cartridges. Grenades can hardly be found anymore in the AR [*Armées rwandaises*], explosives are generally lacking, as is engineering equipment, etc. So our men have not had time to train.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> From: Claude Arnaud To: Monsieur le Président de la République, 'Entretien avec le Président Habyarimana Jeudi 18 Octobre 1990 à 18h30', 18 October 1990. FGT.

<sup>55</sup> "Zaire: A Crumbling Power" *Africa Confidential*, 7 December 1990

<sup>56</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO 'Incursion into Rwanda', 17 October 1990. FCO.

<sup>57</sup> From: Claude Arnaud To: Monsieur le Président de la République, 'Entretien avec le Président Habyarimana Jeudi 18 Octobre 1990 à 18h30', 18 Octobre 1990. FGT

<sup>58</sup> From: Anatole Nsengiyumva To:- 'N084/G2.2.2.1.4', 7 October 1990. "File 1990/Planning" LMRGA-UoW. "Concernant la préparation de nos militaires, [elle] montre ses insuffisances. En effet, nos hommes ne savent plus respecter la discipline de tir, beaucoup paniquent quand ils entendent le premier coup de feu tiré par l'ennemi, d'autres s'affolent et tirent à gauche et à droite, d'autres encore, fait encore plus grave, désertent tout simplement leur UNITES, retournent casaques et s'en vont. Voici quelques uns des phénomènes qui montrent que nos hommes ne sont pas du tout préparés à la tâche qui est la leur."

<sup>59</sup> "Les causes de ce manque de préparation sont multiples. D'abord il y a eu la conjoncture économique. A cause de la maigreur du budget, notre pays N'a PAS pu dégager assez de fonds pour assurer une formation valable de nos hommes. Souvent les cartouches d'exercice ont manqué, les cartouches réelles ont fait défaut. Les grenades n'existent presque plus à l'AR, les explosifs en général manquent, le matériel génie, etc... Alors nos hommes n'ont pas eu le temps de s'exercer."

The report ended on a depressing note:

Add to this the lack of motivation of certain cadres. Officers and NCOs, as well as Cpx [Corporals] and Sdts [soldiers]. Indeed, many people currently enter military life simply to earn money, or to lead an easy life in which everything is paid for by the State. Therefore the result cannot be more satisfying [than it is], and the suffered setbacks should not surprise anyone.<sup>60</sup>

By the time the Zairians left, the RPA had been significantly worn down. The High Command had been unable to fully recover from the death of Fred Rwigyema. His plan had been a blitzkrieg straight to Kigali, but now the RPA found themselves stranded, unable to advance further than Gabiro. As Museveni had closed the border, supplies were slow in arriving, while FAR helicopters, which had regular supplies of ammunition from France, remained a nuisance. The FAR were also increasingly able to deploy their light armour effectively – mostly French-built Panhard AML armoured cars armed with 12.7 mm machine guns, MILAN wire-guided anti-tank missiles and 90 mm guns. The flat, savannah-like terrain of north-eastern Rwanda was perfectly suited for these vehicles. While the RPA had some heavy weapons, it proved difficult to deal with these armoured cars. According to James Kabarebe, “the situation was pathetic, we were totally in disarray.”<sup>61</sup>

### **The Arrival of Paul Kagame**

Around the second or third week of October 1990, Major Paul Kagame arrived to take command of the RPA. Kagame had been following a course at the United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, when the RPA attacked Rwanda. After the start of the attack, Kagame had tried to make contact with Rwigyema, but had received no reply. A few days later, he heard that Fred had been killed, and he immediately prepared to return to Rwanda. He asked a friend, the Ugandan Ambassador at the UN (another example of the RPF-Uganda link), to arrange visas for himself and his pregnant wife. On 8 October, the two of them flew from New York to London. There, Jeanette Kagame boarded a plane to Brussels, where a sister of Paul lived. Kagame himself, after picking up \$80,000 from a London sympathiser, boarded a plane to Addis Ababa. After spending a few days in Addis, Kagame made his way by plane to Entebbe on 14 October. At the airport, he was picked up by friends in the Ugandan intelligence services. “The person who picked me up took me to his house and another friend from intelligence came to see me.”<sup>62</sup> After spending the night at his friend’s house, Kagame was driven to the border. The guards there were also helpful and allowed him and his Ugandan intelligence escort to pass. When Kagame arrived at the front, he was shocked by what he saw:

It was totally disorganised. The first sight was probably the worst I have ever seen, that and the genocide ... I asked for a meeting with my commanders. I called them back from

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<sup>60</sup> “S’ajoute alors le manque de motivation de certains cadres. Offrs et S/Offrs, ainsi que des Cpx et Sdts. Beaucoup sont en effet, ceux qui entrent maintenant dans la vie militaire, tout simplement pour gagner de l’argent, ou bien pour mener une vie facile où tout est payé par l’Etat. Le résultat ne peut pas donc être plus satisfaisant, les déboires enregistrés ne pouvant dès lors pas étonner qui que ce soit.”

<sup>61</sup> Interview with James Kabarebe, 16 October 2018

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda’s Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2008), 76

the field, told them to leave their subordinates in charge. The senior ones came back to meet. They were terribly demoralised – even that was an understatement.<sup>63</sup>

Kagame was, for a number of reasons, the natural choice to replace Fred Rwigyema. First, he was one of Rwigyema's closest friends, with unique insights into the preparations which had been made for the attack on Rwanda. Second, he could draw on an extensive network in Uganda. He had been one of the original "Kabamba 27" who had started Museveni's war against Obote. Thereafter he had served in military intelligence – where he could clearly still count on the friendship of many colleagues. This network was crucial for the RPF. If Uganda was to fully withdraw its support, even unofficial, from the RPF, then the movement would be finished. One of the best ways to prevent that was to have at the very top of the RPF organisation someone whom Museveni knew and trusted. After the death of Rwigyema, Kagame was probably the only one who could fulfil that role. Finally, Kagame could count on his own reputation. Caesar Kayizari explains:

They [the RPA officers and rank and file] knew him from before, as a tough one, you did not cross roads with him. Two, they knew his level. Someone can be tough, authoritarian, but without knowledge in what you are authoritarian of ... but if you are authoritative, and you have done your homework, then the end product is much better. So some of them knew him from previous wars, in NRA bush, where he went and found problems, and problems diminished ... Even in NRA they said "ah Kagame has come, it will be solved." That is why everyone was waiting for him after the death of commander Fred because they knew what he would bring on the table.<sup>64</sup>

Kagame understood that, since a quick victory was now impossible, it was imperative that what remained of the RPA be preserved to fight another day. The RPA needed a safe haven where it could rest, reorganise and prepare for the next phase of a war which promised to be long. For that, several objectives had to be fulfilled. First, the RPA had to be extracted from its engagement with the FAR before making a strategic withdrawal to a place of safety. While Uganda might provide some small-scale and temporary sanctuary, it would not agree to the RPA establishing its base of operations there. With the RPA's main ally out of the running, only one place of refuge remained: the rainforest-clad volcanoes of Virunga National Park in northwest Rwanda. Secondly, the logistics base would need to be vastly improved. Providing enough food and munitions for the soldiers had proven a major headache so far, and if the war was to be continued, this would have to change. Thirdly, a method would have to be established to treat injured RPA fighters in the safety of Uganda or Tanzania, preferably in hospitals. Though frontline medical treatment was already established within the RPA, it needed to be improved. Most importantly, the strategic withdrawal had to take place without a total collapse in morale or the complete disintegration of the RPA. Here Kagame used an old trick. Ludoviko "Dodo" Twahirwa was sent west with a hundred or so soldiers to attack the border post at Gatuna. A quick victory would help restore the battered morale

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 76, 77

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018; Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 78-79

of the RPA. It would also allow the gathering of key intelligence for a strategic relocation to the Virunga Mountains.

Meanwhile fighting raged on. On 22 October, the two sides locked horns just south of Gabiro. Once again, the FAR Gazelle helicopters took part in the fighting. They made themselves felt around Gabiro until one was shot down by the RPF. Another helicopter crossed the border and attacked suspected RPF targets in Uganda.<sup>65</sup> The British Ambassador in Kinshasa reported to London that “According to French Military Attaché Rwandan aerial reconnaissance had located two RPF training camps in Ugandan territory, one west of Rwemhasha and the other north of Kagitumba. The latter was attacked on 22 October by Rwandan Gazelles firing 24 rockets.”<sup>66</sup> The RPF suffered another setback when a large logistics convoy was captured by the FAR around Nyagatare.

To enable a strategic withdrawal to the volcanoes, order had to be established in the chaos which now reigned throughout RPA lines. Thus it was doubly devastating when Chris Bunyenyezi and Peter Bayingana, two key members of the temporary command, were killed on 23 October. As with the death of Fred Rwigyema, there are many theories as to how they died. I will present the official – and, to my mind, most plausible – version. On the morning of 23 October, or possibly the day before, a significant FAR element managed to slip through a gap in the RPA lines and set several ambushes in the rear of the RPA positions.<sup>67</sup> While travelling to the frontline, both commanders were killed in separate ambushes. Then, the situation rapidly deteriorated. An RPF member notes that “the deaths of these leaders in a period of less than a month was a devastating blow to the month-old RPA. The force was thrown in disarray.”<sup>68</sup>

Following these crushing two days, Kagame gave the order for his force to melt away. A staged withdrawal took place towards Kagitumba, where the force was reorganised into small mobile units.<sup>69</sup> Several of these moved west, following “Dodo” Twahirwa’s unit. Others moved into Akagera National Park or slipped over the border into Uganda together with the most seriously wounded. However, though Kagame and the rest of the RPA High Command had been able to extricate most of their forces from Gabiro and Kagitumba, some had become detached. For example, a column was operating in Akagera National Park, out of touch with the High Command as it had lost its radio.

As the RPA withdrew from Gabiro, the FAR and Rwanda’s political leadership thought the war was over. The British high commissioner in Kampala reported that

The Rwandan Ambassador [in Kampala] is claiming complete victory over the rebels. ... Kengo [the Zairian ambassador who was negotiating with the RPF] said the rebel leaders

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<sup>65</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Rwanda: Military Situation’, 25 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari 14 October 2018; see also, ‘Trip Report Kagitumba-Nyagatare-Gabiro by US Embassy in Rwanda’, 8 November 1990. “Exhibit Number: DNT 226, Date Admitted: 18-09-2006” *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T

<sup>68</sup> Correspondence with former RPF member, 27 August 2017

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 22 September 2018

claimed that they had taken a tactical decision to withdraw into the bush but that they were still in Rwanda, both in the [A]kagera national park and around Nyagatare and Gabiro. ... it seems that the rebels have suffered a serious reverse, but I think the Rwandan Ambassador's claim of total victory is probably premature.<sup>70</sup>

As Cullimore suspected, the Rwandan Ambassador in Kampala was wrong. While the RPA had been dealt a serious setback, it was not defeated.

### **The Political Aspects of the October 1990 Invasion**

Because political action ran concurrently with military operations, it is worth taking a closer look at the former, picking up the political thread where we had left it, just after 5 October. On 8 October Rwandan Foreign Minister Casimir Bizimungu, briefed the diplomatic corps in Kigali for the first time since the start of the invasion. During the briefing, the Ugandan Ambassador mentioned the actions which had been taken by his government to prevent the RPF from being reinforced, but "complained that he had not been received at the Foreign Ministry until [then]."<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the Tanzanian Ambassador noted that the frontier with Rwanda had been "secured" in order to stop RPF sympathisers from infiltrating across the border. Clearly, the Tanzanians were playing the same double game as the Ugandans. In fact, the RPF column cut off in Akagera National Park was able to escape the FAR by slipping into Tanzania. The Rwandan foreign minister was also pressed by the Vatican, as well as UNDP and Swiss representatives, about the human rights situation of those arrested on 5 October. Nor were they the only ones.

Today's Belgian press reports that the foreign minister saw the Rwandan Ambassador yesterday, and quotes [Mark] Eyskens as expressing "concern" about respect for human rights in Rwanda. Press reports from Belgian correspondents in Kigali suggest that the Rwanda government are using the incursion to deal with their political opponents within Rwanda and that there have been executions, and also draw attention to corruption within Habyarimana's government and its failure to address the problem of Tutsi refugees.<sup>72</sup>

However, while the Belgian press might have been putting pressure on Kigali, Prime Minister Martens let it be known that he was not at all pleased with President Museveni and Uganda. The latter had visited Brussels on the weekend of 6-7 October to explain his position in the affair, but the Belgians had been left with the feeling that Uganda was responsible for much more than Museveni would admit.<sup>73</sup> In a meeting with the heads of mission of the European Community on 9 October, the Rwandan foreign minister went a step further and claimed that the government of Uganda was actively working with the RPF. According to Bizimungu, entire units had been equipped and recruited by Uganda to reinforce the RPA. The minister

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<sup>70</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO 'Incursion into Rwanda', 1 November 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part C), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

<sup>71</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO 'Incursion into Rwanda', 12 October 1990. FCO.

<sup>72</sup> From: O'Neil, Brussels To: Priority FCO 'Incursion into Rwanda', 9 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part A), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid; see also Oscar Garschagen, "Martens: Oeganda zat achter invasie Rwanda" *De Volkskrant* (Amsterdam, Netherlands), 16 October 1990

also indicated that Rwanda would take up the matter with the UN Security Council and with the Organisation of African Unity.<sup>74</sup>

After his visit to Belgium, Museveni cut his European tour short and flew back to Uganda where he gave a one-hour press conference upon landing. Although the president seemed fatigued after what must have been a hectic week, he still spoke at length about the Rwandan situation. The conference showed the ambiguity which Museveni felt towards the RPF. He explained how, after hearing from Army Commander Mugisha Muntu that the RPA had attacked Rwanda, he had immediately warned the Rwandan authorities. In fact, so Museveni continued, he had warned Habyarimana on several occasions that “those boys are very dangerous for you. They are disgruntled. They have acquired skills. Of course we will police it, but if a faction of the Rwandans comes and says join us they can desert in big numbers.”<sup>75</sup> Despite these actions, which indicated a sense of responsibility from one head of state to another, High Commissioner Cullimore noted that “[Museveni] doubted whether Rwigyema’s troops could be defeated, and ruefully indicated that they included ‘some of our best people’ ... Indeed he made no attempt to conceal his sympathy for Rwigyema’s cause and referred to him throughout as ‘Fred.’”<sup>76</sup>

Despite this ambiguity, the Ugandan government continued to maintain that it had not been involved in the execution of the attack on Rwanda. When High Commissioner Cullimore spoke with Ugandan Minister of State Ateker Ejalu, the latter

was adamant that, as the President had said at his press conference, it was not always possible to know who was a Rwandan. Those who had been here for 30 years or more now spoke fluent Ankole or Luganda and had in many cases changed their names. The president lost over 20 of his personal staff from State House including his driver. Ejalu was convinced that in many cases Museveni had not known that these people were in fact Rwandese and that it was inconceivable that he would knowingly have allowed himself to be surrounded by so many Rwandans.

I said I remained puzzled as to why so many Rwandese should now want to return to an overcrowded and poor country having survived a number of hostile regimes in Uganda especially that of Obote II. Ejalu said that although official NRM policy towards the Rwandan refugees had always been sympathetic there had nevertheless continued to be considerable harassment at grass roots level especially in Ankole country.<sup>77</sup>

The French government, closely allied to Habyarimana, was not buying the Ugandan explanation. Two French diplomatic communications reveal France’s peculiar position. On 13 October, Gilles Vidal, an advisor to President Mitterrand, told the British Ambassador in Paris that he was sure that Uganda had structurally helped the RPF and that Museveni must have been in the know. After all, how could the Ugandans not notice when the RPF drove off with much of their military arsenal? The ambassador then “asked what Museveni could hope

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<sup>74</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 12 October 1990. FCO.

<sup>75</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala to: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 11 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part A), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO ‘Rwanda/Uganda’, 15 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

to gain from the violence which was embarrassing for him as OAU president. Vidal thought that Museveni might see the invasion as a way of getting rid of the Tutsi refugee population in Uganda.”<sup>78</sup> Vidal added that he did not believe a negotiated solution would be possible in the short term: “A Tutsi victory would lead to Hutu rebellions against what they would see as minority rule. There was a risk of the situation degenerating on the Liberian model. The best solution would probably be for President Habyarimana to stay in office under new political arrangements which included guarantees for the Tutsis.”<sup>79</sup> What is interesting is the particular emphasis on ethnicity. While British diplomatic communications indicate an awareness of the ethnic factor, Vidal puts it at the centre of his analysis.

The French Ambassador in Rwanda, Georges Martres, did the same in a cable dated 15 October and entitled “Analysis of the situation by the population of Tutsi origin.” His message concerns the reaction of the Tutsi population within Rwanda to the invasion by the RPF. As it is the first diplomatic communication which speaks of genocide, four years before the events of 1994, it is worth quoting in full:

The Rwandan population of Tutsi origin believes that the military action has failed in its psychological consequences, as it has not led to results rapid enough to prevent the mobilisation of Hutus against the prospect of a return to the former monarchy.

It is still counting on a military victory, thanks to the support in men and means from the diaspora. This military victory, even partial, would enable it to escape the genocide. By holding part of the east of the country, General Rwigyema would present a sufficient threat to force President Habyarimana to negotiate.

[...]

The Tutsi are convinced that if the current authorities were to enjoy total victory, the departure of the French and Belgian troops would result in an exacerbation of the repression and persecution, and would lead to the total elimination of the Tutsi. Failing a military victory by General Rwigyema, the Tutsi, who do not believe in President Habyarimana’s promises of openness and dialogue, would welcome a coup d’état within the Hutu clan that would bring a more moderate leader to power. Such a person still needs to be found. But some people remark that President Habyarimana took power in similar circumstances in 1973 and that he was totally unknown at the time.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> From: Fergusson, Paris. To: Priority FCO ‘Rwanda: French Assessment’, 13 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> From: Martres To: French Foreign Ministry ‘Analyse de la Situation par la Population d’Origine Tutsi’, Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information*, Annexes, 133 “La population Rwandaise d’origine Tutsi pense que le coup de main militaire a échoué dans ses prolongements psychologiques parce qu’il n’a pas obtenu des résultats assez rapides pour prévenir la mobilisation des Hutus contre la perspective du retour de l’ancienne monarchie.

Elle compte encore sur une victoire militaire, grâce à l’appui en hommes et en moyens venus de la diaspora. Cette victoire militaire, même partielle, lui permettrait, d’échapper au génocide. Le général Rwigyema, en tenant une partie de l’est du pays, constituerait une menace suffisante pour obliger le Président Habyarimana à négocier.

Just like Vidal, Martres places ethnicity at the heart of his understanding of the situation. This is most likely a reflection of the opinions of the circle of Rwandans with whom the French had the most contact. The French military-technical relationship with Rwanda meant that its diplomats and soldiers often communicated with the FAR High Command. As many senior FAR officers were later implicated in the Genocide, this is probably one of the sources of information through which the French internalised the importance of ethnicity. However, Martres's knowledge of Rwandan history allows him to take his analysis one step further than Vidal. In 2014, in an interview about his cable, he explained that he "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. ... 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."<sup>81</sup> While Martres underestimated the severity of the genocide he predicted, his report proves the exceptional access and capability of the French diplomatic staff in Rwanda.

In Uganda, however, the French were less welcome. The relationship between France and Uganda, the most important allies of the Rwandan government and the RPF, respectively, is well illustrated by an anecdote by High Commissioner Cullimore. A few weeks after the start of the invasion, the French minister for overseas development visited Uganda and had a meeting with President Museveni to which Cullimore was invited. The French minister confronted the Ugandan president and asked: "Why did you not prevent it?" before adding "What on earth are all these people going into Rwanda for, I mean they don't even speak French?" Museveni "said, with very large eyes which would get very big when he was a bit cross, first of all 'I didn't think I was supposed to be the jailer of the Rwandans. Uganda is not a prison.' And secondly he said 'It may have escaped your notice, but they all speak Kinyarwanda. That's their mother tongue.'"<sup>82</sup>

### **The Start of Ceasefire Negotiations**

With France and Uganda at loggerheads, the first serious peace proposal came from Belgium. Prime Minister Martens, Defence Minister Guy Coëme and Foreign Minister Mark Eyskens travelled to Nairobi on 14 October to meet President Habyarimana. The trio assured the press that rather than interfering in the affairs of another country, this was a "sounding out [of] opinions to see if it was possible to bring conciliation among the different groupings within

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Les Tutsi sont convaincus que si la victoire du pouvoir actuel était totale, le départ des troupes françaises et belges aurait pour résultat d'aggraver la répression et les persécutions et conduirait à l'élimination totale des Tutsi. A défaut de victoire militaire du général Rwigyema, ne croyant pas aux promesses d'ouverture et de dialogue de Président Habyarimana, les Tutsi verraient d'un bon œil qu'un coup d'état au sien du clan Hutu porte au pouvoir un homme plus modéré. Cet homme reste à trouver. Mais certains font remarquer que le Président Habyarimana lui-même a pris le pouvoir en 1973 dans des conditions analogues et qu'il était alors complètement inconnu."

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Georges Martres, 22 April 2014, Narbonne, France, conducted by Michael Dobbs, last accessed: 27 December 2018, <https://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/speakers-and-events/all-speakers-and-events/rwanda-conference/voices/georges-martres>

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Charles Cullimore, 20 May 2009, conducted by Jimmy Jamieson, British Diplomatic Oral History Programme.

the country.”<sup>83</sup> While this might have been true, part of the motivation was probably to hand over the initiative in the peace talks to Habyarimana. Choosing Nairobi as the meeting place was in itself mildly provocative. Kenya and Uganda were in troubled diplomatic waters at the time, and President Arap Moi had never had any sympathy for the RPF. Thus, it cannot have come as a surprise that the Kenyan government tried to use the talks between the Belgian delegation and Habyarimana as a stick with which to beat Uganda.<sup>84</sup> In addition, Martens made several negative remarks about Uganda while in Nairobi. While it would seem that the Belgians heavily favoured Habyarimana, this is probably not the whole truth. The Belgian decision not to intervene militarily and to more or less withdraw the support of their military training mission, though the troops remained in-country, was seen as a betrayal by many FAR officers.

As a meeting of regional presidents was scheduled to take place in Mwanza, Tanzania, on 17 October, Museveni decided to reassert himself before the talks. At a press conference held a day before, he reiterated that the Ugandan government had had no prior knowledge of the plan to attack Rwanda. While there had been rumours that the refugees would try to organise something soon, these had been passed on to the relevant Rwandan authorities. He also responded to criticism that the Ugandan army had been ineffective at closing the border, arguing that it was almost impossible to close the frontier due to the terrain and the sympathy of the local population for the RPF’s cause. Besides these protestations of innocence, the Ugandan president also dwelt on the upcoming talks. Cullimore reports that

[at the meeting in Mwanza, Museveni] intended to renew the offer he had already made twice to Habyarimana to use his good offices to try to persuade Rwigyema and the rebels to accept the ceasefire and commit themselves to not attempting to overthrow the Rwandan government if Habyarimana would commit himself to finding a political solution to the refugee problem. ... At some stage the Rwandan government would have to talk directly to the refugee leaders. They were high calibre people. He had spent many hours with Rwigyema before the incursion trying to encourage him to lead a refugee delegation to talk to Habyarimana.<sup>85</sup>

The press conference also laid bare signs of increasing animosity between Uganda and Rwanda. Towards the end, the Rwandan Ambassador, who was sitting next to Museveni, explained that Rwanda now considered itself “as the victim of ‘foreign aggression.’” Museveni responded with a smile that he thought it difficult to categorise the return of one’s own people after 30 years in exile as ‘foreign aggression.’”<sup>86</sup>

At Mwanza, Museveni and Habyarimana met their Tanzanian counterpart, President Hassan Mwinyi. The conference was surprisingly successful, and the “Mwanza Communiqué” was published at its close. Habyarimana pledged that his government would open discussions with “the internal and external opposition under the auspices of the OAU Secretary

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<sup>83</sup> From: McCarthy, Brussels To: Immediate FCO ‘Surprise Belgian Initiative on Rwanda’, 15 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>84</sup> “België zoekt oplossing voor strijd in Rwanda” *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam, Netherlands), 15 October 1990

<sup>85</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO ‘Rwanda/Uganda’, 16 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

General.”<sup>87</sup> In return, both Museveni and Mwinyi pledged that they would try to convince the RPF to observe a ceasefire. It had taken the two presidents all their powers of persuasion to convince Habyarimana to talk to the RPF, without which there would be no chance of a ceasefire.<sup>88</sup> It is unclear whether an explicit plan had been drawn up for the next steps of the peace process, but the agreement seems to have been that Museveni and the Belgians would use their good offices to contact the RPF and encourage them to agree to, and implement, a ceasefire.

Immediately after returning from Mwanza, Habyarimana left for another round of international diplomacy. First stop, Paris. There he spoke with President Mitterrand and several other government advisors on 18 October. After receiving pledges that he would continue to receive political support, as well as ammunition and weapons from France – albeit in a smaller quantity than he would have liked – the Rwandan president headed back to Africa.<sup>89</sup> However, before returning home, he first visited Mobutu at Gbadolite, his extravagant jungle palace compound. Despite the problems encountered by the Zairian detachment in Rwanda, the relationship between the two presidents appeared intact. Indeed, the two were known to be close personal friends, and this would remain the case until the death of Habyarimana in 1994.<sup>90</sup>

Meanwhile, the Belgian delegation headed to Kampala for the next act in the first ceasefire attempt. Museveni informed the Belgians that he had sent an emissary to the RPF and that the reply he had received on 22 October stated that they accepted an immediate ceasefire. Drawing on his expansive network, High Commissioner Cullimore could once again report back to London:

I discussed these developments this morning with the Minister of State in the MFRA, Kabwegyere, who was at the State House meeting ... He confirmed that the rebels have accepted a ceasefire on condition that Habyarimana agrees to talk to them. Such talks would take place in Addis under OAU auspices. He also said that Martens seemed confident that he could now deliver Habyarimana.<sup>91</sup>

Exactly what followed is unclear, but no ceasefire materialised on 22 or 23 October. Indeed, as the two sides never met, and due to a general lack of sources, it is difficult to determine if both sides had actually agreed to a ceasefire being implemented on either of these dates. What exactly did the RPF mean by an “immediate ceasefire”? Was this message properly communicated to Habyarimana by Martens? And in the chaos reigning on the battlefield, could a ceasefire have been successfully imposed by either side? Two facts are nonetheless

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<sup>87</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Deskby FCO ‘Rwandan Refugees’, 18 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> From: Claude Arnaud To: Monsieur le Président de la République ‘Entretien avec le Président Habyarimana Jeudi 18 Octobre 1990 à 18h30’, 18 Octobre 1990. FGT; From: Fergusson, Paris To: Immediate FCO ‘Visit to Paris by President Habyarimana 18 October’, 22 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>90</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Rwanda’, 22 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>91</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO ‘Rwanda’, 23 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO

certain: first, that for the RPF a ceasefire would have come at the ideal moment. It would have allowed Kagame and his officers to reorganise their battered force in relative tranquillity. Secondly, that on 23 October, when Bayingana and Bunyenyezi were killed, the campaign swung definitively in favour of the FAR.

Although fighting raged on, further diplomatic efforts were also made. On 25 October, Habyarimana, Mobutu and President Pierre Buyoya of Burundi met at a *Communauté économique des pays des Grand Lacs* (CEPGL) summit of regional presidents held in Gbadolite. Mobutu and Buyoya tried to impress upon Habyarimana that the best course of action was indeed to sit down with the RPF, organise a ceasefire and start negotiations. Naturally, as relations between Zaire and Belgium were less than amicable at the time, a senior government official told the British Embassy that “the GOZ [government of Zaire] would not play any part in peace negotiations if the Belgian government had a representative at the summit. He said that this was ‘diplomatic reciprocity’ as Zaire had not been included in the Belgian-organised talks to resolve the Rwandan Crisis.”<sup>92</sup> The CEPGL heads of state went even further, when both Habyarimana and Buyoya encouraged an initiative by Mobutu to make him a middleman between concerned parties in the Rwanda Crisis.<sup>93</sup> Almost at a stroke, and perhaps to the relief of the Belgian government, the CEPGL summit put the diplomatic process back into African hands. The importance of the OAU had been confirmed in Mwanza, and now Mobutu, who had infinitely better regional contacts than the Belgians, had manoeuvred himself into a key position, as a result of which further negotiations would be held in Zaire.

President Buyoya’s involvement at this stage of the process deserves further scrutiny. Buyoya was a Burundian soldier, ethnically Tutsi, who had come to power through a coup d’état in September 1987. While he claimed to be an ethnic moderate, and did occasionally act as one, his government strongly supported the RPF. Burundi was the second biggest supporter of the RPF after Uganda. Not only did the RPF eventually open an office there, but it also had strong networks among the Rwandan refugees in the country, including some within the military intelligence services. The close relationship between the RPF and Buyoya can be largely explained by the fact that the ethnic Hutu-Tutsi dynamics which were so important in Rwanda were mirrored in Burundi. However, Burundi had not had the equivalent of Rwanda’s Social Revolution, and the army and government remained dominated by Tutsi.

The Belgian delegation also continued to push for some kind of solution to the crisis, with Secretary-General of the OAU, the Tanzanian Salim Ahmed Salim, and Martens meeting in Frankfurt in late October. Gradually the idea had crystallised that a peacekeeping force would need to be put in place between the two warring parties. The OAU indicated it could provide the troops if the European Community agreed to fund them. OAU Assistant Secretary-General Ahmed Haggag thought a force consisting of North Africans would be best. “Zaire was ruled out: off the record, he said their troops had done a lot of indiscriminate killing. In

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<sup>92</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 25 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO

<sup>93</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Priority FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 26 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO

light of previous bitter experience, the force would not be put together until funding had been obtained.”<sup>94</sup> However, by this point, negotiations had been overtaken by events on the ground. With the defeat of the RPF now imminent, the efforts of the Belgians were in vain. Nonetheless, the round of blitzkrieg diplomacy conducted by Martens did give birth to many of the ideas that would eventually be taken up in the Arusha Accords years later (see chapter VIII).

### Conclusion

Before moving on, let us determine where the main protagonists of this chapter stood in late October 1990. As the RPA and the FAR will be covered in detail in the next chapter, a few words on Habyarimana and Museveni will suffice. The RPF invasion created both problems and opportunities for Habyarimana. On the one hand, he now faced two concerted threats to his rule. First, there was the increasingly vocal domestic opposition. Doubts about his rule had been circulating for some time prior to the attack. These had become serious when President Mitterrand had insisted in his La Baule speech that aid to African countries would be tied to democratisation. Habyarimana had been able to contain the domestic opposition by promising reform to the governance system (see end of chapter III). Secondly, he was now also burdened with the military challenge to his rule by the RPF. Though neither of these threats were insurmountable, an alliance between the RPF and the domestic opposition might well prove fatal to him.

On the other hand, the invasion by the RPF had also offered Habyarimana opportunities. France had rushed to Rwanda’s aid, even though no reforms of any kind had yet been implemented. This suggested that the new doctrine which Mitterrand had outlined at La Baule was more important in theory than in practice: if Habyarimana called, France would answer. The invasion had also allowed Habyarimana to move against the domestic opposition, with the mass arrests of 5 October being justified by pointing to the need to eradicate internal RPF collaborators. While there had been a backlash in the international media and his government had had to answer difficult questions as a result, the fallout had been contained.

However, the end of the immediate threat posed by the RPF did not spell the end of Habyarimana’s problems. The short war had depleted the already meagre government treasury, and the president would soon have to go cap in hand to the IMF for a new loan. Securing this loan, which would undoubtedly come with strings attached, would be Habyarimana’s priority for the next couple of months.

As for Museveni, what can we conclude about his relationship with the RPF? In 1998, he himself said that “‘faced with a *fait accompli* situation by our Rwandan brothers,’ Uganda decided ‘to help the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), materially, so that they are not defeated because that would have been detrimental to the Tutsi people of Rwanda and would not have

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<sup>94</sup> From: Glaze, Addis Ababa to: Routine FCO ‘Incursions into Rwanda’, 25 October 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part B), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO

been good for Uganda's stability.'"<sup>95</sup> In this case, it seems the elusive Ugandan president was telling the truth. Indeed, the evidence suggests that though Museveni knew that the Rwandan element of his armed forces was interested in returning home, he had not known the exact date or anticipated the scale of the desertion. The RPF's decision to go ahead put Museveni in an acutely embarrassing position during the year in which he was the chairman of the OAU. It also made him look impotent in the eyes of those Ugandans who thought the Banyarwanda enjoyed too much influence in the country. On top of that, the RPF took a staggering amount of weapons, and their replacement would not come cheap. These factors probably provoked Museveni's initial anger towards the RPF, including his public condemnation of the invasion and the closing of the border to reinforcements and supplies.

However, as October passed, Museveni seems to have slowly changed his position. He was, after all, very close to the RPF High Command; both Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame were personal friends, and he did not want to see their organisation destroyed in a military confrontation. This was probably why he favoured a negotiated solution from the very start of the conflict. In addition, Habyarimana's response to the invasion likely alienated Museveni. Not only did Rwandan, French and Belgian diplomats heap the blame for the invasion on Uganda, but FAR troops also violated Ugandan sovereignty repeatedly. Gazelle helicopters struck targets in Uganda, FAR mortars hit targets over the border and infantry repeatedly crossed the frontier.<sup>96</sup> In this context, Museveni increasingly turned a blind eye as his NRA commanders helped their former comrades. As one Ugandan officer remarked, "I have fought side by side with these chaps not only against Obote but later in the North. One of them saved my life when we were fighting against Alice. Would you expect me to refuse them now when they come to me because they haven't any more ammunition?"<sup>97</sup> This frame of mind is confirmed by Senator Tito Rutaremara.

Our most important support was our relationship with each and every soldier in the Ugandan Army ... We had spent years fighting and living together. When we needed to slip out of Rwanda, we would always find an army officer who would say, "Cross here. Pass here." At the time Museveni was saying he was not helping us, they were letting us pass.<sup>98</sup>

Other RPF cadres also remember that the "NRA commanders in the bordering region of Rwanda were a constant supply of heavy artillery, ammo, ammunition, other supplies and cover. Of course this was done with complicity with the senior leadership of Uganda."<sup>99</sup> Yet this did not mean that the aid Museveni distributed to the RPF was unconditional or always forthcoming. Museveni had to make sure he did not draw the ire of the international

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<sup>95</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 183

<sup>96</sup> From: Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter To: High Commissioner, Kampala 'DA Report on Visit to Rwanda 16-20 Feb 91', no date, but received in registry 5 June 1991. "JWW 014/1 (Part B), Rwanda: Internal Political Situation" FCO; Correspondence with Molyneux-Carter, 29 May 2017; From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO 'Rwanda: Military Situation', 25 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (Part B), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 119

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 80

<sup>99</sup> Correspondence with former RPF member, 31 August 2017; Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 82

community at a time when Uganda was still rebuilding from its own long civil war. Rwanda had powerful allies in the West and sanctions could have been disastrous. There were also elements within the NRA and the Ugandan intelligence services who were less than keen on the Banyarwanda. Yet even for this anti-Banyarwanda group the decision to help or not was not straightforward. While they might feel reticent about arming the RPF, the more support they gave, the more likely the Banyarwanda in Uganda would be able to go home. In the coming years, Ugandan support for the RPF would be crucial and it is doubtful the organisation could have survived without it.



1 – On 23 October, a flank attack kills Major Chris Bunyenyenzi and Dr Peter Bayingana. Soon after the RPA start withdrawing towards Kagitumba. 2 – Paul Kagame orders the RPA to relocate to the Virunga Mountains. Some elements retreat into Uganda, others into Tanzania. The rest of the force makes its way along the Rwanda-Uganda border. 3 – Ludoviko “Dodo” Twahirwa is sent with a strike force to win a quick victory at Katuna. Several substantial skirmishes take place in the Katuna sector as the RPA move towards Volcanoes National Park.

## VI - FORGING THE RWANDAN PATRIOTIC ARMY: NOVEMBER 1990 – JANUARY 1991

Quatre braves, qui ne se connaissent pas, n'iront point franchement à l'attaque d'un lion. Quatre moins braves, mais se connaissant bien, sûrs de leur solidarité et par suite de leur appui mutuel, iront résolument. Toute la science des organisations d'armées est là.<sup>1</sup>

An army which preserves its usual formations under the heaviest fire, which is never shaken by imaginary fears, and in the face of real danger disputes the ground inch by inch, which, proud in the feeling of its victories, never loses its sense of obedience, its respect for and confidence in its leaders, even under the depressing effects of defeat; an army with all its physical powers, inured to privations and fatigue by exercise, like the muscles of an athlete; an army which looks upon all its toils as the means to victory, not as a curse which hovers over its standards, and which is always reminded of its duties and virtues by the short catechism of one idea, namely the *honour of its arms*; such an army is imbued with the true military spirit.<sup>2</sup>

For the FAR garrison stationed at the Gatuna border post, the arrival of Ludoviko “Dodo” Twahirwa’s column, on 3 November 1990, must have come as a nasty surprise. Only days before, the Rwandan Ambassador in Uganda had proclaimed a total victory over the RPA, but the attack now battering their position proved this was far from true.<sup>3</sup> Before the day was out, the RPA troops had driven the FAR from its position, inflicting numerous casualties on the defenders.<sup>4</sup> This victory, so soon after the retreat of its main body from Gabiro and Kagitumba, was an enormous boost to the morale of the RPA, just as its commander Paul Kagame had hoped. Twahirwa consolidated the victory the next day, when his troops ambushed the FAR company which had been sent to retake the border post, capturing large amounts of munitions and several heavy weapons.<sup>5</sup>

The current historiography suggests that the RPA redeployment to the Virunga Mountains took place through Uganda, and that there was a lull in the fighting between late October 1990 and January 1991, when the RPA captured Ruhengeri.<sup>6</sup> This stands to be corrected, since the RPA and the FAR were engaged in a series of skirmishes throughout the closing months of 1990 – with the villages of Kiyombe, Cyumba, Kaniga and Kivuye all being contested.<sup>7</sup> Usually initiated by the RPA, these skirmishes served several functions. First, they kept the FAR confused about the locations of the main RPA force as they moved to the

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<sup>1</sup> Ardant du Picq, *Études sur le combat* (Paris: Coulommiers, 1880), 93

<sup>2</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Hertfordshire: Woodworth, 1997), 154-155

<sup>3</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 1 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>4</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 5 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>5</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Priority FCO ‘Rwanda’, 9 November 1990. JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>6</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997), 115; Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2008), 79-88

<sup>7</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Routine FCO ‘Rwanda’, 21 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.; also From: Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter To: High Commissioner, Kampala ‘DA Report on Visit to Rwanda 16-20 Feb 91’, no date, but received in registry 5 June 1991. FCO.

Virunga Mountains. To amplify the confusion, RPA units would often move in small groups, and then reunite before an attack. Second, small-scale hit-and-run operations were carried out to scrounge for resources and capture key supplies.<sup>8</sup> Like the success of Twahirwa's force, these operations also helped to rebuild the self-confidence of the RPA.

It was during this period that the RPA started its transformation from uncoordinated and defeated rebel group to formidable fighting machine. However, it must be kept in mind that the changes described below did not occur overnight, and that it took many months for their full effects to become apparent.

### **Discipline and Combat Doctrine**

When Paul Kagame arrived at the front line in October, he had found a thoroughly exhausted and demoralised force. The situation was so bad that it remained one of his defining memories of the war, together with the Genocide: "There was nothing in its right place, not a single thing. Casualties were lying in the road, so many in such a short time."<sup>9</sup> It was from this shambles that Kagame, chairman of the RPA High Command, would have to rebuild his force, together with his fellow officers.

Many generals and soldiers have noted that an army without mental strength is at best a fragile tool. No matter how well armed a force may be, if it lacks "fighting power" – the "mental, intellectual and organisation foundations"<sup>10</sup> which manifest as "discipline and cohesion, morale and initiative, courage and toughness, the willingness to fight and if necessary to die ... the sum total of mental qualities that make armies fight"<sup>11</sup> – it will fail on the battlefield. So the RPA High Command first worked on this. As Caesar Kayizari explains:

He [Kagame] was God given. I am not being spiritual, but I am stating the reality. He brought in iron discipline. ... In operations from the day he arrived. ... [this] was not limited only to military operations ... even ... within civilian operations within RPF. ...

When he comes in the Struggle he raises the bar, beyond shooting. ... and the bar is for everybody, for small men: soldiers know their bar, NCOs know their bar, as well as for the commanders and our civilian support group. ... There were benchmarks, or you had to explain why you could not meet them: more than "sorry I got lost." Because you are dealing with lives of Rwandans, you cannot afford that luxury. ... Kagame was very articulate on that. ... Of course he is a good manager: he can hit you hard, but give you another chance. After being hit hard, you will get it. Then later sometimes he will manage you, except if you become impossible, unmanageable, ungovernable. ...

This is a war which is fought, seriously fought. If you ask me what was your biggest weapon ... I would say discipline, ... Because that was our centre of gravity. He told us ... "Discipline is the foundation stone upon which we build our liberation." He said it in Swahili: "What I would like you to understand is that discipline ... will bring

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 22 September 2018

<sup>9</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 69, 76

<sup>10</sup> Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 3

<sup>11</sup> Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 3; Clausewitz, *On War*, 153-157

fundamental change in our country of Rwanda. ... I want your behaviour, your acts, to be different from those we are fighting.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Kayizari, Kagame viewed self-control as the most important part of discipline. Everyone in the RPF and RPA, from the senior officers to civilian cadres, was expected to fully commit to the liberation of Rwanda. To achieve this, the RPA High Command used two methods. The first and preferred method was to have members – military and civilian – internalise the values of the RPF and the reasons for their armed struggle. Officers and political commissars explained to the rank and file why the RPA was waging its struggle and how discipline would help ensure final victory. The second method, as in any army, was to make sure that those who displayed undisciplined behaviour were punished.<sup>13</sup>

As long as the Struggle was being fought, it was considered unacceptable to give in to personal temptation or gratification – “Not just here [on the front line] but globally, [also] if you are Charles Murigande or Patrick Mazimhaka in New York.”<sup>14</sup> Officers were expected to lead by example, and shared the same food and accommodation as their troops. This attitude also extended to social contact among RPF members. Female cadres were well represented throughout the organisation but casual sex was strongly discouraged. As Christine Umutoni explained, “We don’t want the men to think the girls are here for that, and we don’t want people saying ‘that girl slept with so and so in her last unit.’”<sup>15</sup> The result of this emphasis on discipline was remarkable. Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire, the commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) – who would arrive in 1993, and about whom more will be said later – wrote that

The [RPA] soldiers we did see were clearly well-led, well-trained and motivated. They wore an idiosyncratic combination of East German summer uniforms and rubber boots, but were always clean and neat. The rank and file tended to be young, sometimes even boys; the officers too were young but clearly knew how to work their troops. When not training, soldiers had lectures to attend and equipment to clean and maintain.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, veteran BBC journalist Fergal Keane noted how

They were lanky and thin and most looked like teenagers. But as we got closer I noticed that their uniforms were neat, and that the troops themselves were not slouching, but instead seemed to be standing to attention. ... there was no sign of the usual detritus of beer bottles and discarded clothing that follows so many African guerrilla armies.<sup>17</sup>

Another of Kagame’s strengths was his ability to build an effective command structure. When he arrived, and despite the deaths of Paul Rwigyema, Chris Bunyenyezi and Dr Peter Bayingana, the RPA could still count on several excellent commanders. Steven Ndugute and Sam “Kaka” Kanyemera already held key positions and were soon joined by outstanding battlefield commanders like “Dodo” Twahirwa – whom we have already met – Thaddeus

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Jill Rutaremara, 7 September 2018

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Catherine Watson, “War and Waiting”, *Africa Report*, vol. 37, no. 6 (November 1992), 54

<sup>16</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), 67

<sup>17</sup> Fergal Keane, *Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey* (London: Penguin, 1996), 51

Gashumba, Fred Ibingira, Charles Muhire, Charles Ngoga, Theogene Bagire and Charles Musitu. Younger soldiers who displayed aptitude for command were also quickly promoted to positions of significant responsibility. Good examples are James Kabarebe, Charles Kayonga and Caesar Kayizari. Other important posts relating to military intelligence, the RPA medical services and political education were held by Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa, Karake Karenzi, Dr Joseph Karemera and Frank Mugambage, respectively. Together with this group of officers, Kagame was able to project his vision and will throughout the RPA, as Kabarebe notes:

The role of the leader was central and the sole reason for our success. Remove him from the equation and the Struggle would not have been successful. His style of leadership was involving. His intent was passed to everyone, cadres, soldiers, commanders. We lived among meetings, even during heavy fighting. His intent was communicated.

He understood the strength and the weaknesses of his people.

You could never tell him a lie because he knew everything. He knew what was going on on the battlefield, and his own intellectual understanding was very strong.

Sometimes he took risks we were not convinced of. But then, when they worked out, we would understand. For him nothing was impossible. With him on our side we knew we were psychologically stronger than the others.<sup>18</sup>

Communicating the commanders' intent was especially important for the way Paul Kagame decided the RPA would henceforward wage its war. While scholars disagree on the subject, it seems unlikely that Rwigyema ever had the intention of waging a guerrilla war against the FAR.<sup>19</sup> Otherwise, he would have started his campaign by infiltrating into the wooded and hilly terrain of northern Rwanda and slowly waged an escalating war against the Habyarimana presidency. Instead, he chose to launch an open attack directly down the main highway to Kigali. The idea that such an experienced commander would have made such a mistake is ridiculous.<sup>20</sup> Rwigyema had fought several wars and had also held command positions during the NRA guerrilla war against the Obote II government. Rather, he probably calculated that the element of surprise, combat experience, better leadership, and the motivation of the RPA would prove sufficient to overcome the helicopters and light armour of the FAR in a short, brutal campaign. Once in Kigali, the installation of a broad based government, as laid down in the RPF political charter, would consolidate the victory. Rwigyema's plan would probably have worked if he had not been killed on the second day of the invasion and if France and Zaire had not intervened decisively on the side of the FAR.

As for Kagame, he had no choice but to wage a guerrilla war. The mauled RPA he found upon arrival could not stand up to the French-supported FAR out in the open. However, he did not wage his guerrilla campaign along standard lines. To understand the distinction, it is worth looking at two examples of these "conventional" unconventional wars: the Vietnam War (1955-1975) and the fight conducted by the Taliban against the Coalition-supported central government in Kabul, Afghanistan (2001-). In the first case, the North Vietnamese

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with James Kabarebe, 16 October 2018

<sup>19</sup> Gérard Prunier, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front", in *African Guerrillas*, ed. Christopher Clapham (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 130-131

<sup>20</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 79

and Vietcong guerrillas operated on several levels: “Guerrillas operate within and around their hamlets and villages. District companies move within their district and the province battalions operate within their province. Main force units operate across province boundaries.”<sup>21</sup> In this system, the hard-core guerrillas who do most of the fighting move from village to village, where they link up with the district- and village-level units. These low-level groups supply the main-force units with shelter, guides and local information on enemy deployments. When the United States armed forces questioned village-level groups on their reasons for supporting the Vietcong, one of their replies was that the guerrillas were better for the people than the government.

The struggle for social justice aims also at putting an end to the abuses by GVN [Government of Vietnam] civilians and military officials. Members of the Front [Viet Cong] frequently refer to the venality and arrogance of the local government authorities, and compare the latter with the Front cadres whom they regard as honest, self-sacrificing, and gentle in their relations with the population.<sup>22</sup>

There is a similar story in Afghanistan. Lieutenant Colonel David Kilcullen, who served as counter-insurgency expert to General David Petraeus and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, writes that

The Taliban’s relationship with local tribal allies is important in this pattern of conflict, and arises largely from opportunities created by the Afghan government. ... The Taliban exploited this, posing as defenders of the local tribes against misrule by unrepresentative appointed provincial and district governors, and seeking alliances with dispossessed and disenfranchised tribal power brokers.<sup>23</sup>

The Taliban alliance with local tribal leaders allowed their main-force units access to village-level support, as in Vietnam. “Taliban organisation structure varies between districts, but most show some variation of the generic pattern of a local clandestine network structure, a main force of full-time guerrillas who travel from valley to valley, and a part-time network of villagers who cooperate with the main force in its area.”<sup>24</sup>

However, from the start of the Struggle for Liberation, the RPA faced an important obstacle to fighting this kind of war. The Hutu-Tutsi ethnic divide meant that most Rwandans were pre-disposed to work against the RPA, which they considered to be a Tutsi, as well as a foreign or specifically Ugandan, organisation. This meant that the RPA would not be able to exploit local grievances against the central government. Where local grievances did cause disloyalty to the Habyarimana presidency, these grievances pushed the people into the hands of domestic opposition parties – as will be explained in the following chapters – rather than the RPF/RPA. On top of that, northern Rwanda, the most suitable region of the country to conduct a traditional guerrilla campaign, was also the most loyal to the central government. This is probably also one

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<sup>21</sup> RAND Corporation, *Insurgent Organization and Operations: A Case Study of the Viet Cong in the Delta, 1964-1966*. Written by Anderson, Arnsten and Averch, (Santa Monica, California. August 1967), 9

<sup>22</sup> RAND Corporation, *Viet Cong Motivation and Morale in 1964: A Preliminary Report*. Written by Donnel and Pauker, (Santa Monica, California. March 1965), 21-22

<sup>23</sup> David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (London: Hurst, 2017), 50-51

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 54

of the reasons why Fred Rwigyema chose a blitzkrieg towards Kigali. He knew that the conditions for a classic guerrilla war were not met in Rwanda.

Kagame's answer to this problem was that the RPA would fight a guerrilla war without explicitly relying on the support of Rwanda's population. Instead, his troops would use the natural terrain to their advantage and wage a war of manoeuvre against the FAR.

He brought serious manoeuvre warfare. ... At first, ... some senior commanders were doubting. But when it succeeded, they said, "the old man, he knows," ...it was recently being applied in the USA army ... Command initiated fighting. So he brought it and he made our enemy dance on his head. And he was always tripping. So that brought confidence again among the commanders.<sup>25</sup>

This manoeuvrist approach is a fascinating blend of strategies and tactics from different sources. The basic concept of manoeuvre warfare had first crystallised in the late stages of the First World War and in the interwar period. Theorists like Heinz Guderian, Basil Liddell Hart and Mikhail Tukhachevsky saw it as a way to restore the advantage of the offence over the defence by harnessing the power of the internal combustion engine. During the Second World War, these theories were put into practice by the German and Soviet armed forces. From then on, manoeuvre remained an important strand in both NATO and Warsaw Pact military thinking. One similarity among these various doctrines is that they were conventional *par excellence*. They were designed to be used by one conventional army against another, which is one of the reasons why the US and the USSR ran into such problems in Vietnam and Afghanistan. Their troops had been training and preparing for a conventional manoeuvre war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact over the plains of Western Europe rather than a fight against small bands of irregular troops conducting hit-and-run attacks.

Kagame would have been well aware of the latest developments in manoeuvre warfare as he had been attending the United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth when the RPA attacked Rwanda on 1 October 1990. He might also have been influenced by high-level officers in the NRA – like Mugisha Muntu – who had received training in the Soviet Union. However, most of his operational experience had come from fighting with, or against, guerrillas or insurgents. Indeed, the NRA insurgency against the Obote II government had been fought like the insurgencies described above.<sup>26</sup> There are also rumours that Kagame received training in Cuba. As such, the RPA High Command chairman was in a good position to adapt a conventional warfighting doctrine to the unique circumstances which the RPA faced in its war against the FAR.

Two key aspects borrowed from classical manoeuvre warfare were the decentralisation of command and a focus on initiative. In a fast-paced, fluid battle, a single commander

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>26</sup> Pascal G Ngoga, "Guerrilla Insurgency and Conflict Resolution in Africa: A Case Study of Uganda" (PhD diss., Lancaster University, 1997), 230, 241-242, "Clandestine political networks were established from an early stage with just a few individuals to start with, followed by the recruitment of further sympathisers, until a village was sufficiently supportive to elect a village resistance council. These provided the base organisations for a pyramid, in which the members of village executive committees elected parish resistance councils, and so on up through the county and district levels to the national resistance council."

cannot control his forces in detail – especially when they are fighting many miles away. As a result, it would be up to local commanders to make their own decisions. As Kayizari explained in an interview,

We sat only in the meeting to be briefed on where to go, what to do and how to do it. But also leaving you the room to do it another way even when you see the situation has changed on the ground.

JBK: Ah ok, so he was happy to give trust to his commanders?

Yes, yes, yes. He said if the situation changes – which it does in war – based on this manoeuvre warfare, put another manoeuvre approach to the situational problem on the ground. And some of us were very young, were busy, seriously making notes. Because while we had fought he had also been in military schools, so we wanted to see what is he saying.<sup>27</sup>

However, unlike the USA or Soviet Union, the RPA was not an entirely conventional armed force. It could not count on the full support of a nation state and did not have the supply train or vehicles to conduct classical manoeuvre warfare. As a result, it conducted manoeuvre warfare on foot, as light infantry. Operations were characterised by night marches and infiltrations, after which attacks would be launched on surprised FAR detachments.

So, we are doing ... highly mobile warfare. Making deep operations in enemy territory. If the enemy declares victory in Musanze, we attack the national park. ... When he comes, he moves his forces to that sector, then overnight we have attacked where he has maintained a minimum force and we are not bothered to hold territory. Territory is not our issue, destabilising our enemy psychologically and militarily is [at the] top of [the] agenda.<sup>28</sup>

This forced the FAR to fight on the RPA's terms, and made it impossible for the former to bring their force multipliers, like light armour, to bear on the latter.

However, the RPA could not fight its war without regard to the Rwandan population. The RPA High Command was adamant: "We were ordered: 'Do not harm the population!'"<sup>29</sup> Many RPA commanders who had fought during the NRA Resistance War understood that the internal opposition was key to destabilising the Habyarimana regime. Any war crimes or massacres carried out by the RPA would be counterproductive, alienating the internal opposition and strengthening the position of the presidency. This did not mean that the civilian population of northern Rwanda was left entirely unmolested. For military and humanitarian reasons, the RPA encouraged the population of the north to move out of the combat zone and flee towards Kigali. This had several military benefits, as Kagame told British Lt Col O'Brien: "[Kagame] 'advised' the residents of the combat area to move out as he feared infiltration and did not want to commit any of his scarce manpower to internal security duties."<sup>30</sup> For the

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 22 September 2018

<sup>30</sup> From: Lt. Col. EJK O'Brien, British High Commission To: Lt. Col. JP Cameron, MoD 'Rwanda – Meeting with RPA Commander', 4 September 1992. "FOI 0421-17" FCO.

RPA, a battlefield with as few civilians as possible also presented other advantages. It meant the FAR would not be able to use the local population as guides or human shields, and it allowed the RPA to employ its heavy weapons without fear of causing collateral damage. In addition, the arrival in and around Kigali of the internally displaced population placed an additional strain on an already overtaxed Rwandan government.

### Unit Cohesion

While the Rwandan Patriotic Army could count on its members being either combat experienced or trained to an acceptable standard, the secretive nature of the attack on Rwanda had made thorough preparation impossible. Normally the men, women, and units which engage in war, in the British or French army for example, have had time to prepare and exercise together. This allows procedures to be honed and the personalities within the units to bond. It is also of importance to the commander-subordinate relationship and trust. Officers, NCOs, and the enlisted troops have to become familiar with one another, simply to know how their peers think about a certain problem. German General Herman Balck, who fought in the Second World War, provided an instructive anecdote:

At one time I had just gotten a new divisional chief of staff. He came to my commanders' meeting and complained that the fuel reports were being falsified. I interrupted and said "Please be quiet. When the tank regiment reports that they have absolutely no gas and can't move, I know that they have precisely three combat hours and 50 kilometres of movement left. When the engineer battalion reports that they have no gas left, I know they mean just that."<sup>31</sup>

General Friedrich von Mellenthin, who served under Black, similarly felt that "Commanders and subordinates start to understand each other during war. The better they know each other, the shorter and less detailed orders can be."<sup>32</sup> Operating procedures and small-unit tactics will have subtle differences between units, especially as operational experience starts to influence textbook drills.<sup>33</sup>

However, because the RPA units were only physically formed on the Ugandan-Rwandan border days or even hours before going into combat, they were lacking in unit cohesion.<sup>34</sup> Though many of the soldiers and officers would have known each other well, and in many cases would have fought together before, there would have been many new faces at the assembly stations and jumping off points. Crucially, their NRA comrades were also absent, creating a key missing link within the RPA. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that, though the core of the RPA came from Uganda, many recruits and volunteers had grown up in Congo, Tanzania or Burundi. Others had come from as far as the United States and

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<sup>31</sup> Hermann Balck, *An interview, 12 January 1974* (Bennington Vermont: Merriam Press, 2006), 59-60

<sup>32</sup> BDM Corporation, Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defence, *Generals Black and von Mellenthin on Tactics: Implication for NATO Military Doctrine* (Tysons Corner, Virginia. 19 December 1980), 22

<sup>33</sup> Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 73-76 To get familiar and up to date on the latest experience, German troops often received extra training in the field from veterans before being put in the line; Balck, *An interview*, 38-39

<sup>34</sup> Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1948): 280-315; Guy L. Siebold, "The Evolution of the Measurement of Cohesion", *Military Psychology*, vol.11, no. 1 (1999): 5-26; Guy L. Siebold, "The Essence of Military Group Cohesion", *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2007): 286-295

Europe.<sup>35</sup> Though they were “Rwandan,” the cultural backgrounds and experiences of this variety of recruits would have been broad. One of the expressions of this heterogeneity was the many languages spoken within the RPA. While this was an advantage in the diplomatic sphere, where RPF diplomats could switch seamlessly between English, French, Swahili and Kinyarwanda, in combat it could be a significant drawback. Under stress, everything becomes more difficult, including clear communication. It is telling that the RPA used Swahili as its battle command language, while Kinyarwanda was used during the pre-operation briefings.<sup>36</sup>

The solution to this lack of unit cohesion was twofold. As the German military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz points out, “this [cohesive] spirit can only be generated from two sources, and only by these two conjointly; the first is a succession of campaigns and great victories.”<sup>37</sup> Transposed to late 1990s and the RPA, this meant staying in the field while avoiding defeat, and winning small victories to establish self-confidence. Later, more spectacular victories would follow, especially the attack on Ruhengeri in January 1991. “The other,” Clausewitz continues,

is an activity of the army carried sometimes to its greatest pitch. Only by these, does the soldier learn to know his powers. The more a general is in the habit of demanding from his troops, the surer he will be that his demands will be answered. The soldier is as proud of overcoming toil as he is of surmounting danger. Therefore it is only in the soil of incessant activity and exertion that the germ will thrive, but also only in the sunshine of victory.<sup>38</sup>

Just like in the NRA – where “an idle army was [considered] an undisciplined army”<sup>39</sup> – the RPA was always kept busy. Besides military and physical training and political education, the soldiers, especially during ceasefire periods later in the war, would grow their own crops and organise inter-unit sporting competitions.

### **Relations Between the RPF and the RPA**

The logistical weakness of the RPA during the October campaign suggests that the RPF had not been able to prepare its civilian cadres in Uganda and abroad to their full potential. This was probably, as with the military preparations, a result of the need for tight secrecy in the run-up to the invasion. However, now that the war would clearly be protracted, cooperation between the RPA in the warzone and the RPF civilian cadres behind the front became increasingly important. In this sense, the attack on Rwanda had been a success. It had loudly announced the existence of the RPF/A and shown that they were not only talk. This had been particularly important to gain the support of the Banyarwanda refugees who were still sitting on the fence. Nonetheless it took some time to convince some of the older refugees that the RPA would not end up like the *Inyenzi* of the 1960s (see chapter II).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 116

<sup>36</sup> Interview, 13 May 2017

<sup>37</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 156

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-157

<sup>39</sup> Ngoga, “Guerrilla Insurgency and Conflict Resolution”, 241

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Vianney Shumbuso, 18 October 2018; interview with Christine Umutoni, 14 May 2019

Women played an important part in this process. Aloisea Inyumba was appointed commissioner of financial mobilisation in 1988, which made her one of the first top-level female RPF cadres. When the RPA arrived in the Virunga Mountains, she made strenuous efforts to set up crucial supply routes. At the grassroots level she mobilised RPF sympathisers in Ugandan refugee camps. “Wherever Inyumba went to raise money she brought photos and videos of the suffering *Inkotanyi* [a moniker for the RPF/A inspired by the name of one of the famous pre-colonial regiments].”<sup>41</sup> When I asked Ndore Rurinda if he had known Aloisea, his answer showed profound respect for his late comrade, “I knew her personally? You bet. She trained me on the cadreship programme, supervised my initial internship, and I later worked fulltime with her as a junior cadre ... Can’t exhaust this person in few words; humility, loyalty and clarity of intent characterised her dealings and appearance. RPF cadre to the core.”<sup>42</sup>

Refugees baked food and donated other supplies. These were then transported in secret to the hideouts among the volcanoes.<sup>43</sup> These same supply lines were also used to bring new recruits to the main force.

We were working [behind the front line]. ... The military men who were there from the army, they had to be transported to Rwanda ... we had to do it clandestinely. ... people passing here and there. Looking for the way for people who are ... in the East of Congo, and bring them. The Rwandese were found outside in Europe, where they could come to Uganda, and we had to hide them and pass them through to Rwanda. Then the ways to bring the people from Burundi and Tanzania. ... We had to transport them, feed them, bring others, find them and so on.<sup>44</sup>

Christine Umutoni was one of the top female leaders in the RPF who helped mobilise abroad. Before the invasion, she had travelled to Burundi via Tanzania carrying a letter from Fred Rwigyema for RPF supporters there. Generally, the RPF could count on a good deal of support from Burundi, where many Banyarwanda refugees had settled. Besides the refugees, there were also sympathetic elements in the Tutsi-dominated security forces. In Kampala, the neighbour of Fred Rwigyema was the Burundian Ambassador and the two maintained regular contact.<sup>45</sup> Umutoni continued these trips once the war had started and worked hard on mobilising support in southern Africa. She visited RPF cells in Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe and maintained contact with Frelimo, Zanu-PF and the ANC. Though these countries did not contribute directly to the RPF coffers, they allowed the organisation to fundraise and helped envoys, like Umutoni, achieve their objectives.<sup>46</sup>

Besides her work mobilising international support, Umutoni also helped with the political education of the troops. Though many had followed courses at the RPF schools in Uganda, not all had been able to attend. To make sure they absorbed the RPF ideology, Umutoni led two-week courses from makeshift classrooms in the Virunga Mountains. Most of her pupils were military intelligence officers and political commissars. The curriculum was composed

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<sup>41</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 82

<sup>42</sup> Correspondence with Ndore Rurinda, 18 March 2019

<sup>43</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 82-83

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Tito Rutaremara, 9 October 2018

<sup>45</sup> Interview Christine Umutoni, 14 May 2019

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

of Rwandan history, a bit of Marxist-socialist economic theory, African liberation struggles, the reasons of the Struggle, and the RPF 8-point political programme. It also included special sections on the importance of youths and of women in the Struggle. Once they had completed the course, it would be the responsibility of operative and political commissars of military intelligence to pass on what they had learned to the rank-and-file.<sup>47</sup>

The mobilisation of the RPF civilian support was especially important in November and December 1990. While Rwanda is close to the equator, the high altitude of the volcanoes (4,000-5,000 meters) means it can get astoundingly cold. Several volcanoes are almost permanently shrouded in a thick fog which makes the low temperatures even more difficult to bear. As Kagame himself admitted, “I’d not studied well the conditions of the mountains. You’d wake up in the morning and find soldiers frozen to death.”<sup>48</sup> Yet, it was the only place where the RPA could regroup in relative safety from the FAR.

Just as supply lines had to be established, so did medical care. While the RPA had excellent front line medical care, it had to be integrated with hospital-level attention. This meant bringing wounded RPA troops into Uganda or, sometimes, Tanzania, and finding sympathetic doctors and nurses to operate on them. Caesar Kayizari’s injury is a good illustration of this system in action. In 1991, he was shot through the jaw while leading his soldiers:

I was operated in the grass ... With the whole mandible gone, the bullet hit here. And shattered the bone – jaw. ...

JBK: So the [RPA] doctors were good?

They were good, They were able to save life. At any cost. Even at the cost of hurting you extremely. Because if they didn’t do it, I would be dead. Because I was bleeding like a pipe of water.

I was evacuated through our short lines to the initial treatment. ... Then it was decided [by the RPA doctor who had provided the initial treatment] mine was fatal, I had to be taken clandestinely to Mulago Hospital [in Kampala], and then they had to manage how to treat me clandestinely. ... we had to find one managing emergencies, so that the story is falsified.<sup>49</sup>

After receiving treatment at Mulago, Caesar was flown to Belgium where he was given a bone transplant to restore function to his jaw. The knowledge that lifesaving treatment was readily available in case of injury was an important morale boost for the RPF. In the opinion of British Field Marshal Lord Carver,

soldiers fear wounds more than they do death, about which they tend to be fatalistic. Confidence that, if wounded, they will be quickly evacuated and effectively treated, removes or reduces a great deal of that anxiety, and supports the fighting spirit which is the key to success on the battlefield.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Watson, “War and Waiting”, 55

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>50</sup> Field Marshall Lord Carver, “Morale in battle – the medical and the military”, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, vol. 82 (February 1989), 68

Peter Kalimba, who was himself injured by gunfire but recovered, concurs: “this [medical care] was one of our biggest weapons besides our discipline.”<sup>51</sup>

The emphasis on medical care shows the profound importance the RPA High Command placed on the welfare and lives of its troops. According to Kayizari, “[we were] lucky that our initial commanders loved their men. Loved their soldiers. They loved their people and they loved their nation.”<sup>52</sup> This attitude among the commanders is exemplified by a story told of Adam Wasswa. After seeing an overzealous RPA attack on a FAR position, he is said to have commented that “To fight a lion with your bare hands is brave, but also stupid.”<sup>53</sup> This caring attitude was felt throughout the organisation. As a former officer explains, “It is very important to recognise the value of a soldier. As long as you communicate and they respect you, you cannot fail.”<sup>54</sup> Foot soldiers were also aware of this attitude, and adopted it in their relationships to one another. “We ate sorghum porridge every day. When there were beans, we saved them for our injured comrades.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Working Towards a Ceasefire**

While the RPA was regrouping in the Virunga Mountains, political manoeuvring continued. As he now felt he had the upper hand, President Habyarimana became increasingly recalcitrant in his position on negotiations with the RPF. On 29 October, he announced in a radio address to the nation that he would “not negotiate with the rebels until they left the country.”<sup>56</sup> This attitude was confirmed when Charles Nyandwi, the Rwandan Minister for Higher Education who had been sent to Brazzaville, told Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso that the government of Rwanda would not negotiate with the RPF.<sup>57</sup> Thus, it was surprising when, on 31 October, it was the RPF which failed to turn up for negotiations in Zaire. Rwandan Foreign Minister Casimir Bizimungu arrived at Gbadolite to find that no RPF delegation was present. According to the latter, they had not come because the FAR had broken the 23 October ceasefire brokered by the Belgian prime minister. Bizimungu still met with his Zairian counterpart, who pressed that the government of Rwanda should negotiate with the RPF. In response, Bizimungu explained that this was no longer necessary because the RPA had been pushed out of Rwanda.<sup>58</sup>

Zairian diplomats, supported by their Ugandan colleagues, hoped to get negotiations back on track by putting pressure on Habyarimana, but their plan was complicated by the arrival of a French diplomatic mission to the region.<sup>59</sup> Minister of Cooperation and Development Jacques

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Peter Kalimba, 23 October 2018; this view was echoed by Logan Ndahiro, interview, 26 October 2018

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Peter Kalimba, 23 October 2018

<sup>55</sup> Interview, 13 May 2017

<sup>56</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 1 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘Incursion into Rwanda’, 2 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>59</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Immediate FCO ‘Troika Demarche on Rwanda’, 7 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.; From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Mr Smith, Mr Innes ‘Rwanda, and Zaire/Uganda Relations’, 8 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

Pelletier and Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, the son of the French president, visited both Kampala and Kigali before stopping to meet President Mobutu in Gbadolite. While Pelletier and Mitterrand told Mobutu that they had urged Habyarimana to agree to a ceasefire and to change his one-party political system, it is difficult to believe they did so forcefully.<sup>60</sup> When the Canadian Ambassador to Zaire, Claude Laverdure, visited Habyarimana a few days later, the “latter was adamant that he would not talk to the RPF who, he said, were not refugees but professional Ugandan soldiers. He was quite convinced that Museveni was personally responsible for the incursion. Habyarimana recognised the need for a regional conference but said that arranging one was ‘Mobutu’s responsibility.’”<sup>61</sup>

The next round of diplomatic wrangling took place on 20 November, when Habyarimana and Museveni met for bilateral talks at Cyanika, in northern Rwanda. On the same day, the Rwandan president also met with Mobutu and Buyoya in Goma. Initially, it seemed as if both meetings had gone well, and Mobutu announced that in the plan for peace negotiations, “the accent will be placed particularly on the ceasefire and its strict application.”<sup>62</sup> However, the next day, Radio Rwanda announced that in the bilateral meeting Museveni had told Habyarimana that the RPF were regrouping in Uganda. The government of Uganda immediately released a press statement explaining that this was “very unfortunate and highly irresponsible and consistent with the Rwandan propaganda of hoodwinking the world into believing that the armed conflict in Rwanda is an external aggression which the Rwandan Government has now repulsed. The truth of the matter is that a war is taking place on Rwandan soil as Rwanda herself admitted.”<sup>63</sup> High Commissioner Cullimore met Museveni on 22 November to hear his side of the story. The Ugandan president explained that while the meeting had proceeded smoothly, he was under the impression that Habyarimana still thought that “Uganda could solve his problems for him.” He then explained that

he had tried to persuade Habyarimana that he should negotiate with the rebels now while the going was good. They were not seeking to overthrow Habyarimana but there had to be some kind of power-sharing and an arrangement which would allow some of them to be absorbed into the Rwandan army. If Habyarimana waited the rebels would only become stronger as their new leadership became better established and they attracted more sympathisers to their cause.<sup>64</sup>

Museveni also told Cullimore that while talks were taking place in Goma between the government of Rwanda and the RPF, under Zairian guidance, he did not think that they would amount to much in the face of Habyarimana’s reluctance to concede anything.

Museveni’s prediction proved prescient. On 10 December, the members of the US Embassy in Bujumbura had a meeting with the Director General for African Affairs of Burundi’s Foreign Ministry, M. Niyungeko. In the meeting, Niyungeko told the Americans that even

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<sup>60</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Priority FCO ‘Rwanda’, 9 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>61</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Priority FCO ‘Rwanda’, 12 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>62</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Routine FCO ‘Rwanda Refugees’, 21 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>63</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Priority FCO ‘Rwanda’, 23 November 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

though the key parts of a regional peace plan were in place – ceasefire and observation force, regional refugee conference, direct communication between the RPF and the government of Rwanda – the plan had been rejected by the government of Rwanda delegation. The warring parties had met twice in Goma on 22 November, with President Mobutu presiding. However, the government of Rwanda delegation was unwilling to agree with a set of RPF conditions, which included public records of the proceedings, the presence of neighbouring state delegations at the talks and a formal recognition of the RPF.<sup>65</sup>

The GOB [Government of Burundi] view as reported by the Americans is that the GOR [Government of Rwanda] is no longer interested in a diplomatic solution. The inherent danger for the GOB of such an approach is that only RPF military successes would force the GOR to negotiate while the absence of a ceasefire will jeopardise regional stability further. It is unclear just how much influence the Burundi [sic] have with the Rwandans but any they have will be exercised in favour of early negotiations and a ceasefire.<sup>66</sup>

Between 11 and 14 December, General Jean Varret, who was in charge of all French military cooperation missions, visited both Burundi and Rwanda. While in Burundi, President Buyoya told him the same as Niyungeko had told the Americans: It was important that Habyarimana redouble his efforts to find a way to unite all Rwandans.<sup>67</sup> Buyoya was not so much concerned with the well-being of Rwandans as afraid that the violence in Rwanda would spill over the border into Burundi. The country was in the middle of a sensitive period, as Buyoya was seeking to mend damaged ethnic relations, and violence in Rwanda might put that process in jeopardy. Indeed, Varret noted that while Buyoya was steering a moderate course, this could not be said for significant elements of the, mostly Tutsi, Burundian armed forces.<sup>68</sup> When Varret met Habyarimana, the latter was still not interested in talks with the RPF. The RPF, he insisted, was being supported by Museveni, who wanted to annex Rwanda and – the first Gulf War was taking place in the Middle-East – make it “the Kuwait of Uganda.”<sup>69</sup>

### **The Attack on Ruhengeri**

By early January 1991, Paul Kagame had decided that the RPA was strong enough to attempt a major coup. The target Kagame had chosen for the attack was the town of Ruhengeri. This was one of Rwanda’s most important towns because it was the heartland of the northerners who dominated the Rwandan government. It also housed a large prison, where many of the most important political prisoners were kept, and was home to a commando training centre. Kagame later explained: “There were these political prisoners in Ruhengeri. We understood that if we had them in our hands, it would also hurt Habyarimana’s government politically and create some kind of new dynamic.”<sup>70</sup> On 20 January, Kagame called a meeting of the High Command, where the necessary dispositions were discussed. About six hundred RPA

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<sup>65</sup> From: DS Schroeder, Kinshasa To: Teleletter FCO ‘GOB views on Rwanda conflict’, 10 December 1990. “JWW 051/1 (Part C), ‘Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990’” FCO.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> From: General de Division Varret, Chef de la Mission Militaire de Coopération To: Ministre de la Coopération et du Développement ‘Compte rendu de mission au Burundi et au Rwanda’, 19 December 1990. FGT.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 88

soldiers divided into five battalions and commanded by Fred Ibingira, Camile Ntambara, Edward Karangwa, “Maligenya” and John Gashugi would take part. Overall operational command was in hands of Vedaste Kayitare and Ludoviko Twahirwa.<sup>71</sup> The next day, the rank and file were briefed by their commanders and the leading elements began moving to their designated jumping off points. Initially the plan had been to attack Ruhengeri on 22 January, but the going through the jungles of the Virunga Mountains was so tough that progress was slow. Moving as a unit was also difficult: “Our linear movement had started to break up due to darkness under the bamboo canopy, we even tried to hold onto each other’s shirts in order to keep the linear movement, but this too proved very difficult and each time the line broke, we had to halt and start whistling to re-locate each other.”<sup>72</sup> By the end of the day, Kagame realised that his troops would not be able to attack Ruhengeri that night. Instead, he ordered a halt and it was decided that the town would be attacked the next day at dawn.

The attack started at 05:30 on 23 January. By 08:00, Ruhengeri was in the hands of the RPA.<sup>73</sup> Just like at Gatuna, most of the FAR garrison had been quickly routed, though some posts had offered heavy resistance, beginning with the Gendarmes at Camp Muhoza, who were practically wiped out.<sup>74</sup> Those who put up the heaviest resistance were probably partly garrisoned with French troops who had been training their FAR counterparts.<sup>75</sup> After gaining control of the town, the RPA set about releasing political prisoners from jail and collecting any weapons and supplies they could get their hands on. At the jail there was an unexpected setback, as the RPA were unable to find the keys to the cells. While the idea was mooted to shoot the locks, it was decided that it would be too risky for the prisoners. Meanwhile, the warden had been given the order to kill the most important prisoners. They, however, were saved by Colonel Charles Uwihoreye, who refused to carry out the executions.<sup>76</sup> Out of a total of about 1,000 freed prisoners, three stood out for their importance: Colonel Theoneste Lizinde, formerly one of Habyarimana’s closest allies, Captain Muvunanyambo and Commander Stanislas Biseruka.

As news of the attack reached Kigali, the FAR Para-Commando Battalion was immediately dispatched to retake the town. It was followed closely by two sections of the French 8<sup>e</sup> *régiment de parachutistes d’infanterie de marine* (8<sup>e</sup> RPIMA), whose orders were to evacuate any Europeans in town. Habyarimana had hoped that the French paratroopers would take an

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<sup>71</sup> The following section is based on Logan Ndahiro, “Liberation Diary: The Attack on Ruhengeri and Release of Political and other Prisoners”, *The New Times*, 27 August 2015, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/191956>; and correspondence with Logan Ndahiro, 19 and 20 March 2019

<sup>72</sup> Logan Ndahiro, “Liberation Diary”

<sup>73</sup> From: Oliver, Kinshasa To: Immediate FCO ‘New RPF Activity in Rwanda’, 23 January 1991. “JWW 014/1 (Part A), ‘Rwanda: Internal Political Situation’” FCO.

<sup>74</sup> Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 88-89; Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information par La mission d’information de la commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées et de la commission des affaires étrangères, sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d’autres pays et l’ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994* (Assemblée nationale, 15 December 1998). Annexes, 152; Transcripts of Tuesday, 4 December 2007, Examination-in-chief by Mr. St-Laurent. *The Prosecutor v. Ndindiliyimana et al.* ICTR-00-56-T, 46

<sup>75</sup> Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information*, Comptes Rendus 6 Mai – 3 Juin 1998, 225-229

<sup>76</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 120

active part in the fighting, but the request was turned down by Ambassador Martres. By the time the FAR para-commandos and the French arrived at Ruhengeri, the bulk of the RPA had withdrawn, their objectives achieved, to the protection of the Virunga Mountains. However, some rear-guard actions did probably take place, since Martres reported the next day that

The unit commanded by Colonel René Galinié stayed within the limits of the mission parameters they were given, intervening in the residential zone immediately after the city had been recaptured by the Rwandan para-commandos. Staying within the mission parameters did not exclude a certain audacity which the French paratroopers had to display in the last two hours before nightfall.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the concern for expatriates, none were harmed, and the French soldiers returned to Kigali in two columns at 23:00 on the night of 23 January and at 01:00 the next morning. Besides a motley group of French, Canadians, Belgians, Egyptians, Omanis, Americans and Austrians, the convoys were also carrying 52 Rwandans, including the district judge and two *sous-préfets*. The flight of these last three was, according to Martres, “a disturbing sign of the loss of confidence in the upper-echelons of the Rwandan administration.”<sup>78</sup>

The attack on Ruhengeri was a spectacular coup for the RPF and RPA. It signalled to the world that it had not been vanquished during the October 1990 campaign and that they were able to strike at the heart of the Habyarimana regime. Within three months of his arrival, Kagame had laid the groundwork for the transformation of the RPA from a defeated force to one that could fight with confidence against the FAR. It is worth noting here that Paul Kagame’s role in leading the RPA, and the RPF, to victory is more than a post-war myth. Besides the testimonies of the former RPA commanders presented above, there are also coeval foreign observers who noted the importance of his leadership. For instance, the British defence advisor who succeeded Lt Col Molyneux-Carter wrote that Kagame

arrived in the area of operations to find chaos; the army in disarray, morale rock bottom, the three senior commanders dead and the area of operations unfavourable, being open and devoid of cover. ... From this mess, he marshalled his troops, identified a modus operandi, caused the RPA to rethink its battle plan and launched an intensive training programme in guerrilla warfare and tactics. ... Kagame is clearly a charismatic leader who in the face of extreme adversity pulled his army together and has gained both territorial and political successes.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information*, 136 “l’unité dirigée par le Colonel René Galinié a su rester dans les limites de la mission qui lui était impartie, intervenant dans la zone résidentielle aussitôt après la reprise en main de la ville par les para-commandos rwandais. Le respect des instructions n’a pas exclu une certaine audace dont les parachutistes français ont dû faire preuve dans les deux dernières heures précédant la tombée de la nuit.”

<sup>78</sup> From: Martres To: Paris ‘Situation au Rwanda’, 24 January 1991. Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information*, Annexes, 153 “... un signe inquiétant de perte de confiance de la haute administration rwandaise.”

<sup>79</sup> From: Lt. Col. EJK O’Brien, British High Commission To: Lt. Col. JP Cameron, MoD ‘Rwanda – Meeting with RPA Commander’, 4 September 1992. FCO. Bernard Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l’armée française et le Rwanda* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 2005), 78, concurs that, from January 1991 onwards, the RPA outclassed the FAR.

## Conclusion

Between November 1990 and January 1991, Paul Kagame and the RPA High Command laid the foundations for eventual victory by re-forging a broken force. This was achieved by adapting various existing combat doctrines to the circumstances of the Struggle, on the one hand, and by ensuring close cooperation between the RPA and the RPF, on the other.

This chapter shows the folly of military historians who have regarded African military organisation as nothing more than ‘tribal’ or who posited that the western way of war is the surest way to victory. Although the RPA’s combat doctrine drew inspiration from a broad range of western and eastern military thought, the RPA high command moulded foreign theories to suit the circumstances in Central Africa. In the process it developed its own way of fighting which relied on a combination of daring operations and guerrilla warfare, while operating on a shoestring budget – as showcased in its most extreme form during Operation Kitona during the Second Congo War in 1998. Especially important is that the RPA managed to do this without relying on foreign advisers, building instead on the experiences of its commanders in Uganda and Rwanda.

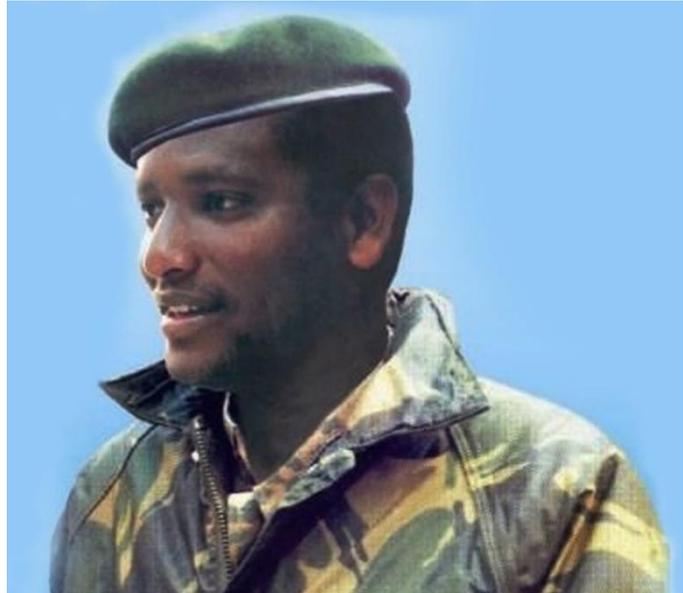
This raises a myriad of questions on both rebel militaries and (foreign trained) government armies. Might it be that foreign tutelage of African armies has been far less important than previously thought? After all, even in conflicts where foreign military support was undoubtedly essential, such as the Angolan Civil War, it was Africans who did most of the fighting. It also raises the question of unique African military traditions running from the (pre) colonial period to the present – in which interactions with non-combatants seem to be particularly important. While Richard Reid has argued this point for some time, much more research still needs to be done on African freedom fighters, rebels and revolutionaries, and their methods of combat.<sup>80</sup>

In the next chapter we will look at the development of the fighting power of the FAR, and how even French support proved insufficient to make up for the sheer determination and motivation of the RPF/A.

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<sup>80</sup> Richard Reid, *Warfare in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

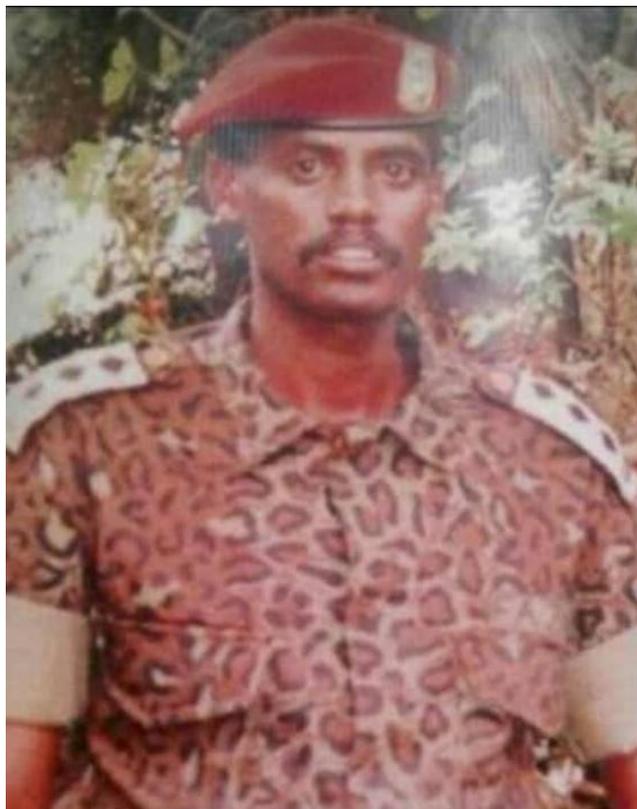
*Right: Emmanuel Gisa, also known as Fred Rwigyema, was the inspiring commander who led the RPA into Rwanda on 1 October 1990. He was killed while leading his troops the next day.*



*Left: Major-Dr. Peter Bayingana, one of the RPA commanders who kept the situation together until Paul Kagame arrived to take command. He was killed in an ambush on 23 October 1990.*



*Right: Vedaste Kayitare, a highly respected RPA officer who fought with Delta Mobile. He was killed before the end of the war.*



## VII - THE COLLAPSE OF THE FAR AND THE BATTLE OF AGASENTIMITA

Having examined the remarkable recovery of the RPA under the leadership of Paul Kagame, we now turn to the FAR. First, this chapter will explore some of the structural problems faced by the FAR and the attempts by the French military training mission to address them. After discussing some of the early, abortive attempts at peace, the narrative turns to the crucial battle of *Agasentimita* and the Byumba Offensive, which were fought in northern Rwanda.

### The Fighting Power of the FAR

Shortly after the fall of Ruhengeri, the British Defence Adviser in Uganda, Lieutenant Colonel Molyneux-Carter, was invited by the Rwandan Embassy in Kampala for a tour of the frontline in northern Rwanda. The invitation was also extended to Brigadier Mohamed Abdelramin of Sudan and Colonel Shaban of Tanzania. Between 16 and 21 February 1991, the group spoke to high-level FAR officers, including the minister of defence and the former head of Military Intelligence. They also visited the battlefields where the fighting had taken place in October, as well as the more active frontline around Ruhengeri, and spoke to RPA prisoners of war. After the tour was completed, Lt Col Molyneux-Carter wrote a long report for the high commissioner in Uganda.

Any wonder about how the FAR had been unable to defend Ruhengeri in January quickly evaporated:

The Rwandese military bases we saw this day [in the northeast of the country] were pathetically amateur in their positioning, tactical layout, camouflage and concealment, mutual support, state of preparedness, protection, and so on.

Their tactics are incredibly poor. They do not patrol; they do not operate at night; there was no (operational) map in the infantry positions; there were no trenches, only bulldozer scrapes; there was no scrape to scrape communications trench or string/wire; there was no defence in depth. There were no radios for platoon commanders; ammunition (for different small arms) was heaped centrally in some shell scrapes with no identification system to assist resupply in haste at night; Machine gun fields of fire were limited to in one case 10, but normally not more than 100 metres. Only one Rwandan officer had a compass; there were no field defences beyond the circle of scrapes. No range cards were in evidence;

...

Most of the commanders drank beer during the mid-day lunch break, and many empty beer bottles lay around the positions.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was the disarray limited to a small sector of the front:

At Ruhengeri town [two days later] we met Major Bizimunga who is the Commander of Operations in the Ruhengeri sector. ... All defensive positions are situated in or near the town

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<sup>1</sup> From: Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter To: High Commissioner, Kampala 'DA Report on Visit to Rwanda 16-20 Feb 91', no date, but received in registry 5 June 1991. "JWW 014/1 (Part B), Rwanda: Internal Political Situation" FCO

because it is too difficult he told us, for Rwandese soldiers to operate in the forest area ... GOR [government of Rwanda] officers pointed out how easy it had been for the RPF to infiltrate through their forces and therefore attack Ruhengeri prison. The GOR forces had been deployed in firm defensive bases, about a kilometre apart, in a thin line. No patrolling had been done between the positions.<sup>2</sup>

Before the start of the war, the FAR had been considered, by the standards of the region, a competent force.<sup>3</sup> It was a small professional army that did not – like the Zairians for example – prey on the local population. Belgium had remained the main military partner of the FAR after Habyarimana took power in 1973. Their advisors continued working in Rwanda, and FAR officers would regularly receive training at the *École royale militaire* in Brussels.<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Neretse, a senior FAR soldier, had undergone a typical path for someone of his stature. He had completed basic officer training at the *École supérieure militaire de Kigali* in the 1980s and then, after serving as instructor at Camp Gako, was sent to Belgium for a six-month course at the *Centre des transmissions et de l'électronique* at Peutie. A couple of years later further courses followed at the *École d'infanterie de l'armée belge* in Arlon and the *Institut royal supérieur de défense* in Brussels, leading to the coveted *Brevet d'état-major* (BEM).<sup>5</sup>

Yet this varnish of respectability obscured internal rot. Until Habyarimana came to power, officers in the FAR had not been allowed to have other off duty employment. The president, however, had changed this regulation, and the quality of the FAR started to decline. Many officers took the afternoon off to work on the side and ethically dubious businesses soon flourished. Among other outrages, FAR rations and equipment intended for its soldiers were sold privately. The resulting lack of equipment made regular training impossible. Other business opportunities were also enthusiastically explored, which meant that over the course of the 1980s many in the officer corps became businessmen who were only marginally interested in soldiering. Still, considering that both France and Belgium maintained military training missions in Rwanda, one would have expected the FAR to be more capable in 1990 than it actually was. While the internal corruption of the force must have been an important contributor, Western militaries also have a record of failure when it comes to building the structural military capacity of Third World allies.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Defence Intelligence Report, Defence Intelligence Agency, 'Rwanda: The Rwandan Patriotic Front's Offensive', 9 May 1994. "The US and the Genocide in Rwanda, 1994" National Security Archive, 3

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly one of the key books on the subject fails to even discuss the Belgian military presence in Rwanda between 1963 and 1990: Patrick and Jean-Noël Lefèvre, *Les militaires belges et le Rwanda 1916-2006* (Brussels: Editions Racine, 2006)

<sup>5</sup> 'Expert Report requested by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Positions of Authority in the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR): Power and authority that a civilian could exercise in FAR', 1 August 2006. "Exhibit Number: Unknown, Date Admitted: 27-11-2006" *The Prosecutor v. Zigiranyirazo*. ICTR-2001-73, 51

<sup>6</sup> The US Armed forces have been grappling with this problem for a while; see for example: William McCoy, 'Senegal and Liberia: Case Studies in US IMET Training and its Role in internal Defense and Development', N-3637-USDP, RAND, Santa Monica: 1994, 26; Stephen Watts, *Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa's Fragile States* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2015); Christopher Paul et al, *What Works Best When Building Capacity in Challenging Contexts?* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2015). For the peacekeeping context specifically, see Marco Jowell, *Peacekeeping in Africa: Politics, Security and the Failure of Foreign Military Assistance* (London: IB Tauris, 2018)

Unlike their French counterparts, Belgian advisers did not swing into action after the outbreak of hostilities, probably because of their government's reticence to get involved in what they considered a civil war. A French officer stationed in Rwanda was not impressed: "Before NOROIT was deployed [see below], the training was done by the Belgians, and honestly it was a mess. The most unprofessional, peace-time TTPs I've ever seen. Complete battalions had been slaughtered by the FPR [RPF] and the FAR units had widely lost their self-confidence."<sup>7</sup> The Belgian Parliamentary Inquiry concurred and found that, once the war broke out in October 1990, "the relationship [between the Belgians and the Rwandans] cooled.' The Belgian technical and military cooperation was reduced to a symbolic relationship. Colonel Vincent even added that the officers and NCOs did nothing ('nothing or practically nothing')."<sup>8</sup> Had Belgian trainers been as invested in the cause as their predecessors had been during the First Rwandan Civil War or Habyarimana's *coup d'état* of 1973, they would not have sat around and done nothing, but would have pushed their training mandate to the limit. In that sense the outbreak of the war completed a process that had been on the way for a long time, as France replaced Belgium as Rwanda's main military partner.

### Reliance on France and the DAMI

The start of the war exposed many of the problems within the FAR. James Gasana, who would hold the post of minister of defence from April 1992 to July 1993, later wrote that "a large part of the credit for the victory of the war of October 1990 really lies with the foreign troops (Belgian, French, Zairian), both by their psychological impact, and, for the Zairian troops, by their role in combat."<sup>9</sup> As the impact of the Zairians and Belgians has already been discussed, it is worth turning to the role of the French. From the start of the RPA attack, the role of the French *Mission d'assistance militaire* (MAM) changed from "instruction in time of peace to the preparation and support of forces in times of war or crisis."<sup>10</sup> This was well within the parameters of the treaty governing French military assistance to Rwanda. A 1983 modification of the original 1975 treaty had removed "the ban on French military to be associated directly or indirectly to any preparation or execution of military operations."<sup>11</sup> This change in stance also meant that at the outbreak of war several additional French officers arrived to advise the highest FAR echelons. The most important of these was

<sup>7</sup> Correspondence with French Officer, 11 September 2016

<sup>8</sup> Philippe Mahoux and Guy Verhofstadt, *Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda* (Sénat de Belgique, 6 December 1997), 698 "In oktober 1990 breekt de oorlog uit en verkoelen de relaties. De Belgische technische en militaire samenwerking wordt herleid tot een figurantenrol.' Kolonel Vincent voegt er zelfs aan toe dat de officieren en onderofficieren niets deden ('niet of bijna niets') en dat ze hoopten dat 'het vredesproces de situatie kon deblokkeren.'" See also: From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Coopération militaires belge au Rwanda', 20 October 1991. FGT "La coopération militaire Belge, manifestation sous-employée au Rwanda depuis les événements d'octobre 1990, a proposé aux autorités militaires rwandaises d'installer ... des stands de tir réduit, en fournissant les carabines à air comprimé de 4,5mm. Cette proposition n'a pas suscité, de la part des Rwandais, un enthousiasme très marqué."

<sup>9</sup> James K. Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État à l'État-garnison* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 67

<sup>10</sup> From: General de Division Varret, Chef de la Mission Militaire de Coopération To: Ministre de la Coopération et du Développement 'Compte rendu de mission au Burundi et au Rwanda', 19 December 1990. FGT "Depuis le mois d'octobre 1990, le Rwanda étant [illegible] un théâtre d'opérations militaires, le rôle de l'assistance militaire technique a changé dans les faits passant de l'instruction du temps de paix à la préparation et au soutien des forces en temps de guerre ou de crise."

<sup>11</sup> Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information par la mission d'information de la commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées et de la commission des affaires étrangères, sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d'autres pays et l'ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994* (Assemblée nationale, 15 December 1998), 28

Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert Canovas of the *1<sup>er</sup> régiment de parachutistes d'infanterie de marine* (1<sup>er</sup> RPIMa), who advised the Rwandan government and the chief of the FAR General Staff.<sup>12</sup> The Rwandans were exceptionally grateful for the help provided by the French. Colonel Léonidas Rusatira wrote on behalf of the Rwandan Ministry of Defence that,

The French officers, in particular the commander of the MAM, Colonel Galinié and Lieutenant-Colonel Canovas, have, throughout the October war, provided permanent moral, technical and tactical support to their Rwandan comrades.

During the most difficult moments, their presence, their support and friendly counsel were particularly effective and appreciated. They played a decisive role as effective councillors ...

They naturally strengthened the friendly and fraternal ties with the FAR and gained their full confidence. Our soldiers readily recognise this and are happy to count on real friends of Rwanda. Our population is also grateful.<sup>13</sup>

As the war went on, the FAR increasingly relied on French support. After the debacle at Ruhengeri, the French government decided to substantially raise the number of military instructors attached to the FAR. By January 1991, their presence in Rwanda was split in two. The first part was composed of the French soldiers who made up *Opération Noroît*. They were charged with the protection of the expat community and the French Embassy. The Noroît units were not supposed to fight the RPA and had strict rules of engagement. Nonetheless, as Colonel Thomann, commander of Noroît between 21 October and 6 December 1990, points out,

To these ... aspects of the mission, we must add the stabilising effect of the presence, even if not active, of a foreign intervention contingent, to bolster a power threatened by external aggression and confronted with a non-negligible risk of internal disorders, of ethnic or political origin.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Didier Tauzin, *Rwanda: Je demande justice pour la France et ses soldats* (Paris: Editions Jacob-Duvernet, 2011), 53; Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information*, 355-356

<sup>13</sup> From: Colonel Leonidas Rusatira To: - 'Note d'appréciation de l'Assistance Militaire française au Rwanda', 17 November 1990. FGT. "Les Officiers français, en particulier le Chef MAM, le Colonel Galinie et le Lieutenant-Colonel CANOVAS, ont, tout au long de la guerre d'Octobre, apporte un appui moral technique et tactique permanent à leurs camarades rwandais.

Dans les moments les plus difficiles, leur présence, leur soutien et leurs conseils amicaux ont été particulièrement efficaces et appréciés. Ils ont joué un rôle déterminant de conseillers efficaces ...

Ils ont ainsi naturellement renforcé avec les cadres des Forces Armées Rwandaises des liens amicaux et fraternels et ont acquis leur totale confiance. Nos militaires le reconnaissent volontiers et sont heureux de compter ainsi sur de vrais amis du RWANDA. Notre population aussi leur en sait gré." The same appreciation was also expressed for the French officers who supported the Gendarmerie see: From: Lt Col Pontien Hakizimana, G3 EM Gd N To: Son Excellence Monsieur le ministre de la Défense nationale, Kigali, 'Prolongation de séjour', 18 November 1990. FGT; see also From: Ministre des affaires étrangères To: Ambassade de France, Kigali 'L'assistance militaire de la France au Rwanda', 23 November 1990, FGT.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information*, Annexes, 137-138 "A ces ... aspects de la mission, il convient d'ajouter le rôle stabilisateur que joue la présence, même non active, d'un contingent d'intervention étranger, pour conforter un pouvoir menacé par une agression extérieure et confronté à un risque non négligeable de troubles intérieurs, d'origine ethnique ou politique."

The tasks of Noroît units ranged widely throughout the country, from securing supply convoys to Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, to escorting the French Ambassador and training the FAR at camps Kanombe and Gako.<sup>15</sup>

The second part was the MAM, which was specifically there to increase the effectiveness of the FAR. It was subdivided into four detachments.<sup>16</sup> The first three were the *détachements militaires d'assistance technique* to the Gendarmerie, the army and the air wing. Each of these consisted of about 20 officers, NCOs and soldiers who were scattered throughout the FAR and provided training and technical expertise – especially to the FAR helicopter unit. These detachments had been in place in Rwanda since the first military cooperation agreements between Rwanda and France in 1975. In 1991, a new element was added; this would become the fourth component of the MAM. The *Détachement d'assistance militaire et d'instruction* (DAMI) arrived in Rwanda on 22 March 1991. It was composed of about 30 officers and soldiers, many drawn from the 1<sup>e</sup> RPIMa, and was tasked with the training of FAR troops and the stabilisation of the key sectors of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri. While the rules of engagement for the DAMI were tight – and its members were not supposed to be engaged in direct combat with the RPA – the spirit of the mission was different to that of the rest of the MAM. The latter did not normally leave Kigali, but the former trained FAR units in their camps and bases around the country.<sup>17</sup> Because the DAMI was mostly composed of special forces – who are selected for their initiative, aggression and endurance – it could be counted upon to push the limits of its mandate and thus formed an important part of the FAR military machine.

The additional training which the DAMI could provide was in short supply. From the start of the war, the FAR increased considerably in size. Casualties needed to be replaced, and the small peacetime force which had numbered about 8,000 soldiers was insufficient to hold back the RPA. Emmanuel Neretse – the aforementioned FAR officer who had trained in Belgium – wrote that “After 1 October 1990, in order to cope with emergencies, there was need to urgently swell the ranks to counter the RPF invasion. The training of a soldier was often done over a short period. From 15 days at the height of the crisis in October 1990, it took about 3 months in 1992.”<sup>18</sup> He went on:

Instead of training new recruits at Gako Training Centre alone, from November 1990, a cohort of three battalions was trained in less than one month at Bigogwe Commando training centre, Gisenyi. ... Other recruits were trained at Gabiro ... Unlike Bugesera Training Centre, which accommodated a maximum of three battalions only, the size of the area allowed to train many recruits at the same time.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “2e régiment étranger de parachutistes, Journal des Marches et Operations 1 janvier an 30 juin 1991” GR7U 3440. Service Historique de la Défense.

<sup>16</sup> From: Chollet, DAMI To: Colonel Cussac ‘Réunion des militaires français en poste au RWANDA’, 25 July 1991 FGT.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information*, 144-146

<sup>18</sup> ‘Expert Report requested by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Positions of Authority in the Forces Armees Rwandaises (FAR): Power and authority that a civilian could exercise in FAR’, 1 August 2006. *The Prosecutor v. Zigiranyirazo*. ICTR-2001-73, 42

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32

In just a couple of years, the FAR grew from 8,000 to 31,000 soldiers.<sup>20</sup> The effect of these shortened mass trainings caused the collapse in quality of both soldiers and officers which Lt Col Molyneux-Carter observed on his visit to Rwanda. As such, one of the most important jobs of the DAMI was to retrain certain units and bring them up to a higher standard.

Thanks to the several reports sent from Lieutenant colonel Gilles Chollet, commander of the DAMI, to Colonel Galinié, the French military attaché, detailing the progress each battalion made, it is possible to give an overview of the problems faced by FAR units throughout the war. The commander of the Gitarama Battalion, which was the first to be retrained, was Major Singirankabo. According to Lt Col Chollet, Major Singirankabo was an amicable officer who was not particularly interested in leading his unit. Like many battalion and company commanders, he lacked a regular staff for the battalion administration and was as a result chronically overworked.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the commanding officer of 63 Battalion, Commandant Nkundiyaremye, “did not attend a single tactical training session. He did not show up in the field to check the work of his officers and soldiers and seems on the whole to show little interest in his battalion, at least as regard to their training.”<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, Captain Ngendahimana, who commanded the 1<sup>st</sup> company of 32 Battalion, was considered both a friendly and intelligent officer whose military experience allowed him to lead his company confidently.<sup>23</sup> Even within the same unit, the quality of the officers could vary a great deal, as the following comparison between two lieutenants of the 41 Commando Battalion shows:

[second lieutenant Ngilinshuti] Company commander ... completed the entire officer training course in Kigali ... While this officer has some tactical and technical knowledge, he does not have the stature of a leader. Little aware of his role and responsibilities as a leader, he seems only slightly interested in training or in the profession of arms in general.

He puts up with more than he commands, by doing and demanding the minimum.

His lack of rigor in the command of his personnel and material was flagrant and revealing from his first days of instruction. He is certainly the most incompetent and unpleasant company commander we have had to train for five months as intellectual honesty is not one of his qualities either.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Defence Intelligence Report, Defence Intelligence Agency, ‘Rwanda: The Rwandan Patriotic Front’s Offensive’, 9 May 1994, 3

<sup>21</sup> From: Chollet To: Galinié ‘Compte-rendu du lieutenant-colonel Chollet, chef du Détachement d’assistance militaire et d’instruction au Rwanda [Bilan de l’instruction du bataillon Gitarama]’, 22 April 1991. FGT.

<sup>22</sup> From: Chollet, DAMI To: Colonel Cussac ‘Bilan du 63<sup>e</sup> bataillon’, 12 November 1991. FGT. “N’a pas assisté à une seule séance d’instruction tactique. Il ne s’est pas montré sur le terrain pour vérifier le travail de ses officiers et des soldats et semble somme toute montrer peu d’intérêt pour son bataillon au moins à l’instruction.”

<sup>23</sup> From: Chollet, DAMI To: Colonel Cussac ‘Bilan de l’instruction du 32<sup>e</sup> bataillon’, 22 July 1991. FGT.

<sup>24</sup> From: Chollet, DAMI To: Colonel Cussac ‘Bilan de l’instruction du bataillon CECODE (41<sup>e</sup> bataillon) 2<sup>e</sup> et 3<sup>e</sup> compagnies’, 19 August 1991. FGT. “SLT Ngilinshuti Commandant de compagnie

Jeune commandant de compagnie ayant suivi la totalité de la formation d’Officier à KIGALI, il a été, dès sa sortie de l’ESM, chef de peloton pendant un an dans cette même école.

Puis il est muté au Bataillon CECODO pour y commander un peloton pendant 8 mois avant de commander la 2e compagnie en janvier 1991.

However, Ngilishuti's direct subordinate, second lieutenant Nzabalinda, who had not completed his officer training, was considered "intelligent and dynamic, he was wholly satisfactory during these two weeks. Conscious of his role and assiduous at work, he has good tactical knowledge and is appreciated by his men who he commands firmly but with good humour."<sup>25</sup> Despite the presence of officers like captain Ngendahimana and second lieutenant Nzabalinda, Lt Col Chollet's verdict on the officers of the Gitarama Battalion can probably be extended to most of those serving in the FAR: "In general, the officers are not very good, not very motivated and especially, don't lead by example."<sup>26</sup>

The tasks of the officers within the FAR were complicated by the inadequacy and general lack of equipment. There were insufficient radios, binoculars, compasses and maps, which meant that it was very difficult for several battalions, or even companies, to conduct coordinated operations. This also explains why FAR units who engaged with the RPA were unable to regularly and effectively call on their heavy artillery, which might be as far as 10-15 km away, as that requires both a map and a radio.<sup>27</sup>

Another problem which the FAR had to cope with was its bewildering complement of small arms. Most FAR battalions were equipped with weapons which used the 7.62x39 mm Soviet round (AK47, AKM, RPD) and those which were chambered for 7.62x51mm NATO (Vektor SS77, FN MAG, FN FAL, HKG3). While these rounds are of a similar calibre, they are not compatible with each other, so having them both in one unit puts a strain on supply and causes confusion in the heat of combat. The practice of mixing different kinds of weapons and calibres was not just limited to small arms. The support platoon of the Ruhengeri Commando Battalion was, for example, equipped with 81 mm mortars made in South Africa and the United States, and 82 mm mortars made in China. What is strange is that the effort to consolidate these arms per unit (i.e. equip one battalion with firearms that only use the 7.62 mm NATO), while blindingly obvious, seems to have only been pushed by the DAMI, rather than by the FAR itself.

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Si cet officier dispose de quelques connaissances tactiques et techniques, il n'a pas la stature d'un chef. Peu conscient de son rôle et de ses responsabilités il ne semble que peu intéressé par l'instruction et le métier des armes en général.

Il subit plus qu'il ne commande en faisant et demandant le minimum.

Son manque de rigueur dans la gestion de son personnel et de son matériel fût flagrant et révélateur dès les premiers jours d'instruction. C'est certainement le commandant de compagnie le plus incompetent et le plus antipathique que nous ayons eu à former depuis 5 mois car l'honnêteté intellectuelle ne fait pas partie non plus de ses qualités."

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. "SLT Nzabalinda Chef du 1° peloton

N'ayant pu suivre la totalité de la formation d'officier à cause des événements ce jeune officier a été muté au Bataillon CECODO en janvier 1991. Intelligent et dynamique, il a donné entière satisfaction pendant ces deux semaines.

Conscient de son rôle et assidu au travail, il possède de bonnes connaissances tactiques et est apprécié par ses hommes qu'il commande fermement mais dans la bonne humeur.

Certainement le meilleur chef de peloton de la compagnie."

<sup>26</sup> From: Chollet To: Galinié 'Compte-rendu du lieutenant-colonel Chollet, chef du Détachement d'assistance militaire et d'instruction au Rwanda [Bilan de l'instruction du bataillon Gitarama]', 22 April 1991. FGT. "d'une manière générale, les officiers ne sont pas très bons, ni très motivés et surtout ne montrent pas l'exemple"

<sup>27</sup> From: Chollet, DAMI To: Colonel Galinié 'Bilan de l'instruction du 64° bataillon', 2 July 1991. FGT.

However, what really worried Lt Col Chollet and the other French officers was that the officers and soldiers of the FAR lacked any notion of gun safety. Basic safety drills, like checking whether a bullet was chambered, were unknown. This led to regular negligent discharges during training sessions.<sup>28</sup> Most soldiers trained by the DAMI were also unaware of how the sights on their rifles worked, or of how to carry out basic weapons maintenance. Some units had no weapons oil, while others were issued it in spray cans which were both expensive and prone to break in Rwanda's tropical climate.

As one of my informants explained, these problems were a constant drain on the morale of FAR troops:

[Their morale was] very different according to the units. Some units, including the French-trained units, had developed a high morale [by 1992]. But the bulk was low morale, albeit disciplined and there were not so many deserters. Most battalions were shared between the fear they had for the FPR [RPF], the low confidence they had in their chiefs – you commonly saw units without their commanding officers, who were brown-nosing in Kigali instead of commanding their units, the poor training they had received – it was a small peace-time army, that had been hastily increased with poorly trained draftees and launched in war operations against the FPR, whose soldiers were better trained, whose chain of command was far more involved, who acted by hit and runs, and enjoyed a wide support including artillery from Ugandan forces. So, except of some tough units, the FAR had lost the initiative, developed few [*sic*] and poor reaction and a loser's morale.<sup>29</sup>

### **The N'Sele Ceasefire Agreement and its Collapse**

The start of February 1991 saw Habyarimana under pressure from several quarters. He had been embarrassed by the ease with which the RPA had been able to raid Ruhengeri and realised – despite a brave speech made to the Rwandan parliament, the *Conseil national de développement* (CND) in which he declared that the FAR had the situation under control – that changes had to be made. The ministers of justice and of civil service, as well as the minister of general affairs at the presidency, were all fired and replaced. Commander Uwihoreye of the Ruhengeri sector – on whom more later – was also sacked and replaced by Major, later General, Augustin Bizimungu.<sup>30</sup> But the most important change was that Habyarimana distanced himself from the portfolio of security, which was now handed over to Colonel Augustin Ndindiliyimana as Minister at the Presidency charged with Defence and Security.<sup>31</sup> The appointment of the latter, together with the arrival of the French DAMI would hopefully contribute to stiffen the resolve of the FAR.

Military defeat also changed Habyarimana's mind on negotiations with the RPF. While the FAR had seemed to be on top of the situation, the attack on Ruhengeri clearly showed the balance of power was not decisively in their favour. So on 17 February 1991, on the occasion

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<sup>28</sup> From: Chollet To: Galinié 'Compte-rendu du lieutenant-colonel Chollet, chef du Détachement d'assistance militaire et d'instruction au Rwanda [Bilan de l'instruction du bataillon Gitarama]', 22 April 1991. FGT.

<sup>29</sup> Correspondence with French Officer, 11 September 2016

<sup>30</sup> Transcripts of Tuesday, 4 December 2007. Examination-in-chief by Mr. St-Laurent. *The Prosecutor v. Ndindiliyimana et al.* ICTR-00-56-T, 46

<sup>31</sup> From: Kaye Oliver, Kinshasa To: C Shute Esq, WAD 'Rwanda Internal: Government Reshuffle', 12 February 1991. "JWW 014/1 (Part A), Rwanda: Internal Political Situation" FCO.

of another regional summit in Zanzibar attended by Tanzanian President Ali Hassan Mwinyi and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, the Rwandan president changed his bullish attitude and agreed to reaffirm the Mwanza Communiqué, which prescribed a ceasefire agreement and talks with the RPF.<sup>32</sup> This was confirmed two days later, during another meeting in Dar es Salaam, when President Mobutu was asked to organise a ceasefire.

About a month later, the first sustained negotiations between the RPF and the government of Rwanda took place at N'Sele in Zaire. After five days of negotiations, the two parties agreed to a ceasefire formula. The ceasefire would be monitored by a multinational African Neutral Military Observer Group and all prisoners of war, or people jailed in relation to the war, were to be released. Furthermore, a political dialogue, which presumably would lead to a permanent peace settlement, was scheduled to start within 15 days. Although, on 29 March, the "N'Sele Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Rwandese Republic and the Rwandese Patriotic Front" was signed, on 30 March, the FAR and RPA clashed violently at Mutara.<sup>33</sup> Next, Pasteur Bizimungu and Jacques Bihozagara met with British Ambassador Cormack in Kinshasa on 1 April. During the talk, they indicated that the RPF was still willing to take part in a political dialogue, but that they did not believe the same could be said of the Rwandan government. In his report to the Foreign Office, Cormack concluded that

Bizimungu was highly critical of the French role. ... in fact they were guarding key points in Kigali including the PTT and the Radio Station. They were also giving Rwandan troops based in Ruhengeri practical instruction in how to attack RPF positions, the French could obviously not be trusted to give disinterested advice to the GOR and he was therefore counting on countries such as Britain to put pressure on GOR to rectify the internal political and social situation. I said we had little direct influence with the GOR but had been, and would continue to be, indirectly involved through the European Community. ...

There was little in this encounter to make one optimistic about the likelihood of an early solution to Rwanda's problems. The RPF is highly suspicious of the GOR and it will take a good deal of arm twisting before the latter agrees to recognise the RPF.<sup>34</sup>

The RPF's motives for this visit were clearly self-serving. On the one hand, by showing willingness to proceed with the N'Sele agreement, Bizimungu implicitly denied any RPA complicity in ceasefire violations. On the other, by complaining about French operations in Rwanda, he was highlighting the bad faith of the Rwandan government. As the RPA was itself conducting long-range reconnaissance patrols into the east of Rwanda at the time, this was not entirely justified. Nonetheless, the RPF had good reason to be worried about French operations around Ruhengeri.

The arrival of the DAMI, together with the aforementioned appointment of Colonel Augustin Ndindiliyimana, reinvigorated the FAR. Towards the end of April, only one month after the deployment of the DAMI, the FAR launched a number of concerted efforts to flush the RPA out of the Virunga Mountains: "we decided ... we should proceed with an operation to

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<sup>32</sup> Bruce D. Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 1

<sup>33</sup> Details are sketchy. See: From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: Teleletter FCO 'Rwanda Internal', 4 April 1991. "JWW 014/1 (Part A), Rwanda: Internal Political Situation" FCO.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

recapture the volcanoes. So, that was a major operation we put in place.”<sup>35</sup> They attacked Mount Sabyinyo but were met by the RPA’s Delta Battalion under the command of Charles Kayonga.<sup>36</sup> After hard fighting, the FAR was repulsed, but the RPA High Command decided that a distraction was needed on another section of the frontline to relieve the pressure.

Two battle-hardened battalions were selected to range deep into FAR territory and strike at targets in and around the Akagera National Park. To make sure these two units would manage to avoid detection as they descended from the Virunga Mountains, an array of diversionary attacks was launched at FAR positions around the park.<sup>37</sup> On 30 April, several RPA units attacked the border post at Cyanika and the surrounding area. Heavy fighting took place throughout the day, and the French suspected that the RPA was receiving artillery support originating in Uganda.<sup>38</sup> By 2 May, the FAR had repelled the RPA attacks and organised several *ratissages* during which they counted 60 enemy dead. As the fighting around Cyanika was taking place, the FAR noticed “numerous rebel concentrations opposite Gatuna,”<sup>39</sup> leading the FAR General Staff to believe an attack against the Byumba sector was imminent.

On the night of 2-3 May, the FAR in Ruhengeri started showing worrying signs of indiscipline. Several soldiers and officers left out during a round of promotions started firing into the air in protest. Two soldiers were heavily injured in the fracas.<sup>40</sup> On the night of 4 May, the same behaviour was witnessed by Ambassador Cormack:

While I was in Gisenyi, there were explosions and gunfire which went on for about 2 hours between 7:30 and 9:30 pm. This turned out to be Rwandan troops firing in the air in some cases to celebrate promotions and decorations and in other cases to protest against not being promoted/decorated. ... There were a good many military roadblocks between Gisenyi and Kigali and between Kigali and Gahini, but fewer between Kigali and Butare. The soldiers were reasonably polite but not always sober and were certainly lacking in military bearing.<sup>41</sup>

Under cover of these battles, the two RPA battalions set out to towards Akagera National Park. An RPA veteran remembers that “for the first time in our struggle, we were supplied with tinned beef and beans and plastic jerrycans for drinking water. ... All combatants, rank and file, were very excited by this change of diet. ... This boosted our morale as we felt that we were now treated like other contemporary world armies.”<sup>42</sup> While the FAR suspected that the RPA were infiltrating through their lines towards Akagera National Park, they were unable to verify their information despite helicopter reconnaissance flights and foot patrols.<sup>43</sup> On 16 May, however, a FAR helicopter did spot the RPA battalions close to Lake

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<sup>35</sup> Transcripts of Tuesday, 4 December 2007. Examination-in-chief by Mr. St-Laurent. *The Prosecutor v. Ndindiliyimana et al.* ICTR-00-56-T, 50

<sup>36</sup> Logan Ndahiro, “From canopy to open savannah; an incursion into Akagera National Park” *The New Times*, 1 February 2016, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/196665>

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> From: Martres To: Armées Paris ‘Situation Militaire et Renseignements Divers’, 2 May 1991. FGT.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> From: Swinnen, Belgian Embassy Kigali To: Belext bru ‘Intrep ctm des 03, 04 et 05 mai 1991’, 6 May 1991. FGT.

<sup>41</sup> From: Cormack, Kinshasa To: DHM ‘Visit to Rwanda 28 April – 1 May’, 7 May 1991. “JWW 014/1 (Part B), Rwanda: Internal Political Situation” FCO.

<sup>42</sup> Ndahiro, “From canopy to open savannah”

<sup>43</sup> From: Martres, Kigali To: Armées Paris ‘Situation militaire et renseignements divers’, 13 May 1991. FGT.

Rwanyakizinga and attacked them with its 68 mm SNEB rockets.<sup>44</sup> The spotting of the RPA by the FAR helicopter, together with other intelligence, must have given the FAR a good idea of the locations of the RPA battalions.<sup>45</sup> Logan Ndahiro recalls that, “As night fell, on 20th May 1991, the enemy had come close to where we were hiding and besieged us. He had completely surrounded us and had mobilised Gabiro barracks for a dawn attack.”<sup>46</sup> However, the RPA command decided to pre-empt the FAR and attacked in the middle of the night, catching many FAR troops sleeping in their tents. Fierce fighting continued the next day as the RPA moved back towards the northwest. In the chaos of battle, the RPA was also able to ambush several FAR resupply convoys.<sup>47</sup> While the FAR informed the French that the fighting had gone their way, they felt compelled to reinforce with an additional battalion the Akagera sector, which, they now believed, was the theatre of operations the RPA was focusing on.<sup>48</sup> By 28 May, the fighting died down as both sides retired to lick their wounds.

From the available testimonies and reports, it is difficult to determine whether the Battle for Akagera National Park had a definitive winner. Both sides fought hard and neither was defeated. However, the RPA was the strategic victor of the engagement. It had initiated the fight with the goal of drawing attention away from the Virunga mountain sector and keeping the FAR off balance. It had succeeded on both scores. The battle also shows the progression of the RPA as a fighting force. Its units could now count on more properly organised supplies and were able to go toe-to-toe with the FAR over the same terrain where they had been defeated only six months earlier. At the same time, the Battle for Akagera National Park was the first time that FAR units, though seemingly not those directly engaged in combat, started showing blatant indiscipline. The problems of indiscipline were repeated on 28 and 29 May, when FAR units protested against a new promotion system. At the same time, a Gendarmerie company in Ruhengeri protested against certain replacements.<sup>49</sup> Considering the divisions within the officer corps, to which we now turn our attention, it is no wonder that the troops were on the brink of open mutiny.

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<sup>44</sup> From: Martres, Kigali To: Armées Paris ‘Situation militaire et renseignements divers’, 16 May 1991. FGT.

<sup>45</sup> From: Martres, Kigali To: Armées Paris ‘Situation militaire et renseignements divers’, 17 May 1991. FGT.

<sup>46</sup> Ndahiro, “From canopy to open savannah”

<sup>47</sup> From: Swinnen To: belext bru ‘Intrep du 17 au 20 mai 91’, 21 May 1991 FGT.

<sup>48</sup> From: Martres, Kigali To: Armées Paris ‘Situation militaire et renseignements divers’, 21 May 1991. FGT; From: Martres To: Armees Paris ‘Situation tactique le 22 mai 1991 à 16H00’ 22 mai 1991’, FGT; From: Swinnen To: belext bru ‘Intrep van 22 mei 91’, 24 May 1991. FGT.

<sup>49</sup> From: Martres To: Armées Paris ‘situation militaire et renseignements divers’, 29 May 1991. FGT.



1 – On 23 January 1991 the RPA briefly captured Ruhengeri. 2 – In the months following the attack on Ruhengeri the FAR launched several attacks into the Virunga Mountain area to flush the RPA out of their stronghold. 3 – To draw FAR attention away from the Virunga Mountains the RPA launched a lightning strike towards Akagera National Park and Gaborone. Fighting lasted throughout May 1991.

## Regionalism within the FAR

The relationship between officers in the FAR, and their conduct, were at the core of the organisation's problems. Under Habyarimana's presidency, whatever *esprit de corps* had survived from colonial times was slowly eroded, as officers jockeyed for positions and privileges. The 1973 coup d'état had opened up the possibility of political power for soldiers. As there were no military threats to Rwanda until 1990, this gave FAR officers little else to do for 20 years but to think about how to advance their own position. Some, like Colonel Stanislas Mayuya and Colonel Laurent Serubuga, decided it was best to stick loyally to Habyarimana, while others, like Major Lizinde and Colonel Kanyarengwe, tried to seize power for themselves (see chapter III).<sup>50</sup> However, there were many shades of grey between these two extreme positions – loyalty and coup – and by attaching oneself to a strong group of like-minded officers from the same region, or by eliminating a rival, it was possible to increase one's own chances. This is probably what happened to Colonel Stanislas Mayuya, then commander of Camp Kanombe and of the Para-Commando Battalion, when he was murdered in April 1988. According to an anonymous ICTR witness,

Prior to the death of Colonel Mayuya, there was a, sort of, indiscipline in one of the companies of the paracommando battalion. Colonel Mayuya had been sick and had been taken to Belgium. He was operated on, treated and brought back, and he found that there was a rumour circulating that he had been poisoned. And while convalescing, he opened an inquiry himself. And while he was questioning people, the NCO who had circulated the rumour fled outside the country, and those who were suspected were taken to justice. And in the meantime, Colonel Mayuya was assassinated and the chief of staff decided to dissolve the unit in which that rumour had been circulating [3 company].<sup>51</sup>

According to Gérard Prunier, Colonel Mayuya was murdered on the orders of Habyarimana's wife, Agathe Kanziga. "Colonel Serubuga, one of the most powerful *akazu* members, organised Mayuya's murder. The sergeant who actually pulled the trigger was later murdered in jail and the prosecutor in charge of the file was murdered during the inquiry."<sup>52</sup> During testimony before the ICTR, Laurien Uwizeyimana – a professor at the National University of Rwanda – explained that those investigating the murder found out that it was Habyarimana's family who had been responsible, but that the president "did not dare to act against the murderers, and it was the investigators who were gaoled."<sup>53</sup> Several military inquests were also launched into the death of Colonel Mayuya, and two officers were

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<sup>50</sup> André Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide: Criminal Politics in Rwanda 1990-1994*, trans. Don E. Webster (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 72

<sup>51</sup> Transcript of Thursday, 20 October 2005. Testimony of Witness LE1. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 36-37

<sup>52</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997), 87. The importance of Mayuya is emphasised by the fact that Camp Kanombe, one of Rwanda's biggest military bases, was renamed Camp Colonel Mayuya in his honour. He was in command of the base when he was murdered there. Transcript of Monday, 18 September 2006. Testimony of Aloys Ntabakuze. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 13. Additional information on Mayuya can be found in Transcript of Tuesday, 25 October 2005. Testimony of Theoneste Bagosora. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 49-59

<sup>53</sup> Transcript of Monday, 27 November 2006. Testimony of Laurien Uwizeyimana. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 8

arrested, Colonel Anselme Nkilikibona and Déogratias Ndirwani, though they were eventually released without charges in 1993.<sup>54</sup> It is difficult to know how much credence to give to this murky tale, but what it does show, mainly because no one seems to have doubted that the murderers had come from inside the established circles of power, is that relations among FAR officers were extremely bad.

Regionalism had been important in internal politics since independence. Indeed, just before the start of the war, the then head of military intelligence of the FAR, Anatole Nsengiyumva, wrote that

This ill [regionalism] NEVER disappeared from the country. It is currently in full swing. It is sometimes 'NORTH-SOUTH', or else 'GISENYI-RHENGERI', or else 'BUGOYI-BUSHIRU'... the NORTH-SOUTH problem is currently being exploited by certain minds who always want to create disturbances. The demands of 'Southerners' are still UNCLEAR, although they consider themselves victims of a certain injustice towards people of the South. ... From the point of view of the 'Northerners' the regime is instead courting the people of the SOUTH, who are insatiable and UNGRATEFUL, while those of the NORTH are victims of this situation. They believe they should have more than they receive at present.<sup>55</sup>

The outbreak of war gave the perfect cover for groups of officers working together, or individuals trying to get rid of rivals. In the analysis of former Minister of Defence James Gasana,

The mess in managing this war situation disorganised the FAR and reduced its performance. Deputy chief of staff Colonel L. Serubuga, sometimes in complicity with Colonel E. Sagatwa, took advantage of the war to marginalise officers from the South, such as Colonel Rwanyagasore who perished in a mysterious accident, and Majors A Nteziryayo, Sabakunzi and F. Niyonsaba. He also took the opportunity to expose to death brilliant young rival officers from the north, feared for their more developed sense of the state, for their popularity among the troops ... such as Lieutenant Colonel D. Nsabimana and Major Rwendeye.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Colonel Anselme Nkilikibona and Déogratias Ndirwani had been arrested around the time of Mayuya's murder. They were released during an amnesty in 1993. Transcript of 31 October 2005, Testimony of Theoneste Bagosora. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 12, 13. There were several commissions into Mayuya's death. The third commission was led by Nkubitu, Nsengiyumva and Colonel Pontien Hakizimana. See: Transcript of Wednesday, 11 October 2006, Testimony of Anatole Nsengiyumva. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 79; See Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide*, 72-73.

<sup>55</sup> From: Anatole Nsengiyumva To: 'N042/G2.2.0.', 22 May 1990. "File 1990/Planning" LMRGA-UoW. "Ce Mal N'a JAMAIS disparu de ce pays. Actuellement, il bat son plein. Tantôt 'NORD-SUD', tantôt c'est 'GISENYI-RHENGERI', tantôt 'BUGOYI-BUSHIRU'... Le problème 'NORD-SUD' est actuellement exploité par certains esprits qui veulent toujours semer des désordres. Les revendications des 'Sudistes' NE sont toujours PAS claires, mais ils se jugent victimes d'une certaine injustice vis à vis des gens du SUD. ... Pour les 'Nordistes' le régime courtise plutôt les gens du SUD insatiables et NON reconnaissants, tandis que ceux du NORD sont victimes de cette situation. Ils jugent qu'ils devraient avoir plus qu'ils n'obtiennent actuellement."

<sup>56</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État*, 66-67. "Le cafouillage dans la gestion de cette situation de guerre désorganise les FAR et réduit leur performance. Le chef d'état-major adjoint, le colonel L. Serubuga, parfois en complicité avec colonel E. Sagatwa, profite de la guerre pour marginaliser les officiers du Sud, tels que le colonel Rwanyagasore qui périt dans un mystérieux accident, les majors A. Nteziryayo, Sabakunzi et F. Niyonsaba. Il en profite également pour exposer à la mort les jeunes officiers rivaux brillants du nord, redoutés pour leur sens

Matters started coming to a head when seven officers were court-martialled in July 1991.<sup>57</sup> The first two, Majors Sabakunzi and Mutambuka, of 64 and anti-aircraft battalions, respectively, had both been arrested on 2 October 1990, and were accused of conspiracy, with the first facing the death penalty. According to Gasana, Major Sabakunzi had been accused by a FAR captain who had attempted an insurance fraud which Sabakunzi had prevented; Sabakunzi had not been involved in any conspiracy at all.<sup>58</sup> Two other officers were Commanders Habyarimana and Munyagatanga, who were prosecuted for failing to carry out an order, but were acquitted. Gendarmerie Lt Col Uwihoreye, who had been in command of Ruhengeri when the RPA attacked and had refused to execute the prisoners, was accused of cowardice and conspiracy. Finally, there were two further officers, only one of whom has been identified: Commander Kanamugire of the Gendarmerie. While all of these officers were acquitted, none of them were allowed to re-join the FAR, and thus lost their salary.<sup>59</sup>

A couple of months later, a regional lobby group, the *Amicale de Byumba*, wrote to President Habyarimana to summon his help against the regionalism within the FAR. Several officers were part of the *Amicale* and in an astonishingly bold letter explained that,

Major Emmanuel Mugabo and Major Evariste Nyampame were side-lined from their career through incomprehensible transfers carried out arbitrarily and in an illegal manner. Some others, such as Commander Gaspard Mulindahabi and Commander Godfroid Butare, who were summarily dismissed on the eve of their retirement, Captain Pierre Canisius Hitimana, Lt. Evariste Bizimana, as well as Second Lt. Mukuralinda, were arbitrarily and illegally side-lined in very confusing circumstances, clearly motivated by hatred. ... Lt. Colonel BEM Anselme Nkuliye Kubona and Major BEM Gaspard Mutambuka were arbitrarily arrested and detained respectively for more than two years and more than 11 months and finally released without any formal charges being brought against them, before they were dumped on the street.<sup>60</sup>

Besides these grievances, the letter also explains that, in several cases, life had been made impossible for these soldiers and their families since being thrown out of the army, as they now “live in a situation of total material isolation and are deprived of their elementary social rights.”<sup>61</sup> Some of those who had been arrested had even fought against the RPA. One of them was

Commander BEM Emmanuel Habyarimana, who was illegally and arbitrarily arrested, although he had proven his qualities on the battlefield during almost the entire month of October 1990 in Mutara. ... Your excellency, we believe that it is within your authority and power to find a remedy to this situation ... which is only bringing shame to our

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de l'Etat plus développé, pour leur popularité au sein des troupes, et surtout pour le soupçon des intentions de putsch, tels que le lieutenant-colonel D. Nsabimana et le major Rwendeye.”

<sup>57</sup> From: Swinnen To: belext bru 'Sitrep 19-20-21/07/91', 22 July 1991. FGT.

<sup>58</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État*, 159

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> From: Major Nyampame, *Amicale de Byumba* To: His Excellency the President of the Republic of Rwanda, Kigali 'Amicale de Byumba', 22 October 1991. “Exhibit Number: P431A, Date Admitted: 9-11-2006 (English Translation)” *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

country. Also we would like to point out that Byumba is not the only prefecture that has suffered from such injustice at all levels both within the Military and the Civil Service.<sup>62</sup>

The settling of personal scores by FAR officers was debilitating to the force as a whole. It meant that the energy required to command soldiers in battle against the RPA was being wasted on fighting internal opponents. It can be surmised that this caused problems on the battlefield itself, as certain commanders would have been unenthusiastic to support, or take orders from, certain factional antagonists. Parallel networks of patronage developed within the FAR, as junior officers stuck close to those who could protect them from arbitrary dismissal, undermining the official chain of command. These networks became even more pronounced and important as President Habyarimana embarked on the transition from a single-party state to what was supposed to be a multiparty democracy.

### **Transitioning to Multiparty Politics**

President Habyarimana had been promising political reform since he had formed the *Commission nationale de synthèse sur les réformes politiques au Rwanda* on 21 September 1990, and remarkable progress had been made under pressure from the war. The Commission had published its initial recommendations for a new political charter on 28 December of the same year to allow for comments from the Rwandan public. Its proposals were discussed at the MRND party congress four months later. While the initial intention had been to put up the new charter to a referendum, it was agreed instead to pass it on for ratification to the CND.<sup>63</sup> The main changes proposed by the *Commission* were political pluralism and thus an end to the one-party state. Other clauses aimed to ensure the country's stability. Thus, every party would have to "seek and consolidate the cohesion of the Rwandan people,"<sup>64</sup> and discrimination by political parties on the basis of ethnicity, region or religion was forbidden. It was also prohibited for any political party to form "militias or other similar organisations,"<sup>65</sup> as maintaining security was the role of the state.

The first serious political party to emerge in this confusing climate – in which political change was promised, while thousands were arrested and jailed due to the war – was the *Mouvement démocratique républicain* (MDR). Harking back to President Kayibanda and his MDR-Parmehutu party, the MDR drew on regional opposition to the Habyarimana presidency.<sup>66</sup> Yet the association with Kayibanda was not merely ideological: Faustin Twagiramungu, leader of the MDR, was married to one of the daughters of the former president, and Emmanuel Gapyisi, another prominent member, to another.<sup>67</sup> The MDR appealed to such early successes as the abolition of the monarchy and independence, and could count on strong support in many parts of Rwanda which had been neglected throughout

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> From: Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter To: High Commissioner, Kampala 'DA Report on Visit to Rwanda 16-20 Feb 91', no date, but received in registry 5 June 1991. FCO.

<sup>64</sup> 'Rapport de la Commission Nationale de Synthèse sur les réformes politiques au Rwanda.', March 1991. "Exhibit Number: DB 243, Date Admitted: 1-11-2005" *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 38

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 122-123

<sup>67</sup> "The Three Victors Who Will Lead Rwanda" *The New York Times*, 20 July 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/07/20/world/the-three-victors-who-will-lead-rwanda.html>; Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide*, 81

Habyarimana's rule.<sup>68</sup> However, the party was divided at the core. While 'Parmehutu' had been dropped in order to signal that the party was no longer committed to exclusionary ethnic politics, many members undoubtedly remembered that independence and the abolition of the monarchy had gone hand in hand with enormous anti-Tutsi violence. Considering the situation the country found itself in in early 1991, and the fact that the RPF was often identified as a Tutsi organisation, the MDR attracted many people with strong anti-Tutsi views.

The second party to enter the picture, mainly based in the south of the country around Butare, Rwanda's university town, was the moderate *Parti social-démocrate* (PSD). At its core, it had two veteran politicians, party president Frédéric Nzamurambaho and executive secretary Félicien Gatabazi, who had both served as ministers in past governments. The party was liberal on the ethnic issue and was one of the opposition groups which were not disturbed by the prospect of cooperating with the RPF. Another important party was the *Parti libéral* (PL), a mostly urban party headed by Justin Mugenzi and his brothers. There are rumours that this party was conceived by President Habyarimana himself as a pro-business outfit that would help develop Rwanda. But its liberal credentials and the membership of Landoald Ndasingwa, who owned the well-frequented *Chez Lando* bar in Kigali, made it popular among the Tutsi business community.<sup>69</sup>

For the FAR, the transition from a single to a multiparty state was a disorienting experience. As the US Ambassador in Rwanda pointed out,

During the period 1973 to 1990 the armed forces were an organ of the one-party state. The role of the military was to protect that state, the MRND party and its President MGen. Juvénal Habyarimana. ... The creation of new parties, for the most part in opposition to the MRND and Habyarimana, was a shock to the system. The change of the army's role from that of support and protection of Habyarimana and the MRND to apolitical protector of a multiparty state is not well understood by either the military or the civilian opposition. MRND hard-line officers see the opposition parties as a threat to the MRND, as collaborators with the RPF, and thus, as a threat to the armed forces. The opposition parties see the military as a tool of the president and his party.<sup>70</sup>

The importance of regionalism both in the FAR and in Rwanda's political scene meant that it was only a matter of time until they intermingled, exacerbating each other. Officers and soldiers who felt disenfranchised in an army dominated by officers from Ruhengeri and Gisenyi were automatically drawn to parties like the MDR and the PSD. This created yet another layer of tension and mistrust within the military. In a letter to the FAR chief of staff, the head of military intelligence, Anatole Nsengiyumva, makes it clear that he has been spying on soldiers with different political affiliations. (Note that this letter was written in July 1992, a year on from the events described here, but the dynamics it reveals probably started immediately after the advent of multiparty politics.)

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<sup>68</sup> Dismas Nsengiyaremye, "La Transition Démocratique au Rwanda (1989-1993)", in *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993-1994)* ed. André Guichaoua (Paris: Karthala, 1995), 249-250

<sup>69</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 124-125

<sup>70</sup> From: Flaten, US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC 'The Military and the Political Process', 11 June 1993. "Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords" National Security Archive.

In my previous memo, I talked about a subversive movement led by the *Parti Liberal* and some members of other opposition parties. ... Commander Donat Habimana has been recruited by the PL and was said to be the leader of the team in Gisenyi ... [he] often attends meetings one of which was held in Lando's house. ... Warrant Officer Ndoli ... received a Mazda car offered by Landoald Ndasingwa (the car belongs to him). It is now driven by former Corporal Rurangwa of the Recce Battalion.<sup>71</sup>

After naming several more sections, which, he feels, have been infiltrated by the PL network, Nsengiyumva moves on to the second part of his report, which considers infiltrations carried out by the RPF. However, he does not make a link between the subversive movements of the PL network and the RPF. In fact, what exactly the PL network is planning remains unclear, though Nsengiyumva points out that they were printing counterfeit money and distributing pistols. The head of military intelligence concludes that

Our soldiers have been contacted by the PL and by other opposition parties, and they are involved in demobilizing good soldiers. Those identified as such should be dismissed from the Rwandan Armed Forces [FAR]. I will strive to find tangible evidence. ... Major Ngirumpatse and Ntezilyayo should be kept on a close watch. The G4 service of the R.A.S.H. should be streamlined, because it has been infiltrated by Major Ngirumpatse. The case of Commander Donat Habimana should be followed up closely, while Commander Bahizi should be closely watched.<sup>72</sup>

In sum, the introduction of multipartyism with its end goal of a democratic Rwanda complicated the already bad relations between officers in the FAR. In mid-August 1991, the French Embassy started hearing rumours of a possible coup attempt planned for the night of 15-16 August.<sup>73</sup> By 15 August, Colonel Bernard Cussac, who had replaced Colonel Galinié as military attaché, reported that a coup attempt would not be carried out by the RPA who, "as things stand, cannot reach the capital,"<sup>74</sup> nor would it come from the internal opposition who were neither armed nor properly organised. Rather, Cussac suspected that such an attempt would come from either "young officers who can no longer stand the geographical recruitment imposed by the staff of the FAR and the incompetence of its leaders,"<sup>75</sup> or from elements within the army who saw the movement towards a democratic Rwanda as a threat to their privileged position.<sup>76</sup>

### **Cross-Border Warfare**

After two months of relative calm following the heavy fighting in Akagera National Park, both sides stepped up the tempo of operations in the Virunga Mountains. The FAR had managed to build a position on the ridge between two of the dormant volcanoes which

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<sup>71</sup> From: Nsengiyumva To: Chef EM AR 'Sûreté intérieure de l'Etat', 2 July 1992. "Exhibit Number: P20(b), Date Admitted: 11-9-2002 (English Translation)" *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 1

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>73</sup> From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation militaire et renseignements divers', 13 August 1991. FGT.

<sup>74</sup> Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation militaire et renseignements divers', 15 August 1991. FGT. "Elle ne peut pas être le fait des rebelles qui, contenus à la frontière, ne sont pas en mesure, dans l'état actuel, d'atteindre la capitale."

<sup>75</sup> Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation militaire et renseignements divers', 15 August 1991. FGT. "Soit d'une action, menée par une partie de l'armée et particulièrement par de jeunes officiers qui ne supportent plus le recrutement géographique imposé par l'Etat-Major des FAR et l'incapacité de ses dirigeants."

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

dominate Volcanoes National Park. Nestled between the cragged Sabyinyo and the smaller Gahinga, the strongpoint hindered movement over the Uganda-Rwanda border, limiting the RPA's freedom of manoeuvre. On 21 August 1991, the RPA launched a serious attack to dislodge the FAR from the Sabyinyo/Gahinga ridge. After a bombardment by 120 and 82 mm mortars, two companies of attackers advanced through the thick foliage which was defended by the newly DAMI-retrained 41 Commando Battalion. As the jungle in this part of the Virunga Mountains is incredibly dense, fighting took place at close quarters. By 10 a.m., the two platoons which had been guarding the FAR flank closest to Gahinga broke, and the RPA occupied the position. In an afternoon counterattack, the FAR managed to retake the position.<sup>77</sup> A week later, the RPA were back for another attempt. While the Sabyinyo/Gahinga ridge was subjected to a series of punishing bombardments and attacks, another RPA element moved around Sabyinyo in an attempt to outflank the position. Outmanoeuvred, the FAR units gave up their strongpoints without a fight. However, the RPA might not have intended to force a breakthrough, since after capturing substantial amounts of material, they conducted a tactical withdrawal, allowing the FAR to retake the positions it had lost earlier in the day.<sup>78</sup>

After a short breather, the RPA returned for round three. The FAR on the Sabyinyo/Gahinga ridge were mortared relentlessly throughout 2 September and the following night. At daybreak the attack went in and managed to surround the FAR positions. The trapped soldiers were saved by the arrival of an additional company which proved able to cover their retreat out of the encirclement. After regrouping, the FAR counterattacked and succeeded in retaking the ridge by 17:00.<sup>79</sup> On the night of 5-6 September, the RPA carried out two more attempts to take the Sabyinyo/Gahinga ridge, but this time the FAR managed to repulse the attacks. Perhaps encouraged by this success, they mounted a big sweep of the area between the two volcanoes on 7 September and were able to surprise an RPA company which was forced to retreat after a sharp engagement.<sup>80</sup>

This episode shows that, even by mid-1991, the FAR had not yet been beaten. Despite the troubles of its officer corps, French-trained units could still face off the RPA, especially when in entrenched positions. Even when pushed back, the FAR were usually able to rally and carry out a counterattack. As Caesar Kayizari put it: "While they were defeated, the FAR were good fighters, ... you defeat him and he does counterattack."<sup>81</sup> The FAR were not exclusively on the defensive either and would regularly try to push the RPA out of strategic volcanoes.

Yes they did [dislodge us] not once, but several times. But we would counterattack immediately. We were determined to see who would be the winner. ... Sometimes they would dislodge you tactically because if you hold on to territory you will have many

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<sup>77</sup> Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation militaire et renseignements divers', 21 August 1991. FGT.

<sup>78</sup> Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation militaire et renseignements divers', 31 August 1991. FGT.

<sup>79</sup> From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation Tactique le 3 septembre 1991 à 12H00 locales', 3 September 1991. FGT; From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation militaire et renseignements divers', 5 September 1991. FGT.

<sup>80</sup> From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation militaire et renseignements divers', 6 September 1991. FGT.; From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Situation tactique 7 Septembre 1991 à 12H00 locales', 7 September 1991. FGT.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 14 October 2018

casualties. So we would go back. Because [the FAR] ... are getting supplies from the government and you are a guerrilla so you have to use your resources efficiently.<sup>82</sup>

What is clear is that RPA commanders were more creative and used manoeuvre to their tactical advantage, as the flanking movement around Sabyinyo and the attempt to surround the FAR on 2 September show. The problem for the FAR was that these intense bouts of fighting wore down its most effective troops. As a French officer explains,

The units trained by the French DAMI (*Détachement d'assistance militaire...*) performed very well. ... We (I mean the DAMI) taught them manoeuvre, use of battalion and company fire support, and it worked very well. But, as soon as the training was completed, the units used to be sent as “patches” or “firefighters” all over the frontline, and their routine mission was to re-gain terrain the other battalions had lost. They suffered terrible losses: I have personally seen the 33rd in April 92, it had been trained six months earlier and its remaining strength was under 300, instead of the initial 600. By our standards, a unit with 50% losses is no longer used in offensive operations but the FAR high command had no real choice and continued tasking them to heavy offensive operations.<sup>83</sup>

This episode also proves beyond reasonable doubt that the RPA did have rear bases in Uganda, at least in the Virunga Mountains, although probably along the frontier. The Ugandan border is simply too close to the Sabyinyo/Gahinga ridge for the RPA to have been operating exclusively from Rwandan territory. As Lt Col Molyneux-Carter wrote in his report,

There is no doubt that the INKOTANYI/RPF do cross the Rwanda/Uganda border. I suspect that there are dozens of places where this can be done without their being noticed by either side; ... There is no doubt that during the conflict, RPF have mounted attacks on Rwandese establishments/towns from within Uganda.<sup>84</sup>

Just like the RPF, the FAR did not only operate exclusively within Rwanda's borders either. From the beginning of the war, Rwandan troops had regularly violated Ugandan sovereignty.<sup>85</sup> While these violations seem to have been limited to bombardments or fighting relatively close to the border, the FAR eventually became bolder and also moved operations into Zaire as the war progressed. On 15 February 1991, a cable was sent from the UNHCR office in Kinshasa. Concerned with the protection of refugees on the Rwanda-Zaire border, the report stated that UNHCR personnel had heard from

a considerable number of unrelated sources ... that on various occasions armed Rwandese elements, both in uniform and in civil have entered Zaire over the last few weeks in search of refugees they would claim to be actually rebels. In a number of instances (four cases were cited a number of times) persons who were probably refugees were actually taken back to Rwanda by force. Mission saw on various occasions Rwandese Army vehicles with soldiers driving slowly past refugee reception centre. Various sources,

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Correspondence with French Officer, 11 September 2016

<sup>84</sup> From: Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter To: High Commissioner, Kampala 'DA Report on Visit to Rwanda 16-20 Feb 91', no date, but received in registry 5 June 1991. FCO.

<sup>85</sup> Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter 'DA Report on Visit to Rwanda border Area – 18 October 1990', 22 October 1990. "JWW 051/1 (part C), 'Incursion into Rwanda: October 1990'" FCO.

including Zairean civil servants implicitly or explicitly accused Zairean army of being accomplice in this exercise, having been paid to identify and/or arrest such persons.<sup>86</sup>

It makes sense that the FAR, or the various Rwandan intelligence services, would have been interested in what was happening across the border in Goma, where quite a few RPA deserters, often from Burundi, had sought shelter, fleeing the fighting and hardships of the Virunga Mountains. And it is entirely possible that there were RPF cadres in Goma recruiting for the RPA, or looking for information across the border in Rwanda. However, it can also be hypothesized that the FAR and the Zairian armed forces (FAZ) were working together, abducting refugees and then demanding ransoms for their release. Either way, the report from Lt Col Molyneux-Carter, who was in Gisenyi only a couple of days after the above UNHCR message was sent, confirms that FAR/FAZ cross-border operations were likely being carried out:

He [the sector commander] said he had intelligence reports that the RPF intends to attack Gisenyi from both the Ruhengeri area and from Zaire, he felt sure the Zairians would not help the RPF. He said there was close cooperation with Zairean troops at their common border. Indeed we met 4 Zairean officers in the barracks, before touring the border area. Later when I mentioned this point to Major Nzabanita, he became extremely agitated – he was remarkably angry at my allegations, but the other liaison officers with us admitted their presence and he grudgingly agreed that perhaps there were Zairean officers, but they were probably off-duty or on leave. Quite what he had to hide I do not know.<sup>87</sup>

Another interesting snippet comes from a confidential French cable sent by Colonel Cussac to Paris. During the fighting for the Sabyinyo/Gahinga ridge, he reported that Uganda's NRA was massing around Mbarara and Gisoro, which the FAR High Command interpreted as a sign of an upcoming RPA offensive. While the main source of this information had been a diplomat in Kampala, the intelligence had also been confirmed by a FAR special missions units called the *Commando de renseignement et d'action dans la profondeur* (CRAP). The exact text reads: "during the night of 4-5 September, vehicles were observed on the Mbarara-Gisoro road (40 km north of Ruhengeri). (This information is confirmed by FAR CRAP)."<sup>88</sup> Considering the Mbarara-Gisoro road is at about ten kilometres from the border, the obvious conclusion is that a FAR CRAP, probably from the Para-Commando Battalion, had snuck into Uganda undetected and gathered intelligence deep inside the country.

In mid-September 1991, the RPF and the government of Rwanda met for another round of negotiations in Gbadolite, Zaire. While both parties agreed to some modifications of the

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<sup>86</sup> From: Kinshasa To:- , 'Protection Issues Related to Influx Rwandese Refugees in Kivu, Zaire, Status of Deserters from Rwanda Patriotic Front', 15 February 1991. "100.RWA.GEN Refugees in Rwanda - General [A]" UNHCR Archive.

<sup>87</sup> From: Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter To: High Commissioner, Kampala 'DA Report on Visit to Rwanda 16-20 Feb 91', no date, but received in registry 5 June 1991. FCO.

<sup>88</sup> From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris 'Renseignements transmis par ambassadeur du Rwanda à Kampala', 5 September 1991. FGT. "Signale que, dans la nuit du 4 au 5 septembre des véhicules ont été observés sur la route Mbarara-Gisoro (40kms nord de Ruhengeri). (ce renseignement est confirmé par les CRAP des FAR)." That the CRAP did carry out operations behind enemy lines is confirmed by the commander of the Para-Commando Battalion, Major Aloys Ntabakuze: "The CRAP executed the operational missions (reconnaissance and action in the enemy lines) for the benefit of army HQ or of operational sector on demand or on initiative of the Army HQ." See: 'III. The Army and the Para Cdo Bn Background.' "Exhibit Number: DNT235, Date Admitted: 21-9-2006" *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 42

earlier N'Sele Ceasefire Agreement, there was no realistic chance of a cessation of hostilities. The RPF argued that the political situation in Rwanda had changed with the advent of multiparty politics and that they would not negotiate with a delegation composed solely of MRND members.<sup>89</sup> One of the reasons the RPF took such a strong stance was because they wanted to help strengthen the internal opposition in Rwanda. Had the RPF agreed to officially negotiate with an exclusively MRND delegation, they would have conferred legitimacy on the ruling party and undermined the opposition. This was a clear case of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”: though the opposition parties, especially the MDR, were not pro-RPF, they were anti-Habyarimana.

By this point, both France and the United States had lost faith in Zairian President Mobutu as a mediator, and there were suspicions that Habyarimana was trying to keep the talks in Zaire alive to buy himself more time to deal with the turbulent internal political situation in Rwanda.<sup>90</sup> In response, the United States and France started taking an active behind-the-scenes role to get the Habyarimana regime and the RPF talking. The US oversaw some talks in Harare, Zimbabwe, while the French invited the two parties to come to Paris.

Between 17 and 23 September 1991, an RPF delegation arrived in France to lay the groundwork. It met with Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, son of the French president and an adviser on African affairs, and Paul Dijoud, the director of African Affairs at the French Foreign Ministry. The French wanted to kick-start peace negotiations between the two parties, convince the RPF that a military solution was not the best possible outcome and “Dispel any possible misunderstanding concerning the mission of the French soldiers currently stationed in Rwanda [by demonstrating] that we are friends of all Rwandans without exclusion.”<sup>91</sup> Naturally, Kagame took exception to the last point, as his troops could hear French soldiers advising FAR units by radio intercepts. Nonetheless, he was open to a secret meeting in Paris to see if peace talks could progress to the next stage.<sup>92</sup> Delegations of the government of Rwanda and of the RPF would meet up to start talks in Paris on 13-14 January 1992.

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<sup>89</sup> From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris ‘Conversations entre gouvernement Rwandais et FPR’, 16 September 1991. FGT; Bruce D. Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 56

<sup>90</sup> Johan Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal* (Kalmthout: Polis, 2016), 141-145

<sup>91</sup> From: Dijoud To: - ‘Visite à Paris du major Kagame’, 27 September 1991. Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information*, Annexes, 206. “Dissiper tout éventuel malentendu concernant la mission des soldats française actuellement stationnés au Rwanda. ... Démontrer que nous sommes les amis de tous les Rwandais sans exclusive.”

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.



## **The Battle for *Agasentimita* - Sector Centimetre**

RPA operations changed towards the last quarter of 1991. So far, the High Command had not been concerned with taking and holding terrain. But as the war went on and peace negotiations became increasingly serious, it became clear that having a permanent base of operations in Rwanda would significantly add to both the strength and legitimacy of the movement. The Virunga Mountains were a good place to hide and rebuild, but could not be used for the new purpose.

Paul Kagame was faced with a choice of where the RPA should decide to capture territory, and then stand and fight to protect it. While the Battle for Akagera National Park had shown that the RPA could now face the FAR in the open, it had been a close-run thing, and the RPA columns had been fighting a mobile battle. This time that would not be possible, as the lightly rolling hills of Akagera National Park were prime terrain for the FAR armoured units and helicopters. Enlarging the area of operations around the Virunga Mountains would also be highly problematic, as it would require capturing Ruhengeri permanently. Not only would capturing the town be harder now that the DAMI was in place, but supplying such a large population on a permanent basis was probably beyond the logistical capacity of the RPF. On top of that, any permanently captured territory in this sector would be flanked in the west by the Zairian border, a strategic liability considering the close ties between the FAR and the FAZ.

This left only one option: the swathe of land bordered on the east by Nyagatare and on the west by Butaro. For the RPA High Command, this was familiar ground. Its units had traversed the incredibly hilly terrain both during the strategic manoeuvre to the Virunga Mountains and during the preparations for, and aftermath of, the fighting in Akagera National Park. It was also an important part of Rwanda, as it dominated one of the two main roads into Uganda. And it was a formidable natural defensive position, crisscrossed as it was by small rivers, ravines and thick banana groves.

By October 1991, the RPA had infiltrated and firmly established itself in a narrow strip of land which the troops called Sector Centimetre (*Agasentimita* in Kinyarwanda). Four or five battalions had reinforced the already imposing natural position. The narrow gorges were obstructed with anti-tank traps and riverbanks cleared of cover. Several belts of well camouflaged foxholes and trenches were sited among the banana plantations and forests. In front of these positions, killing zones were designated which were covered by heavy machine guns and mortars.<sup>93</sup>

It had been a grave strategic mistake for the FAR to give up Sector Centimetre without a fight. Whereas it could have fought an attritional battle from an advantageous defensive position, its commanders were now forced to attack a prepared position. Considering the political importance of the sector, it was also impossible to ignore it. Despite its disadvantage, the FAR prepared “several very heavy offensives.”<sup>94</sup> Colonel Déogratias Nsabimana was dispatched to personally lead the preparations. All the big FAR combat

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 12 October 2018

<sup>94</sup> Interview with James Kabarebe, 16 October 2018

multipliers were deployed, including the reconnaissance battalion with its light armour, helicopters and artillery. The latter was especially hard on the RPA soldiers. Until now, the FAR had often been firing in the blind, but now that the RPA was in fixed positions, the FAR gunners, supported by their French mentors, were able to zero in on their targets. Throughout October, on 9 December and on New Year's Day 1992, the FAR launched a number of coordinated attacks to push the RPA out of Sector Centimetre.<sup>95</sup> But each time they were repulsed. Gérard Prunier, who was once with the RPF when they were caught in combat, described the FAR in the following way:

They were heavy and sluggish. Their officers were stupid and poorly trained. The one time I was caught in combat, their tactics were idiotic; they came at us uphill, through the bush, crashing through the undergrowth, making a hell of a noise, we knew exactly where they were; their confidence, verging on stupidity, had to do with the French artillery support they had. But the French artillery was imprecise and we did not get hit. When the poor FAR came within range, they were slaughtered in one minute flat by heavy machine gun fire. They ran back downhill, leaving lots of corpses behind.<sup>96</sup>

While they were now on the strategic defensive, the basic combat doctrine of the RPA did not change. They conducted a mobile defence as much as possible.<sup>97</sup> Logan Ndahiro explains:

The battles to maintain Agasentimita were a mixture of conventional, positional and guerrilla mobile warfare. At the beginning of the fighting, we opted to be defensive (positional warfare). We could let the enemy attack us in our trenches, under pressure from their Commander-in-Chief's orders.

This made him vulnerable and exposed him to our positional fire, and then when he is retreating, we would waylay him in ambushes that caused him many casualties. The objective was first to destroy and demoralize him while in our defensive positions with minimal losses on our side.

Apart from ambushes, we used night sniping into his defences but quickly fall back to ours, sieging him, cutting his food supply routes and a number of times sending mobile forces through his defences to attack him far and behind his positions.<sup>98</sup>

To minimize the effects of the FAR artillery, the RPA would try to “hug” FAR troops so they could not call on their heavy guns without hitting their own troops. Another tactic involved withdrawing to secondary defensive positions after repulsing a FAR attack to avoid the retaliatory bombardment which was sure to follow. Nonetheless living under constant

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<sup>95</sup> The exact date of these operations is difficult to determine. My interviewees seemed certain they took place towards the very end of 1991, but Abdul Ruzibiza places them a couple of months earlier. While the exact timing of the fighting is not of great importance during this episode, it is something to keep in mind. Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza, *Rwanda: L'histoire secrète* (Paris: Editions du Panama, 2005), 146-151

<sup>96</sup> Personal correspondence between the author and Gérard Prunier, 23 January 2014. It should be noted that this description might not be about the fighting in Sector Centimetre per se, but might have taken place around the Virunga Mountains. The point is that it seems to describe well the fighting between the FAR and the RPA and confirms many of the stories I was told by RPA veterans.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with James Kabarebe, 16 October 2018

<sup>98</sup> Logan Ndahiro, “The capture of enemy territory – The Agasentimita” *The New Times*, 16 May 2016, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/199921>

artillery bombardment saps morale even if there are only light casualties. During these times, RPA commanders and RPF political cadres worked overtime to maintain the morale of the troops and explain the reasons for fighting and for enduring the tireless hammering of the FAR artillery. Paul Kagame and the rest of the High Command also led by example, establishing their headquarters in Sector Centimetre to show the troops they shared their hardships. What also helped with morale was an increasingly improved supply situation. Because the RPA was now in a static position, regular supply lines could be established.

By January 1992, the FAR had proved incapable of dislodging the RPA from Agasentimita. As the FAR and RPA regrouped, Colonel Cussac summed up the year:

The nascent democratic debate seems to have quickly locked itself up in an impasse whose only exit would be to hold a national conference, while military harassment operations, which seemed to be levelling off in the expectation of a negotiated solution, masked in fact a real territorial gain by the “Inyenzi” in Mutara.

At the same time the behaviour of the FAR continued to deteriorate, the serious abuses committed by “uniformed armed men” multiplied, and the repeated appeals of the French technical advisers to improve discipline and security had little effect on the ground, especially within a Gendarmerie whose deputy chief of staff appears to suffer from a permanent incapacity to improve the service of his army, unless this is the effect of a deliberate choice.<sup>99</sup>

### **Rwandan Internal Politics and the First Successful Ceasefire (January-July 1992)**

While the fighting raged on in northern Rwanda, talks had resumed in Paris on 13-14 January 1992, under the supervision of the French Foreign Ministry. The government of Rwanda delegation was led by its Ambassador to Uganda, Pierre-Claver Kanyarushoke, while Pasteur Bizimungu headed the RPF team.<sup>100</sup> However, the RPF took exception to the attitude of Paul Dijoud, the director of African Affairs at the French Foreign Ministry, and little progress was made.

The solution to the impasse came from the internal Rwandan opposition. When the new constitution had been accepted in mid-1991, President Habyarimana had appointed Sylvestre Nsanzimana to form a new government. Nsanzimana was part of the old guard: he had been a member of the PARMEHUTU and had served as foreign minister and rector of the University of Rwanda. Since February 1991, he had been minister of justice and, in this capacity, had

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<sup>99</sup> From: Colonel B. Cussac, Attaché de Défense près l’Ambassade de France au Rwanda To: Chef d’Etat-Major des Armées ‘Rapport de renseignement bimestriel (Septembre-Octobre 1991)’, 5 December 1991. FGT. “Cependant, le débat démocratique naissant semble s’être rapidement enfermé dans une impasse dont la seule sortie serait la tenue d’une conférence nationale tandis que les opérations militaires de harcèlement, qui paraissent marquer le pas dans l’attente d’une solution en cours de négociation, masquaient en fait une véritable prise de gage territorial par les ‘Inyenzi’ dans le MUTARA. Dans le même temps le comportement des forces armées rwandaises continuait à se dégrader, les graves exactions commises par ‘des hommes armés en uniforme’ se multipliaient, et les appels réitérés des conseillers techniques français pour améliorer la discipline et la sécurité n’étaient suivis que de peu d’effet sur le terrain, particulièrement au sien d’une Gendarmerie dont le Chef d’état-major adjoint semble frappé d’une incapacité définitive à améliorer le service de son armée, à moins que ce ne soit l’effet d’un choix délibéré.”

<sup>100</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Priority FCO ‘Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF)’, 29 January 1992. “FOI: 0421-17” FCO.

been “instrumental in discreetly releasing the victims of the October 1990 mass arrests.”<sup>101</sup> Because of this background, the French and Belgians hoped (vainly, as it turned out) that he would be seen as a compromise candidate.<sup>102</sup>

In late 1991, Nsanzimana did negotiate with opposition parties to try to form a multiparty cabinet, but they refused to join his government.<sup>103</sup> The MDR, PL and PSD had formed the *Comité de concertation de l'opposition* to coordinate their actions. In response to Nsanzimana's overtures, they argued that the president and territorial administration still retained too much power in the new constitution. On top of that, they felt that they were operating from a position of strength. When Nsanzimana was forced to present a mostly MRND cabinet, the opposition parties organised several large demonstrations. The most important, held on 8 January 1992, drew as many as 50,000 people to the streets of Kigali.

By mid-January, Rwandan intellectuals and the Church had made it clear that they also expected a proper multiparty government in the near future.<sup>104</sup> The Catholic and Protestant Churches cooperated and acted as intermediaries between the Habyarimana presidency and the opposition parties.<sup>105</sup> Negotiations lasted throughout February and March, when a compromise was reached. The constitution would not be changed and the presidency would retain its power. However, Dismas Nsengiyaremye, an MDR member, was appointed to form a new government. On 7 April, his government was sworn in – the first truly multiparty government in Rwanda's history.

At this crucial juncture, James Gasana was made minister of defence in the new government. Gasana was a Hutu MRND man who had studied in the United States and served as minister of agriculture, livestock and the environment in 1990-1992. He had gained a reputation as a smart, efficient manager untainted by corruption. More importantly, and perhaps because he was from Byumba and not from the northwest, he was a moderate. All these attributes made Gasana a threat for the FAR High Command, which – as we know – was corrupt, regionalist and incompetent. Gasana had only been in the job for two days when the first volley was fired of what would become a hostile relationship between the minister and the hardliners in the FAR. Chief of Staff Colonel Laurent Serubuga tried to divert operational information which would normally be shared with the Ministry, probably to cover the setbacks being suffered by the FAR, but was caught red handed.<sup>106</sup> Gasana then set a plan in motion to rejuvenate the FAR High Command.<sup>107</sup> The president was pressured into giving the good example, and he retired from the army on 22 April.

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<sup>101</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 134

<sup>102</sup> From: Colonel Cussac To: Armées Paris ‘Désignation d’un premier ministre’, 15 October 1991. FGT.

<sup>103</sup> In Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques*, 253. Note that Prunier suggests that Nsanzimana did not enjoy support from within the MRND either, Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 134. For another assessment of Nsanzimana's character and history, see Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 172, 176

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 179, 184

<sup>105</sup> Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 138-139; Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 185-186

<sup>106</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État*, 103; see also Transcript, 27 November 2002, Examination-in-Chief by Ms. Mulvaney of Witness ZF. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 23-26

<sup>107</sup> Prunier argues that “As soon as the Nsengiyaremye cabinet was sworn-in, the President asked the new Prime Minister and his Minister of Defence, MRND(D) moderate James Gasana, to prepare a plan for reorganising the Armed Forces top leadership, with the aim of eliminating the most resolute extremists.” Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 167. However Gasana specifically mentions in his book that this was not the case; Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État*, 124

However, Gasana's first real test came on 29 May, when the Minister of Information M. P. Ndengejeho announced plans on the national radio for a reduction in the size of the FAR. These plans were only supposed to be put into practice at the end of the war, but the minister's address did not make that clear. This announcement, combined with the sharp defeats the RPA had inflicted on the FAR as they broke out of Sector Centimetre (see below), meant that the already fragile discipline and cohesion in the FAR snapped. Different sections of the FAR started shooting at each other in Ruhengeri, killing at least five.<sup>108</sup> The next day the same happened in Gisenyi, where at least 17 more people were killed. A section of French troops had to be sent in to protect the expatriate community, one of whom was robbed in their house by mutinous Rwandan troops.<sup>109</sup> There were also indications that mutinies might break out in Camp Kanombe, Kigali's largest military base, and the French put the troops of *Opération Noroît* on highest alert. By 1 June, the mutiny had spread to the south of the country. In Butare, FAR troops sacked the stocks of the OPROVIA parastatal company, while in Kibuye other FAR soldiers robbed the local bank. "Sixteen million Rwandan francs were taken. The president of the republic asked the French Ambassador for the intervention of Noroît, but he refused."<sup>110</sup>

Gasana would later write that "conservative officers and politicians seized this as a golden opportunity and wanted to exploit these military mutinies to overthrow the [first multiparty] government. Aware of what was at stake I went to Ruhengeri to listen to the mutineers."<sup>111</sup> When he arrived in Ruhengeri, Gasana found that the local commander, Lt Colonel Bizimungu, and Chief of Staff Colonel Serubuga, were unable to calm the mutineers. In the pouring rain, and without an umbrella as the troops did not have any either, Gasana listened to the problems of the soldiers. They explained that the management of the army was poor, that certain groups were discriminated against and "they even touched on basic problems such as why (and for whom) the war [was being fought]."<sup>112</sup> The minister of defence held several such meetings with discontented soldiers over the next couple of days, and, together with targeted arrests, these measures restored discipline throughout the FAR. Naturally, Gasana was now convinced that the entire FAR High Command ought to be sacked, and he got his opportunity on 6 June. The day before, the RPA had launched one of the decisive offensives of the war and captured Byumba (see below, "The RPA's Byumba Offensive"). Knowing that he could now count on the support of President Habyarimana, the moderates within the FAR and the French military advisers in Rwanda, Gasana sacked Colonel

<sup>108</sup> "Détachement NOROIT du 2e RIMA, Journal des Marches et Operations 05 mars 1992-13 juillet 1992" GR 2000Z 114 455. Service Historique de la Défense. "Intervention du groupe de Mukamira dans le cadre de DAMI à Ruhengeri afin de rassurer la population européenne inquiète à cause des affrontements entre des éléments des FAR. Les mutins manifestent leur mécontentements suite à l'annonce de la déflation des effectifs de l'Armée. Bilan: cinq morts, une vingtaine de blessés."

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. "20H50: Intervention du groupe Mukamira dans le cadre du DAMI à Gisenyi afin de regrouper et protéger les ressortissants français.

La situation dans les FAR est similaire à celle du 29 Mai à Ruhengeri. Bilan : dix-sept morts.

22H00 : Le calme semble revenir dans Gisenyi. Un ressortissant français a été agressé et dévalisé à son domicile par des éléments des FAR incontrôlés."

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. "Seize millions de francs rwandais volés. Le Président de la République demande l'intervention de Noroît à l'Ambassadeur de France qui refuse."

<sup>111</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État*, 109. "les officiers et les politiciens conservateurs s'en saisissent comme une occasion en or et veulent exploiter ces mutineries de militaires pour renverser le gouvernement. Conscient de l'enjeu, je me rends à Ruhengeri pour écouter les mutins..."

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 110 "Ils abordèrent même les problèmes fondamentaux tel que pourquoi (et le pour qui) de la guerre."

Seruguba, chief of staff of the FAR, and Pierre-Celestin Rwagafilita, chief of staff of the Gendarmerie. To save face, these old-timers were technically retired for having reached the military age limit for their ranks. They were replaced with two enigmatic officers.

Colonel Déogratias Nsabimana was promoted as the FAR's new chief of staff. The US Embassy in Rwanda described him as "a complex figure. He is celebrated as one of the true heroes [*sic*] of the ongoing war with the RPF, having been in command of troops in the Mutara sector since the outbreak of the war in October 1990. He is highly respected by his soldiers and, in this time of decreasing army discipline, is known as an officer to be obeyed."<sup>113</sup> Nsabimana had also been one of the officers in command during the fighting in Sector Centimetre, and though he had been unsuccessful, the RPA regarded him as a tough adversary. The US report did add as a final note that "He is known as a man who gives no quarter, believed to have tortured prisoners to death and instituted summary executions on the battlefield."<sup>114</sup> Pierre-Célestin Rwagafilita was replaced as chief of staff of the Gendarmerie by Colonel Augustin Ndindiliyimana, who was moved from his position as minister at the presidency charged with defence and security. Ndindiliyimana was "well respected in and out of the armed forces, and generally considered to not have used his positions of power to enrich himself."<sup>115</sup>

Gasana did not rest with the sackings of Serubuga and Rwagafilita. He also set his sights on the other two officers of the old guard: Colonels Théoneste Bagosora and Elie Sagatwa. Nevertheless these two officers still enjoyed the support of the president and so managed to extend their contract by one extra year. However, Gasana made sure that Bagosora did not hold another operational command. Instead he was employed as a civilian as chief of staff in the Ministry of Defence.<sup>116</sup>

The relationship of Colonels Nsabimana and Ndindiliyimana with the president and with the hardliners in the army is difficult to pin down. Both seem to have enjoyed the support of President Habyarimana, Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye and Minister of Defence Gasana.<sup>117</sup> By promoting two younger officers, Habyarimana was able to sideline two members of the old guard who had built their own networks within the FAR and might pose a threat now that

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<sup>113</sup> From: US Embassy Kigali To: Secretary of State Washington 'Council of Ministers retires top military officers', 11 June 1992. FGT; Transcript of, 6 February 2008, Testimony of Witness CBP67. *The Prosecutor v. Ndindiliyimana et al.* ICTR-00-56-T, 56, 73

<sup>114</sup> From: US Embassy Kigali To: Secretary of State Washington 'Council of Ministers retires top military officers', 11 June 1992. FGT. Roméo Dallaire's assessment of Nsabimana was rather less positive: "what I saw was an army chief of staff, who, in my book, did not have the same leadership qualities, charismatic qualities and the calmness in his command that I would have expected from somebody of that rank." Transcript of, 21 January 2004, Cross-examination by Mr. Constant of Romeo Dallaire. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 13

<sup>115</sup> From: US Embassy Kigali To: Secretary of State Washington 'Council of Ministers retires top military officers', 11 June 1992. FGT.

<sup>116</sup> Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide*, 74

<sup>117</sup> Transcript, 21 September 2004, Testimony of Filip Reyntjens. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 11 "I would not have considered General Nsabimana a member of the *Akazu*, and I think I would have considered him, like others, to be essentially a professional soldier. This would have been the view of the opposition, too, because when he, together with General Ndindiliyimana at the head of the gendarmerie, when he was appointed in replacement of members that were clearly *Akazu*, Colonel Serubuga for the army and Colonel Rwagafilita for the gendarmerie. That being said, and I must be very hesitant here if only because General Nsabimana is dead, there are a number of sources that suggest that he may have been less the saint that I would have thought he was."

Habyarimana had himself fully withdrawn from the armed forces. Gasana would have preferred to have Colonel Gatsinzi as FAR chief of staff but Habyarimana refused.<sup>118</sup> Regionalism might have played a role here. Nsabimana was from Ruhengeri, in the northwest, whereas Gatsinzi was from the south of the country. Having one southern officer might have been acceptable to the president, but two – Ndindiliyimana was also from the south – would have been too much. Despite his best efforts, Gasana was unable to make an immediate impact on the fighting power of the FAR (as we will see below), but by sidelining several of the most hard-core elements he had made an impressive start.

The change in government did make a real and immediate difference to the peace negotiations. The new Foreign Minister Boniface Ngulinzira travelled to Kampala to meet vice-chairman Patrick Mazimhaka, one of the RPF's top political cadres, on 24 May. They agreed that formal negotiations would open in Paris two weeks later. There were two major differences between the negotiations conducted in Paris on 6-8 June and those that had taken place in January. Firstly, the government of Rwanda was now represented by Ngulinzira instead of Kanyarushoke. Secondly, the French facilitators and US observers stayed out of the details of the talks. We are, however, privy to the details because of a report that the British Ambassador in Paris, Ewen Fergusson, wrote to the FCO:

The French and Americans left the Rwandans, speaking Kinyarwanda, to it, after the opening ceremony. ...

Although the talks did not produce much in terms of substance, they effectively launched the peace process. The mechanics of talks are now established, the next round being scheduled for 10-12 July in Zaire or Tanzania ... Equally although Mobutu (still in France) formally remains the mediator, his role is not active at this point. The agenda for the next meeting covers national unity and democratisation. It is agreed that negotiations will address the fusion of the two armies, a transitional government and political guarantees. Both sides confirmed their political will to end the war and re-affirmed the validity of the N'sele agreement as modified by the Gbadolite agreement of September last year. ...

Although neither the French nor the US were privy to the main proceedings, both expressed satisfaction at the fact that the talks took place and that a process is under way. However, neither over-estimate the possibilities for progress.<sup>119</sup>

Fergusson added an interesting note on the French take on the situation in Rwanda:

The Quai [d'Orsay, the headquarters of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs] added that the RPF would, in any case, never accept to share power with Habyarimana: he had been forced to join these talks by growing pressure and the RPF had seized the chance as part of a two-pronged approach – the other prong being military. ... The Quai stressed that the different interest groups within Rwanda and even inside the GOR and armed forces were numerous and it was impossible to know who was plotting with whom ...

The French are clearly prepared to invest considerable effort to maintain stability in Rwanda. This is no doubt in part due to Habyarimana's (generally acknowledged) ties with the Élysée but also because the French see a real risk of tribal violence flaring up in

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<sup>118</sup> Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État*, 123-124

<sup>119</sup> From: Fergusson, Paris To: Priority FCO 'Rwanda', 12 June 1992. "FOI 0421-17" FCO.

this traditionally volatile region, including Burundi. When we discussed French interest in Rwanda with Taix, Quai directeur adjoint for Africa, on 11 June, he said that the French see potential for major destabilisation in the region unless a balance can be struck.<sup>120</sup>

It is worth briefly discussing why the July 1992 ceasefire was the first to be successful. While an extensive literature has developed on the point at which belligerents are ready to negotiate, German military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz was among the first to get to the heart of the issue: “There are two considerations which as motives may practically take the place of inability to continue to contest. The first is the improbability, the second the excessive price, of success.”<sup>121</sup> He continues, “As war is no act of blind passion, but is dominated by the political object, ... the value of that object determines the measure of the sacrifices by which it is to be purchased. ... As soon, therefore, as the required outlay becomes so great that the political object is no longer equal in value, the object must be given up, and peace will be the result.”<sup>122</sup>

Unlike many others, including perhaps President Habyarimana himself, the new multiparty government understood that the chance of success in the war against the RPF was too small to continue the conflict.<sup>123</sup> In part this was precipitated by the RPA’s success in the field, which had become obvious by spring 1992. This had dispelled the idea, brought about by the RPA’s defeat in October 1990, that the FAR could win the war. However, more importantly, before Nsengiyaremye, Gasana and Ngulinzira took up their respective roles, there was no one within the political establishment who grasped that reality and could drive it home.

For the RPF a peace agreement made sense on several levels. It was now on the front foot militarily and negotiating from a position of strength. The RPF was now also talking with a different partner, not the Habyarimana regime as such, but the multiparty government that also included the political opposition. Leaving these new interlocutors with a good impression would be key in the quest to depose Habyarimana. Finally, there was the constant spectre of French military intervention, which could swing the balance of power from the RPA back into the hands of the FAR.

However, we should not underestimate the possibility that previous ceasefires had probably failed partly because they had been implemented too soon after having been agreed upon by diplomats. In a war where communications of both sides were far from perfect it took time for the FAR and the RPA – especially manoeuvring or forward units – to receive news from their respective high commands. So, matters were handled differently this time. A temporary truce would go into effect on 19 July at midnight; the ceasefire itself would follow on 31 July. This left both sides a good three weeks to inform all units and soldiers of the impending ceasefire and wind down combat operations. It was also agreed that if the ceasefire held, both sides would meet to start proper political negotiations in Arusha at the start of August.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 27; Some of the literature here is the theory of ‘ripeness’ I. William Zartman and M.R. Berman. *The Practical Negotiator*. (New Haven: Yale university Press, 1982); Barbara Walther, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); I. William Zartman. *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on theory and practice*. (London: Routledge, 2008)

<sup>122</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 27, 28

<sup>123</sup> Zartman, *Negotiation and Conflict Management*, 251

<sup>124</sup> ‘Joint Communiqué Issued at the End of the Negotiations on the Ceasefire between the Rwandese Government and the Rwandese Patriotic Front Arusha 10 – 12 July 1992’, 12 July 1992. FGT.

With a clear path to a ceasefire followed by proper negotiations now mapped out, both sides redoubled their efforts on the battlefield (see below) to gain as favourable a position as possible

### **The RPA's Byumba Offensive (January-July 1992)**

While complicated internal political manoeuvres were going on behind the frontline, the war entered a crucial phase. It is important to keep in mind that the internal rivalries and mutinies within the FAR described above directly impacted its fighting power *vis-à-vis* the RPA.

With the FAR on the back foot after its failed offensives on Sector Centimetre in late 1991, it was the turn of the RPA to launch a series of attacks. The first objective would be to break out of Sector Centimetre and the ring of defences which the FAR had thrown up around it. This defensive line consisted of a series of mutually supporting fortified hills which were supposed to keep the RPA hemmed into Sector Centimetre and prevent any breakout. Crucially, while the hills were well protected, they were not physically linked by a continuous belt of trenches or fighting positions. This meant that the RPA was able to infiltrate through the defensive line under cover of darkness, a key weakness which Kagame and his staff would ruthlessly exploit.<sup>125</sup>

After making the necessary preparations, the RPA started its attack around the end of February. The linchpin of the defensive line was a position on a hill close to Kabuga. It was surrounded by landmines, and the FAR had created killing grounds by using bulldozers to clear anything that might serve as cover to an attacker. Realising that a frontal attack on such a strong position would cause heavy losses, the RPA decided to envelop the strongpoint and starve out the defenders.<sup>126</sup>

At first, RPA patrols, conducted under the cover of night, infiltrated past Kabuga with scouting approaches which were not under the guns of FAR positions on neighbouring hills. They would then lay ambushes for supply convoys headed for the garrison. Gradually the noose was tightened until an iron ring surrounded Kabuga. Meanwhile other RPA troops continuously harassed the defenders on top of the hill with mortars and small arms fire. While the RPA was able to replace the troops surrounding and harassing the strongpoint, the defenders did not have the same luxury. After a couple of days, the conditions in the strongpoint became hellish. Water and food ran out. The troops were forced to stay in their foxholes all day and all night, under the hot equatorial sun, relieving themselves where they stood. Injured soldiers could not be evacuated, their cries and groans demoralising their impotent comrades. The dead could not be buried. Slowly, individual soldiers started deserting their positions.

Three attempts were made by the FAR to relieve the position from the outside, but only one managed to get through to Kabuga. While the relief brought in fresh troops and some supplies, they did not manage to significantly alter the tactical situation as the corridor which they had opened to push through to Kabuga was quickly sealed off again by the RPA. After seven days, the RPA, which was listening in on FAR communications, heard the High

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 12 October 2018

<sup>126</sup> The following section is based on Ndauro, "The capture of enemy territory", Logan Ndauro, "Expansion of territory and the Mukarange targeted enemy shelling" *The New Times*, 19 September 2016, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/203643> and interview with Ndore Rurinda, 12 October 2018

Command pass on the message to the commander of the Kabuga garrison that they would not be relieved from the outside and that their only chance was to attempt to break out themselves. Instead of surrendering, the garrison did try, with great bravery but against common sense, to break out. Most of them were killed trying to fight their way out of the encirclement, but a few did manage to get through.

Over the following month, the RPA systematically rolled up the rest of the FAR defensive positions. The positions around Gashenyi, Bushara I, Bushara II, Mutojo, Runyinya and Mabare fell one after the other.<sup>127</sup> Bounding forwards from this success, the RPA launched two more offensives in quick succession. The first, at the end of May, extended the western flank of Sector Centimetre. By attacking here, the RPA cut off one of the main roads from Rwanda to Uganda and also captured the Mulindi Tea Factory and Plantation. On 2 June, the tea plantation, which is situated on a hill overlooking the Kigali-Katuna road, was captured. From then on, it would become the permanent headquarters of the RPA.

Only three days later, the RPA High Command unleashed one of the most decisive attacks of the war. Advancing out of Sector Centimetre, several RPA battalions moved on Byumba, which was captured on 5 June 1992. As with the capture of Ruhengeri 18 months earlier, the RPA raided the town before withdrawing back onto the surrounding hills. The next day, two FAR battalions reoccupied the town and started to thoroughly pillage it. French troops from *Opération Noroît*, which had been sent to evacuate expatriates, noted in their operational diary that “Byumba is occupied by the FAR who plunder the city centre. ... The FAR continue to sack the downtown stores despite the presence of Noroît.”<sup>128</sup> Two days later, on 8 June, heavy fighting was still taking place around the town, with the FAR Para-Commando Bataillon trading blows with the RPA along the entire Kiyombe-Mukarange line.<sup>129</sup> Even though their comrades were engaged only kilometres away, “the looting of the city centre by the FAR continue[d].”<sup>130</sup>

For the rest of the month there was heavy fighting as each side tried to improve their position. By 19 June, the FAR was on the edge of total collapse. The Ruhengeri Battalion, one of those sent to reinforce Byumba, which had been holding a position to the west of the town, started retreating towards the hamlet of Base. It was rallied the next day by the intervention of the FAR General Staff, but the situation remained critical.<sup>131</sup> Once more, it was the French who helped stabilise the situation. Colonel Jacques Rosier, the commanding officer of the 1e RPIMa, had helped conduct an assessment of the FAR on behalf of the French *État-major des armées* (EMA). He had concluded that it was lacking in three aspects. Firstly, the FAR did not possess a capable cadre of commanders. Secondly, it did not possess mobile reserves which could be quickly deployed to threatened sectors to bolster defences or conduct counter-offensives. Thirdly, it lacked the firepower to stop RPA attacks in their tracks.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ndahiro, “Expansion of territory”

<sup>128</sup> “Détachement NOROÏT du 2e RIMa, JMO 5 mars – 13 juillet 1992” GR 2000Z 114 455. SHD. “Byumba occupé par les FAR qui pillent le centre-ville. .... Les FAR continuent à piller les magasins du centre-ville malgré la présence de Noroît.”

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. “Bataillon parachutiste au contact au nord sur la ligne Kiyombe-Mukarange.”

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. “Le pillage du centre-ville se poursuit par les FAR.”

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l’armée française et le Rwanda*, 101-102

Days after handing in this report, Rosier was made operational commander in Rwanda. His top priority was to get a battery of 105 mm howitzers, which France had donated to the FAR, operational. Between 22-25 June, 25 French advisers from the *35<sup>e</sup> régiment d'artillerie parachutiste* arrived together with two 105 mm howitzers and at least ten tonnes of ammunition to set the process in motion.<sup>133</sup> The advisers also helped to bring the other Rwandan field artillery battery up to fighting trim. It consisted of the heaviest guns in the FAR arsenal: 122 mm Soviet-designed D30 howitzers.<sup>134</sup> Rosier also supported the promotions of capable officers, like Nsabimana and Ndindiliyimana, to replace their notoriously incompetent colleagues.<sup>135</sup>

While the French worked desperately behind the scenes, the RPA maintained its high tempo of operations. On 26 June, it attacked on the Mukarange-Miyove axis but was pushed back. By 1 July, there were rumours that the Ruhengeri Battalion had again broken.<sup>136</sup> The next day, 51 Battalion, which had suffered such heavy casualties that it was combat ineffective, was dissolved and its remaining elements distributed over other units.<sup>137</sup> On 4 July, the troops of *Opération Noroît* reported a “worrying situation around Byumba. The RPF is present within a radius of 3 kilometres north of Byumba. The FAR authorities in the area request the intervention of French troops, especially the 105 mm guns.”<sup>138</sup> Shortly thereafter, on 6 July, the Para-Commando Battalion, which was still holding its positions to the north of Byumba, was attacked at dawn. Reinforcements were rushed up at the end of the day, and the situation was again stabilised.<sup>139</sup>

By 8 July, Rosier judged the 105 mm battery to be capable enough to be committed to the fight and it started bombing RPA positions around Byumba.<sup>140</sup> The effect was immediate. One of the first targets to be hit was the headquarters of Delta Mobile Force, the RPA unit which had been fighting against the FAR Para-Commando Battalion. An RPA officer who was present described the bombardment:

It was during one of these meetings taking place at Delta Mobile Force headquarters at Mukarange that, at around 5 pm, the enemy started shelling our position. This shelling [was] the first of its kind in terms of intensity and the heaviest we had ever encountered so far ... every one of us, including our commanders was thrown into panic. The shelling caught us by surprise and ... targeted our combatants' trenches/*handakis*. As there was no cover to go to, some of us who were in the meeting, thus not in trenches, found ourselves prone to the shells shrapnel. ...

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<sup>133</sup> “Détachement NOROIT du 2e RIMa, JMO 5 mars – 13 juillet 1992” GR 2000Z 114 455. SHD.

<sup>134</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand*, 102

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 103

<sup>136</sup> “Détachement NOROIT du 2e RIMa, JMO 5 mars – 13 juillet 1992” GR 2000Z 114 455. SHD.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* “Byumba-Base: dissolution d'un bataillon des FAR et répartition des éléments dans les autres bataillons. ... Le 51<sup>e</sup> bataillon est complètement débandé. Actuellement, il reste l'effectif de deux sections aux abords sud de Miyove.”

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* “Situation préoccupante autour de Byumba. Le FPR est présent dans un rayon de 3 kilomètres au Nord de Byumba. Les autorités des FAR de la zone demandent l'intervention des troupes françaises en particulier des canons 105mm.”

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* “Positions du bataillon parachutistes durement attaquées par FPR qui resserre son étau sur Byumba.”

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* “Depuis 08 dans le soirée la batterie d'artillerie rwandaise formée par le 35<sup>e</sup> Régiment d'Artillerie Parachutiste a effectué une dizaine d'interventions sur les positions du FPR.”

All Senior Officers present wondered what type of medium range artillery had been used in this shelling. A hot argument followed as to what type of long range artillery piece was used. Some saying it was *katyusha* (107 mm), others saying it was (120 mm) mortars, some saying it was (122 mm) Howitzer while others said it was by 122 mm guns fired by tanks. Later on, we learnt that it was 105 mm medium range artillery piece operated in batteries by the French ... We later nicknamed this medium-range artillery “*dimbahasi*” due to its impact on explosion that caused earth tremors.<sup>141</sup>

Colonel Rosier felt that a limited counterattack in the Byumba sector, with the support of the heavy guns, would help restore the morale of the buckling FAR.<sup>142</sup> However, he had overestimated the FAR’s fighting power:

On D-day everything went well in the morning (after the snack) until noon (soup time).

Thereafter, the momentum was broken under the pretext of a lack of ammunition. ... I drew the conclusion that any lost ground would be irretrievable and that, were we to leave, the worst was to be feared militarily. The FAR were undergoing war rather than waging it. The organisation remained desperately frozen despite my advice. I had to impose that the batteries would not be dispersed all over the front. And I indeed felt that the idea of a reserve, although politely welcomed, struggled to establish itself.<sup>143</sup>

On 30 July 1992 both sides ceased fire for the first time since the start of the war. The RPA, though its troops and commanders must have been exhausted after a long period of combat, held the upper hand. It had accomplished its objective of conquering an important part of Rwanda and would thus be able to conduct the forthcoming negotiations from a position of strength. One of the most symbolic moments of the RPA success was when its political leadership crossed into Rwanda on 7 June and settled in at the Mulindi Tea Plantation. It was the first time that the RPA High Command and the RPF political leadership were unified on Rwandan soil. The FAR, on the other hand, had been defeated. It had been unable to push the RPA out of the country and faced enormous internal problems. However, it was now led by a capable minister of defence and two new chiefs of staff. How successful their attempts at reform would be is the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>141</sup> Ndahiro, “Expansion of territory”

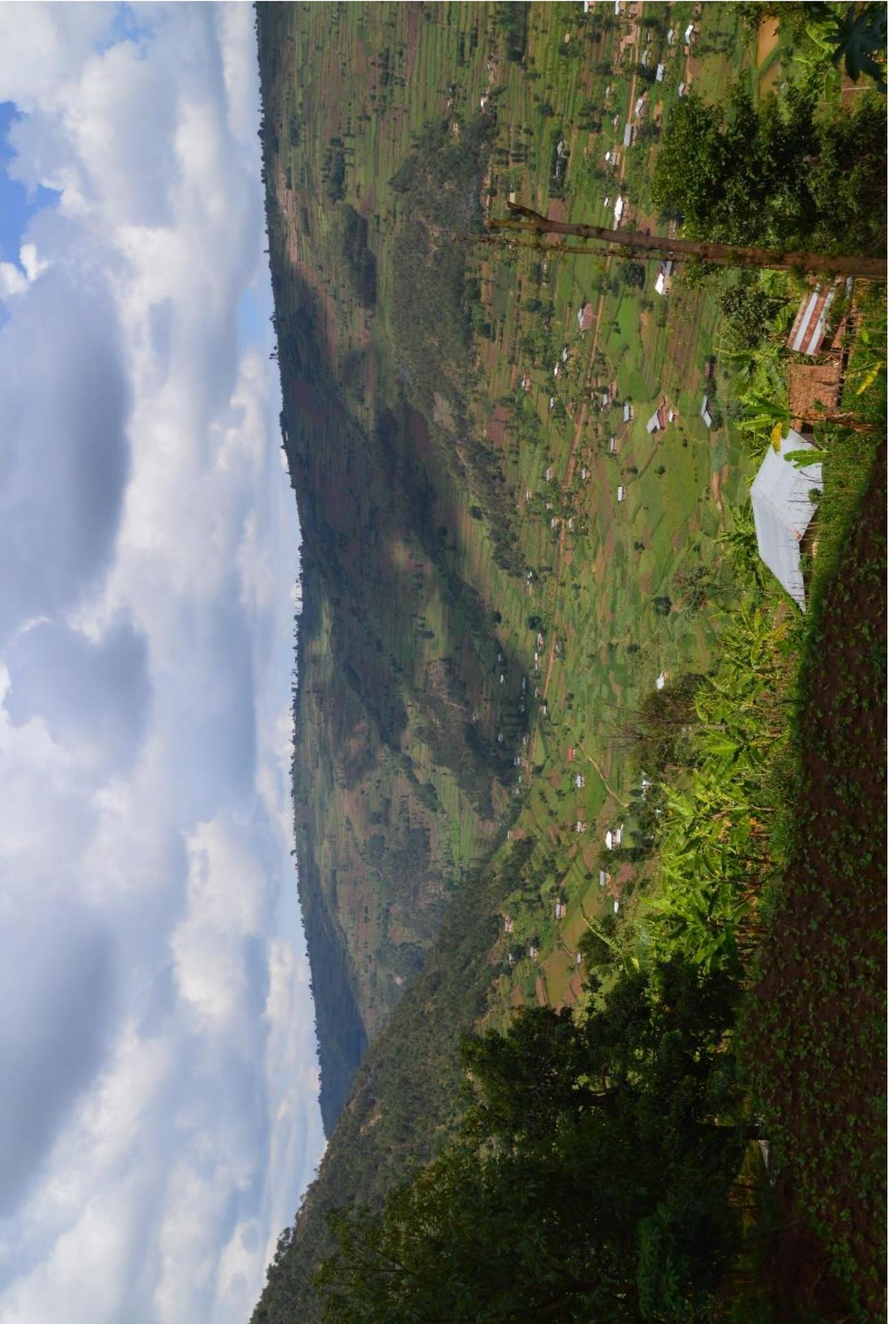
<sup>142</sup> Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l’armée française et le Rwanda*, 103

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 103 Quoting General Rosier: “Le jour J, tout se passe bien du matin (après le casse-croûte) jusqu’à midi (heure de la soupe).”

Dès lors, l’élan est brisé sous prétexte d’un manque de munitions. Il est des pesanteurs quasiment invincibles ! J’en tire la conclusion que tout terrain perdu devient irrécupérable et que, si nous partons, le pire est à craindre sur le plan militaire. Les FAR subissent en effet la guerre plus qu’elles ne la mènent. Le dispositif demeure désespérément figé malgré mes conseils. Je dois imposer de ne pas disperser les batteries sur tout le front. Et je sens bien que l’idée d’éléments de réserve, même si elle est poliment accueillie, a du mal à s’imposer.”



*The road from Katuna to Byumba and Kigali, as seen from the hills around Mulindi. This sector would become the headquarters of the RPF from June 1992 onwards. Next page: Rubaya-Gishyambashyayo sector, tucked away deep in the valleys close to the Ugandan border, where the combined mobile forces were formed in 1993.*



## VIII - JULY 1992 – MARCH 1993: A STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

Since the start of the war, Rwandan Tutsi had been subjected to ethnic violence. After looking at the beginning of the Arusha negotiations, this chapter addresses the dynamics of that violence and explains how it was used to temporarily derail the peace process. It also examines how the struggle for power between the president's MRND party and opposition parties, combined with the pressures of war, initiated a process which can be characterised as the slow collapse of the Rwandan state. Banditry, political assassination and terrorism all became daily occurrences, which the forces of order were unable to control. The effect of this spiral of unchecked violence was to create an atmosphere of confusion and terror in which peacebuilding became impossible.

Another objective of this and the following chapter is to disprove the widely held belief that Rwanda was a country of "systematic, centralised and unconditional obedience to authority."<sup>1</sup> In this view, President Habyarimana, and Kayibanda before him, are seen as figures with absolute authority whose will became policy.<sup>2</sup> The main problem with this characterization is that it robs all other elements of Rwandan society of their agency. A close reading of existing sources shows that agency and individual initiative were present throughout Rwandan society, both for good and ill. The internal opposition, led by Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye, tried to change the country for the better. Hundreds of thousands of people followed their lead by joining the MDR, PSD or other opposition parties. Rwandan human rights organisations carried out daring research which rejected the government's official narrative time and again. Dozens of journalists, among them the Catholic Priest André Sibomana, defied the message of hate spread by their Hutu-power colleagues. Soldiers in the FAR, fed up with their poor pay and leadership, deserted in droves and became bandits or joined political militias.

### Ethnic Attacks

The first recorded ethnic attack after the outbreak of war occurred on 11 October 1990 at Kibilira, between Gitarama and Ruhengeri. Using the recent invasion to stoke the fires of fear, the burgomaster (mayor) pointed to the local Tutsi as accomplices of the RPF. At his instigation, the *commune* secretary, the local head of the MRND and various other notables among the Hutu of Kibilira killed "at least 348 people," burned 50 houses and destroyed or

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<sup>1</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997), 57, 141. Besides Prunier, see Filip Reyntjens, "Rwanda, genocide and beyond", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1996): 245 ("The state is present everywhere and every Rwandan is 'administered.' The structure is pyramid-like and orders travel fast and well from top to bottom."); Peter Langford, "The Rwandan Path to Genocide: The Genesis of the Capacity of the Rwandan Post-colonial State to Organise and Unleash a project of Extermination", *Civil Wars*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2005): 12, 15; and René Lemarchand, "Disconnecting the threads: Rwanda and the Holocaust reconsidered", *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2002): 513. For earlier challenges to the notions of conformity and absolute authority, see Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 199-200; and Timothy Longman, "Placing genocide in context: research priorities for the Rwandan genocide", *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2004), 37

<sup>2</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 141-142

pillaged “nearly all the farm animals, food reserves and household furnishings.”<sup>3</sup> In some sectors, people stood up to the killers. Sector leaders in Ntaganzwa and Longi protected their people, and in the sector of Rugarama, the Tutsi organised themselves on the crest of an uninhabited hill and managed to keep their attackers at bay.<sup>4</sup> A local priest telephoned the papal nuncio and the French and Belgian embassies for help. According to the human rights association ADL (*Association rwandaise pour la défense des droits de la personne et des libertés publiques*), the Belgians responded first, informing the presidency of the slaughters.<sup>5</sup> In turn, the presidency sent the prefect of Gisenyi to stop the killings. When he arrived on 13 October, together with four gendarmes, the killings immediately ceased. While some people were arrested, the Gisenyi public prosecutor later told investigators that he did not have the resources to investigate the killings. Those who had been arrested for the murders were released after four weeks.<sup>6</sup> Though the public prosecutor may well have lacked the necessary resources, given the identity of the instigators of the massacre, it is more likely that political interference ended the investigation.

The second bout of large-scale ethnic killings also took place in the northwest of Rwanda. The Bagogwe are a Tutsi sub-group who were harassed from the first days of the war.<sup>7</sup> Already in late 1990, local authorities had stripped many of them of their possessions or else arrested them without reason.<sup>8</sup> However, when, on 23 January 1991, the RPF attacked and briefly captured Ruhengeri, one of the most important cities in the area, the Bagogwe were targeted for their supposed role as RPF accomplices. Eric Gillet and André Jadoul, two Belgian lawyers who investigated the attacks in 1992, wrote in their report that the “killings were rapidly of such a magnitude that it was possible to speak of massacres or even genocide. Very soon, numerous lists of victims were circulated.”<sup>9</sup> In Mukingo commune, the police and forest guards, with the assistance of the teachers and director of a local school, were ordered by the burgomaster to round up the local Bagogwe, whom they then “killed ... with stones, spears sticks and guns.”<sup>10</sup> One eyewitness explained:

at that time, around 1991, it was mainly soldiers and senior officials like Kajelijeli [the burgomaster] who would say they are taking these people [Bagogwe] for detention but

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<sup>3</sup> FIDH in collaboration with Africa Watch, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation on Human Rights Violations in Rwanda since October 1, 1990 (January 7-21 1993)* (Paris, March 1993), 11-13; Africa Watch, *Rwanda: Talking Peace and Waging War. Human Rights since the October 1990 Invasion* (Washington DC, 27 February 1992); Association rwandaise pour la défense des droits de la personne et des libertés publiques, *Rapport sur les Droits de l'Homme au Rwanda (Septembre 1991 – Septembre 1992)* (Kigali, December 1992), 109-116, for a list of those who were killed.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 101

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 102

<sup>6</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 14

<sup>7</sup> Association Rwandaise, *Rapport sur les Droits de l'Homme*, 117-134

<sup>8</sup> Africa Watch, *Rwanda: Talking Peace and Waging War*

<sup>9</sup> Comité pour le respect des droits de l'Homme et la démocratie au Rwanda (C.R.D.D.R.), *Rwanda: Rapport de Deux Missions Effectuées par Eric Gillet & André Jadoul Avocats au Barreau de Bruxelles au Rwanda du 9 au 17 Janvier et du 2 au 5 Février 1992* (Brussels, May 1992), 23. “Les persécutions ont consisté en pillages de maisons, en assassinats, en emprisonnements également. Les assassinats ont rapidement pris une ampleur telle que l'on a pu parler de massacres, voire de génocide. Très rapidement, de nombreuses listes de victimes ont circulé.”

<sup>10</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 19

actually they took them for massacres. ... When they were taken away, we were there. We watched it happening, as they were taken to the *communal* detention cells. They disappeared afterwards. And anyway, people like Kajelijeli said that these people have to be killed. And they -- first of all, they were taken into detention but at night they would take them, massacre them, and throw them into big pits.<sup>11</sup>

The houses and possessions of the dead were pillaged. Around the same time, on 27 January 1991, the burgomaster of Kinigi, Thaddeé Gasana, had his henchmen kill between 30 and 60 Bagogwe, some of whom were buried in a mass grave behind his house, which was later found by the International Commission of Investigation on Human Rights Violations in Rwanda.<sup>12</sup> Just days later, on 2 February, another 60 people, this time residents of Gaseke and Giciye, were killed by gangs encouraged by the authorities and supported by the police. Only one perpetrator was arrested and brought before a judge.<sup>13</sup> There were similar attacks in the northwest around 4 February, in Mutara, Kanama, Rwerere, and the city of Gisenyi, as well as in Kanzenze in the south. The attacks on the Bagogwe lasted about a month and a half but because of the region where they were occurring, close to the frontlines and the heartland of the northern clique, it took a long time for news to get out. It is unclear how many Bagogwe were killed, though most estimates count at least three hundred. The International Commission of Investigation on Human Rights, the report by Gillet and Jadoul and the *Associations rwandaises de défense des droits de l'Homme* all agree that the anti-Bagogwe violence was genocidal in intent.<sup>14</sup>

The speed with which the ethnic killings started after the outbreak of war is one of the strongest indicators that the popular memory of the Social Revolution – the acceptability of killing Tutsi and the associated impunity – was still present in Rwanda. Kibilira was about 100 km from the frontline and after only eleven days of war there was no reason to target Tutsis in the commune other than as an echo of the traditional reaction to *Inyenzi* attacks or other upheavals, such as the lead-up to the 1973 coup d'état. While the attacks were instigated by the local authorities, they seem to have had little trouble mobilising people to participate, in spite of some instances of resistance.

On 1 March 1992, a large *Parti libéral* rally took place in Nyamata, the main city of the Bugesera region, to the south of Kigali. Justin Mugenzi, the founder of the party, and François Gahima, the local leader, were both in attendance and accused the MRND mayor, Fidèle Rwambuka, and the sub-prefect, of various misdeeds. At the end of the rally, both the mayor and the sub-prefect made it clear that they would seek revenge. The next day an anonymous pamphlet was distributed which attacked the PL leaders and “called the local population, especially youngsters, to be on guard against these ‘bandits who hold you hostage

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<sup>11</sup> Transcript of, 11 October 2004. ICTR Bizimungu et al. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 42-44

<sup>12</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 19

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22

<sup>14</sup> Association rwandaise pour la défense des droits de la personne et des libertés publiques, *Rapport sur les Droits de l'Homme au Rwanda (Octobre 1992 – Octobre 1993)* (Kigali. December 1993), 165; FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 29

under the pretext of democracy.’ The tract concludes ‘they may not escape us.’<sup>15</sup> On 3 March 1992, Radio Rwanda broadcast a report which warned that Tutsi were going to kill important Hutu.<sup>16</sup> The night after this warning, attacks and killings started throughout Kanzenze; over the following five days, about 300 people were murdered.<sup>17</sup> A further 15,000 people fled their homes. As soon as he heard of the slaughters, Belgian Ambassador Johan Swinnen headed for Nyamata, where he arrived on 7 March. He first stopped at the Nyamata church and as the most important missionaries in the area were his compatriots, he was able to get a great deal of information on the situation:

at the moment of my visit (from noon to around 17H00) the refugees kept streaming in, many with mattresses, personal belongings ... in total one could already estimate around 4,000 to 5,000 ... In the apothecary dozens of heavily and less badly injured were being treated. I could count 15 bodies, including, two women and a boy of about eight. Most of the dead were the elderly who had not been able to flee. All victims had been horrifically attacked with machetes, sticks ... mostly to the head.<sup>18</sup>

According to Swinnen, there was no doubt that the provocative pamphlet had been written by the municipal authorities themselves. Both he and the French Ambassador, Martres, were shocked by the slow response of the forces of order.<sup>19</sup> Most of the witnesses he spoke to explained that, on the night of 6 to 7 March, Gendarmes and soldiers had stood by impassively or had even acted in concert with the killers. After the Ambassador returned to Kigali, he spoke with several opposition figures. On 8 March, he was visited by PL leader Mugenzi himself. Mugenzi claimed that it had not been a spontaneous outbreak of violence by Hutu peasants against their Tutsi neighbours, but that elements of the MRND militia, the *Interahamwe*, had been specially mobilised from Kigali.<sup>20</sup> Swinnen would later be told by a FAR colonel with MDR sympathies, Anselme Nhizirungu [Nshizirungu], that soldiers had actually actively taken part in the killings, some dressed in civilian clothes and wearing

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<sup>15</sup> From: Swinnen, Belgian Embassy, Kigali To: belext bru ‘Etnische onlusten in de bugesera – mijn bezoek aan nyamata’, 7 March 1992. FGT. “De plaatselijke bevolking, vooral de jongeren, worden opgeroepen tot waakzaamheid tegen deze ‘bandieten, die u gegijzeld houden onder voorwendsel van de democratie’. De tract besluit: ‘zij mogen ons niet ontsnappen’.”

<sup>16</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 27

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> From: Swinnen, Belgian Embassy, Kigali To: belext bru ‘Etnische onlusten in de bugesera – mijn bezoek aan nyamata’, 7 March 1992. FGT “Op het ogenblik van mijn bezoek (van ’s middags tot omstreeks 17 u) bleven de vluchtelingen toestromen, velen met matrassen, persoonlijke effecten en huisgerief. Het totaal kon toen reeds op ongeveer 4 a 5.000 geschat worden. ...in het dispensarium werden tientallen zware en minder zware gekwetsten verzorgd. Ik kon zelf vijftien lijken tellen w.o. twee vrouwen en een jongetje van ongeveer acht jaar. De meeste doden waren ouderlingen die niet in staat waren geweest om te vluchten. Alle slachtoffers waren gruwelijk met machetes, stokken en ... bewerkt, voornamelijk aan het hoofd.”

<sup>19</sup> From: Martres, French Embassy, Kigali To: - ‘Situation au Rwanda’, 9 March 1992. Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information par la mission d’information de la commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées et de la commission des affaires étrangères, sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d’autres pays et l’ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994* (Assemblée nationale, 15 December 1998), Annexes, 166 “La réaction des forces de l’ordre a été tardive. Le chef d’état-major des armées, le Colonel Serubuga, a déclaré, dans l’après-midi du 6, qu’il n’était pas au courant.”

<sup>20</sup> From: Swinnen, Belgian Embassy, Kigali To: belext bru ‘Onlusten bugesera – demarches – mijn onderhoud met pl-voorzitter Mugenzi’, 9 March 1992. FGT

MRND hats.<sup>21</sup> Again, as with the cases in north-western Rwanda, no one was prosecuted for the killings. Although the French soldiers of the 2e RIMa launched a two-day relief operation for the Tutsi refugees following the Bugesera massacres – during which they distributed food and blankets to 600 people in the parishes of Nyamata and Rilima – they had not intervened during the massacres themselves.<sup>22</sup> Considering the fact that the French had several hundred troops in Kigali, they could have swung into action on 7 March, the day Ambassador Swinnen reached the area.<sup>23</sup>

Following the killings in Nyamata, Ambassador Swinnen became increasingly concerned about the situation in Rwanda. On 8 March, he warned that the troubles should be rapidly brought under control because the potential existed for them to spread throughout the country.<sup>24</sup> He also sent several cables to Brussels, explaining that informants were communicating knowledge of a “secret general staff charged with exterminating the Tutsi in Rwanda.”<sup>25</sup> Besides several people close to the president, this “general staff” was alleged to have close contacts with the Rwandan secret service, the *Service central des renseignements* (SCR), and the National Academy of the Gendarmerie in Ruhengeri. According to Swinnen’s informants, this secret body could count on special teams made up of selected gendarmes in training, a hard core of Interahamwe which had received military training, as well as the Interahamwe’s rank and file.

### **The Arusha Negotiations**

Following the July 1992 ceasefire, the RPF and the government of Rwanda conducted protracted peace negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania. The negotiations centred around five topics: rule of law, power-sharing in a broad-based transitional government (BBTG), resettlement of Banyarwanda refugees currently outside of Rwanda, integration of the FAR and the RPA, and miscellaneous issues, which would be discussed one by one. Once consensus had been reached on the different topics, they would all be combined into the final peace treaty.

The Tanzanians acted as facilitators throughout the Arusha negotiations, with Ambassador Ami Mpungwe taking the lead. Moving the negotiations out of the sphere of influence of President Mobutu of Zaire changed the atmosphere of the talks. Tanzania was a stable country, and its troops had not been involved in Rwanda during the war. In addition, while sitting President Ali Hassan Mwinyi was not sympathetic to the RPF, former President Julius Nyerere, a giant of African liberation movements, and still influential behind the scenes, was

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<sup>21</sup> From: Swinnen, Belgian Embassy, Kigali To: belext bru ‘Getuigenis van rwandees officier over politieke toestand’, 25 March 1992. FGT Swinnen spells the name as “Nhizirungu”, though the correct spelling seems to be “Nshizirungu”.

<sup>22</sup> “Détachement NOROIT du 2e RIMa, Journal des Marches et Operations 05 mars 1992-13 juillet 1992” GR 2000Z 114 455. Service Historique de la Défense.

<sup>23</sup> Jacques Morel, *La France au cœur du génocide des Tutsi* (Paris: L’Esprit Frappeur, 2016), 82-84

<sup>24</sup> From: Swinnen, Belgian Embassy, Kigali To: belext bru ‘Etnische onlusten – demarche bij de rwandese overheid’, 8 March 1992. FGT “Snellen interventie is des te meer geboden daar ook elders in het land zich ernstige spanningen of conflicten voordoen. De vrees voor een bloedbad op nationale schaal is derhalve niet ongegrond.”

<sup>25</sup> From: Swinnen, Belgian Embassy, Kigali To: Willy Claes ‘Rwanda – Onlusten Bugesera’, 27 March 1992. FGT.

squarely in their camp. The Tanzanians were also experienced with these kinds of negotiations, as Ambassador Mpungwe explains.

We did a lot of studying about Rwanda, the conflict, the historical and contemporary dynamics of what was happening. We also had the opportunity to study other conflicts around Africa. We had been involved in the front line in Nigeria ... Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.<sup>26</sup>

The international community played an important role during the Arusha negotiations, as it had during the fighting. Especially interesting are the roles of France and Uganda. Both had observer status at the talks and supported their allies. However, both were also growing tired of the war and used their leverage to cajole both the RPA and the Rwandan government into agreements.<sup>27</sup> Other observers were the OAU, the United States, Belgium, Germany, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Zaire and the United Kingdom.

While the negotiations were straightforward for the RPF – whose aim was to obtain as advantageous a peace as possible – that was not the case for the delegation sent by the government of Rwanda. Within the multiparty government, three men were fully committed to a peace deal with the RPF: Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye (MDR), Minister of Defence James Gasana (MRND) and Foreign Minister Boniface Ngulinzira (MDR).<sup>28</sup> All three envisaged a peace encompassing not only an agreement with the RPF but also a normalisation of relations with Uganda.<sup>29</sup> The US Ambassador in Kigali noted after a meeting with Gasana and Ngulinzira that “the intention to sign a peace treaty with the RPF and to negotiate separately with Uganda are two important departures from the position of the former government that should open new avenues of discussion for all parties.”<sup>30</sup> The problem faced by the “doves” was that significant factions within their government, the MRND and the FAR did not support the idea of talking with the RPF or normalising relations with Uganda.

The first part of negotiations, on the rule of law, was concluded soon after the ceasefire agreement came into effect. On 18 August 1992, Foreign Minister Ngulinzira and Pasteur Bizimungu, a member of the executive committee of the RPF, signed the Protocol of Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front on the Rule of Law. The protocol stipulated that both sides agreed that post-war society would be based on national unity, democracy, pluralism and human rights. National unity implied “that the Rwandese people, as constituent elements of the Rwandese nation, are one and indivisible.” As such, it also entailed “the rejection of all exclusions and any form of

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<sup>26</sup> US Holocaust Museum and The Hague Institute for Global Justice, *International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide: Rwanda 1990-1994: Annotated Transcript* (The Hague. 1-3 June 2014), 1-10

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-26

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-16-17

<sup>29</sup> From: Flaten, US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘GOR outlines Strategy to Negotiations to End War’, 13 May 1992. “Rwanda: The Failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

discrimination based notably, on ethnicity, region, sex and religion.”<sup>31</sup> This protocol paved the way for the rest of the negotiations, because it enshrined the fundamental idea that both sides would form a broad-based transitional government (BBTG) until elections could be held at a later date.

This early success had been one of Ambassador Mpungwe’s goals. By starting with the non-contentious issues, he hoped to build trust between the negotiating parties.<sup>32</sup> However, the next part of the negotiations would not go so smoothly. Between September 1992 and January 1993, the RPF and the government of Rwanda delegation struggled to find a compromise on how power would be shared in the BBTG. Which ministries would go to which party, and how many ministries would each party have? Both President Habyarimana and certain members of the RPF delegation were responsible for the slow pace of the progress.

On 22 September 1992, Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye wrote a withering letter to President Habyarimana to try and unblock the negotiations. After explaining that the multiparty government had made good progress in several fields, especially in bringing about an enduring ceasefire with the RPF and the signing of the Protocol on the Rule of Law, the prime minister pointed to the existence of “blockages found at the level of government.” These – he contended – “could be quickly corrected if the constitutional powers of the President of the Republic, judged excessive by some, were deployed to unblock certain situations unnecessarily crippling the functioning of the administration.”<sup>33</sup> Nsengiyaremye, for instance, berated the attitude of MRND ministers in the multiparty government who, at this crucial time, had sulked through a cabinet meeting instead of cooperating. Rather than forcing the ministers of his party to cooperate, Habyarimana had proposed another meeting at a later date. Dismas also informed the president that his personal chief of staff had disrupted negotiations on 17 September, when he had demanded that the government of Rwanda delegation return to Kigali from Arusha, even though the negotiations were proceeding along the agreed lines.

In addition to his anger at the president’s lackadaisical attitude towards the Arusha negotiations, the prime minister also called him to account for several other ongoing problems in Rwanda. Firstly, the cabinet had unanimously agreed that a review should take place of all civil servants at the communal and prefecture levels. However, at a meeting on 18 September 1992, MRND ministers had refused to even look at the resulting report, which, according to Nsengiyaremye, might lead some “to conclude that this is the complicit protection of some mayors, especially those involved in the Murambi and Bugesera troubles,

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<sup>31</sup> Protocol of Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front on the Rule of Law, Annex III of the Arusha Accords. United Nations Peacemaker.

<sup>32</sup> US Holocaust Museum, *International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide*, 1-17

<sup>33</sup> From: Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye To: President Habyarimana ‘Etat d’exécution et situation de blocage du programme du Gouvernement de transition’, 22 September 1992. “010.RWA Relations with external Governments Rwanda (G)” UNHCR Archive. This comment was also a dig at the President, as many in the opposition thought that his powers had not been curtailed sufficiently during the formation of the multiparty government.

as well as the Bagogwe massacre.”<sup>34</sup> Secondly, the cabinet had yet to discuss the reintegration of soldiers who had been unjustly kicked out of the FAR. Thirdly,

The perpetrators of growing and blatant insecurity are still roaming and sowing terror and desolation everywhere. The interventionism of some authorities destroys any initiative of the public prosecutor’s office, the Gendarmerie and the administrative authorities.

As the Interahamwe is the only organisation that accepts soldiers into its ranks, and this “youth” is more supervised by police officers than by politicians, it should be called to order and should stop terrorizing the population. During the demonstrations of 28/07/1992 in Gitikinyoni, the active presence of elements of the Presidential Guard was noted. The Gendarmerie formally identified two who participated in this event. This is, to say the least, a strange situation, which needs to be normalised quickly.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the prime minister concluded his long missive by pointing out that:

It follows from the forgoing that you bear a double responsibility for blocking the action of the government, first as President of the Republic ... then as President of the MRND Party, which occupies half the ministerial positions in government and is the principal obstacle to the proper functioning of the cabinet. ... I urge you to put an end to these outdated and antidemocratic practises, which unnecessarily impede the implementation of the government programme. Also, in the superior interest of the nation I ask you to make a positive commitment to the process of democratization of Rwandan political life.<sup>36</sup>

This bold letter to Habyarimana aptly illustrates the main problems confronting the multiparty government as it tried to negotiate peace and move forward the democratic

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. “Certains peuvent conclure qu’il s’agit là d’une protection complice de quelques bourgmestres, notamment ceux impliqués dans les troubles de Murambi et de Bugesera ainsi que dans le massacre des Bagogwe.”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. “Les auteurs de l’insécurité grandissante et criante se promènent toujours et sèment partout la terreur et la désolation. L’interventionnisme de certaines autorités annihile toute initiative des services du Parquet, de la gendarmerie et des autorités administratives. Comme le groupe Interahamwe est la seule organisation qui accepte dans ses rangs les militaires, et que cette ‘jeunesse’ est encadrée plus par des policiers que par des politiciens, elle devrait être rappelée à l’ordre et cesser de terroriser la population. Lors des manifestations du 28/07/1992 à Gitikinyoni, l’on remarque la présence active des éléments de la Garde Présidentielle. Les services de la Gendarmerie en ont formellement identifié deux qui participaient à cette manifestation. Il s’agit d’une situation pour le moins étrange qu’il convient de normaliser rapidement.”

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. “Il ressort de ce qui précède que Votre responsabilité dans le blocage de l’action gouvernementale se trouve engagée et ce à double titre, d’abord comme Président de la République, Chef de l’Etat et Garant du bon fonctionnement des institutions, ensuite comme Président du parti MRND, parti occupant au Gouvernement la moitié des postes ministériels et principal frein au bon fonctionnement du Conseil des Ministres.

Comme ce blocage ne doit plus perdurer et qu’il est contraire à l’esprit et à la lettre du protocole d’entente du 7/4/92 et du programme gouvernemental, je Vous demande instamment de mettre fin à ces pratiques surannées et antidémocratiques qui entravent inutilement l’exécution du programme gouvernemental. Aussi, dans l’intérêt supérieur de la nation, je Vous prie de Vous engager positivement en faveur du processus de démocratisation de la vie politique rwandaise.

Si le Gouvernement de transition ne réussit pas à instaurer la démocratie et à ramener la paix dans le pays, tout son travail aura été vain et le peuple rwandais sera en droit de demander des comptes à tous ceux qui l’auront empêché de remplir sa mission.”

processes in the country. However, the government of Rwanda was not the only party suffering from internal disagreements.

As the Tanzanian facilitator Mpungwe reminded Patrick Mazimhaka, one of the RPF negotiators, at a conference held 25 years after the events, he, on occasion, had had to weigh on the RPF team and keep it in check.

As Patrick ... will recall, we pushed heavily on the RPF. You were more organized. Your position was unanimous. ... We would lean on the RPF. We told them, "We want a good agreement, not just any agreement." You may be stronger and smarter than the government on such and such a point, but we do not agree with you. We went to RPF headquarters in Mulindi and had direct discussions with Paul Kagame. I said, "Paul, your people in Arusha are being difficult, please assist."<sup>37</sup>

And, sometimes, the RPF did reprimand its negotiators. The British Defence Advisor in Uganda, Lt Col O'Brien, was told at a dinner party that

two representatives of the RPF at the Arusha talks were out of order in their strong stands demanding Habyarimana's stepping down and the degree of power sharing in the coalition. Prior to the talks, Kagame, the RPA Commander, and Museveni had briefed the two representatives and agreed on the line to take.<sup>38</sup>

The two representatives in question had strayed from the agreed line, and both Kagame and Museveni had been unpleasantly surprised when they heard about the positions they had taken. "The two representatives subsequently returned to RPF-held Rwanda and were arrested and put into jail, and were told that they would not be released unless they toed the line – which they subsequently agreed to do. ..."<sup>39</sup>

Three articles of the proposed protocol (14, 21 and 46) posed especially intractable problems.<sup>40</sup> Article 14 stipulated that the BBTG would consist of the organisations included in the multiparty government of 16 April 1992, as well as the RPF. However, this meant leaving out a new political party, the *Coalition pour la défense de la République* (CDR), which had only come into being after the swearing in of the multiparty government. This new extreme right-wing party was, according to Joyce Leader, the US deputy chief of mission in Kigali, "particularly feared by members of the opposition for its Ku Klux Klan-like approach to ethnic relations."<sup>41</sup> Because of its extreme stance on the ethnic issue, the RPF did not want

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<sup>37</sup> US Holocaust Museum, *International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide*, 1-34-35

<sup>38</sup> From: Lt-Col EJK O'Brien To: Deputy High Commissioner 'Conversation with Brigadier Shaban: Arusha Talks', 16 October 1992. "FOI 0421-17" FCO.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> From: Ewing, US Embassy, Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC 'Arusha V – Going ahead on nov 23, military integration to top agenda', 20 November 1992. "Rwanda: The Failure of the Arusha Peace Accords" National Security Archive.

<sup>41</sup> From: Leader, US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC 'Internal Insecurity: An Ongoing Problem', 21 August 1992.

the CDR to have a ministerial portfolio; the MRND, conversely, saw it as a valuable ally against a possible MDR, PSD, PL and RPF coalition.

The other two articles revolved around an issue which Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye had also highlighted in his letter to Habyarimana, namely the role and punishment of local authorities who had been implicated in massacres or human rights abuses. Article 46, in particular, stipulated that the BBTG government would get rid of all “incompetent elements as well as authorities who were involved in the social strife or whose activities are an obstacle to the democratic process and to national reconciliation.”<sup>42</sup> As many of those who had been implicated in the massacres were MRND party members, Habyarimana was keen to find ways of shielding them from prosecution, which is where article 21 came in. In general, article 21 governed how the BBTG cabinet would function, and how a majority of two-thirds would be sufficient to pass a decision. Yet it also outlined a number of exceptions to this rule, where decisions made by the cabinet had to be unanimous. The most important of these was the “exercise of the prerogative of mercy and mitigation of sentence.”<sup>43</sup> Considering the MRND would not command a majority in the cabinet, the chance of clemency for those who had been involved in ethnic killings or other human rights abuses was very small indeed. Taken together Articles 21 and 46 would ensure that the MRND would lose control of many civil service posts and that at least some of its members would be jailed.<sup>44</sup>

Despite objections to these articles, which would continue until January 1993, the government of Rwanda delegation signed the first part of the Protocol of Agreement on Power-Sharing within the Framework of a Broad-Based Transitional Government on 30 October 1992.

### **Habyarimana Reacts**

While President Habyarimana had never been particularly keen on the idea of negotiations, and had dragged his feet in any matter relating to the Arusha peace talks, he particularly balked at the power-sharing framework. Not only did the latter leave many of his MRND party members open to prosecution for past crimes, but it also severely curtailed the powers of the presidency itself.<sup>45</sup> Speaking to an MRND rally in Ruhengeri on 15 November, a mere two weeks after the signing of the Protocol of Agreement, Habyarimana called the Arusha peace talks nothing more than “a scrap of paper”<sup>46</sup> and a “civil coup d’état.”<sup>47</sup> Two days later, Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye sent him yet another long letter demanding an explanation.

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<sup>42</sup> Protocol of Agreement on Power-Sharing within the Framework of a Board-Based Transitional Government between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front, Annex IX of the Arusha Accords. United Nations Peacemaker.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 271

<sup>45</sup> US Holocaust Museum, *International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide*, 1-21-22

<sup>46</sup> From: Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye To: President Habyarimana, 17 November 1992. “010.RWA Relations with external Governments Rwanda (G)” UNHCR Archive.

<sup>47</sup> From: Ewing, US Embassy, Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Arusha V – Going ahead on nov 23, military integration to top agenda’, 20 November 1992 “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

The positions you have expressed on the Arusha Accords and on the security problems within the country, as well as your support to the Forces armées rwandaises and the Interahamwe to support your electoral campaign, have raised many questions on the future of the peace process and the democratic process in our country. ...

Regarding the peace process, you said that the Arusha Accords are just a scrap of paper ... and as such do not commit the Rwandan people. Such a declaration by an official of your rank, who calls into question the commitments of the government, constitutes a barely veiled disavowal of the Arusha Accords and opens the way for a resumption of hostilities. Therefore, it is my duty to remind you that such a move is contrary to the letter and spirit of the governmental program to which you and your party, the MRND, subscribed on 16/4/1992, as well as to the higher interests of the Rwandan nation. ...

The main objective of the Government's programme is to negotiate a peace agreement with the Rwandan Patriotic Front. This approach meets the aspiration of all Rwandans concerned about the future of their country. As there is no military solution to the fratricidal war that Rwanda has been experiencing for more than two years, a negotiated solution is the only way out for all the protagonists of this conflict.<sup>48</sup>

The prime minister then went on to explain that the negotiations being carried out by the government delegation led by Foreign Minister Ngulinzira were based on documents and discussions of the Rwandan cabinet. As such, the president would have been fully conversant with the substance of the talks. Even more importantly, no other members of the cabinet, including the MRND ministers, had disavowed any of the protocols signed at Arusha so far. Thus, the president's latest U-turn was unfounded, and the signed documents did "fully commit this government [to the peace process]."<sup>49</sup> Nsengiyaremye went on to ask "whether, like your ally, the CDR, the MRND also publicly denounces the Arusha Accords and

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<sup>48</sup> From: Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye To: President Habyarimana, 17 November 1992. UNHCR Archive. "Les positions que Vous avez exprimées sur les Accords d'Arusha et sur les problèmes de sécurité à l'intérieur du Pays, ainsi que les appuis aux Forces Armées Rwandaises et à la milice Interahamwe pour soutenir votre campagne électorale ont suscité beaucoup d'interrogations quant à l'avenir du processus de paix et du processus démocratique dans notre Pays.

1. Concernant le processus de paix, Vous avez déclaré que les Accords d'Arusha ne sont qu'un chiffon de papier ... et qu'à ce titre ils n'engagent pas le peuple rwandais. Une telle déclaration, de la part d'un responsable de Votre rang, qui met en cause les engagements du Gouvernement, constitue un désaveu à peine voilé des Accords d'Arusha et ouvre la voie à la reprise des hostilités. Dès lors il est de mon devoir de Vous rappeler que pareille démarche est contraire à la lettre et à l'esprit du programme gouvernemental auquel Vous-même et Votre parti, le MRND, avez souscrit le 16/4/1992 ainsi qu'à l'intérêt supérieur de la nation rwandaise.
  - i) Le programme du Gouvernement a pour objectif majeur la négociation d'un accord de paix avec le Front patriotique Rwandais. Cette approche rencontre l'aspiration de tous les Rwandais soucieux de l'Avenir de leur pays. Comme il n'y a pas de solution militaire à la guerre fratricide que vit le Rwanda depuis plus de 2 ans, une solution négociée s'impose à tous les protagonistes de ce conflit."

Note that while this letter has been mentioned by Guichaoua (*From War to Genocide*, 77-78) he does not give it the attention and prominence which it, in my opinion, deserves.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. "C'est dire donc que l'Accord de cessez-le-feu du 12 juillet 1992, le Protocole sur l'Etat de Droit du 18/8/92 ainsi que le Protocole sur le partage du Pouvoir du 30/10/92 constituent des documents du Gouvernement rwandais et à ce titre engagent pleinement ce Gouvernement."

therefore calls into question the peace process.”<sup>50</sup> If so, “you will have to take your responsibility before the Rwandan people and history, and assume, alone, the disastrous consequences of this position.”<sup>51</sup>

The prime minister also took umbrage with another part of the president’s speech, in which the latter had expressed pride in the fact that FAR soldiers and officers supported his electoral campaign. Nsengiyaremye remarked that soldiers were obliged by law to remain neutral; besides, he stressed, the electoral campaign had yet to be officially opened. “It is therefore regrettable that the top official is bragging, and publicly, about breaking the law.”<sup>52</sup> And since Habyarimana had heaped praise on the Interahamwe during the very same speech, Nsengiyaremye finished his letter by explaining that “it has repeatedly been pointed out that these youths include armed elements and should as such be disbanded in accordance with the law on political parties in Rwanda.”<sup>53</sup> The Rwandan prime minister was not the only person shocked at the president’s public disavowal of the Arusha negotiations. Ambassador Mpungwe and the Tanzanians were also “particularly miffed”<sup>54</sup> and “most upset.”<sup>55</sup> On 22 November 1992, the prime minister and the Tanzanians received Habyarimana’s answer to their outrage. Instead of taking a step back, the MRND escalated the issue when Léon Mugesera, MRND vice-chairman of the Gisenyi prefecture, delivered one of the most infamous speeches of this period of Rwandan history. After expressing his support for Habyarimana’s Ruhengeri speech, Mugesera told his audience that,

Recently, I told someone who came to brag to me that he belonged to the PL – I told him “The mistake we made in 1959, when I was still a child, is to let you leave.” I asked him if he had not heard the story of the Falashas, who returned home to Israel from Ethiopia? He replied he knew nothing about it! I told him “So don’t you know how to listen or read? I am telling you that your home is Ethiopia, that we will send you by the Nyabarongo so you can get there quickly!” ... Do not be afraid, know that anyone whose neck you do not cut is the one who will cut your neck. Let me tell you, these people should begin leaving while there is still time...<sup>56</sup>

Negotiations resumed in Arusha on the very day that Mugesera gave his inflammatory speech. However, by this point, Habyarimana had lost faith in Foreign Minister Ngulinzira,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. “Il y a lieu de préciser si, à l’instar de Votre allié, le CDR, le MRND aussi, dénonce publiquement les Accords d’Arusha et partant remet en cause le processus de paix.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. “Toutefois, si d’aventure il s’agissait d’une dénonciation de ces Accords, alors il faudra que Vous preniez vos responsabilités devant le peuple rwandais et devant l’histoire et assumiez, Seul, les conséquences désastreuses de cette position.”

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. “Il est donc regrettable que le plus haut responsable du pays se vante de transgresser la loi et ce publiquement.”

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. “Quant aux Interahamwe, il a été maintes fois rappelé que cette jeunesse comprend des éléments armés et qu’à ce titre elle devrait être dissoute conformément à la loi sur les partis politiques au Rwanda.”

<sup>54</sup> From: Ewing, US Embassy, Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Arusha V – Going ahead on nov 23, military integration to top agenda’, 20 November 1992. National Security Archive.

<sup>55</sup> From: Flaten, US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Integration of the Armies and Demobilisation’, 20 November 1992. “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

<sup>56</sup> Hearing held at Quebec 28 and 29 April 2003, Judgement at Ottawa 8 September 2003. *Leon Mugesera et al. v. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration*, 23-24

whom he now described to US Ambassador Robert Flaten as “a servant of the RPF and the parties for change.”<sup>57</sup> Because the government of Rwanda and the Tanzanians expected significant difficulties in the negotiation of the second part of the Protocol of Agreement, which would involve the actual division of ministerial portfolios among the political parties, it was suggested to change the subject to military integration instead.<sup>58</sup> For these two reasons, Habyarimana sent a delegation of FAR officers to join the government negotiating team. Composed of four colonels and a major, and lead by Colonel Bagosora, this delegation formed a parallel network through which the president could keep an eye on the foreign minister. Jean-Christophe Belliard, one of the French observers at the negotiations, remembers that

I worked a lot with Ngulinzira who listened to me. But I also knew that Ngulinzira was powerless. It was not him who took decisions. The real decisions were taken elsewhere. We could see that Kanyarushoki [the Rwandan Ambassador to Uganda, who also played a key role throughout the Arusha negotiations] was continually slowing things down and playing for time, while the third person, Bagosora, did not speak but seemed to think a lot. I had the sense that a lot of things got decided at his level.<sup>59</sup>

One of the biggest problems which came up during the talks was the disagreement between the MRND and the opposition parties on the division of the ministerial portfolios. Mediation was conducted by an interdenominational religious council, as had been the case during the initial formation of the multiparty government. While neither President Habyarimana – representing the MRND – and the CDR, nor Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye had initially wanted to budge, heavy pressure from the diplomatic community in Kigali and from the Tanzanians in Arusha eventually proved decisive.<sup>60</sup> On 9 January 1993, the two sides signed the second part of the Protocol of Agreement on Power-Sharing within the Framework of a Broad-Based Transitional Government. However, as the next section will show, there was significant opposition to the Protocol back in Rwanda.

### **Provoking a Resumption of Hostilities**

Both the MRND and the CDR had already been upset by the first part of the Protocol on Power-Sharing. The second part sent them into a frenzy. Not only was the CDR excluded from the BBTG, but the RPF and the MRND were allocated the same number of ministerial portfolios. Resorting to violence was a way for the MRND and the CDR to sabotage the peace process without looking like fools before the international community in Arusha. Writing to Geneva, a UNHCR employee explained that, “since Monday [18 January]

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<sup>57</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Demarches to President and Prime Minister’, 14 December 1992. FGT.

<sup>58</sup> From: Ewing, US Embassy, Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Arusha V – Going ahead on nov 23, military integration to top agenda’, 20 November 1992. National Security Archive.

<sup>59</sup> US Holocaust Museum, *International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide*, 1-26

<sup>60</sup> From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Demarches to President and Prime Minister’, 14 December 1992. FGT; and From: Bagosora To: Habyarimana ‘Negotiations in Arusha from 22 November 1992 to 9 January 1993’, 15 January 1993. “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

incidents have broken out in Kibungo, Butare, Gikongoro, Cyangugu, Gisenyi and Kigali. ... [the] political class appears to be badly split over protocol on power-sharing signed at Arusha on 09/01/1993.”<sup>61</sup> Two days later, the violence spread to Kigali, and the situation spiralled out of control:

MRND supporters erected roadblocks in all entry and exit points to Kigali, thus preventing people from entering or leaving. In downtown Kigali numerous roadblocks brought the city to a virtual standstill. Shops, banks, schools and offices, public and private, were closed and traffic was almost non-existent as all vehicles with exception of those holding diplomatic plates were prevented from circulating. Authorities report fierce clashes between opposing political parties resulting in scores of people injured amid passive and sometimes complacent attitudes of security forces. More than 100 injured people were reportedly taken to hospital. Moreover ugly scenes of looting and rampage in Kigali shantytowns by uncontrolled mobs and heavily armed thugs were the order of the day thus creating a climate of widespread panic amongst the powerless population. ... Both MRND and CDR have announced that they will continue their opposition campaign against the Arusha Protocol of agreement by staging further demonstrations in the coming days. Their latest demand is that the Prime Minister should step down. In sum, the test of wills between the ruling MRND party and the opposition parties is engaged in earnest.<sup>62</sup>

20 January 1993 also saw another important development on the Rwandan political scene. A letter was circulated around Kigali announcing the existence of the *Alliance des militaires agacés par les séculaires actes sournois des Unaristes* (AMASASU), in translation, the “Alliance of Soldiers Annoyed by the Underhand Secular Acts of the Unarists.” In Kinyarwanda, *amasusu* means “bullets” which explains why the unwieldy name was chosen. The authors of the letter remained anonymous but they purported to be a group within the military animated by the intention to “thwart the malicious plans of the members of the UNAR party who have been aggressing us from 1959 to the present. We support political pluralism and democracy with all our might because we want to see real justice established in Rwanda ...”<sup>63</sup> In other words, AMASASU wanted to make sure that the RPF, which it equated with the old UNAR monarchist party, would not be able to return to Rwanda. The next sentence invoked another memory from the Social Revolution, namely that real democracy and justice in Rwanda would always favour the Hutu majority of the country. Turning even more sinister, the letter also explained that,

We know, as you do Mr. President, that we are fighting on the borders of our country whilst on the inside there are individuals who support our aggressors publicly and with impunity. If these blackmailing *Inyenzi* start the war once again, how do you plan on preventing us from teaching these inside traitors the lesson they deserve? After all we

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<sup>61</sup> From: Tshitungi, UNHCR Kigali To: UNHCR ‘Political Situation Rwanda’, 21 January 1993. “010.RWA Relations with external Governments Rwanda (G)” UNHCR Archive.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> From: AMASASU to: His Excellency the President ‘Creation of AMASASU’, 20 January 1993. “Exhibit Number: P3D1(b), Date Admitted: 78-09-2002” *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T.

have already identified the most virulent among them and we shall act with the speed of lightning!<sup>64</sup>

This message was right along the lines of Mugesera's speech just a few months before. It is difficult to follow the logic of AMASASU. By this point, it was already clear that for the FAR there was no military solution to the war: it was too weak to hope to fight and prevail against the RPA. More importantly, the causes of the weakness of the FAR had nothing to do with treacherous elements within Rwanda, but rather with the corruption and incompetence of the officer corps. However, AMASASU, which was probably composed of elements inside the military intelligence services of the FAR, does not seem to have fully understood this reality.

By the end of the month, it was clear that it was not just opposition party members who were being targeted by MRND and CDR militias. An ethnically-motivated attack on USAID employees provoked a scolding reply from the State Department, which ordered its ambassador to give Habyarimana a dressing down.<sup>65</sup> Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye also insisted in a letter to the president that the massacre of civilians had to stop.<sup>66</sup> On 28 January, an open letter, signed by all the major domestic and international human rights groups, denounced the ethnic massacres which had recently taken place in the north of the country. Over 250 people had been killed over the preceding weeks just because they were Tutsi. The letter presented two examples. In one instance, the aggressors had put up an illegal roadblock and stopped a bus. They had forced the passengers to get off and show their identity cards for an ethnicity check. Then, having picked out four people, they had proceeded to kill them, dumping their bodies in a common grave. In another instance, an old Tutsi couple had been burned alive in their house. When their son returned home for the burial, he too was set upon by "aggressors."<sup>67</sup>

Considering that these massacres took place in the very region where Habyarimana and Mugesera had renounced the Arusha Accords and, in the case of the latter, called for genocide, there is little doubt that local MRND authorities, supported by their colleagues at the national level, were behind the murders. As a French Embassy councillor who had

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

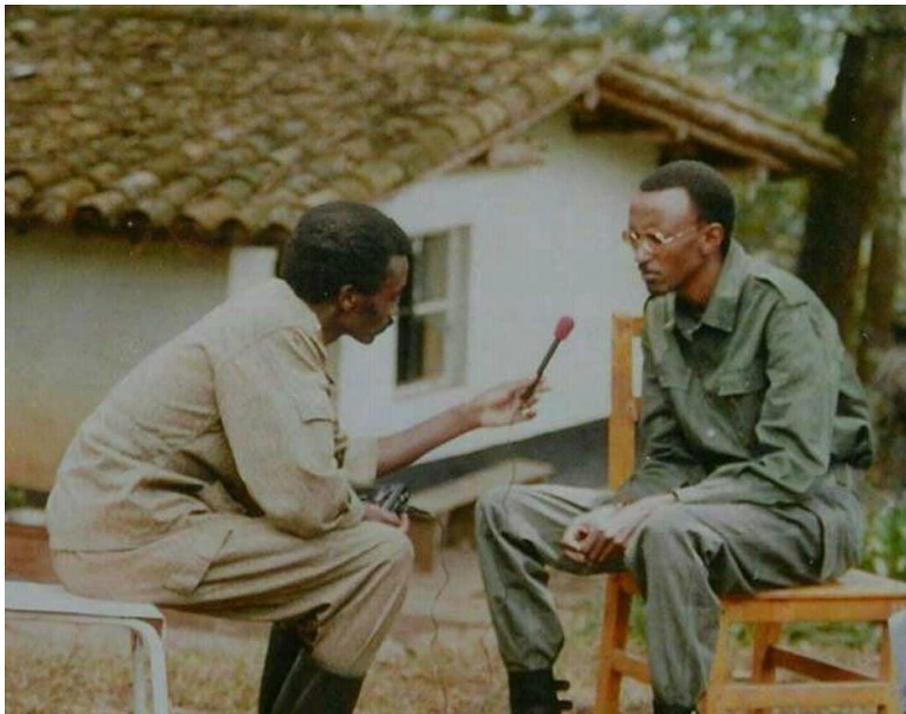
<sup>65</sup> From: Secretary of State, Washington DC To: US Embassy, Kigali 'demarche on President Habyarimana', 27 January 1993. FGT. "The recent episode of ethnically-motivated violence against employees of a USAID-funded CARE project requires an immediate response. Moreover, it seems increasingly obvious that it is symptomatic of a pattern whereby the President is tolerating if not encouraging political violence in order to create a situation where only he can save the country."

<sup>66</sup> From: Prime Minister Dismas Nsengirayeme To: President Habyarimana 'Poursuite des négociations d'Arusha', 24 January 1993. FGT.

<sup>67</sup> Association Rwandaise, *Rapport sur les Droits de l'Homme (Octobre 1992 – Octobre 1993)*, 160-164 "Jusqu'à la date du 28 janvier, il y a eu au moins 78 morts dans la commune Ramba, 184 dans la communes de Satinsyi et 8 dans la commune de Kanara. Pour ne citer que deux exemples frappants de ces massacres, lundi le janvier, des agresseurs ont dressé un barrage illégal sur la ligne Ngororero-Gitarama et ont arrêté un bus à Satinsyi. Ils ont fait descendre tous passagers et, après vérification de leurs cartes d'identité pour établir l'ethnicité et le lieu d'origine, quatre passagers, dont une femme, ont été tués ... les cadavres ont été jetés dans une fosse commune. A Kayove, un vieux couple Tutsi a été brûlé vif à l'intérieur de leur maison incendiée ; leurs fils, curé de la paroisse de Muhororo, a été recherché à son tour par agresseurs lors de son retour de l'enterrement."

travelled to the northwest told Belgian Ambassador Swinnen, “the attacks against the Tutsis appear methodical and organised, they are not spontaneous reactions by the population. The MRND and the CDR have been identified as the instigators of the unrest.”<sup>68</sup> The Ugandan government, for its part, was even convinced that the president was “personally implicated.”<sup>69</sup>

The RPF was now faced with a difficult situation. On one hand, they confronted a recalcitrant president who had personally disavowed the Arusha peace talks, followed by Mugesera’s call for genocide. On the other, they had established a working relationship with opposition parties which were genuinely committed to the peace process. To make matters worse, Tutsi were now being killed in the immediate proximity of the RPA forward positions. These killings were a clear breach of the July 1992 modified N’Sele Ceasefire Agreement (see chapter VII), whose Article VII had stipulated that “‘Cessation of hostilities’ shall mean the end of all military operations, all harmful civil operations and denigrating and unfounded propaganda through the mass media.”<sup>70</sup>



*Ndore Rurinda interviews the Chairman of the High Command, Paul Kagame, for Radio Muhabura at Mulindi during a lull in the fighting.*

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<sup>68</sup> From: Ambabel Kigali To: belextru, ‘Troubles dans le nord-ouest du pays’, 27 January 1993. FGT. “les attaques contre les tutsis ont un caractère méthodique et organisé, il ne s’agit pas de réactions spontanées de la population. MRND et CDR sont désignés comme instigateurs des troubles.”

<sup>69</sup> From: Cullimore, Kampala To: Deskby FCO ‘Unrest in Rwanda’, 11 February 1993. “FOI 0676-17” FCO.

<sup>70</sup> The N’sele Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Rwandese Republic and the Rwandese Patriotic Front. UN Peacemaker, 14



*Radio Muhabura: The prominence of this volcano, which can be seen from many places in Rwanda on a clear day, means that it is known as Mount Muhabura, the Kinyarwanda word for guide. Not only did the RPF Radio Station, from whose bush studio this picture was taken, look out over Muhabura, but it also hoped to guide Rwandans to embrace the philosophy of the RPF. It was no wonder the radio station took the name of the volcano.*

### **The 8 February 1993 Offensive**

As Roessler and Verhoeven point out, the motto of Paul Kagame throughout the Struggle for Liberation was *si vis pacem, para bellum*, “if you want peace, prepare for war.”<sup>71</sup> This meant that the RPA had not been idle in spite of the eight-month ceasefire. Inter-unit sports events had kept the morale and physical fitness up, as the different battalions competed in football, basketball and volleyball leagues. Paul Kagame and other officers also visited the units, laying out why the decision had been taken to negotiate with the government of Rwanda at Arusha. “It was explained why are we asking this percentage [of government ministries and], why [we do] not take it all since we are the better guys. They were all explained that this was nation building. It was not eating the cake. We are not dividing the cake; we are nation building.”<sup>72</sup> Occasionally, the RPF politicians who were at Arusha would come and explain the process to the troops themselves. RPA members who had not visited the political schools in Uganda, but had gone directly to the front, followed classes organised by the RPF, or by the RPA Political Commissars, in which they were taught the history of Rwanda, why the Banyarwanda were refugees and some Marxist theory. The syllabus also included a chapter on the indispensable role of women and youths in the Struggle.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven, *Why Comrades Go to War: Liberation Politics and the Outbreak of Africa's Deadliest Conflict* (London: Hurst, 2016), 124

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 18 October 2018

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Christine Umutoni, 30 May 2019

Besides investing in the mental wellbeing of the troops, the RPA also reorganised its fighting units. Eight Combined Mobile Forces (CMF) were created from various battalions and columns. Each consisted of between 1,000-2,000 soldiers and carried enough heavy equipment – mortars, recoilless guns, and heavy machine guns – to be able to operate independently. Each CMF was led by capable, and by now very experienced, battlefield commanders who were well versed in the RPA combat doctrine of mobile warfare. An all-female unit led by NRA-veteran Nuriat Nambaje, Yankee Mobile, was also formed. While women had until now been spread throughout RPA units, it was decided that, considering the length of the ceasefire, it would be better if the force were generally – although not stringently – segregated, “Women empowerment was preached from the highest levels of command. Both in the political wing and the military wing women were well organised and had a voice.”<sup>74</sup>

As the ceasefire meant that the RPF/RPA were now stationary in Mulindi, regular supply lines were set up which brought food and weapons to the front. Christine Umutoni explains that the division of labour between the RPF and the RPA was important in this respect. In many guerrilla movements, tensions arise between the frontline troops, who are considered heroes, and those who organise their supplies, whose contribution tends to be belittled. However, the RPA saw, and the High Command explained to the troops, that it was the political wing of the organisation, the RPF, which organised the Banyarwanda community, bought supplies, and transported these to the frontline. The mutual respect between the two branches is shown by the fact that RPA troops were required to salute their RPF comrades, even though the latter were not soldiers, “and they all did, such was their discipline.”<sup>75</sup>

In deciding how they would react to the ethnic killings in northern Rwanda, the RPF had to take several factors into consideration. Both sides had earlier violated the N’Sele Ceasefire Agreement by expanding their military arsenals.<sup>76</sup> However, the murder of Tutsi in the open, following the provocations by the president, could not be ignored. The opposition in Rwanda was in no position to stop these killings, or to make sure they would not resume in future as the Arusha Accords were being implemented. Perhaps more important was that these killings represented everything the RPF was against. What would its supporters, inside and outside Rwanda, and its soldiers, some of whom might have had family members who were being killed, feel if the RPF sat on its hands? Faced with these facts, the RPF felt it had no other choice but to resume hostilities. Other reasons for the RPF attacks have been put forward. Both Linda Melvern and Bruce Jones argue that the RPF wanted to ensure that when negotiations resumed, they would be able to demand a larger share in the post-war Rwandan

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<sup>74</sup> Correspondence with Christine Umutoni, 23 July 2019

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> There is much documentation of the weapons imported by the FAR; see, for example, Human Rights Watch, *Arming Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War*. (New York, January 1994)

army.<sup>77</sup> Though this might have been an additional reason to resume hostilities and troop levels had briefly come up at Arusha, they were not being discussed when hostilities recommenced.

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<sup>77</sup> Linda Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (London: Zed Books, 2009), 65; Bruce Jones, "The Arusha Peace Process", in *The path of a Genocide*, eds Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (New Brunswick: Transactional Publishers, 2000), 141



Once the decision was taken, the RPA was ready to swing into action at a moment's notice. As Caesar Kayizari explains:

our leadership could not hold its arms and see everything going in smoke. So immediately quick attack. ... All forces were to attack in their sector. To tell these guys that ... If you want to fight as you have always insisted, we are available for a fight. And what we did, we made a deep attack. ... We bypassed their trenches, we bypassed their front units and attacked their rear forces.<sup>78</sup>

On 8 February 1993, all RPA units attacked simultaneously. Charlie Mobile, under the command of Willex Kiiza, moved through the Virunga Mountains and attacked Ruhengeri, which was captured on the same day, with the exception of Lt Col Bizimungu's command post.<sup>79</sup> Caesar Kayizari, who was in command of one of the companies that took the town, remembers: "I was in the town, on the airfield, that is where my company ... went in, others went on the hills overlooking the city."<sup>80</sup> In response, the FAR brought in extra troops from Gisenyi and Gitarama and launched a counterattack the next day. The fighting was intense and, on 10 February, the RPA decided to pull out of the centre of town.

The briefing we had got from the command in chief had said ... "Go fight to punish the enemy that is killing the Rwandese people. Don't waste a lot of your personnel on capturing territory, fight punchy, and if you see you have done the punishment, pull back to better strategic positions." The purpose was to force him ... back to Arusha.<sup>81</sup>

On the eastern flank of Charlie Mobile, three CMFs, Alpha, Bravo and Delta, commanded by Sam Kaka, Ludoviko "Dodo" Twahirwa and Vedaste Kayitare, respectively, pushed through the gap between Lac Ruhondo and Byumba. Further east, 7 Mobile, led by Theogene Bagire, struck around Nyagatare.<sup>82</sup> On every front, the RPA pushed back the FAR, inflicting enormous casualties. Only around Ruhengeri and Byumba did the FAR mount a tenacious resistance. A major advantage of the RPA during the fighting was its combat doctrine, which was understood throughout the force. As Caesar Kayizari explains, "While it was centralised command, it was decentralised execution on our part. The commander-in-chief is commanding it, but he allows freedom of manoeuvre to the lower commanders as they assess the territory."<sup>83</sup> This flexibility allowed commanders to react quickly to developments on the battlefield without having to refer back to the High Command for their every move.<sup>84</sup>

By 15 February 1993, as Bruno Delaye, an advisor on African Affairs to President Mitterrand, reported after a visit to Kigali and Kampala, the RPA was "militarily in a position

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 18 October 2018

<sup>79</sup> Bernard Lugan, *François Mitterrand, l'armée française et la Rwanda* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 2005), 122

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 18 October 2018

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Or, in military technical lingo, it reduced the RPA's John Boyd's observe-orient-decide-act (OODA) cycle.

to take Kigali,”<sup>85</sup> while President Habyarimana and Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye were at odds with each other. The President wanted to fight to the end and told Delaye that it was “better to die than to submit to the Tutsi.”<sup>86</sup> The prime minister, on the contrary, wanted to negotiate. With the FAR crippled on the battlefield and Rwandan politicians unable to take control of the situation, the French were left in a tight spot:

we are at the limit of the strategy of indirect support to the Rwandan Armed Forces. ... Their degree of motivation is too uneven (because of differences between northern and southern Hutus) to contemplate a stabilisation of the military balance of power with equanimity. If the front were to cave in, **we would have no other choice but to evacuate KIGALI** (the official mission of our two infantry companies is to protect expatriates), **unless we want to become cobelligerents.**<sup>87</sup>

On 20 February, now only 30 km from Kigali, the RPF announced a unilateral ceasefire and stopped major offensive operations.<sup>88</sup> According to Caesar Kayizari, the RPA stopped on the brink of total victory “because the international mood was in Arusha, so if you begin capturing Kigali it is too much ... and that is Kagame’s uniqueness in studying the situation.”<sup>89</sup>

The French reaction to the RPA offensive was to increase support to the FAR. Firstly, large amounts of ammunition were flown to Rwanda, especially for the FAR’s artillery. Secondly, *Opération Noroît* was reinforced with two companies, bringing its strength up to several hundred.<sup>90</sup> The top brass of the RPA and the RPF might also have factored this into their decision to stop the offensive, as a direct confrontation with French troops would carry enormous risks. Thirdly, a detachment from 1e RPIMa was sent to help the FAR stabilise the situation. Colonel Didier Tauzin, who was in command of the assistance mission (*Opération Birunga*), and his team from the 1e RPIMa took off from Biarritz in their Transall C-160 at 0600 on 21 February. They arrived in Kigali the next day around noon, after a short stop in Bangui, Central African Republic. Colonel Tauzin was also immediately given command of the French troops who made up the DAMI, most of whom were also members of the 1e RPIMa.<sup>91</sup> Tauzin quickly decided that to reverse the tide of battle, a parallel command

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<sup>85</sup> From: Bruno Delaye To: Président de la République ‘Rwanda: Mission à Kigali et Kampala’, 15 February 1993. FGT. “Il est militairement en mesure de prendre Kigali.”

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. “Mieux vaut mourir que d’être soumis aux Tutsi.”

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. “Nous sommes aux limites de la stratégie indirecte d’appui aux forces armées rwandaises. (Nous accélérons les livraisons de munitions et matériels). Leur degré de motivation est trop inégal (en raison des divergences entre hutus du Nord et hutus du Sud) pour envisager avec sérénité une stabilisation du rapport de forces militaires. Au cas où le front serait enfoncé, **nous n’aurions d’autre choix que d’évacuer KIGALI** (la mission officielle de nos deux compagnies d’infanterie est de protéger les expatriés), **à moins de devenir cobelligérants.**”

<sup>88</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997), 177

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari 18 October 2018; Stephen Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda’s Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2008), 104-105

<sup>90</sup> Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information*, 164

<sup>91</sup> Didier Tauzin, *Rwanda : je demande justice pour la France et ses soldats* (Paris: Éditions Jacob-Duvernet, 2011), 67-68

structure, in which French officers advised their FAR colleagues at all important headquarters, would have to be put in place.

As soon as I returned to Kigali, I visited Colonel Nsabimana. ... This true warrior had not given up, but the way he greeted us showed that our arrival represented his last chance to turn around a disastrous situation. He is clearly prepared to accept anything I ask. He will *de facto* place himself under my command and will execute without fail all the orders drawn up for him by Chéreau [full name and rank unknown] who will take charge of his general staff with two or three officers.<sup>92</sup>

Besides the general staff, French officers were also embedded in the three frontline sector commands: Lt Col Gégou, supported by a team 12 specialists from the 1e RPIMa, was sent to Byumba to fight alongside Lt Col Gratien Kabiligi; Lt Col Gilles Chollet, who had been in command of the DAMI, was sent with his team to support Lt Col Bizimungu in the Ruhengeri sector; and the team of Lt Col Étienne Joubert was deployed to the central sector around Rulindo. Besides these advisers, there were two other teams. One supported the FAR heavy artillery batteries, while the other, composed of engineers, roamed the frontline helping to construct defensive positions.<sup>93</sup>

Although the RPA had declared a unilateral ceasefire on 20 February, Tauzin's account suggests that heavy fighting continued after that date. The fighting around Ruhengeri and Byumba was not going the way of the FAR, but the mortal threat was in the central sector around Rulindo and Tumba. There, Sam Kaka's Alpha Mobile had pushed the FAR back and was only 30 km from the centre of Kigali. Crucially, the RPA was also threatening to cut the Kigali-Ruhengeri road, which would mean that moving reinforcements from sector to sector would become much harder for the FAR.<sup>94</sup> It is unclear if Alpha Mobile had already occupied this key position before 20 February, and was just conducting minor operations to improve its frontline, or whether it was actually still attacking.

As is the habit of special forces, airborne soldiers selected for their aggression and initiative, Colonel Tauzin set about organising a counterattack. The plan was for the FAR to attack from the Byumba salient and capture Kissaro, cutting off the RPA spearheads and exposing their rear.<sup>95</sup> It took until 27 February to assemble the 3,000 men who were to carry out the offensive, codenamed Miyove. But difficulties in assembling the required munitions and lack of transport meant that the offensive was repeatedly postponed. Towards the end of February, with negotiations set to resume at Arusha, the French government decided that the offensive

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 71 "Dès mon retour à Kigali, je rends visite au colonel Nsabimana ... Ce vrai guerrier ne baisse pas les bras, mais sa façon de nous accueillir me montre que notre arrivée est pour lui la dernière chance de redresser une situation désastreuse. Il est manifestement prêt à accepter tout ce que je lui demanderai. Il se mettra *de facto* sous mon commandement et exécutera sans aucun faille tous les ordres qui seront préparés pour lui par Chéreau [full name and rank unknown] qui, avec deux ou trois officiers, prendra la direction de son état-major."

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 72

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 74; Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 18 October 2018

<sup>95</sup> Didier Tauzin, *Rwanda*, 76

would be detrimental to diplomatic efforts to reimpose a ceasefire and cancelled *Opération Miyove*.

Eighteen years later, when Colonel, by then General, Tauzin wrote his book on Rwanda, he argued that *Opération Miyove* might have been a turning point in the war. He believed that, under French command and with the massive support of its heavy artillery, the FAR would have been able to break the RPA.<sup>96</sup> However, this assessment seems overly optimistic. Tauzin and his team had only been on the ground for a week, and they could only have restored by so much the fighting power of the FAR. In early February, and despite months of ceasefire, the FAR had been smashed by the RPA attack, and by the end of the month, its troops would still have been disorganised and demoralised. Nor – contrary to what Tauzin seems to think – would the FAR and the French have found an RPA with a weakened impetus or morale. After all, it had not been the FAR that had stopped the RPA offensive, but rather Paul Kagame himself.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, Tauzin’s analysis clashes with that of Pierre Joxe, the French minister of defence at the time, who wrote to President Mitterrand on 26 of February that

the Rwandan army no longer fights ... I struggle to see why the RPF would abandon such a close victory, which would, no doubt, not even require a general offensive on its part. ... he [Habyarimana] is, by his political intransigence, and his incapacity to mobilize his own army, largely responsible for the current fiasco. If the RPF retakes the offensive, our soldiers could, in a matter of hours, find themselves face to face with the rebels.<sup>98</sup>

On 7 March, the RPF and the government of Rwanda met in Dar es Salaam to sign a new ceasefire agreement which would enable both parties to return to the negotiating table at Arusha. One of the clauses of the ceasefire obliged the RPA to withdraw to its pre-8 February offensive positions in northern Rwanda. This caused a serious internal debate within the RPF, and was seemingly one of the few occasions in which grave doubts were raised about Kagame’s decisions throughout the organisation. Tito Rutaremara clearly remembers that

Kagame had [to do] a lot to convince us to go behind [the original frontline]. He worked very hard ... The civilians wanted to keep [the captured territory] ... and there were even some military people who were behind us. ... At the end we understood that we could not have the international community against us. We had to bend a bit. ... He understood it before us. And he fought it, to make us understand it. ... It was only one or two days, and then we understood it, and then we went on mobilising the others. ... He gave the order to go and explain it to our members outside Rwanda. To go out and start telling our cadres in Burundi, Zaire, Uganda, Tanzania and we went on explaining. ... I was given that work to go and explain to our cadres and our political organisation outside.<sup>99</sup>

James Kabarebe, who was Kagame’s ADC at the time, remembers that all the important officers assembled for a meeting in territory which had been captured during the 8 February offensive. Once there, Kagame asked them three questions: “First, ‘How did you get here?’

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 79

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 76

<sup>98</sup> From: Pierre Joxe To: Président François Mitterrand ‘Rwanda’, 26 February 1993. “The Rwandan Crisis seen Through the Eyes of France” National Security Archive.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Tito Rutaremara, 9 October 2018; Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills*, 106-107

The assembled officers answered, ‘On our feet.’ Well, Kagame replied, ‘You still have both your feet.’ Second, ‘What equipment did you have?’ The answer was ‘Guns.’ Well, the chairman of the High Command concluded, ‘Now you have more guns because we captured many.’ Third, ‘Considering all this, could you come back if you so willed?’ To which the officers answered ‘Yes we could.’<sup>100</sup> Besides meeting with the High Command, Kagame went to all the CMFs to personally explain to the soldiers why he was asking them to give up the ground that many of their comrades had died to capture. In Caesar Kayizari’s view, the authority which Kagame had accrued by leading the RPA from victory to victory allowed him to convince the soldiers of the need to give up the territory they had captured and permit negotiations to resume.<sup>101</sup>

As this thesis has looked at the FAR’s complicity in war crimes and ethnic killings, and will do so in the next section as well, it is worth briefly examining the human rights record of the RPA. There were accusations of sporadic RPF and RPA’s human rights abuses from the start of the war.<sup>102</sup> The March 1993 FIDH report stated that the RPF had been “guilty of attacking civilian targets, of summary executions, forced expulsions of populations, injuring civilians, and pillage and destruction of property.”<sup>103</sup> The report also notes that abuses and the plunder of cattle and other foodstuffs were especially common once the RPA had suffered defeat at the end of October 1990. It is undoubtedly true that the RPA lived off the land to an important degree throughout the war. Healthcare centres were often raided to steal medicines and bandages. Similarly, FAR’s positions were often raided for their weapons. There is little doubt that similar raids would have been carried out to obtain cattle or other foodstuffs.

According to Prunier, it is clear that the RPA committed war crimes during the 8 February Offensive.<sup>104</sup> His assessment is backed up by CLADHO (*Comité de liaison des associations rwandaises de défense des droits de l’Homme*), an association of Rwanda’s five big human rights associations. As CLADHO was fearless in its criticism of the FAR and the Habyarimana government, its assessment is above suspicion.<sup>105</sup> Both Prunier and CLADHO put the death toll of those who were arbitrarily executed at between 50 and 150. The exact causes of these killings – were they revenge acts for the ethnic killings which the MRND had committed in previous weeks? – and the reaction of the RPA High Command remains unknown.

Onerous as these killings might have been, the most important contribution by the RPF to the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda was its policy of pushing the population out of its zone of control (though it should be noted that a large portion of the IDPs in Rwanda were not from the zone which the RPA occupied). While the reasons for the RPF’s policy were logical – the

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with James Kabarebe, 16 October 2018; I am paraphrasing Kabarebe here, as the interview was not recorded.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 18 October 2018; Interview with Ndore Rurinda, 5 October 2018

<sup>102</sup> Africa Watch, *Rwanda: Talking Peace and Waging War. Human Rights since the October 1990 Invasion*. (Washington DC, 27 February 1992), 22-23

<sup>103</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 37

<sup>104</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 175

<sup>105</sup> Association rwandaise pour la défense des droits de la personne et des libertés publiques, *Rapport sur les Droits de l’Homme au Rwanda (Octobre 1992 – Octobre 1993)* (Kigali, December 1993), 172; Africa Watch/Human Rights Watch, *Beyond the Rhetoric: Continuing Human Rights Abuses in Rwanda*. (Washington DC, June 1993)

RPF would not be able to feed or care for the population, or control it – the hundreds of thousands of refugees housed in atrocious conditions in camps throughout Rwanda certainly contributed to the destabilisation of the country. It also should be noted that the population which remained in the RPF zone was well treated, if tightly controlled.<sup>106</sup>

### **The Situation Following the 8 February 1993 Offensive**

In the next chapter, we will turn to the continuation and conclusion of the Arusha negotiations. Before doing so, however, we will examine the parlous state in which Rwanda found itself after the 8 February 1993 offensive. Under the combined pressures of economic collapse and the war, Rwandan society began to break at the seams. From late 1992 onwards, the forces of order were no longer able to contain a multitude of threats to ordinary Rwandans – threats which were often caused by active or former members of the security forces themselves. It is in this context of social and state collapse that the Arusha Accords eventually failed.

The situation is well summed up by a letter to President Habyarimana signed by the leaders of the three main opposition parties, Faustin Twagiramungu, Dr Theoneste Gafaranga and Justin Mugenzi, from the MDR, PSD and PL, respectively. On 19, 21 and 24 May, these three parties had come together to discuss the deteriorating security in the country. The immediate cause for these meetings had been the murder of Emmanuel Gapyisi, a member of the central committee of the MDR and the party president for the Gikongoro prefecture. He was considered a rising star and one of the more interesting and popular politicians in Rwanda. His appeal came from his anti-RPF, anti-Habyarimana, but pro-Hutu ideology: a guardian of the *rubanda nyamwinshi*, the majority people.<sup>107</sup> In Prunier's opinion, Gapyisi was a racial extremist in sheep's clothing. He "made extremism seem normal and even respectable ... his personal respectability and his friendly and matter of fact approach, attracted to the extremist cause people who would otherwise have shied away."<sup>108</sup> However, André Guichaoua makes out Gapyisi to have been a far more moderate politician, and it is clear that he commanded significant popularity among many Rwandans.<sup>109</sup> On 18 May 1993 towards 8 pm Emmanuel Gapyisi was shot dead outside his house in Kicukiro, Kigali. The gunmen were never found, but there is no doubt that they were affiliated with the pro-MRND/CDR/AMASASU hardliners, as the opposition leaders imply in their letter to the president. "Indeed, everyone notes with bitterness that the only categories of people whose security is ensured are on the one hand the president, his family and entourage, and on the other, the expatriates who are the object of particular attention on the part of French troops stationed in Kigali."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 39

<sup>107</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 183, 185-186

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 185

<sup>109</sup> André Guichaoua, ed., *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993-1994)* (Paris: Karthala, 1995)

<sup>110</sup> From: C.A. Rodriguez To: M. N. Bwakira, 1 June 1993 with attached 'Note au Président de la République sur le Problème de la Sécurité', 24 May 1993, signed by Faustin Twagiramungu, Dr Theoneste Gafaranga and Justin Mugenzi. "010.RWA Relations with external Governments Rwanda (G)" UNHCR Archive. "En effet, tout le monde constate avec amertume que les seules catégories de personnes dont la sécurité est assurée sont

The letter goes on to point out that ethnic pogroms and other unrest have killed “thousands of people” since the start of the war and that the president has done nothing to stem the tide of violence. Not only has the president done nothing, but the parties “are indignant that insecurity is orchestrated or encouraged by those who want to exploit this situation for the benefit of the regime and of the president.”<sup>111</sup> After listing all the cases in which the president or the MRND have been implicated in human rights violations, and explaining that Habyarimana has been using his influence to ensure that the perpetrators would not be punished, the letter moves on to the MRND party militia, the Interahamwe:

the dictator used elements of law enforcement either to execute his plans or to give cover to his other civil forces, in particular the militias of the MRND – CDR parties. ... Thus acts of looting, rapes, killings ... carried out by certain elements of the Rwandan armed forces were not punished; some soldiers and gendarmes responsible for multiple crimes have never been worried and remain present in the ranks of the security forces. ... The moral and material support that some elements of the presidential guard brought to the Interahamwe and CDR militias in their murderous expeditions has been repeatedly decried but the head of state has never taken the complaints of the parties and the population seriously.<sup>112</sup>

Considering the vehemence of this letter and the effects which various forms of violence were having on the Rwandan population, it is worth looking at them in more detail.

### *Political Assassinations*

One of the other main complaints in the letter of the opposition parties to Habyarimana was that, besides the murder of Gapyisi, there had been dozens of political assassinations since the outbreak of war. One of the first significant incidents was an attack on the second house of Judge Joseph Kavaruganda, the head of Rwanda’s Supreme Court, which was located about 600 m from the presidential residence at Kanombe. On 11 September 1991, Joseph and his wife Annonciate were planning to spend a couple of weeks at this house near Kanombe. Joseph arrived early in the evening after a session at the court. Their youngest daughter, who studied abroad, was about to leave, and the two parents realised that if they took her to the

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d’une part le Président de la République, sa famille et son entourage et d’autre part les expatriés qui font l’objet d’une particulière attention des troupes françaises stationnées à Kigali.”

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. “Les Partis MDR, PSD, et PL constatent avec indignation que l’insécurité est orchestrée ou encouragée par ceux qui veulent exploiter cette situation au profit du régime et du Président de la République.”

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. “Les Partis MDR, PSD et PL déplorent le fait que dans la plupart des exactions, le dictateur s’est servi des éléments de la force publique soit pour faire exécuter ses plans, soit pour donner la couverture à ses autres forces civiles, notamment les milices des partis MRND – CDR.

C’est ainsi que les actes de pillages, viols, tueries ... exécutés par certains éléments des forces armées rwandaises n’ont pas été sanctionnés ; certains militaires et gendarmes responsables de multiples crimes n’ont jamais été inquiétés et continuent à évoluer dans les rangs des forces de sécurité.

Le support moral et matériel que certains éléments de la garde présidentielle ont apporté aux milices Interahamwe et CDR dans leurs expéditions meurtrières a été plusieurs fois décrié et jamais le Chef de l’Etat n’a pris au sérieux la plainte des partis et de la population.”

airport they would not make it back to Kanombe before curfew set in. So rather than spend the night there, they decided to spend it in Kigali itself, leaving for the airport with their daughter around eight. At two in the morning their house staff in Kanombe heard noises in the garden and saw soldiers – men in uniform – moving around, who shortly thereafter opened fire on the home with anti-tank rockets.<sup>113</sup> When the tyre tracks of the jeep of the assailants were followed in the morning, they led towards the presidential compound. Who was responsible for the attack remains unclear, although neither Joseph nor Annonciate thought it was ordered directly by President Habyarimana.<sup>114</sup>

The attack on Kavaruganda's house was followed by the assassination of David Gatera in October of the same year. Gatera was a founding member of the PL and an important business partner of his brother, Justin Mugenzi, who was in turn a founding member and the chairman of the PL.<sup>115</sup> Within the PL, the assassination was seen as “a persecution against Mr Mugenzi” and an attempt “to cut down his right arm in business ... and to weaken him mentally so that he couldn't advance as he had been doing ... in the political arena.”<sup>116</sup> According to the official version, the assassin, a soldier named Kuzungu, was taking revenge on Gatera, who was said to have murdered his father after an extortion attempt.<sup>117</sup> On 26 December 1992, Mugenzi was again targeted through his family, when a grenade attack was carried out on the home of his sister, injuring several children.<sup>118</sup>

Matters did not improve the following year. According to André Sibomana, one of the most important human rights activists in Rwanda, “the whole of 1993 was marked by massacres, killings, abductions and all kinds of odious crimes.”<sup>119</sup> Sibomana himself was threatened and there were attempts on the lives of Stanislas Mbonampeka and Donat Murego, the vice-chairman of the PL and executive secretary of the MDR, respectively. In his testimony to the international tribunal, Joseph Ngarambe, a leader of the PSD and human rights activist of the ADL, described the security situation as follows:

...what I was afraid of was quite ordinary. It was being written in the newspaper and people were being killed on a daily basis. They had started killing in Gisenyi back in 1991. ... It was in '91 when they killed the Bagogwe. They had killed people in Bugesera in 1992, in March. They were killing on a daily basis in Kigali.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Transcript of 28 November 2003. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T., 11

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 42

<sup>115</sup> Transcript of 1 November 2005. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T., 51

<sup>116</sup> Transcript of 26 January 2004. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T., 19; Transcript of 20 October 2004. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T., 13; Transcripts of 29 January 2004. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T., 13-14

<sup>117</sup> ‘Study of Terrorism in Rwanda since 1990.’ “Exhibit Number: 3D41, Date Admitted: 19-9-2007” *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 13

<sup>118</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 44

<sup>119</sup> André Sibomana, *Hope for Rwanda* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 50

<sup>120</sup> 4 October 2004. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 40

Journalists were also often targets for arbitrary arrest, torture or assassination.<sup>121</sup> On 6 December 1991, Belgian Ambassador Johan Swinnen was visited by Boniface Ntawurushintege, who worked for the *Umurangi* newspaper. He had

swollen feet, bleeding toes and scars on the right arm. He had been tortured with iron wire [helical cutting cable] by ... Captain Simbikangwa of the Presidential Intelligence Service, who had repeatedly yelled that other journalists would suffer the same fate (“*parce que nous tenons à notre Général, à notre Président*”).<sup>122</sup>

Later the same day Ntawurushintege was arrested. Swinnen was also visited by André Kameya, editor-in-chief of the opposition newspaper *Rwanda Rushya*, who had come to show the Ambassador a death threat which he had received on Ministry of Defence letter-headed paper signed by a group of “comrades in arms of a fallen hero.” While Swinnen tried to intervene with the Rwandan authorities, hoping that the assassins might be scared off by the personal involvement of the Belgian Ambassador, it was to no avail. Kameya was arrested towards the end of February 1992.<sup>123</sup> Arrest and torture were not the only threats journalists faced. On 29 November 1992, Straton Byabagamba, a columnist for the Rwandan Catholic Church and PL leader for the Kanombe Commune, was shot dead in his house. A few months later, on 6 April 1993, Callixte Kalisa, a journalist for TV Rwanda, was shot dead when entering his house in Remera. He had worked on the film *Gorillas in the Mist* and had been a witness in the murder case of Dian Fossey.<sup>124</sup>

### *Terrorist Attacks*

Between October 1991 and September 1993, at least 52 terrorist attacks using mines or other explosives were carried out in Rwanda. Mines were placed along roadsides, at bus stations, bars, markets and post offices, killing those who drove or walked over them. Sometimes the mines were used as improvised explosive devices (IED). Having been set with a time delay, they were not triggered by someone stepping on them, but rather exploded after a set amount of time, turning the mine into a more or less conventional bomb.<sup>125</sup> This spate of attacks remains shrouded in mystery, because their objective and perpetrators are impossible to pin down.

A report emanating from the French Embassy sums up the confusion. After stressing that, from December 1991 onwards, terrorist attacks had spread beyond the frontline, the report went on to suggest two alternative explanations for them. The first suggestion was that these mines were being planted by the RPF in an attempt to destabilise the Rwandan political scene or to hinder FAR logistics. At the site of one of the terrorist attacks, French troops had been

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<sup>121</sup> Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques*, 266; C.R.D.D.R, *Rwanda: Rapport de Deux Missions Effectuées par Eric Gillet & André Jadoul*, 21-23

<sup>122</sup> Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 164-165; C.R.D.D.R, *Rwanda: Rapport de Deux Missions Effectuées par Eric Gillet & André Jadoul*, 21-22; ‘Media Situation in Rwanda’, 10 January 1992. “Exhibit: DNS7, Date Admitted: 22-11-2002” *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 13

<sup>123</sup> Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 164

<sup>124</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 203

<sup>125</sup> ‘Study of Terrorism in Rwanda since 1990.’ *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T.

able to recover remnants of the anti-tank mine used and had sent it to the Army Laboratory in Paris, which concluded that the mines had been produced in a Warsaw Pact country and sold to Uganda at some point during the previous three years.<sup>126</sup> The Rwandan *Centre de recherche criminelle et de documentation* (CRCR), which worked closely with the French Gendarmerie training mission, reached the same conclusion, which also received some backing from at least one RPF source: a colonel who told a Ugandan journalist that the RPF was responsible for some of these bombings.<sup>127</sup> The second possibility was that the attacks were being carried out by those who wanted to specifically destabilise the new multiparty government. Belgian Ambassador Swinnen espoused this reading of events. The source who had warned him about the existence of a secret general staff (see above) had also written that “this clandestine general staff disposes of cells at the level of each prefecture and each commune. It is also this group which had been planting anti-tank and anti-personnel mines and spreading terror in urban centres, especially Kigali.”<sup>128</sup> This latter theory was also supported by both the MDR and the PL.

Besides the structural lack of investigative skills in the Gendarmerie, another problem was that the mines were often planted by improvised hired assassins, rather than by members of the organisation behind the attack. This could lead to bizarre situations. In one case, a Burundian living in Rwanda had been caught planting mines, but this – according to the French Embassy – had been of little help to investigators in narrowing down the number of “possible leads”:

- The identity of the main suspects, who are Hutu, of Burundian nationality, more or less refugees in Rwanda, and who regularly and illegally cross the border, suggests this activity could be linked to PALIPEHUTU who have sought for some months to increase tensions between the two countries;
- The identity of the so-called alleged sponsor (who fiercely denies complicity) – a rich Tutsi related to some RPF leaders living in exile – leads us in a somewhat opposed direction. The fact that his release was obtained by the Parti Liberal, for insufficient evidence, can only, for some, be an additional “proof of his guilt”.
- The environment of the main suspect could lead us down another road, joining the first, however: he has been working since his arrival in Rwanda, 7 years ago, for a landowner in Bugesera, who originates from the North of the country and belongs therefore to these Bakiga, which public rumour accuses of being for the real culprits of the recent massacres. The son of this employer is a senior officer who is officially in the service of the Presidential Guard Battalion, but it seems this is just a cover: Major Mugemana is more frequently employed on “missions” outside Rwanda on behalf of the president. Mrs. Habyarimana is said to be a close friend of this officer’s wife. Thus, according to the side you support, you can use this affair to (hastily) claim:
- That the sponsor was a Tutsi of the RPF;

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<sup>126</sup> Correspondence with French Officer, 1 October 2016

<sup>127</sup> Justus Muhanguzi Kampe, *Eyes of a Journalist* (Kampala: Worlds of Inspiration, 2016), 158-161

<sup>128</sup> From: Swinnen To: Willy Claes ‘Rwanda – Onlusten Bugesera’, 27 March 1992. FGT.; Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 181

- Or that the sponsor is an officer very close to the president.<sup>129</sup>

Another difficulty faced by investigators was that, even though they could track the origin of mines, this did not automatically lead to the guilty party. First, a bewildering array of mines were used, ranging from Warsaw Pact anti-tank to Belgian-made anti-personnel mines.<sup>130</sup> Secondly, mines can easily be sold or dug up from their original location and reused.

It is possible that both the RPF and the hardliners within the Rwandan government/FAR, and perhaps even the opposition, were all planting these mines. Some devices that targeted assets of strategic value, such as Rwanda's petroleum infrastructure and power plants, point to the RPF. However, others, such as the two anti-personnel mines found in the banana plantation of an agronomist, or the two mines which went off on 12 March 1992 in Nyanza – which had no military value, but was the former Royal Capital of the Mwami – do not seem to have been the work of the RPF. Regardless of who planted them, these bombs greatly contributed to the atmosphere of insecurity which settled over Rwanda towards late 1991 and early 1992. As the chief of staff of the Gendarmerie wrote on 8 May 1992, “With the war launched by the FPR against our country in Oct 1990, the insecurity characterized by armed robberies with the use of firearms and grenades, as well as the laying of mines and bombs on public roads and in places with a high concentration of people, has not ceased to increase.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> From: MAM To: Ministère de Coopération et Développement, Paris ‘Actes de terrorisme perpétrés au Rwanda depuis décembre 1991’, 31 May 1992. FGT., 2 “Ce dossier est exemplaire de la confusion des genres et de la multiplication des pistes possibles :

- La personnalité des principaux suspects qui sont hutus, de nationalité burundaise, plus ou moins réfugiés au Rwanda et franchissant régulièrement et en fraude la frontière, pourrait être celle des activités du PALIPEHUTU qui cherchent depuis quelques mois à accroître la tension entre les deux pays ;
- La personnalité du soi-disant commanditaire mis en cause (qui nie farouchement), tutsi riche et apparenté à certains leaders du FPR vivant en exil, amène dans une direction quelque peu opposée. Le fait que sa libération ait été obtenue, faute de charges suffisantes, par le Parti Libéral ne peut, pour certains, qu’être une ‘preuve’ supplémentaire de sa culpabilité ;
- L’environnement du principal suspect pourrait amener dans une autre voie, rejoignant cependant la première : il travaille depuis son arrivée au Rwanda, il y a 7 ans, chez un propriétaire terrien du Bugesera, originaire du nord du pays et appartenant donc à ces Bakigas que la rumeur publique accuse d’être les vrais responsables des massacres récents. Le fils de cet employeur est officier supérieur officiellement en service au Bataillon Garde Présidentielle mais il semblerait que ce ne soit là qu’une couverture : le Major MUGEMANA étant plus fréquemment employé à des ‘missions’ à l’extérieur du Rwanda pour compte du Président. Mme HABYARIMANA aurait pour amie intime l’épouse de cet officier.

Ainsi, selon le parti auquel on appartient, on peut s’appuyer sur cette affaire pour affirmer (hâtivement) :

- Que le commanditaire était un tutsi du FPR ;
- Ou que le commanditaire est un officier très proche du président.”

<sup>130</sup> From various documents the LOT numbers assigned to the mines were as follows: PRB-M3 Anti-Tank Mines: Lot LAR 1.7 (1960?), Lot LAR 1.9, BMP 1.11; PRB-M409 Anti-Personnel Mine: Lot BMP 1.20; TM-57 Anti-Tank Mine: Lot 55-6-71; MUV-2 TrACTION Igniter: Lot 156 (Engraved on mine MBY-2, 583-); Other batches, mines/igniter unknown: LOT-RAR-1-9 ATK, CR-6-8702, MYB-25-83-156-69.

<sup>131</sup> From: Colonel P-C Rwagafilita To: le Ministre de la Défense Nationale ‘Lutte contre le terrorisme’, 8 May 1992. FGT. “Avec la guerre déclenchée par le FPR contre notre pays en OCT 1990, l’insécurité caractérisée par

### *Banditry and Criminality*

Before the outbreak of the war, Rwanda had not experienced substantial organised crime. Yet, by the eve of the genocide, the country was awash with heavily armed, more or less organised gangs. The significant difference between this banditry and the other forms of violence discussed in this chapter is that the former, unlike the latter, was uncontrolled and undirected. Though hard facts and figures are hard to come by, the best guess is that many of these bandits were army deserters, internally displaced persons (IDP) or young men squeezed by the social tensions caused by the economic malaise. These bandits became more adept and grew in size as the war went on and more people suffered from its consequences. As early as 1991, some businessmen had started asking the Ministry of Defence for weapons licences because of

targeted attacks or thefts. ... very often directors of institutions were targeted. Perhaps they thought they had things in their houses. It was during the period when companies and establishment enterprises were being targeted that I requested for a license to be issued to me by the ministry of defence in order for me to carry a weapon. ... I was afraid one day I would be attacked at my home.<sup>132</sup>

By 1992, these gangs had become a real problem. Because the Gendarmerie and police were either implicated in the crimes or completely outgunned, they

locked themselves by night in their compounds (there had been several attacks with hand grenades against them), and the bad guys were on the verge of controlling the town, every night as of midnight.<sup>133</sup>

This meant that security, especially in Kigali, was in the hands of the foreign troops: first the French and, later, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR, which arrived in late 1993 and which will be discussed in the next chapter). While the French troops of *Opération Noroît* did not have a mandate to intervene in the case of intra-Rwandan trouble, they still made concerted efforts to make the town a safer place. Not only did they want to maintain the initiative, but the Europeans were subject to the same banditry as the average Kigalian.<sup>134</sup> The 2e RIMa seemed particularly active in this regard, almost always sending out a patrol following reports of gunfire or grenades going off in town.<sup>135</sup> High-alert squads mounted in pick-ups could quickly reach the scene of a crime and were often successful in apprehending suspects.<sup>136</sup> The French soldiers would then hand over the suspect to the French gendarmes stationed at the Embassy. However, while these gendarmes were

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des vols à mains armées avec utilisation des armes à feu et grenades ainsi que la pose des mines et bombes sur les voies publiques et dans des lieux à haute concentration humaine n'a cessé de s'accroître."

<sup>132</sup> Transcript of Monday, 5 December 2004, witness Pie Betabura. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 14; Human Rights Watch. *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 90

<sup>133</sup> Correspondence with French Officer, 15 September 2016

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 September 2016

<sup>135</sup> "Détachement NOROIT du 2e RIMa, Journal des Marches et Opérations 05 mars 1992-13 juillet 1992" GR 2000Z 114 455. Service Historique de la Défense.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

trained police officers, they had no jurisdiction and would therefore turn over all suspects to their Rwandan colleagues.

For example, on 10 May 1992 at 1 pm a section of French troops from the 2e RIMa had to intervene after a Belgian couple was attacked by four machete-wielding criminals. Later that day, around 9 pm, a Gendarmerie deserter attempted to rob another Belgian couple but was stopped by two FAR soldiers. An off-duty, and thus unarmed, French officer happened upon the scene and was soon confronted with a situation in which the detained deserter tried to convince the soldiers to release him, rob the couple, and kill the French officer. The discussion between the deserter and the FAR soldiers was ongoing when a squad of French soldiers arrived and took control. On 18 May there was an attempted robbery on a grocery store by “three men dressed in military uniforms and two civilians” armed with grenades.<sup>137</sup> French troops responded, but were unable to make any arrests on this occasion. Roughly a month later, on 22 June, French troops were again scrambled, this time to the house of a French expat in Kigali who had been attacked in his home by a dozen men armed with machetes and grenades.<sup>138</sup> In addition, between 1 June and 22 June, French forces in Kigali logged no less than eight incidents in which grenades or firearms were used in the city.<sup>139</sup> While Westerners were frequent victims of attacks and robberies, it seems they were not specifically targeted because of their ethnicity: “I don’t think the *musungus* [whites] were targeted as Westerners, more probably as criminal opportunity targets because they were richer than the average Kigalian.”<sup>140</sup> However, as French troops were not supposed to interfere in Rwandan affairs, but could legitimately protect expatriates, it was significantly more risky for criminals to target Westerners.

Nor was this banditry confined to Kigali and surroundings. As the commander of the Gendarmerie company in Cyangugu explained,

the Cyangugu-Gikongoro road has along its bank a forest that stretches over 50 kilometres, and bandits will lay ambush along that road. I was a victim of such an ambush once at around 8 p.m. on my return from a meeting. We ran into one of those ambushes, and the bandits would waylay, so to speak, vehicles in order to steal their property. ... in Cyangugu *préfecture*, ... armed banditry was -- was raging.<sup>141</sup>

After the FAR mutiny in 1992 (see Chapter VII), the army became, in many instances, not much more than a group of bandits itself. When the mutiny started on 29 May, five people were killed in Ruhengeri, and 17 more the following day. By 19:00 on 30 May French troops in the capital had been put on red alert in case the mutiny spread to Gisenyi and the Kanombe military camp in Kigali. By 20:50 a French detachment had intervened in Gisenyi and order was more or less restored. However, even the presence of French troops could not prevent a

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. There are other cases as well; see, for example, Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 161

<sup>139</sup> “Détachement NOROIT du 2e RIMa, JMO 5 mars – 13 juillet 1992” GR 2000Z 114 455. SHD.

<sup>140</sup> Correspondence with French Officer, 6 November 2016

<sup>141</sup> Transcript of Friday, 25 January 2008. *The Prosecutor v. Ndindiliyimana et al.* ICTR-00-56-T, 21-22

French citizen from being robbed in his house by “uncontrolled FAR elements.”<sup>142</sup> On 1 June the mutiny spread: FAR troops in the south robbed the bank of Kibuye, taking 16 million Rwandan Francs, while more “uncontrolled FAR elements” plundered an OPROVIA warehouse in Butare.<sup>143</sup> Nor were these isolated incidents. According to the International Commission of Investigation, another bank was robbed in Ruhengeri on 5 June.<sup>144</sup> While the mutiny was an explosion of discontent within the army that was eventually brought under control, it became increasingly common for the FAR to terrorise the Rwandan people it was supposed to protect. Soldiers abused their position of power to force internally displaced people to work on their farms for starvation wages and raped women throughout the country. Rape was not confined to the aftermath of heavy fighting or the frontline. The International Commission, for instance, reported in March 1993 that around military barracks “dozens of young girls, some as young as twelve or thirteen, are pregnant as a result of rape” and that “at military barriers, it has become practice to demand a ‘*contribution en nature*’ from passing women.”<sup>145</sup> A Rwandan newspaper summed up the situation, writing that

Soldiers are the biggest cause of insecurity. When they have had too much to drink they will do anything: shoot at people, ransack houses, rape girls and women. ... The civilians have had enough and will defend themselves with their traditional weapons. In several places bad soldiers have been found dead.<sup>146</sup>

By 1993, the Rwandan National Security Council was reporting that,

For some time now, the usual banditry we had become accustomed to has rapidly developed into characterized organized crime especially involving firearms and grenades. ... Gangs armed with machetes, clubs, guns and grenades operate at dusk and sometimes even in broad daylight. ... It has been demonstrated that the perpetrators of such attacks are mainly criminals with remarkable skill in the use of firearms and explosives. In fact, these gangs include former soldiers, deserters and even undisciplined soldiers, who are still on active duty.<sup>147</sup>

The United Nations peacekeepers agreed:

Since ... 24 September 1993 ... the security situation in Rwanda and, especially in Kigali, the capital, has deteriorated alarmingly. While most incidents can be attributed to armed banditry ... ethnically and politically motivated crimes, including assassinations and murders have also been increasing.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> “Détachement NOROIT du 2e RIMa, JMO 5 mars – 13 juillet 1992” GR 2000Z 114 455. SHD.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> C.R.D.D.R, *Rwanda: Rapport de Deux Missions Effectuées par Eric Gillet & André Jadoul*, 33

<sup>145</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 33

<sup>146</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 174

<sup>147</sup> ‘Study of Terrorism in Rwanda since 1990.’ *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 5

<sup>148</sup> “S-1062-0004-0004-00001” UNAMIR Archive. (35/152)

When the head of the Rwandan Gendarmerie, Colonel Ndindiliyimana, first met Roméo Dallaire, the general commanding UNAMIR, these bandits were the colonel's greatest concern.<sup>149</sup> A local gendarme reported on them in the following terms early in 1994:

In all commune sectors the population have been subject of grenade attacks from bandits who excape [*sic*] after their crime. The population organised themselves and carried out night patrols in order to fight off the bandits but since they have none [*sic*] arms they invited the gendarmes to assist. .. armed banditry have grown again in the past few weeks because they learnt that the gendares [*sic*] have not enough arms and only a few of transport-possibilities. ... Though armed robbery is the most ruthless and dangerous there are also pickpockets and thieves.<sup>150</sup>

One report from the Kicukiro Gendarmerie company stated that in the neighbourhood of Nyanza a major problem was the “Erection of roadblocks accompanied by robberies or all armed attacks even during daylight.”<sup>151</sup> Several other neighbourhoods, like Karambo, Sosoma and Sahara, were also noted as especially dangerous. The main cause of insecurity in Sahara was “armed and grenade assassinations even in broad daylight.”<sup>152</sup> Nor did banditry subside as 1993 turned into 1994. In fact, quite the opposite. By 1994, in many parts of Kigali, “villagers had to leave their homes and seek accommodation elsewhere in a bid to find peace and security.”<sup>153</sup>

#### *Deserters, IDPs and Political Militias*

In the summer of 1993, when a UNHCR official visited the RPF-occupied zone of Rwanda, he wrote that the “civilian population have been removed from all FPR areas, except for two protected settlements at Gishambashayo (7,000) and Butaro (3,000). Most of the displaced people have been in the camps since June 1992.”<sup>154</sup> As outlined above (see section “The 8 February Offensive”), the RPA's military strategy included pushing civilians out of the areas they occupied. There were several reasons for this modus operandi. Firstly, a large, hostile population posed a security threat to the RPA. Locals could guide FAR troops to RPA positions or pass on important intelligence. Secondly, the RPA did not have the resources to properly look after a large population. Often, especially at the beginning of the war, the RPA barely had enough supplies for its own troops. Thirdly, the RPA did not want Rwandans to be killed during the fighting, or used as human shields.

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<sup>149</sup> ‘First Meeting with the Gendarmerie’, 16 November 1993. “S-1062-0008-0002-00001” UNAMIR Archive. (4, 7-8/22); Dallaire would later go on to call Ndindiliyimana “by far the most helpful, candid and open” officer he worked with on the side of the Rwandan government. Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), 70

<sup>150</sup> ‘Special Report From: PMT Nyarugenge To: PC Kigali’, 20 February 1994. “S-1060-0009-0002-00001” UNAMIR Archive. (33/38)

<sup>151</sup> From: PMT Kicukiro To: CPMT Kigali ‘Brief Presentation of Kicukiro Territorial's Gendarmerie Company’, date unknown. “S-1060-0009-0002-00001” UNAMIR Archive. (p.18/38)

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Transcript of Thursday, 17 January 2008. *The Prosecutor v. Ndindiliyimana et al.* ICTR-00-56-T, 15-16

<sup>154</sup> Franklin, Tom, ‘Confidential Note to the File: Visit to the FPR Displaced Camp, Gishambashayo – Commune of Cyumba and Kivuye’, 25 August 1993. “619.8.RWA (B) Special Protection problems Rwanda: Displaced Persons” UNHCR Archive.

While this strategy had its advantages when the RPA operated from the Virunga Mountains, it became problematic after the 8 February offensive. Due to the large gains made by the RPA, almost 350,000 Rwandans became IDPs and were forced into refugee camps around Kigali and Ruhengeri.<sup>155</sup> This brought the total number of IDPs in the country to 900,000.<sup>156</sup> These refugee camps were cesspits and despite the best efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UNHCR, nutrition, education and shelter were inadequate. However, these camps did contain a valuable resource which many within Rwanda were eager to exploit: idle young men. Minister of Defence James Gasana wrote to the prime minister that:

- The recruitment [for the FAR] must focus on youth from combat zones for two reasons;
- (1) To save them from poverty in the displaced persons' camps where they suffer from idleness and hunger, whereas they have the strength to work.
  - (2) As they have encountered the problems of the war, they are mentally more motivated than most people.<sup>157</sup>

However, the FAR faced the problem of holding on to its recruits. Regular soldiers suffered as a result of internal rivalries and politics within the officer corps. Not only were they likely to die fighting the more combat proficient RPA, but life in the FAR was, quite simply, horrible. In addition, there were several attractive reasons to desert from the FAR. As former Minister of Defence James Gasana explains, the “value of their rifle and other personal equipment represented five years of salary for a soldier. You only had to steal one or two weapons, or recover them from the battlefield, to supply yourself for several years.”<sup>158</sup> Their skills were also in high demand among political parties in Kigali.

From the onset of multipartyism, and in direct contradiction to the constitution, all the important political parties had formed “youth wings,” which were in effect militias. The most infamous of these was that of the ruling MRND party, the *Interahamwe*, which would be responsible for the majority of murders during the genocide. However, the MDR and PSD also had their own youth wings: the *Inkuba*, “thunder,” and the *Abakombozi*, “the liberators,” respectively. The CDR, the new extremist Hutu power political party, followed suit with its *Impuzamugambi*, “those with a single purpose.” These militias could be called up if a

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<sup>155</sup> From: Randolph Kent, Coordinator LASU, DHA To: Mr Tshitungi, head of Desk IV, Regional Bureau for Africa UNHCR, Geneva ‘Rough draft of Rwanda Appeal’, 24 March 1993. “619.8.RWA (A) Special Protection problems Rwanda: Displaced Persons” UNHCR Archive, 3-4

<sup>156</sup> ‘ICRC Warns Against Major Catastrophe, Launches Urgent Appeal’, 13 April 1993. “619.8.RWA (A) Special Protection problems Rwanda: Displaced Persons” UNHCR Archive.

<sup>157</sup> From: James Gasana To: Prime Minister ‘Weekly report on the Country’s External Security’, 26 September 1992. “Exhibit Number: 1D233(E), Date Admitted: 31-5-2007” *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T.

<sup>158</sup> James K. Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État à l’État-garnison* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002), 101 “La valeur du fusil et d’autres équipements personnels représentait pour un soldat plus de 5 ans de salaire. Il suffisait de voler une ou deux armes ou de les récupérer au champ de bataille pour se faire des provisions pour plusieurs années.”

demonstration was needed somewhere, or to intimidate or harass the supporters of other political parties.<sup>159</sup>

In the case of the *Interahamwe* and *Impuzamugambi*, these processes combined to create a particularly vicious kind of political rent-a-mobs. While many militia members were recruited from among the general population, the hard core consisted of those who had been forced to flee from the war and those who had served in the army.<sup>160</sup> Not only were these groups more naturally inclined to hate the Tutsi – and the RPF was invariably presented as a Tutsi organisation – but former soldiers brought weapons with them as well. A report by the National Security Council pointed out that “some of our politicians have surrounded themselves with former soldiers armed with firearms and grenades allegedly for their own protection and that sometimes results in violent clashes.”<sup>161</sup> Thus motivated, and heavily armed, this hard core were used as shock troops: they would be brought to the countryside, like in Bugesera, to jumpstart ethnic killings, and would also be asked to intimidate or attack members of the opposition.

The rewards for militiamen usually consisted of beer, food and status. There seems little doubt that many of them doubled up as the bandits who terrorised Rwandans at night. While the National Security Council did not make an explicit link between bandits and militiamen, it did note that both groups included deserters and discharged soldiers and that “Most of these people at present, have taken to armed robbery.”<sup>162</sup> As the victims of these bandit attacks were mostly ordinary, mainly Hutu, Rwandans, it is clear that the backers of these militias – the extremist anti-Tutsi, pro-MRND/CDR elements in the government and security forces – were uninterested in the plight of the people they purported to represent.

### **The Reaction of the Authorities**

The fusion of banditry, armed deserters, political militias and state-sponsored ethnic killings made it difficult and dangerous for honest law enforcers to do their job. Not only were they faced with colleagues who actively opposed their work, but many of their services were also chronically underfunded.

The judiciary suffered so severely under budgetary restrictions that it was practically unable to fulfil its task. Highly symptomatic of the predicament of the Ministry of Justice is that it did not have its own dedicated building and transport, and was forced to rely on infrastructures that officially belonged to other ministries. Almost 80% of the staff were unqualified, and office equipment was insufficient. Of the 659 judges in Rwanda, only 34 had law degrees. For public prosecutors, the figure was 18 out of 84.<sup>163</sup> In this environment, it

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<sup>159</sup>For examples of their violence, see Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 46-47, 83-83; and From: James Gasana To: Prime Minister ‘Weekly report on the Country’s External Security’, 26 September 1992. “Exhibit Number: 1D233(E), Date Admitted: 31-5-2007” *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 5-6

<sup>160</sup> US Holocaust Museum, *International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide*, 1-59

<sup>161</sup> ‘Study of Terrorism in Rwanda since 1990.’ *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 9

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

<sup>163</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 45

was difficult to bring suspects to trial and even harder to get convictions. Compounding these problems was the deplorable state of the penitentiary system. According to a report compiled by the Rwandan National Security Council, which included all the important crime-fighting agencies in the country,

The prison system in our country also renders the prison sentence ineffective. The prison is no longer a place for rehabilitation, but rather, a centre for perfecting crime where the petty offender rubs shoulders with the tough hardened criminal. Almost every day, the escape in droves of the most dangerous prisoners is reported in the prisons. The inefficiency of these detention facilities [is due to] ... poor surveillance ... the reduced number of guards, and also, because of bribery. This is how the tough criminals, even those prisoners who have been sentenced to death, manage to escape from the prisons and go to organize new criminal gangs.<sup>164</sup>

Nor could the judicial authorities ensure the safety of their own staff or of inmates. In Butare [at an unknown date, the document is unclear] 13 prisoners were found dead in “circumstances which are still baffling.”<sup>165</sup> Dr Pio Ngirimana, who autopsied the bodies of the dead prisoners, was later attacked in his house by uniformed men, “one of whom was identified as a member of the Presidential Guard and as a bodyguard of President Habyarimana’s brother.”<sup>166</sup> Another example is Innocent Munyemana, a criminal investigations officer who was assassinated by hand grenades “thrown by unknown persons through the window into his bedroom” on the night of 15-16 September 1993.<sup>167</sup> As the judiciary did not enjoy a strong independent position, it could not enforce the law with regard to people in a position of political influence. This meant that crimes carried out by anyone related to the regime, or belonging to an influential patronage network, could not be prosecuted. While interference in murder cases is particularly undermining for the justice system, seemingly subtler kinds of interference also took their toll, especially after the introduction of multipartyism, when several different political parties controlled different ministries and a phalanx of people interfered in trials and investigations in the hope of securing partisan outcomes.

From mid-1992, Rwanda also became increasingly saturated with weapons. On the one hand, there was an uncontrolled proliferation of weapons coming from

the front [which] ... were sold by some unruly soldiers who were deserting their units to join forces with criminals. That was how in June 1993 for example, the Ministry of Defence made an inventory of more than 137 weapons stolen including machine guns.<sup>168</sup>

On the other hand, weapons were being distributed through various civilian self-defence programmes. Since the start of the war, civilians had carried out auxiliary operations to free

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<sup>164</sup> ‘Study of Terrorism in Rwanda since 1990.’ *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 12

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> FIDH, *Report of the International Commission of Investigation*, 44

<sup>167</sup> ‘Study of Terrorism in Rwanda since 1990.’ *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 14

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

FAR and Gendarmerie units for frontline duties. Molyneux-Carter noted on his visit in early 1991 that “Unarmed civilians control road blocks – thus releasing military for operations. I believe they are volunteers.”<sup>169</sup> However, from January 1992, the Ministry of the Interior also started handing out weapons to civilians along the frontline. At the start of the programme, most of these weapons were Second World War vintage MAS 36 bolt-action rifles, but as the war went on, the equipment became progressively more lethal. French military advisers in the country had questioned this programme from the very start. Colonel Cussac wondered whether the weapons would “be used only against the RPF? Are they not likely to be used for vengeance of a personal, ethnic or political nature?”<sup>170</sup> Colonel Rwagafilita, who was the head of the Gendarmerie until June 1992, was a particular fan of the programme and wrote to James Gasana that the “population should be better informed, trained and organised to ensure, or contribute to their own safety or security. The civil self-defence system should be rigorously applied to detect criminals and prevent acts of sabotage and terrorism by means of checks and searches.”<sup>171</sup> It is obvious that these civilian self-defence units, especially as they were made up mostly of MRND party members, constituted a mortal danger to any Tutsi or opposition party member in the hills of Rwanda. In this sense, it is fair to conclude that some members of the security forces actively undermined security in the country.

Despite these difficulties, there *were* some who tried to curb the violence. Colonel Ndindiliyimana consistently worked on professionalising the Gendarmerie from the time he was put in command of the force in June 1992. The US Ambassador reported to Washington that Ndindiliyimana

has made significant progress in revamping the image of his force. While there still are several thousand rank and file Gendarmes with no specialized training after boot camp, a good portion of the 7,000-strong force has been given specific police training, with the goal of changing their mentality from one of “destroy the enemy” to that of “protect the population”. The Chief of Staff is having some success in removing his men from combat duties at the front and re-instituting discipline, and is perhaps the most prominent senior military officer to be generally trusted by opposition parties.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> From: Lt. Col. G. B. Molyneux-Carter To: High Commissioner, Kampala ‘DA Report on Visit to Rwanda 16-20 Feb 91’, no date, but received in registry 5 June 1991. “JWW 014/1 (Part B), Rwanda: Internal Political Situation” FCO.

<sup>170</sup> From: Cussac To: - ‘Armements des Populations civiles’, 22 January 1992 FGT. “Les armes ne seront-elles utilisées que contre le FPR? Ne risquent-elles pas de servir à l’exécution de vengeances personnelles, ethniques ou politiques?”

<sup>171</sup> From: Colonel P-C Rwagafilita To: le Ministre de la Défense Nationale ‘Lutte contre le terrorisme’, 8 May 1992. FGT “Les autorités administratives devraient sensibiliser davantage la population au problème de la sécurité et du terrorisme en particulier. La population devrait être mieux informée, formée et organisée pour l’amener à assurer ou à participer à sa propre sécurité. Le système d’auto-défense civile devrait être appliqué rigoureusement pour déceler les malfaiteurs et prévenir les actes de sabotage et de terrorisme par des contrôles et fouilles.”

<sup>172</sup> From: Flaten, US Embassy Kigali To Secretary of State ‘The Military and the Political Process’, 11 June 1993. “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive. The French noted the same; see From: Cussac To: Armées Paris ‘Situation de la Gendarmerie Rwandaise’, 20 juillet 1992. FGT.

However, despite the best efforts of Rwandan law enforcement and UNAMIR, Rwanda was by 1993 “awash with guns; grenades were readily available in the local market for about three U.S. dollars.”<sup>173</sup> A Belgian intelligence report reached similar conclusions: “there were already reports of grenades being available in markets for 20 Belgian francs. Today, it is reported that in certain ‘red-light’ districts, prostitutes even agree to be paid in grenades.”<sup>174</sup>

The activities of extremist anti-Tutsi, pro-MRND elements within the army and security forces, and of the militias of the MRND and CDR, as well as the existence of an enormous pool of potential recruits among IDPs and the structural weakness of the honest forces of order, all fed upon one another and created a climate of profound insecurity for everyone in Rwanda. The result was the “gradual unravelling of a social fabric,”<sup>175</sup> and an early stage of state collapse. This must be borne in mind as we move forward to discuss the conclusion and eventual failure of the Arusha peace negotiations.

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<sup>173</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 166

<sup>174</sup> ‘Rwanda-The *Interahamwe* Militia.’ “Date Admitted: 18-2-1997” *Prosecutor v. Akayesu* ICTR-96-4, 4

<sup>175</sup> Timothy Longman, *Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 19

## IX - THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST GENOCIDE

Force can and does settle questions — when it is used with intelligence.<sup>1</sup>

This final substantive chapter begins by charting the failure of the Arusha Accords. Despite the best efforts of many stakeholders, President Habyarimana and the extremist military clique that surrounded him were able to break the cohesion of the opposition parties and set the country on the path to war. After a brief analysis of the role of UNAMIR (on which a vast literature already exists), the chapter moves to the outbreak of the Genocide and the resumption of war. The Campaign Against Genocide, launched by the RPA on 8 April 1994, lasted about 100 days and ended in the defeat of the FAR and the *génocidaires*. Again, international intervention is dealt with only cursorily, while the actions of the RPF and the RPA predominate. The aim of the concluding section of this chapter is to provide the first ever scholarly account of the fighting which ended the Genocide.

### The Continuation of the Arusha Peace Accords

After the ceasefire was re-established at Dar es Salaam on 7 March 1993, the talks at Arusha resumed. The next item on the agenda was the Protocol of Agreement on the Integration of the Armed Forces of the Two Parties, and it would prove to be the most contentious issue at the negotiations. The first question to be addressed was the strength of the post-war Rwandan army. By 20 March, an impasse had been reached. “The GoR [government of Rwanda] was proposing a total of 25,000; army of 17,000 and a Gendarmerie of 8,000. The RPF seeks a total military not exceeding 15,000 personnel, but are somewhat flexible concerning the sizes of the Army and the Gendarmerie within that ceiling.”<sup>2</sup> In response, the Tanzanians called a meeting during which the observers would listen to the proposal of each side. After the government of Rwanda had set out their position, the US representative noted that it could not understand why the government was interested in an army larger than the pre-war FAR. The representative of the OAU also noted that a large, possibly unpaid, military would itself constitute a threat to peace.<sup>3</sup> When his turn came the RPF’s negotiator, Pasteur Bizimungu, also argued that a small army was preferable. Why spend excessively on defence with money that could otherwise be used to develop Rwanda?

After internal discussions, the RPF decided that they would be willing to accept an army of around 12,000 soldiers and 6,000 gendarmes. However, the RPF wanted the Gendarmerie, and the local and communal police forces to be put under the authority of the Interior Ministry in the broad-based transitional government (BBTG). This demand did not come as a surprise, as the minister of defence in the BBTG would come from the MRND, while the minister of the interior would be a RPF appointee. The eventual compromise called for a 13,000 strong army and a Gendarmerie of 6,000. Both would be under command of the Ministry of Defence. However, the post of chief of staff of the Gendarmerie would go to the

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<sup>1</sup> Attributed to Upton Sinclair in his letter of resignation to the Socialist Party in September 1917

<sup>2</sup> From: de Vos, US Embassy, Dar Es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Background to Rwanda talks concerning military force size’, 26 March 1993. “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

RPF. By 3 April, both sides were busy working out the details of the command structure of the new army.<sup>4</sup>

The real sticking point for the negotiations was the distribution of troops in the post-war army. Both Minister of Defence James Gasana and Foreign Minister Boniface Ngulinzira had been thinking about this since at least November 1992. The former had travelled to Nicaragua to familiarize himself with similar processes in Central America and had then gone on to Washington DC to meet Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Marley, who would later prove to be one of the key neutral observers at Arusha, making several positive contributions when the talks were deadlocked.<sup>5</sup> The Americans reported on the 14 November 1992 meeting that

The Minister and Director General seemed serious about solving the integration questions, but very concerned about the percentage of participation the RPF might demand at Arusha. The Rwandan military has yet to come to grips with the fact that they may have to give the RPF more than 12-15 percent participation in the army. On the other hand, they have clearly thought about the importance of integrating senior RPA Officers into the decision-making process (perhaps on a 50/50 basis) and the helpful impact this participation could have on security issues.<sup>6</sup>

The government of Rwanda indicated that they would be willing to offer up to 18 percent of the posts in the post-war army. The reasoning behind this offer was that that was the percentage of Rwandan refugees the RPF represented compared to the total Rwandan population.<sup>7</sup> The facilitators and observers had also already discussed the issue of percentages on 20 November 1992; High Commissioner Matogo of Uganda had noted that his country would try to convince the RPF to “accept a formula substantially less than 50-50; 30 percent would be adequate and a better expression of their actual numbers.”<sup>8</sup>

When these percentages were proposed to the RPF in March or April 1993, they were immediately refused. This was logical, considering the integration of forces was supposed to achieve security in post-war Rwanda. This being the case, the RPA’s share of the post-war army would have to be strong enough to stop any ethnic massacres or a repeat of the 1959 Social Revolution. Close to 50% would be necessary for that. After all, no refugees – the main constituency of the RPF – would return if they felt their safety was not guaranteed. The other important aspect which has to be taken into account is that, following the 8 February 1993 offensive, the RPA was clearly the more capable fighting force. In that sense, offering them between 12 and 30 percent of the post-war military did not take military reality into account. The issue proved so contentious that the two sides agreed to discuss it at a later date.

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<sup>4</sup> From: Secretary of State, Washington DC To: US Embassy, Dar Es Salaam ‘Rwanda Negotiations Weekend Update’ 6 April 1993, FGT.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce D. Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 87

<sup>6</sup> From: Eagleburger, Secretary of State, Washington DC To: US Embassy, Kigali ‘Rwandan Minister of Defence on Integration of Forces’, 16 November 1992. “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

<sup>7</sup> From: Flaten, US Embassy Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Integration of the Armies and Demobilisation’, 20 November 1992. “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

<sup>8</sup> From: Ewing, US Embassy, Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Arusha V – Going ahead on nov 23, military integration to top agenda’, 20 November 1992. “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

Instead, they resolved to continue with the rest of the practicalities of demobilisation. In early June, with the outline of the Protocol on the Integration of the Armed Forces completed, except for the percentages question, the two sides moved on to the next item on the agenda: the Protocol on the Repatriation of the Rwandan Refugees and the Resettlement of Displaced Persons.

The Tanzanian facilitators hoped that, with the rest of the Protocol on Integration of the Armed Forces now complete, the two sides would be able to come to an agreement on the division of personnel in the post-war army. Ambassador Mpungwe met with the two delegations on 1 June 1993 to lay out the Tanzanian government's plan to break the stalemate on the issue: a 35-40/65-60 split of the army for RPA and the FAR, respectively. To the horror of hard-line Colonel Bagosora, who wanted to stick to the 18% quota, Ngulinzira said he was ready to negotiate from this baseline. The RPF delegation, however, told Mpungwe they could not accept that division of forces.<sup>9</sup> Predictably, two days later, when the Tanzanian Minister of Defence Abdulrahman Kinana proposed the 35-40/65-60 formula, the RPF rejected it out of hand.<sup>10</sup>

This refusal, as well as the RPF's boycott of a government of Rwanda reception to mark the start of the talks on the refugee issue, angered most observers. Mpungwe insisted that the rejection showed "contempt and arrogance."<sup>11</sup> The Ugandans and Senegalese "argued for mounting as much pressure as possible to 'bring reality home to the RPF,'"<sup>12</sup> and the US observer relayed the "astonishment" of the rest of the observers to the RPF.<sup>13</sup> However, the Tanzanians were not about to give up and, on 7 June, Prime Minister John Malecela himself flew to Rwanda for discussions with President Habyarimana and the RPF. By the end of the day, the Protocol on Repatriation of the Rwandan Refugees and the Resettlement of Displaced Persons had been completed.<sup>14</sup> With only the protocol regarding the integration of the armed forces still outstanding, both sides hoped that they would have the entire package finished and ready to be signed by the end of the month.

In the course of the month, the Tanzanians also managed to convince the RPF to accept an integration formula lower than 50/50. The compromise which was reached divided the private and NCO ranks 40/60 for the RPA and the FAR, respectively. As regards to officers, the ratio would be 50/50, with the caveat that if the unit commander belonged to one group (FAR or RPA), the second in command would always belong to the other. The peace agreement was supposed to be signed on 24 June 1993, but President Habyarimana refused.

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<sup>9</sup> From: Colonel Bagosora To: Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs 'Negotiation Strategy', 1 June 1993. "Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords" National Security Archive; From: Browning, US Embassy Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC 'Notes from Arusha Peace Talks on Rwanda', 2 June 1993. FGT.

<sup>10</sup> From: Christopher, US Embassy Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC 'Rwanda: atmosphere at Arusha talks deteriorates markedly', 4 June 1993. FGT.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> From: Browning, US Embassy, Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC 'Arusha peace Talks: Tanzanian Presses both sides toward conclusion', 7 June 1993. FGT; From: Browning, US Embassy Dar es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC 'Arusha Peace Talks: parties conclude protocol on refugee repatriation and reintegration of displaced', 8 June 1993. FGT.

He had hoped that by putting Gasana in charge of the negotiations at Arusha, he would be able to have more influence on the process but, “in discussion with the GoR delegation, the two government ministers [Gasana and Ngulinzira] have been open to the idea of compromise, while Ambassador Kanyarishoke and the military members have been hardliners.”<sup>15</sup>

### **The Defeat of the Moderates and the Signing of the Arusha Accords**

It was now obvious to the president that Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye, Minister of Defence James Gasana and Minister of Foreign Affairs Boniface Ngulinzira were the driving force behind the Arusha negotiations. Their combined portfolios gave them a unique position with regard to political information, relations with external governments – especially France, Tanzania and the United States – and the forces of order. These three were not interested in peace because they harboured a hidden sympathy for the RPF. Rather, they understood that peace was in the best interest of the Rwandan nation. Unlike many in the MRND and the CDR, Gasana also understood that a continuation of the war was unlikely to end in victory for the FAR. Despite his best efforts the army remained a brittle instrument. In that sense, negotiating a peace settlement was preferable to a continuation of hostilities. Habyarimana and the hardliners in the MRND, CDR and FAR were caught in a difficult position. They had never been genuinely interested in peace negotiations, but the talks at Arusha had now advanced so far that it was impossible to withdraw without incurring the wrath of the international community. It was equally clear that it would prove difficult to sabotage the implementation of the Arusha Accords in the face of the Nsengiyaremye-Gasana-Ngulinzira triumvirate.

President Habyarimana responded decisively and effectively. He suddenly objected to two points which had already been agreed in Arusha. First, he refused to accept that Dismas Nsengiyaremye would be the prime minister in the BBTG. Secondly, he opposed the 50/50 split of officer posts in the post-war army. Habyarimana’s tactic was well understood by a British diplomat in London, who cabled his colleagues in New York that,

As the areas of contention which have resurfaced have all previously been regarded as settled it would appear that Habyarimana has decided to stall ...

We would value French and American comments on what appears to have been a deliberate attempt to scupper the Arusha process.<sup>16</sup>

Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye immediately wrote to Habyarimana demanding an explanation. As the president had not only jeopardised the peace agreement again but also personalised the issue by demanding Dismas’ resignation, the latter’s letter was particularly fierce.

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<sup>15</sup> From: de Vos, US Embassy, Dar Es Salaam To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘Background to Rwanda talks concerning military force size’, 26 March 1993. “Rwanda, the failure of the Arusha Peace Accords” National Security Archive.

<sup>16</sup> From: Hurd, FCO To: Immediate UKMIS New York ‘Rwanda Peace Talks’, 29 June 1993. “FOI 0676-17” FCO.

It is imperative that the real motives for this last minute failure to sign the long-awaited Peace Agreement can be clarified. Those motives are part of a logic of rejection of a negotiated solution. Throughout the negotiations, you have constantly developed that rejection and you have even publicly voiced it on November 15, 1992 in Ruhengeri. Your supporters have implemented it in January 1993, more particularly through the disturbances they created in Gisenyi, Ruhengeri and Kibuye prefectures.

Even presently, small terrorist groups are staging attempts against political leaders and creating dissensions throughout the country, in order to incite a new resumption of hostilities.

In other words, it is necessary for you to find an excuse that would allow you to reject the signature of the Peace Agreement, to ask for the resignation of the current Government, to install a war-prone Government at your disposal, to incite the resumption of hostilities ... and call for renegotiations of some clauses of the already signed protocols.<sup>17</sup>

However, Nsengiyaremye was outmanoeuvred. The fact that the mandate of his multiparty government ran out on 16 July 1993 opened up several possibilities for Habyarimana,<sup>18</sup> who immediately designated Agathe Uwilingiyimana, of the MDR, as the new prime minister. While she was supported by party chairman Faustin Twagiramungu, neither of them enjoyed the support of the majority of the party.<sup>19</sup> Foreign Minister Ngulinzira was also replaced in Uwilingiyimana's new cabinet. Thus, in one stroke, two of the driving forces behind the Arusha negotiations – Ngulinzira and Nsengiyaremye – had been sidelined.

Among the turmoil, Minister of Defence Gasana realised events were moving in the wrong direction and decided to resign. He had already sent his family to Switzerland and followed them soon after. On 20 July 1993, he wrote in his letter of resignation that he felt

compelled to [resign] because of the persistent threats and sabotage that I face in my current duties. These threats which place me and my family in a situation of permanent insecurity are the work of an anonymous political-military group which has given itself the name "A.M.A.S.A.S.U." and whose aims remain obscure.<sup>20</sup>

While it has never become clear who formed AMASASU, it seems most likely that the group consisted of hard-line, pro-Habyarimana and anti-Arusha elements within the military intelligence of the FAR. The grave implications of the fact that even the minister of defence was unable to confidently protect himself were not lost on Dr. Casimir Bizimungu, an MRND stalwart and former foreign minister, who privately told the US Ambassador that, "if Gasana

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<sup>17</sup> From: Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye To: President Habyarimana, 6 July 1993. "FOI 0676-17" FCO.

<sup>18</sup> James K. Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État à l'État-garnison* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), 210. Note that the whole episode surrounding Dismas' ouster is particularly confused in the current scholarship.

<sup>19</sup> André Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide: Criminal Politics in Rwanda 1990-1994*, trans. Don E. Webster (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 88

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Annexes "Resignation of James Gasana", <http://rwandadelaguerraugenocide.univ-paris1.fr/minister-of-defense-james-gasanas-resignation-from-office-and-flight-abroad-on-20-july-1993/>

"Je me sens contraint de prendre cette décision en raison des menaces persistantes et des actions de sabotage dont je fais l'objet dans mes fonctions actuelles. Ces menaces qui me placent, ainsi que ma famille, dans une situation d'insécurité permanente sont l'œuvre d'un groupe politico – militaire anonyme qui s'est donné pour nom 'A.M.A.S.A.S.U.' et dont les visées restent obscures."

cannot protect himself we are all threatened.”<sup>21</sup> The timing of Gasana’s resignation suggests that the president or those who shared his agenda had control over the group.

Nsengiyaremye made one last attempt to regain his position as prime minister. He called an extraordinary congress of the MDR for 23-24 July 1993. However, the Interahamwe militia of the MRND blocked the entrance to the hall where the congress was scheduled to take place. Guichaoua writes that, “It was finally the gendarmerie, on orders from Col. Theoneste Bagosora (then filling in for the Minister of Defence who had absconded), that was mandated to contain the clashes and maintain security.”<sup>22</sup> Considering that Bagosora was known as one of the most hard-line anti-Arusha officers in the FAR, not to mention the role that he would play the next day, it seems much more likely that it was the chief of staff of the Gendarmerie, Ndindiliyimana, who sent in the gendarmes to maintain order. Once the congress got underway, it voted to kick both Uwilingiyimana and Twagiramungu out of the party and announced Jean Kambanda as its designee for the premiership.<sup>23</sup> Uwilingiyimana agreed to resign, but when she arrived home, she found Twagiramungu, Bagosora, PL chairman Justin Mugenzi, PSD President Frederic Nzamurambaho and MRND President Matthieu Ndirumpatse waiting. They proceeded to convince her that she should not resign. After some deliberation, Uwilingiyimana decided to stay on as prime minister. Why the PSD and the PL supported Uwilingiyimana over the will of the MDR congress is unclear.

What is clear is that, within a month, President Habyarimana had, through a combination of clever politics, coercion and the acquiescence of the now divided opposition, managed to remove the three ministers – Nsengiyaremye, Ngulinzira and Gasana – who had been a thorn in his side since the swearing in of the multiparty government in April 1992. With them went their experience and the staff which they had carefully cultivated in their ministries.<sup>24</sup> The new Minister of Defence Augustin Bizimana was a firm MRND man and quickly replaced most of the moderates promoted by Gasana. Nor did he use his power and influence to structurally support the Arusha peace process as Gasana had done, leaving any moderates who did vulnerable.<sup>25</sup> Nsengiyaremye, undoubtedly fearing for his life, fled to France. Of the three only Boniface Ngulinzira remained in Rwanda, only to be killed during the Genocide.

The Tanzanian facilitators, international observers and RPF all seem to have missed the importance of the changes summarized above. It could well be that the RPF was happy to see that James Gasana, an effective minister, was no longer in charge of the Ministry of Defence. By the same token, the Tanzanians might have been pleased that the end of the negotiations was in sight. On 26 July 1993, the Rwandan president announced that he was ready to sign the final text. The two sides met in Arusha on 3 and 4 August 1993 and signed the Peace Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front, also known as the Arusha Accords.

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<sup>21</sup> From: Flaten, US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘the MDR vs. the MDR’, 26 July 1993. Department of State FOI.

<sup>22</sup> Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide*, 89

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 93; Gasana, *Rwanda: du parti-État*, 213

<sup>25</sup> Guichaoua, *From War to Genocide*, 88

## The Arusha Accords

There are many who are critical of the Arusha Accords.<sup>26</sup> They argue in particular that the Accords gave too much power to the RPF, especially militarily. Alan Kuperman writes that “In light of the superiority of the rebels on a man-for-man basis by this time, the military integration protocol was tantamount to a negotiated surrender of the Hutu army to the Tutsi rebels.”<sup>27</sup> While Kuperman is right that the RPA was the stronger fighting force, many of its advantages – which were based on unit-cohesion, leadership and doctrine – would have been lost once the two forces integrated. Many RPA soldiers would have come under the command of FAR officers and, as the two forces mixed, the well-oiled RPA Mobile Forces would have been broken up. Furthermore, the RPF would not be in control of the top ranks in the post-war armed forces. The minister of defence was earmarked for the MRND, while the chief of staff of the army would come from the FAR. The only top-tier position held by the RPF would be chief of staff of the Gendarmerie. All things considered, then, the military aspects of the Arusha Accords were well balanced.

The same can be said for the political side of the Accords. Each participant in the BBTG would get control over one or two consequential ministries. The MRND got the Presidency and the Ministry of Defence, the RPF the Ministry of the Interior, the MDR both the Prime Ministership and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the PSD the Ministry of Finance and the PL the Ministry of Justice. These were the only ministries of any real significance. While others existed on paper, Rwanda’s financial situation meant they could exert little influence or control. In fact, the point could be made that the two parties which did best out of the Arusha Accords politically were the MRND and the MDR.

To be sure, it can be argued that the MRND was losing the most compared to the pre-war situation, when – thanks to the one-party dispensation then obtaining – it had enjoyed full control over politics and the military. Yet the MRND’s losses did not come solely at the expense of the RPF. The implicit rejection of the one-party state, a process which had begun before the RPF attacked in October 1990, meant that the negotiations in Arusha were as much a renegotiation of the political *status quo ante bellum* as a peace agreement between the RPF and the government of Rwanda. Power was not only being transferred to the RPF, an external organisation with historical ties to Rwanda, under the threat of force, but also to the internal opposition in continuation of the dismantling of the one-party state.

Another argument which has often been made is that the RPF would have stood no chance in the free elections to be held once the Arusha Accords had been implemented.<sup>28</sup> Usually, this contention is advanced together with the claim that the RPF shot down President Habyarimana’s plane as part of a premediated plan to seize power by force. Proponents of this view stress that, in the polarised post-war climate of Rwanda, the majority of the

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<sup>26</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 210-215

<sup>27</sup> Alan J. Kuperman, “Provoking genocide: a revised history of the Rwandan Patriotic Front”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 6 no. 1 (2004), 75

<sup>28</sup> Barrie Collins, “The Rwandan War 1990-1994: Interrogating the dominant narrative” (PhD diss., SOAS, 2009), 141

population would have voted along ethnic lines. As 80-85% of the population were Hutu, most of the votes would have gone to the “Rwandan” political parties rather than to the RPF. However, this fails to take two factors into account. Firstly, the “Rwandan” parties consisted of the CDR, MRND, MDR, PSD and PL. Of these the MRND, MDR and PSD would probably have done best in any elections, but the chance of any of them gaining an outright majority would have been slim. Secondly, the RPF would have been able to count on the votes of the Banyarwanda refugees who were set to return to Rwanda from the surrounding countries once the Arusha Accords had been implemented. Not only were many of the returning refugees likely to vote for the RPF – as they had already been politicised – but the RPF would have been able to use its formidable political organisation to mobilise support inside Rwanda. As Senator Tito Rutaremara explains,

... the people here did not understand. They thought the RPF was only Tutsi. Then they did not know we had that capacity for mobilisation and sensitisation. They thought we were suicidal when we said the transition will be 21 months. ... All parties were saying the same thing. But we knew we had the capacity for mobilisation. ... The others said, these people, they will only use arms. But we knew we had the capacity for mobilisation. ... The cadreship had been working for seven years. ... They had their relatives in Rwanda where they could start mobilising.<sup>29</sup>

In such an electoral environment, it is doubtful any of the major parties would have been able to achieve a total majority. So some kind of coalition government would have been the most likely outcome. These factors mean that elections were not something the RPF was deeply worried about. All in all, the Arusha Accords were a well-balanced set of agreements that could have worked, had all the parties been fully committed to them.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Tito Rutaremara, 9 October 2018



*Negotiations in the demilitarised zone between the RPF and a Rwandan government delegation. Second and third from the left in the front row in the striped jumpers: Tito Rutaremara and Christine Umutoni.*

### **The Arrival of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda and the Murder of President Melchior Ndadaye**

In Tanzania both sides had agreed that the implementation of the Arusha Accords would be overseen by a United Nations peacekeeping force. Its goal was “to establish and maintain a climate essential for the secure installation and subsequent continuing operation of a broad-based transitional government.”<sup>30</sup> Under the watchful eyes of the blue berets, the two forces would also integrate and demobilise their personnel. Once the BBTG was in place and the demobilisation had been completed, the Arusha Accords would have been implemented and the peacekeepers would be able to go home.

One of the mistakes made at Arusha was that the negotiators had not factored in how much time it would take the UN to deploy a peacekeeping force to the country. This was particularly important because the timeline which had been set out for the implementation of the Accords was tight.<sup>31</sup> The BBTG was supposed to be sworn in on 10 September, only a month after the talks had been concluded. However, it would be impossible for the UN to assemble a peacekeeping force in that time. Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire, who had been put in charge of the UN force, arrived in Kigali for his reconnaissance mission on 19 August 1993. After this first preparatory stage he would have to write a report announcing how many troops he thought he would need. This report would then go to the UN Secretary-General and Security Council; once their agreement had been secured, the troops to staff the

<sup>30</sup> ‘United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda, UNAMIR: Guidelines for Governments Contributing Military Personnel to UNAMIR’, 26 October 1993. FTG, 5

<sup>31</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), 58

mission would still have to be found.<sup>32</sup> All this would take at least three months. One US diplomat later said that “to put it uncharitably ... the diplomats were handing a ticking time bomb off to the UN. This was not an agreement that was going to be workable in any realistic setting given the gross limitations of the UN.”<sup>33</sup>

UNAMIR could hardly have been worse for the UN, which was committed to two large peacekeeping missions in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia and dozens of smaller ones. The situation in Somalia was particularly worrying. On 5 June 1993, 24 Pakistani peacekeepers had been killed while searching for weapons in Mogadishu. A couple of months later, and only two days before the UN mission for Rwanda was officially mandated, elite US forces went into Mogadishu on a mission to capture important lieutenants of Mohamed Farrah Aidid. During the ensuing battle, known as *Maalintii Rangers* to Somalis and Operation Gothic Serpent or Black Hawk Down in the West, between 200 and 500 Somalis, eighteen US nationals, a Pakistani and a Malaysian were killed. This catastrophe had important effects on the UN mission which was about to be deployed to Rwanda, as British diplomat David Hannay explains:

The depth of the shadow cast by Somalia cannot be exaggerated. It did not only apply to the United States, which had had a terrible experience in Somalia and had drawn, in my view, the wrong conclusions from it. It also applied to all the African countries who had troops in Somalia ... This had an appalling effect on everyone’s reaction to Rwanda. Why did practically no African countries volunteer to send troops to Rwanda? Because some of them, the ones who were prepared to send troops anywhere, had got them in Somalia and were worrying a great deal about what happened when an operation started to collapse.<sup>34</sup>

After his reconnaissance mission, Dallaire thought that 5,500 well equipped and well trained troops with armoured personnel carriers and helicopters would be able to carry out the mission. However, he was told that it was unrealistic to expect the countries which formed the UN to pay for or provide that many soldiers.<sup>35</sup> The next viable option was a force of 2,500 troops, but even securing that number was a problem. Eventually, on 5 October 1993, a watered down version of this “next viable option” was mandated by the UN. Dallaire’s force would be deployed with a minimum staff and then slowly built up to 1,200, before being expanded to 2,500 for a brief period. The countries which had been so important as observers during the Arusha Accords should have been the ones to step up and give Dallaire the 5,500 troops he needed. Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Canada and the OAU could easily have deployed the required numbers, especially if France and the United States had helped to foot the bill and provided the necessary air-lift capacity.

In an unlucky coincidence of history, events in neighbouring Burundi also had a major impact on the political atmosphere in Rwanda. Burundi has often been characterised as a twin of Rwanda because of the many shared political dynamics and sociological traits. In 1992,

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 81

<sup>33</sup> US Holocaust Museum and The Hague Institute for Global Justice, *International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide: Rwanda 1990-1994: Annotated Transcript* (The Hague. 1-3 June 2014), 1-36

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 1-107

<sup>35</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 82

Burundian President Pierre Buyoya had started to liberalise a hitherto dictatorial system in which a mostly Tutsi army had effectively run the country. In June 1993, democratic elections were held for the first time and, in another first, Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu who had studied in Rwanda, was elected as President. Ndadaye had appointed a broad government which included the Tutsi Sylvie Kinigi as prime minister. But this was not enough to convince hard-line elements in the army that their position was safe and on 21 October, Ndadaye was murdered in an attempted coup. As killings spread across the country – Burundi had the same long history of ethnic killings as Rwanda – people started fleeing *en masse*. General Dallaire, who had just arrived in Rwanda with a skeleton staff to prepare for the arrival of the bulk of UNAMIR’s forces, wrote in one of his first sitreps that

tension due to Burundi situation is in evidence. ... So far no less than 200,000 refugees in majority Hutu have crossed into Rwanda in the Kigali and Butare prefectures. Mostly women and children. ... There is already some signs of ethnic frictions in the new refugee camps. Refugees have requested to be segregated by tribe.<sup>36</sup>

French Africa experts wrote to President Mitterrand that, “In Rwanda there is widespread concern. The Arusha Accords will probably not withstand the unleashing of ethnic violence in the neighbouring country.”<sup>37</sup> Eventually the influx of refugees from Burundi reached about 300,000, which put a major strain on the already dysfunctional Rwandan government. In total, there were now around 1,000,000 IDPs and refugees in Rwanda, or almost 20 percent of the population.

It was in this environment that General Dallaire tried to get boots on the ground. While he had a small staff in Kigali, no countries had yet firmly committed to sending troops to Rwanda, even though the Belgians did have a reconnaissance mission in the city. “Considerable discussions are being held on the composition and strength of the Belgian contribution to the Kigali Infantry Battalion. They have been limited so far by political decisions at a maximum of 100 personnel.”<sup>38</sup> Dallaire’s mission was also severely hampered by the lack of financial assistance from the UN.<sup>39</sup> Even though UNAMIR had no substantial forces on the ground, crucial milestones lay ahead. Most important was the installation of the BBTG, but a number of other objectives had to be achieved before that. First, General Dallaire wanted to establish a Kigali Weapons Secure Area (KWSA), where all weapons would be placed under UNAMIR control. This would allow the peacekeepers to ensure security within the sector. Second, the French troops who made up *Opération Noroît* would have to leave. In turn, this would make it possible for the RPF political delegation to come to Kigali and take up its posts in the BBTG and Transitional Assembly. An RPA light battalion would accompany the RPF to ensure their security. It would be particularly important for UNAMIR to make sure that the light battalion and the FAR troops stationed in the city did not clash with each other.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> From Dallaire To: Baril ‘Arrival of UNAMIR Force Commander’, 25 October 1993. FGT.

<sup>37</sup> From: Quesnot and Delaye To: President de la Republique ‘Burundi’, 25 October 1993. FGT. “Au Rwanda, l’inquiétude est vive. Les accords d’Arusha ne devraient pas résister au déchaînement de la violence ethnique dans le pays voisin.”

<sup>38</sup> From: Dallaire To: Annan UNHQ New York ‘UNAMIR Situation Report no.2’, 28 October 1993. FGT.

<sup>39</sup> From: Dallaire To: Annan UNHQ New York ‘weekly sitrep no.4’, 9 November 1993. FGT.

<sup>40</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 87

Besides the worrying situation in Burundi, UNAMIR also had to deal with an increasingly fractured and complicated political scene in Rwanda. On 14 November 1993, the PL went down the same route as the MDR when it held a convention, “the result of which was a split right down ethnic lines within the party. The PL ministers in the current government fired the members of their personal staff who attended this unusual party meeting.”<sup>41</sup> Another issue for General Dallaire were the constant and alarmist messages coming from the minister of defence that the RPA was about to restart the war with the help of Uganda. On 23 November he reported back to New York that, “On two separate occasions this last week (Monday and Thursday), the head of mission was called by the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs with information regarding the massing of NRA (Ugandan) troops and RPF elements in Kabale and Volcano areas with the aim of attacking Rwanda.”<sup>42</sup> In both instances, UNAMIR sent military observers to verify the information and found nothing. When Dallaire questioned the foreign minister and the minister of defence, he found out that the information on these so-called impending attacks was coming from the Cabinet of President Habyarimana. “Why the President with the seeming complicity of the Minister of Defence (same political party), is creating these potentially explosive scenarios is not quite clear except to possibly disrupt or slow down our deployments and thus affect the date of establishing the BBTG.”<sup>43</sup>

Nonetheless, UNAMIR kept on working and by December 1993, General Dallaire felt his control over Kigali was strong enough to start the process which would lead to the swearing in of the BBTG. In keeping with the Arusha Accords, the first step was the departure of most French troops from Rwanda between 11 and 13 December.<sup>44</sup> Their withdrawal went off without a hitch and cleared the way for the RPF politicians to travel to Kigali. In the interim, it had been decided that the RPF delegation, who were to be escorted by an RPA light battalion, would be billeted in the parliament building known as the *Conseil national pour le développement* (CND).

On the morning of 28 December 1993, 3 Battalion lined up on the football pitch in Mulindi in their brand new East-German summer uniforms. Charles Kayonga, who was “only in his late twenties, but ... obviously an experienced and able leader,”<sup>45</sup> commanded the unit. As its troops would be representing the RPF to the world, they had been hand-picked and furnished with the best weapons and equipment the RPA’s armouries could supply. After a speech from the chairman of the High Command, the political delegation and the soldiers packed into the waiting buses and made their way to Kigali under the protection of a UNAMIR escort. Upon arrival, 3 Battalion immediately started to reinforce the complex around the building in case it was attacked. Dallaire witnessed the unfolding spectacle:

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<sup>41</sup> From: Dallaire To: Annan UNHQ New York ‘weekly sitrep no.5’, 16 November 1993. FGT.

<sup>42</sup> From: Dallaire To: Annan UNHQ New York ‘weekly sitrep no.5’, 23 November 1993. FGT.

<sup>43</sup> From: Dallaire To: Annan UNHQ New York ‘weekly sitrep no.5’, 23 November 1993. FGT.

<sup>44</sup> From: Marlaud To: - ‘Retrait du Détachement Noroit’, 14 December 1993. Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information par La mission d’information de la commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées et de la commission des affaires étrangères, sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d’autres pays et l’ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994* (Assemblée nationale, 15 December 1998), Annexes, 175

<sup>45</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 130

Once the RPF began digging, they never stopped for the next four months. From shell scrapes or foxholes, they dug full fire-trenches, then roofed the trenches for protection from artillery or mortar fire. They then dug full communication-trenches between the individual trenches and built bunkers that developed into caverns. By the time the war resumed in April, they had built an underground complex under the CND. It was clear that while the peace process was progressing, they were also prepared for the alternative.<sup>46</sup>

These field defences reinforced an already strong building. The CND complex was one of the few buildings in Kigali built of reinforced concrete. Its position also commanded the surrounding area. Though located outside of the Kigali city centre, it was perched on a hill with a view over large parts of the city. The King Faisal Hospital, the Presidential Guard camp and mounts Kigali and Jali could all be clearly observed from the roof of the multi-storey structure. It also overlooked the main road between the city centre and the airport. Negotiating this building as the base for 3 Battalion in Kigali was a coup for the RPF politicians, and a major blunder on the side of the Rwandan Government and the FAR. However, the strength of this position also came with a downside. Exposed on the ridge of its hill, and with few Kigalians living around it, the CND was an easy target for artillery fire. To further improve their position 3 Battalion skilfully placed its two heavy machine guns on the roof of the CND, overlooking the Presidential Guard Camp in Kimihurura and the main road. These Soviet designed 12.7mm DshK's (*Degtyaryova-Shpagina Krupnokaliberny*) were potent weapons. Rugged and reliable, they fired a large calibre shell – also effective against lightly armoured vehicles – to ranges of up to a kilometre. The RPF also set up a first aid post in the basement of the CND.

As usual, the RPF pushed the boundaries. As the CND and 3 Battalion were resupplied from Mulindi in UNAMIR-escorted convoys which the FAR was not allowed to stop, the RPF was able to smuggle in ammunition, rotate troops, and increase the size of the garrison. This pathway also allowed for intelligence operatives to be brought to the CND from Mulindi before being infiltrated into Kigali, or, conversely, for long-serving agents in Kigali to be recovered and transported back to Mulindi.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 131

<sup>47</sup> Interview with former RPF member



*A meeting, probably sometime in late 1993, between the RPF, the government of Rwanda and UNAMIR. From left to right (front row): Theogene Bagire, James Kabarebe, Caesar Kayizari and Charles Kayonga, four key RPA commanders.*

### **Going after the Opposition**

It was at this point that the dynamics of chronic economic malaise, partial state collapse and physical insecurity, combined with the memory of ethnic conflict dating back to the Social Revolution, coalesced to form a razor sharp state of tension throughout Rwanda.<sup>48</sup> Over a million refugees and IDPs, many on the brink of starvation, were camped out around Kigali and close to the border with Burundi. This environment favoured those opposed to the Arusha Accords who used the confusion to their advantage to block the implementation of the agreement.

On 5 January 1994, the first attempt was made to swear in the BBTG in the CND under the protection of UNAMIR. As plain-clothes members of the Presidential Guard whipped up the crowd outside, the ceremony broke down just after President Habyarimana had taken his oath. The list of ministers who were to be part of the government had been changed at the last minute and now included PL and MDR hardliners whose presence had not been previously agreed upon by the RPF.<sup>49</sup> Immediately the RPF let it be known that it would not go along with this sleight of hand and refused to continue with the swearing in. On 8 January, another

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<sup>48</sup> See for example Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 172, but this point has been made abundantly clear over the previous chapters.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-139

attempt was made, but this time crowds, led by groups of militia and plain-clothes Presidential Guards, harassed moderate MDR, PL and PSD party members, making it impossible for them to reach the CND.<sup>50</sup> With some delegates already inside, the president made a last minute decision not to attend and the ceremony collapsed.

The failure to install the BBTG made a bad situation even worse. On 19 January 1994, Justin Mugenzi, who had already been targeted before (see previous chapter), was ambushed. While Mugenzi escaped unharmed, one of his bodyguards was killed in the incident.<sup>51</sup> Then, ten days later, someone unsuccessfully tried to kill the new RPA liaison to UNAMIR, Major Frank Kamenzi, by blowing him up with a hand grenade.<sup>52</sup> On 14 February, there was another attempt at installing the BBTG. However, as the PL and MDR remained split and could not decide on who would take up their allotted ministerial portfolios, none of the political parties showed up.<sup>53</sup>

On 20 February, a major diplomatic dinner attended by all political parties was held. UNAMIR General Roméo Dallaire has left the following account:

the evening started well, with a lot of light hearted chatter ... there was some political discussion but it was all vague and optimistic. ... Then something quite unexpected happened. I was sitting next to Félicien Gatabazi, the head of the influential (and still united) PSD party, and a well-known Hutu moderate from the south who was very pro-RPF, who had a few too many glasses of wine and got into an intense discussion with members of the MRND about their extremist views. The more drinks Gatabazi downed, the louder and more confrontational he became, until he was almost shouting. He started to insult individual members of the MRND, accusing them of manipulating the political process and causing the deadlock, and the whole room fell silent to listen. Gatabazi had already publicly accused the Presidential Guard of training militias at Kanombe barracks and had received a number of death threats; that night he was fearless.<sup>54</sup>

However, after the dinner, it was not Gatabazi but MDR President Faustin Twagiramungu whose car came under fire. While he survived unharmed, a gendarme bodyguard was shot dead.<sup>55</sup> The next evening Gatabazi's limousine was ambushed close to his house. The two gendarmes who were guarding him were killed on the spot, but Gatabazi, mortally injured, managed to get into his house and call UNAMIR for assistance. He died shortly after making the call.<sup>56</sup> Gatabazi was from the south, where the PSD was most popular and the response to his death was immediate. The next day, Martin Bucyana, chairman of the extremist CDR, who was travelling in the south close to Save, the home region of Gatabazi, was attacked by a mob and lynched together with his driver.<sup>57</sup> Thus, within the space of three days, assassins

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 141

<sup>51</sup> Transcript of, 29 January 2004. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 52; Transcript of, 10 June 2004. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 24-25

<sup>52</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 166

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 178

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 186-187

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 188

<sup>57</sup> Transcript of, 27 January 2004. *The Prosecutor v. Bizimungu et al.* ICTR-99-50-T, 4

had targeted the heads of three political parties and succeeded in murdering two of them. Another attempt was supposed to be made at installing the BBTG on 22 February, the day after the lynching of Bucyana, but both Agathe Uwilingiyimana and the RPF refused to attend due to the killing of Gatabazi. The supporters and militias of the various political parties went out on to the streets of Kigali and “over the next couple of days 35 people died and a further 150 were injured.”<sup>58</sup>

Throughout March, both sides tried to find a solution to the political impasse. With the help of Tanzanian mediators, both sides were able to agree, reluctantly, on which PL members would take up the allotted ministerial portfolios and seats in the national assembly. However, Habyarimana insisted on the inclusion of the rabidly racist anti-Tutsi CDR in the new parliament.<sup>59</sup> In the RPF’s view this issue had already been decided during the Arusha negotiations when the topic had come up and the CDR had been excluded. Habyarimana knew perfectly well that the RPF would not agree to a BBTG which included the CDR; unsurprisingly, the RPF delegation did not show up at the next attempt to swear in the government on 25 March. On 5 April UNAMIR’s mandate was extended for six more weeks to give both parties more time to sort out their differences. The next day Habyarimana flew to Dar es Salaam to discuss the situation with regional leaders. After a long day of talks, he offered President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi a lift in his new and comfortable aeroplane.

### **The Plane Shootdown**

Around 20:30 on 6 April 1994 President Habyarimana’s plane, a Falcon 50 given to him by the French government and flown by French pilots, started its descent to Kigali airport. On board were President Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi. With them were two Burundian ministers, Chief of Staff of the FAR Major General Déogratias Nsabimana, Colonel Elie Sagatwa, Major Thaddée Bagaragaza, Juvenal Renaho, an adviser to Habyarimana, and Dr Emmanuel Akingeneye, the president’s physician. Finally, there were the three French flight crew: Jacky Héraud, Jean-Pierre Minaberry and Jean-Michel Perrine. Moments later, the flight was shot down by one or two missiles fired from a portable surface to air missile. The plane crashed just short of the runway in the garden of the president’s house, killing all on board.

There has been an enormous amount of discussion, both by (semi) official inquiries and historians, over who shot down Habyarimana’s plane.<sup>60</sup> There are two main theories. The

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<sup>58</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 189

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 210-212; From: Rawson, US Embassy Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘DAS Bushnell meets Habyarimana and RPF’, 25 March 1994 FGT; From: US Embassy, Kigali To: Secretary of State, Washington DC ‘CDR Issue proves Intractable’, 28 March 1994. FGT.

<sup>60</sup> Jean-Louis Bruguière, *Délivrance de Mandats d’Arrêt Internationaux*. Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris - -- Cabinet de Jean-Louis Bruguière, Premier Vice-Président. Parquet : 97.295.2303/0 Cabinet : 1341. 17 November 2006; Republic of Rwanda, Independent Committee of experts charged with investigation into the crash on 06/04/1994 of Falcon 50 Aeroplane, registration number 9XR-NN, *Report of the investigation into the causes and circumstances of and responsibility for the attack of 06/04/1994 against the Falcon 50 Rwandan Presidential Aeroplane, Registration number 9XR-NN*, Kigali 20 April 2009; Filip Reyntjens, “A Fake Enquiry on a Major Event. Analysis of the Mutsinzi report on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1994 attack on the Rwandan President’s aeroplane”, *Institute of Development Policy and Management Working Paper*, University of Antwerp (July

first suggests that it was Hutu power hardliners in the FAR who killed the president to take power and prevent the Arusha Accords from being implemented. The second argues that it was the RPF who shot down the airplane in order to provoke the genocide which it knew was being planned. Once the Genocide was underway – so goes the theory – the RPF would be able to use its superior military might to take power in the country. The latter – and much publicized – hypothesis does not make sense on several levels. The RPA could have taken Rwanda by force in February 1993, but had instead decided to return to the negotiating table. In addition, the Front had done well in the Arusha Accords. Though it had not secured total power, it had won enough guarantees that it would be in a good position to compete in elections in post-Arusha Rwanda. The movement was also supremely confident in its own abilities, not only militarily but also organisationally. Behind the RPA stood the formidable political machinery which kept it fed, clothed and motivated. Once the war was over, this apparatus would be put in high gear to sell its programme to Rwandans. Another problem with the conspiratorial theory is that it assumes clairvoyance on the part of the RPF, which would have relied on the CDR, MRND and FAR hardliners to commit genocide. If the RPF did indeed shoot down the presidential plane, it is much more likely that it did so to eliminate what remained the main obstacle to the implementation of the Arusha Accords. President Habyarimana had never wanted to negotiate with the RPF, as the previous chapters have proven beyond doubt. By removing him from the scene, the RPF might have expected to be able to push the implementation of the Arusha Accords without putting the peace process at risk. After all, the BBTG was ready to take office and only awaiting its official swearing in.

We will probably never know who shot down the plane because the hardliners within both the FAR and the RPA could have carried out the assassination. In addition, there is no evidence to speak of. The main facts are as follows. Firstly, there is no doubt that both the RPA and the FAR had access to surface-to-air missiles. The former took several Soviet made SA-7 Strela and SA-16/18 Igla surface-to-air missiles with them into Rwanda from Uganda and used them effectively against FAR helicopters. The latter, though it did not officially have any portable surface to air missiles in its arsenal, could easily have obtained them from Egypt or found some on the battlefield. While much has been made of the fact that it might have been “white” mercenaries who were hired because of their expertise with such weapons, this seems unlikely.<sup>61</sup> Portable surface to air missiles are designed to be used in the heat of battle, by conscripts, under high stress and are thus not exceptionally difficult to operate. The mujahedeen, for example, were able to deploy their Stinger missiles effectively against the Red Army in Afghanistan with a minimum of training. Considering the military experience of both the RPA and the FAR, there is no doubt they both had soldiers capable of effectively deploying these weapons. Thirdly, they both would have been able to get their people in place near the flightpath of the president’s plane to shoot it down. As the wider area was under the control of the FAR, access to it would have been easy for the assassins, if they were part of the army’s extremist faction. This would have been harder, but not impossible, for the RPA.<sup>62</sup> A small handpicked group could have evaded the – usually sub-par – FAR patrols. As the previous chapters have outlined, the RPA had enormous experience with infiltration

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2010); Marc Trévidic and Nathalie Poux, *Rapport d’Expertise: Destruction en vol du Falcon 50 Kigali (Rwanda)*. Cour d’Appel de Paris Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris. 5 January 2012.

<sup>61</sup> Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997), 213-215

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-218

behind enemy lines. Fourthly, any evidence collected in the area from which investigators think the plane was shot down is worthless because no proper chain of custody was established. The investigations were only carried out after the Battle of Kigali had been fought over the very places where the missiles might have been fired from. Equally, any eyewitness testimony on the launching of the missiles must be ignored. The flight-time from launch to impact of a SA16/18 missile is between 0.4 and 3.4 seconds, hardly enough time to get a proper look.<sup>63</sup>

However – and this is particularly important – the affiliation of those who shot down the plane is ultimately irrelevant to the issue of the Genocide. Despite Habyarimana’s demise, all the constitutional mechanisms were still in place to permit the swearing-in of the BBTG, which was now planned for 7 April 1994. Annonciate Kavaruganda remembers a phone call between her husband, Joseph Kavaruganda, the president of the constitutional court, and his son on the night of 6-7 April:

My son asked his father, “If indeed there’s a political or legal vacuum in Rwanda, what is going to happen?” And the father responded by saying that, “There’s not going to be any vacuum as such in Rwanda because the ministers of the *Inkotanyi* are there. There are other ministers of other political parties who are there, and there are also members of parliament who are going to be sworn in. All we do not have is a president. And if he is dead” -- at the time we did not know for certain if he was dead. We did not have any reliable information concerning his death. And he said, “I think in the morning all the parties will meet and the MRND will provide a candidate for the post of president. That party will tell me what has to happen and I am going to administer the oath to the ministers. But as long as the constitutional court stays there, I can administer the oath to the ministers. So there will not be any legal vacuum.”<sup>64</sup>

Rather, it was the actions of the FAR in the immediate aftermath of the death of the president which allowed the Genocide to take place. Instead of assisting UNAMIR in maintaining order, the FAR took the lead in the killing. The tragic story of Annonciate and Joseph Kavaruganda illustrates this point beyond the shadow of a doubt. In the early hours of 7 April 1994, units from the Presidential Guard moved into town to kill the leadership of the opposition parties. Joseph, Annonciate and their three children were at home watching a football match when their eldest son Jean-Marcel called. He told his father that, “Well, Daddy, they have just announced in Belgium that the presidential plane had been brought down, or that the news of his death will be announced later on.”<sup>65</sup> Perturbed by the news, Joseph went outside and asked the small UNAMIR contingent which was guarding the house to be on the alert. Soon after the phone rang again; this time, it was their neighbour Frédéric Nzamburambaho, chairman of the PSD and minister of agriculture. “Have you heard the news? It would appear President Habyarimana is dead ... it would appear close to our place, we were being surrounded. I don’t know whether they are not going to kill people, carry out massacres that very night.”<sup>66</sup> Though the president of the supreme court had received death

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<sup>63</sup> Trévidic and Poux, *Rapport d’Expertise*, 239

<sup>64</sup> Transcript of, 27 November 2003, Examination-in-Chief by Ms. Mulvaney of Annonciate Kavaruganda. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 20

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 18

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

threats, he hoped that UNAMIR would be able to protect both his neighbour and his own family.

Shortly after Nzamburambaho called again: “Mr. President, I have only just learnt that the neighbourhood is surrounded and nobody can leave. I do not know what is going to happen.” As Annonciate and Joseph became really worried, there was a knock on their bedroom window. One of the Ghanaian peacekeepers was outside with a Rwandan soldier. Joseph went to the door and saw that there were about 40 Presidential Guards around the house and that the UNAMIR contingent had been disarmed. Annonciate remembers what happened next:

One of the soldiers came from the group, gave him a military salute, and told him, “Mr. President, we have been sent to take you along. Our commanders asked us to come and take you to where we took the other authorities, where Landoual Ndasigwa had been taken and where Faustin Rucogoza also had been taken.” ... “We have been sent to come and take you along. Come on let’s go.” He looked at them and he said, “Why do you have to come and look for me so early in the morning? Where are you taking authorities to so early in the morning or in the night?” And they said, “Our leader said we should come and take you. If you are not going to do so deliberately we are going to force you to do so.” When he heard that he became afraid, he turned around and told the Ghanaian soldiers that those soldiers wanted to kill him. He rapidly closed the door, locked it up ... He was very afraid, he closed the door, he locked it with a key but left the key in the keyhole.<sup>67</sup>

Rushing through the house, Joseph locked every door behind him. When he arrived at the bedrooms, he told the kids to go to their washroom and lie flat on the floor. Annonciate goes on: “he found me in the bedroom, and he told me, ‘There’s a soldier who says he is called Captain Kabera, and he is an officer in Habyarimana’s office, and he is at the head of the soldiers who came to look for me ... Let us go to our room, to our washroom or bathroom and we will stay there.’”<sup>68</sup> Before hiding in the bathroom, Joseph called the Belgian and Bangladeshi UNAMIR detachments, who told him to stay put and that they would send soldiers. They hoped to be there within 45 minutes. Jean-Marcel called for a third time and spoke to his father. During the conversation, the Presidential Guards lost their patience outside and started forcing their way into the house. His wife caught the last part of the conversation between father and son:

Son: Where is the noise I am hearing coming from? Father: The noise is from the Presidential Guards who have started to attack. They have just shot at and probably broken the main entrance door to the living room. For us, this is the end. The three of you outside the country should be courageous in life. You have never let me down. They are coming to our room. *Adieu.*<sup>69</sup>

Annonciate goes on: “We heard the doors within the house being broken with loud noises. There were gunshots in the ceiling, doors were being broken down, all the doors that he had

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>69</sup> Transcript of, 27 November 2003, Examination-in-Chief by Ms. Mulvaney of Annonciate Kavaruganda. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 32

locked up.”<sup>70</sup> As the soldiers searched the house, they found the children hiding in the other bathroom, “so, I heard our little daughter ... knocking at the door and crying out and saying, ‘Daddy open the door. They are going to shoot at me.’”<sup>71</sup> Once the soldiers had entered the room, Joseph made them wait while he got dressed. Annonciate used the opportunity to start packing a bag for her husband but was asked by one of the soldiers: “Do you believe that he needs any other clothes, that he needs to change?”<sup>72</sup> Joseph, Annonciate and their two children were escorted out of the house and put in a pickup. Joseph sat in the front and the rest of his family in the back. As the driver started driving off, Captain Kabera noticed that the family was in the back of the truck and told them to get out and go back to the house. Once they were back at the house, Joseph returned with his captors one more time to give his wife some money, which was promptly stolen by one of the soldiers – who had now set about plundering the house. Then he was taken away, “And since that day I never saw him again, he ... [never] came back. We stayed at the house, they beat us up, they looted.”<sup>73</sup>

For the rest of the morning and the early afternoon Annonciate and her children were beaten by the Presidential Guards while the small UNAMIR detachment looked on. While they did not intervene, their presence did probably prevent the family from being executed there and then. Some of the soldiers continued on their mission and went to the house of Ngango, the deputy chairman of the PSD, while others went to the neighbour’s house. Annonciate heard the screams as Nzamburambaho and his family were massacred. In the confusion, one of the FAR soldiers came up to her and told her:

I was a member of the escort of Landoual, and I want to inform you that Landoual was killed this morning. His wife was also killed, his children, Patrick and Malaika were killed, even his mother was killed. ... They will come to kill you after UNAMIR soldiers leave, and I would, therefore, advise you to run away. I would advise you to take Julien and to throw them over the fence and run into the Serghum plantation so that you can tell your story later on. Otherwise, they have said that it is their intention to kill you so that you don’t testify to what you saw today.<sup>74</sup>

Later in the afternoon, another neighbour, MRND party member Dr. Casimir Bizimungu, arrived home with a military escort and Annonciate asked for his help. After some hesitation, Bizimungu took Annonciate, her two children and the son of Nzamburambaho, who had managed to escape the slaughter at his father’s house, to the Canadian Embassy.<sup>75</sup> Throughout the morning of 7 April, the above scene was repeated throughout Kigali, as FAR death squads went around the capital killing Tutsi and members of the moderate opposition. Besides Joseph Kavaruganda, Frédéric Nzamburambaho (PSD) and Félicien Ngango (PSD), who were killed in Kimihurura, many others were targeted. Luc Marshal, one of the Belgian officers with UNAMIR, was on the phone with Landoald Ndasingwa (PL) when the latter and his family were killed. Not content with the murders of the president of the supreme court, the leadership of the PSD and the head of the moderate faction of the PL, the FAR also

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 24

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 27

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 32

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 33-35

killed Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana (MDR), Faustin Rucogoza (MDR), Aloys Niyoyita (PL) and many others. As General Dallaire puts it, “In just a few hours the Presidential Guard had conducted an obviously well-organised and well-executed plan – by noon on April 7 the moderate political leadership of Rwanda was dead or in hiding, the potential for a future moderate government utterly lost.”<sup>76</sup>

Taking their cue from the FAR, the *Interahamwe* and *Impuzamigambi* militias set up road blocks throughout Kigali where they forced people to show their identity cards. Any Tutsi were immediately killed. Traditional hiding places like schools and churches were assaulted, and the people who had taken shelter there killed with machetes, grenades and clubs. Hutu who refused to join the killing or who were known to be moderate PL, PSD or MDR members were also targeted. According to Alison Des Forges, by 11 April, 20,000 people, “the vast majority of them Tutsi,” had been killed, as more people started joining the killers.<sup>77</sup> Over the next 100 days, the figure would rise to around 800,000. How did the RPF respond to the killings? This is the subject to which we turn in the final section of this chapter.

### **The Campaign Against Genocide**

#### *The Battle of Kigali – First Phase*

After Juvénal Habyarimana’s jet was shot down, 3 Battalion, based in the CND, came under immediate attack.<sup>78</sup> Recoilless rifles and mortars started pounding the structure from several directions. Despite the shelter afforded by its reinforced concrete walls and the trenches surrounding the complex, the CND was in a precarious position. To its direct north was Camp Kami, the base of the Military Police Battalion; to the east were Kigali airport and Camp Kanombe, which housed the Para-Commando Battalion; to the south-west were the Presidential Guards in Camp Kimihurura, while Camp Kacyiru, the headquarters of the Gendarmerie, was a couple of hundred meters west of the CND. Another infantry brigade, the Reconnaissance Battalion, artillery, mortars and various second-line units were stationed throughout Kigali, with Camp Kigali, in the centre of town, being an especially important base. In total, there were about 7,000-10,000 FAR troops facing the 600-strong 3 Battalion.

Throughout 7 April, as all parties tried to understand what was happening, the RPA in the CND did not leave the compound but returned fire, especially on the Presidential Guard Camp located nearby. At first, General Dallaire thought that the killings might be caused by elements of the FAR which had rebelled against their commanding officers. However, the scale of the massacres soon became clear to the RPF as people sought shelter around the CND. What also became clear was that UNAMIR was not strong enough to stop the Genocide. Though UN troops protected Tutsi and moderate Hutu who took shelter in their camps, their rules of engagement – and military weakness – prevented them from taking control of the situation. No genocide has ever been stopped without the use of force, and the only armed group with the will and ability to intervene was the RPA. The RPA High

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<sup>76</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 232

<sup>77</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. Written by Alison Des Forges. New York. March 1999, 156

<sup>78</sup> This section is based on discussion with the staff of the Campaign Against Genocide Museum in the CND during October 2017; and ‘Compte rendu du colonel Cussac et lieutenant-colonel Maurin, Paris, 19 avril 1994’, Paul Quilès, *Rapport d’information*, Annexes, 350

Command had no other option than a full resumption of hostilities. Nor could there be any discussion of a ceasefire as long as the murder of Tutsis continued. This is an important point, since many did try to broker a ceasefire between the two parties.<sup>79</sup> However well-intentioned, these attempts were unrealistic and uninformed: the only way to stop the killings would be the unconditional surrender of the *génocidaires* and the FAR. As the genocidal extremist would not lay down their arms until they had completed the killing of Tutsi and moderate Hutu, the only solution was to defeat them by force of arms.

On 8 April, Chairman of the High Command Paul Kagame gave Charles Kayonga the order to spring into action. All four of the companies of the battalion were given different objectives. Eagle Company was to break out towards the Amahoro stadium to defend the many Tutsis who had taken shelter there under UN protection; the RPF High Command did not trust that the Bangladeshi UN contingent would be able to protect the stadium from *génocidaire* extremists. The company split up and moved towards the stadium in a pincer movement. While the northern pincer made good progress, the southern pincer quickly ran into difficulties as it engaged elements of the FAR Para-Commando battalion which were advancing up the road from the Kanombe barracks towards the CND. Chui (Leopard) Company was ordered to contain the Presidential Guards stationed in their barracks in Kimihurura, with support from the DshK on the roof of the CND. Vicious fighting took place between Chui Company and the Presidential Guards, as Henry Ayidoho, the leader of the Ghanaian detachment of UNAMIR, recalls:

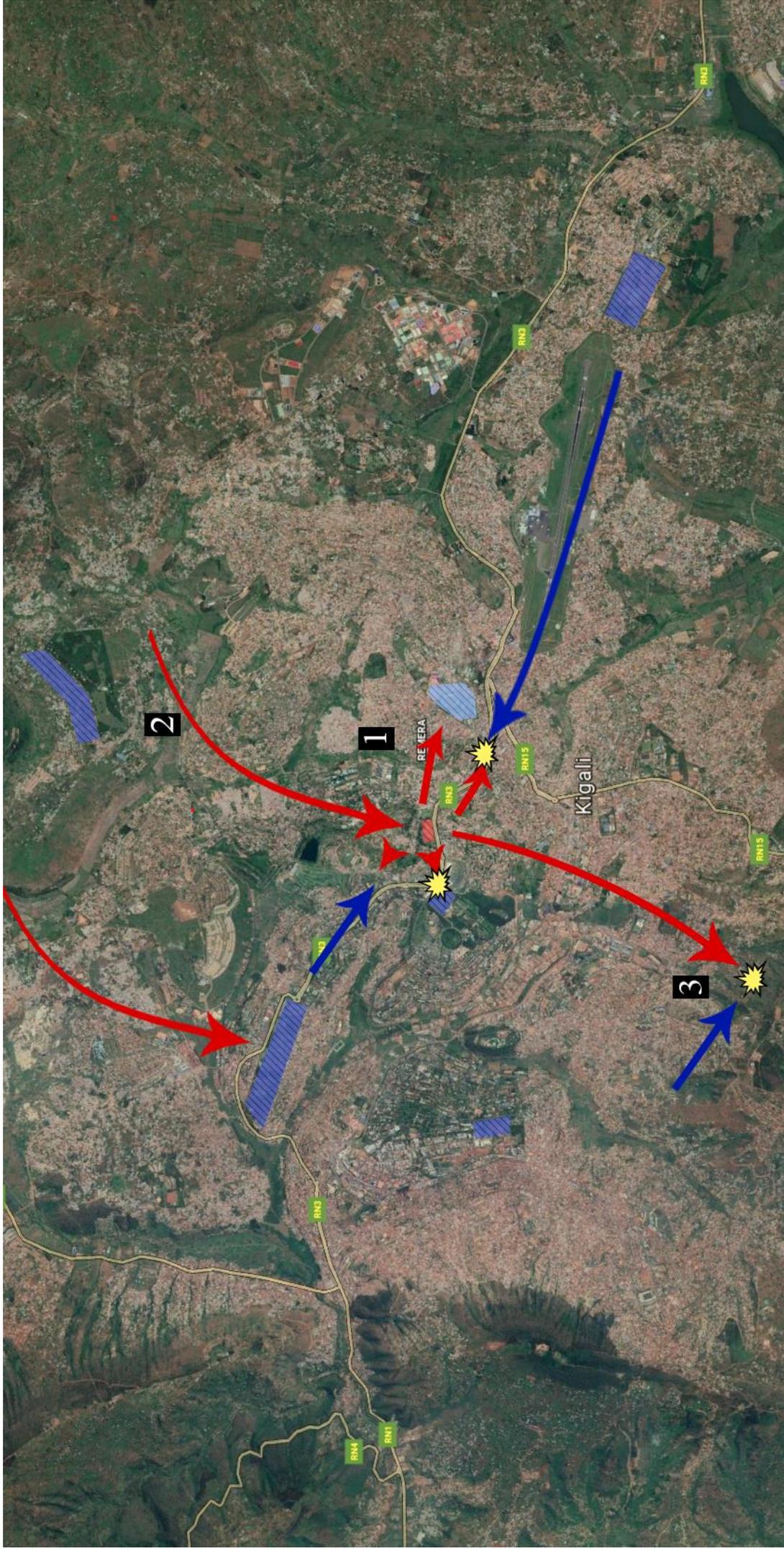
From dusk to dawn there were attacks and counter attacks mainly between the RPF and the Presidential Guards. ... The Presidential Guards held on tenaciously and fought a pitched battle with the RPF. The frontlines between the parties were less than 100 meters. This situation, along the route from the Meridien Hotel to the Gendarmerie Camp in Kacyiru, remained the same for over three months during the civil war.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, Tiger company fought on the right flank of Chui and engaged the Gendarmerie in Kacyiru. The last company, Simba (Lion), engaged the Military Police Barracks at Camp Kami. Despite seizing the initiative with these bold attacks, 3 Battalion would not be able to hold out against the FAR unless it was quickly reinforced.

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<sup>79</sup> Johan Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal* (Kalmthout: Polis, 2016), 528-534; Kuperman, "Provoking genocide", 79

<sup>80</sup> Henry Kwami Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1997), 36



**Battle of Kigali:** 1 – 3 Battalion breaks out of the CND. Chui company attacks the Presidential Guards directly to the west; Tiger and Simba companies fight on Chui's right flank and take on the Gendarmerie advancing from Camp Kacyiru and the MP Battalion in Camp Kami (north-west and north respectively). Eagle company advances east in a double pincer towards the Amahoro stadium (the UN HQ). The southern pincer gets involved in heavy fighting with the Para-Commando Battalion advancing from Camp Kanombe. 2 – Alpha, Bravo and 59 Combined Mobile Forces arrive from the North. 3 – On 12 April, the RPA cut FAR positions in Kigali in two by advancing on and capturing Mt. Rebero. They hold the position despite FAR counterattacks.



*Above: Today, the view from the roof of the CND looking towards the camp of the Presidential Guards is blocked by the Kigali Conference Centre beehive. A statue commemorates the DshK gunners who supported Chui company. Mt. Kigali and Mt. Jali can be seen in the background.*

*Below: Caesar Kayizari (acting commander of Alpha Mobile), James Kabarebe (in command of RPA heavy weapons support) and three other commanders hold an impromptu commanders meeting during the Battle of Kigali.*



*The Relief of the 3 Battalion and Operations Amaryllis and Silverback*

8 April also saw the start of the RPA offensive from Mulindi. The main objective was to quickly relieve 3 Battalion. Alpha Combined Mobile Force, Bravo CMF and 59 CMF were ordered to head straight for Kigali and bypass any pockets of resistance on the way.

All these forces were infiltrating by passing enemy defences; not engaging because the end state was the capital city. Small forces would be left to hoodwink the very heavily barricaded enemy defences which had been there throughout the ceasefire period. This was to distract the enemy as the bulk ... advanced to the capital. The enemy commanders were all in bewilderment when ... they received communication that heavy fighting was going on very deep within the country, actually at the outskirts of the capital yet they were deeply dug in very far away.<sup>81</sup>

Captain, now General, Charles Karamba, stationed at the CND, remembers that, “We were monitoring and in constant communication with the force that had been ordered by the Commander in Chief to link up with us. ... At the same time engaging the enemy but aware that our reinforcement was coming.”<sup>82</sup> Though 3 Battalion was on its own its commanders and soldiers knew that they would not be forgotten and that they had a crucial role to play in the battle. Their aggressive actions around the CND were tying down three of the elite FAR battalions, keeping them away from other crucial sectors of the front.<sup>83</sup>

With Alpha Mobile, commanded by Sam “Kaka” Kanyemera, leading the way, the relief column moved south towards Kigali under the cover of night. By the morning of 9 April, they had reached Muyanza Mission Parish. Once there, however, Bravo CMF and 59 CMF were detected by the FAR and forced to fight off a counterattack.<sup>84</sup> The next day, these units were again forced to confront the FAR when they ran into an ambush at Zoko hill: “The two Commanding officers [Charles Ngoga and Ludoviko “Dodo” Twahira for 59 CMF and Bravo Mobile, respectively] ... held an urgent meeting where it was decided that to avoid further ambushes and unnecessary casualties, the forces should travel by day and confront the enemy during day light.”<sup>85</sup> While this force distracted the FAR, Alpha Mobile had been able to slip through the net undetected and its lead company arrived at the CND from the direction of the King Faisal Hospital in the afternoon of 11 April. However, severe fire from the Gendarmerie in Kacyiru, which had a 37 mm cannon, prevented the rest of Alpha Mobile from reaching the CND during daytime. Later that night they were able to reinforce their comrades of 3 Battalion. Meanwhile, throughout 11 April, Bravo and 59 CMF, still trailing behind, fought running battles with FAR troops which were trying to stop them from reaching Kigali. Making steady progress, they joined the battle around Kigali the next morning.

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<sup>81</sup> Correspondence with former RPF member, 27 August 2017

<sup>82</sup> Edwin Musoni, “How RPA deployed 600 soldiers in the heart of Kigali against all odds” *The New Times*, 3 July 2014, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/76581>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Logan Ndahiro, “The RPA’s quest to stop Genocide and subsequent liberation of Rwanda” *The New Times*, 5 July 2017, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/215521>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Following the death of President Habyarimana, the international community immediately swung into action to save its own. Both France and Belgium launched closely coordinated missions to rescue their citizens, and those of allied nations, in Kigali. Considering the circumstances, this made sense. Ten Belgian peacekeepers had been killed while trying to protect Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana on 7 April, and the RTLM hate radio picked out Belgium and the Belgians as targets for its vitriol.<sup>86</sup> The Belgian Embassy also got several messages of Belgians being killed by the *génocidaires*. Though the threat to the French was less acute, due to the close working relationship between the French Embassy and military cooperants, and their FAR and Gendarmerie counterparts, the French government was not willing to take any risks either. They did not know how the situation would develop or how the RPA would treat the French civilians it encountered.

On the night of 8-9 April, the lead elements of the French Operation Amaryllis landed at Kigali airport. Over two hundred troops of the *3e régiment de parachutistes d'infanterie de marine* (3 RPIMa) took control of the airport. The next day, while reconnaissance operations were under way, they were joined by an extra company. On 11 April, the French started their operations, evacuating French citizens and the family of President Habyarimana. A further company from the *8e régiment de parachutistes d'infanterie de marine* (8<sup>e</sup> RPIMa) reinforced the detachment, bringing total troop strength to well over 400. By 13 April, all French expats and diplomats, together with the family of Habyarimana and other select Rwandans, had been evacuated. The next day the last French troops left Rwanda.<sup>87</sup> The Belgians worked hand in hand with Amaryllis to evacuate their own expatriates.<sup>88</sup> On 10 April, 250 Belgian Para-Commandos arrived at Kigali airport, and in cooperation with the Belgian troops in UNAMIR, started evacuating expatriates.<sup>89</sup> One day after the French, on 15 April, the last Belgian troops and civilians flew out of Kigali.

The reaction of the RPF to Operation Amaryllis and Operation Silverback (as the Belgian part of the evacuation was code-named) was pragmatic. On the one hand, the RPF wanted to avoid confrontation with foreign, and especially French troops, as their intervention in the fighting could decisively turn the battle in favour of the FAR. On the other hand, the RPF wanted these foreigners out of the way as soon as possible. Neither the French nor the Belgians had shown interest in stopping the mass killings which were taking place, literally, before their eyes. The longer non-UNAMIR foreign troops remained on Rwandan soil, the more likely they were to get involved. So, on 12 April, the RPF announced a 60-hour window for foreign, non-UNAMIR, troops to leave Rwanda, after which they would be considered co-belligerents. Both the French and the Belgians departed before the ultimatum ran out.

### *The Battle of Kigali – Second Phase*

Kigali is overlooked by several important hills (Mt. Rebero, Mt. Kigali and Mt. Jali) that tower above the town. Anyone who holds them enjoys a decisive tactical

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<sup>86</sup> Philippe Mahoux and Guy Verhofstadt, *Commission d'enquête parlementaire concernant les événements du Rwanda* (Sénat de Belgique, 6 December 1997), 516-518

<sup>87</sup> Paul Quilès, *Rapport d'information*, 270-272

<sup>88</sup> Swinnen, *Rwanda: mijn verhaal*, 535-546

<sup>89</sup> Philippe Mahoux and Guy Verhofstadt, *Commission d'enquête parlementaire*, 518-521

advantage. Right after their arrival, troops of 59 CMF, supported by their comrades of 3 Battalion, launched a daring raid on Mount Rebero in the early morning of 12 April. This was typical of RPA tactics, as Henry Ayidoho observes: “The main tactics used by the RPF throughout the war was ‘infiltration and encirclement.’ They moved in small numbers mainly during the night and carried out dawn attacks. The RPF soldiers had a stubborn stamina. They had trained on the hills so well that they were always strong and battle ready.”<sup>90</sup> The capture of Mt. Rebero was a key development, as it allowed the RPF to direct artillery and mortar fire onto Camp Kigali. Recognising the danger of leaving this strategic peak in the hands of the RPF for too long, the FAR launched a series of determined counterattacks, but the RPA were able to beat off the sustained attacks launched by the FAR’s 73 and Muvumba Battalions. As Bravo Mobile moved up, it took over the position held by 59 Mobile on top of Mt. Rebero, thereby allowing the latter to help Alpha Mobile and 3 Battalion in the urban fighting now taking place throughout Kigali.<sup>91</sup>

While these actions show that the RPA still possessed all the qualities that had made it a first-class fighting force, its troops started facing serious difficulties in the urban environment of Kigali. Throughout history, cities have swallowed up armies. Perhaps the most famous examples are those of the German 6<sup>th</sup> Army in 1942, as it tried to capture Stalingrad, and of the Russian Army as it tried to occupy Grozny in Chechnya in 1994. More recent examples are the tough battles fought by the United States in Fallujah and Baghdad. In urban terrain, it is more difficult for units to communicate and work together, which reduces combat effectiveness. This proved a problem for the RPA, even though its superior tactics had allowed it to overcome the more numerous FAR in the open in the past. In addition, third-rate militias like the *Interahamwe*, which were worthless on an open battlefield, became deadly opponents when fighting on their home turf.<sup>92</sup>

The RPA and its commanders also faced another cruel dilemma. As Caesar Kayizari, who was intimately involved in the battles around Kigali as second in command, and later acting commander of Alpha Mobile, explains,

The commander in chief [Paul Kagame] gives us two missions ... as much as possible rescue. And as you rescue you fight. The rescue will compromise a lot of the fighting capabilities. If you make deep rescues ... it might mean vulnerabilities as you move to rescue instead of going for military objective after military objective. ... Sometimes we have to scatter the forces for the humanitarian mission, rescuing people in danger of extermination. You would hear the news ... that at location Z 5000 people are being butchered, and already you are under attack. So you have to take part of your force and as much as possible stop that carnage.<sup>93</sup>

At one point in the fighting, part of Alpha Mobile was withdrawn from the city centre of Kigali and ordered to move to Bichumbi, where the local mayor was helping to organise

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<sup>90</sup> Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*, 32

<sup>91</sup> Logan Ndahiro, “The RPA’s quest to stop Genocide”

<sup>92</sup> Interview with James Kabarebe, 16 October 2018

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 23 October 2018

the Genocide. “They were murdering people and when the force came here he ran away, and we saved quite a huge number of people, of course many were dead too.”<sup>94</sup> Another rescue operation was launched on 16 April, when eight soldiers from 3 Battalion evacuated 50 people hiding in the St. André Parish, deep behind enemy lines. The problem of whether to prioritise military targets or humanitarian missions would haunt the RPA throughout the 100-day Campaign Against Genocide. On the one hand, the quicker the FAR were defeated, the quicker the Genocide would end: not only were the FAR defending the killers, but in many cases they were active participants in the Genocide. On the other hand, the RPA did not have enough troops to attack the key FAR camps, the strategic hills around Kigali and other military objectives *and* to mount humanitarian rescue missions throughout the country. This was a matter of numbers. At the resumption of hostilities, the RPA could muster eight Combined Mobile Forces and 3 Battalion – in total perhaps 15,000 troops. Arrayed against them, the FAR could muster 31,000 combat troops, not counting support units or the *Interahamwe* and *Impuzamigambi* militias.<sup>95</sup>

In the maelstrom of the ongoing war and Genocide, the tension within the FAR officer corps came to the surface. On 12 April, a group of moderate officers (Colonels Rusatira, Gatsinzi, Muberuka, Ntiwiragabo, Kanyamanza, Murasampongo and Hakazimana, and Lieutenant Colonels Rwabalinda, Rwamanyama and Kanyandekwe) signed a letter calling for a ceasefire and negotiations so that the Genocide could be stopped. However, these officers no longer commanded any significant influence in the FAR. Their extremist colleagues, who were supporting or orchestrating the killings, now denounced them as traitors and forced the moderates’ leader, Rusatira, into hiding.<sup>96</sup>

Chief of staff of the Gendarmerie Augustin Ndindiliyimana, who was acquitted of charges on appeal before the ICTR, was known to be colour-blind on the Hutu-Tutsi question and fled to Belgium in June 1994. Another important officer in the Gendarmerie, Paul Rwarakabije, who was also put on trial and found innocent, did not take part in the killings but kept fighting the RPA. He was frustrated, as a soldier, that the FAR joined in the Genocide: “The army deployed most of its forces to massacre civilians, diverting trucks, ammunition, and manpower to slaughter them. The genocide caused our resistance to crumble. It was a *cafouillage*, a real mess.”<sup>97</sup> Yet he considered surrender out of the question. One of Rwarakabije’s former comrades told Congo expert Jason Stearns that Rwarakabije “was a disciplinarian to the core. He never really asked why he was fighting; that was for the politicians to decide. And when the politicians ran, he just kept on fighting, like a robot.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Defence Intelligence Report, Defence Intelligence Agency, ‘Rwanda: The Rwandan Patriotic Front’s Offensive’, 9 May 1994. “The US and the Genocide in Rwanda, 1994” National Security Archive.

<sup>96</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 157-158

<sup>97</sup> Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012), 19

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 20



### *The Central and Eastern Axes of Advance*

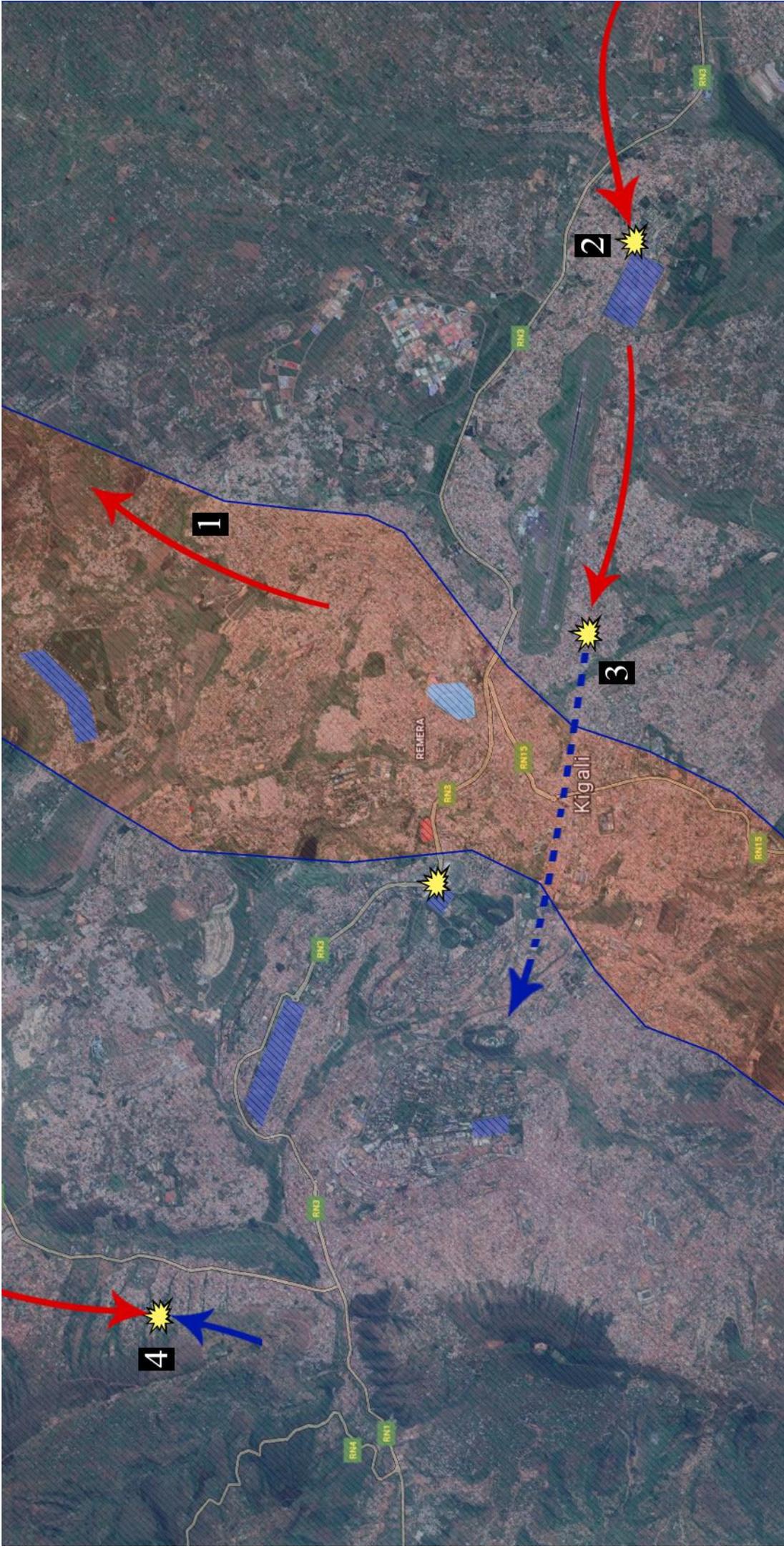
While the RPA now had a significant force in Kigali, there still were strong FAR elements to their rear which had been bypassed in the rush to get to Kigali. It fell to the follow-up forces to deal with these pockets of resistance. 21 CMF, under the command of Charles Musitu, and 101 CMF, under Charles Muhire, advanced on Kigali via Byumba, while 7 Mobile and 157 Mobile, under Theogene Bagire and Fred Ibingira, respectively, were tasked with capturing the east of Rwanda before swinging west to join the Battle of Kigali. Byumba was surrounded and fell around mid-April, and the FAR forces which had given it up headed for the relative safety of their comrades around Kigali, hotly pursued by 21 Mobile. A crucial situation now developed, for if the RPA did not manage to prevent these retreating FAR elements from reaching Kigali, they would be in an excellent position to hit the RPF troops around the city in the rear. Though disorganised, this distraction might be enough to tip the balance in favour of the FAR. To prevent this development, several companies, reinforced by 21 and 101 CMFs, took up blocking positions at Mugambazi and managed to force the FAR to retreat towards Ruhengeri.<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile, 7 Mobile had passed Gabiro in the east and swung west to join the fight in Kigali. Together with elements of Alpha Mobile, it faced the crack Para-Commando Battalion. Brent Beardsley, one of General Dallaire's key officers in UNAMIR, remembers visiting the Para-Commandos before the outbreak of hostilities. The "troops appeared to be very tough field soldiers. They looked very fit, very physically fit, they were moving in formation under the command of NCOs, being briefed, their weapons appeared to be well-maintained, their boots, that type of thing."<sup>100</sup> Unlike the Presidential Guards, which were also considered an elite unit, the Para-Commandos had much frontline experience and had been one of the units which gave the RPA the toughest fight around Byumba in May 1992. For nine days, 7 CMF, Alpha and the paratroops fought tooth and nail around Kabuga before the latter were pushed back to Camp Kanombe.

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<sup>99</sup> Logan Ndahiro, "The RPA's quest to stop Genocide"

<sup>100</sup> Transcript of, 20 January 2004, Examination-in-Chief of Brent Beardsley by Mr White. *The Prosecutor v. Bagosora et al.* ICTR-98-41-T, 9-14



**Battle of Kigali:** 1 – Part of Alpha CMF moves out of the centre of town to join 7 CMF. 2 – After stopping génocidaires in Bichumbi, Alpha links up with 7 CMF and fights a series of battles with the Para-Commando Battalion at Kabuga and Camp Kanombe. 3 – On 22-23 May 7 CMF forces the Para-Commando Battalion out of Kanombe. However the battalion is cut off from the main FAR grouping in the west of town and forced to make a difficult retreat during which it suffers heavy casualties. 4 – Bravo CMF fights a protracted battle for the peak of Mt. Jali.



### *The Battle of Kigali – Third Phase*

With its rear now secure and 7 CMF coming in from the east, the RPA was able to start to prise Kigali out of the hands of the FAR. On 22-23 May, 7 CMF finally pushed the Para-Commandos out of Camp Kanombe and their positions around the airport. The latter now found themselves close to being surrounded and had to fight their way out through a narrow gap between Mt. Rebero and the RPA troops around the CND. 7 CMF was immediately redeployed to help Bravo CMF with the fighting around Mt. Jali.

Besides the continuous fighting around Camp Kacyiru and Camp Kimihurura, where the Presidential Guards had been contained even though they were still holding out, a focal point became the hill on which the University of Kigali's Business School is now located. This hillock, situated between the larger hills of Kimihurura and the centre of town, was important because if the RPA captured it, the Presidential Guards would be cut off from the rest of the FAR.<sup>101</sup> It would also provide the springboard for an attack on Camp Kigali and the city centre. Towards the end of May and early June the RPA would attack under the cover of night and push the FAR defenders back in vicious close-quarter fighting. However, come morning, the FAR, using their 37 mm anti-aircraft guns and heavy artillery, would be able to push the RPA back. In this fashion, the hill switched hands multiple times.<sup>102</sup>

Following the capture of Camp Kanombe, the RPF stepped up the tempo of its rescue missions. On 2 June, 200 people were saved at Kabgayi. Another raid was launched to save people stuck at the Sainte-Famille Church in the centre of Kigali:

Thousands of Tutsi had taken refuge in the Sainte Famille church, on the eastern side of central Kigali. One night in mid-June, the RPF sent a company two kilometres inside what was enemy territory, recovered six hundred Tutsis from Sainte Famille, and pulled them out to safety through RGF lines. The mission began as a clandestine operation and ended as a fully supported running battle with carefully planned artillery support - and, by the standards of any military force, ranks as a first class rescue.<sup>103</sup>

Sadly, the RPF was not able to save everyone at Sainte-Famille, as many people hiding inside the church did not believe that the RPF outside were their saviours, but rather *génocidaires* masquerading as RPF. A couple of days later, on 16-17 June, another rescue operation was mounted, this time to save those trapped at St. Paul. As during the Sainte-Famille raid, an RPA company went deep behind FAR lines under the cover of darkness and escorted several hundred people to safety. Yet the RPA could not be everywhere at once, and thousands of people were killed every day. On 10 June, for example, militias arrived at Nyamirambo Catholic Church in two trucks. Father Otto Mayer, sensing danger, managed to find some Gendarmes who confronted the militia. However, as the militia had the support of the local FAR troops, the Gendarmes were

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 23 October 2018

<sup>102</sup> Interview with James Kabarebe, 16 October 2018

<sup>103</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 421

forced to back down. The militia took 170 Tutsis who were hiding in the church, walked them to a big pit nearby and killed them.<sup>104</sup>

#### *The Advance of 157 Combined Mobile Force*

While the bulk of the RPA was fighting around Kigali, 157 CMF, under the command of Fred Ibingira, had advanced to the Burundian border, which it reached on 30 April, before swinging west. Advancing past Kigali to the south, it captured Nyanza on 29 May and started advancing north towards Kabgayi. By this point, it was clear to the High Command of the RPA that the intense and bloody fighting was costing the lives of too many troops and that it seemed unlikely that the CMFs in the area would be able to force a breakthrough against the dug-in FAR. 3 Battalion, for example, had been engaged in action continuously and lost about 250 of its 600 soldiers during the first couple of weeks of combat. So elements of 101 CMF and 51 CMF were redeployed to reinforce Ibingira's thrust. What brute force could not achieve, mobile operations would. On 2 June, Kabgayi was captured and, soon after, heavy fighting started around Gitarimana. Dallaire reported at this time that the RPF was "containing RGF [Rwandan Government Forces, FAR] positions in Kigali ... with a view to put maximum efforts around Gitarama."<sup>105</sup>

This hook put the FAR troops which were still holding out in Kigali in a difficult position: unless the situation changed radically, they might be surrounded and destroyed. Nonetheless, they kept on fighting and, on 10 June, the RPA troops fighting in the Gatsata neighbourhood in the shadow of Mt. Jali were pushed back by the FAR.<sup>106</sup> On 13 June, after several failed attempts and heavy fighting, the RPA finally captured Gitarama.<sup>107</sup> With the town secured and the FAR almost wholly encircled, the RPA increased the pressure in Kigali. On 20 June, a major breakthrough was achieved when Mt. Jali was captured by Bravo CMF. The RPA also started pushing into the Kigali city centre. *Interahamwe* and FAR troops were firmly entrenched in the area, and the *Inkotanyi* were forced to clear house by house and street by street as they advanced through the neighbourhoods.<sup>108</sup>

On 3 July, after a six-hour fight, the RPA took Butare and, at the same time, the RPA attacked all along the line in Kigali, with particularly fierce attacks against the Presidential Guards in Kimihurura and against Camp Kacyiru. Early the next morning, RPA sentries noticed that the positions in front of them seemed abandoned. As soon as they realised the FAR was withdrawing, the RPA attacked even harder to turn the retreat into a rout. Alpha Mobile entered the Presidential Guards Camp at 06:30 on the morning on 4 July.<sup>109</sup> Around the same time, Bravo Mobile overran Camp Kacyiru. By the end of the day Kigali was under control of the RPA.

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<sup>104</sup> Colonel Mustafzur Rahman 'Investigation Report of the Nyamirambo Killings', 17 June 1994. FGT.

<sup>105</sup> From: UNAMIR Sitrep Dallaire To: Annan UN 'Daily sitrep', 5 June 1994. FGT.

<sup>106</sup> From: UNAMIR Sitrep Dallaire To: Annan UN 'Daily sitrep', 10 June 1994. FGT.

<sup>107</sup> From: UNAMIR Sitrep Dallaire To: Annan UN 'Daily sitrep', 13 June 1994. FGT.

<sup>108</sup> From: UNAMIR Sitrep Dallaire To: Annan UN 'Daily sitrep', 22 June 1994. FGT; From: UNAMIR To: Annan UN 'Weekly Sitrep', 28 June 1994. FGT.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 23 October 2018.

*The Last Week of the Campaign and Opération Turquoise*

In June 1994, the French government decided to intervene in Rwanda.<sup>110</sup> It remains unclear exactly why the French decided to intervene when they did. Prunier suggests it was a rushed reaction to forestall other international initiatives and that it would look good domestically.<sup>111</sup> When the RPF heard of the French intention, it made its position clear and Paul Kagame urged General Dallaire to “Tell France that Kigali can handle more body bags than Paris.”<sup>112</sup> This aggressive stance was based on France having supported the FAR before the outbreak of the Genocide, and having done nothing to stop it. Why would they mount an operation on Rwandan soil other than to rob the RPA of its victory? Gérard Prunier had been asked to act as an adviser for the French government and helped establish basic links between the latter and the RPF. In the first instance, however, the Quai d’Orsay was reluctant to open lines of communication with the RPF. To get his message across, Prunier told an official at the Ministry of Defence the seriousness of the situation. After listening intently the official exclaimed that, “God dammit! It is our boys going in there. And if they get shot up because of those idiots at Foreign Affairs there will be hell to pay.”<sup>113</sup> The result was that two top RPF diplomats, Jacques Bihozagara and Theogene Rudasingwa, visited the French Ministry of Defence. Though the RPF was not wholly convinced of French intentions, the meeting helped break the ice; it showed the RPF the French did not drink gasoline, and the French that the RPF did not eat barbed wire.<sup>114</sup> When the French entered south-west Rwanda there would be serious friction and several close calls with the RPA, but the two sides never came to blows.

When the French deployed to Zaire, they did so in a decisive manner. Following standard operating procedure, it was elite paratroops and Foreign Legion units which formed the spearhead. They were supported by fighter jets and helicopters. Many commentators have argued that this level of equipment suggests that the French were intent on supporting the FAR and fighting the RPA, rather than establishing a humanitarian safe zone.<sup>115</sup> While the motives of the French intervention are murky, this criticism is incorrect. As has been mentioned before, Pakistani, Malaysian and US peacekeepers had been killed in Somalia less than a year before. In former Yugoslavia, UN intervention forces had also suffered casualties and, finally, ten Belgian peacekeepers had been murdered in Kigali just months before. In each case, a lack of equipment and resolve had been the most important cause of death. The French High Command decided it would not risk the lives of its soldiers without ensuring that they would be able to fight back, if attacked.

Ruhengeri had been surrounded by Charlie CMF, commanded by Thaddeus Gashumba, since 6 May 1994. Now that the bulk of RPA forces were released from the Battle of Kigali, they could move north, in pursuit of the FAR, to reinforce Charlie CMF. Besides

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<sup>110</sup> This dissertation does not have the space to cover Turquoise in sufficient detail. The best available accounts are to be found in Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis* (Prunier was an active participant in the French decision-making process), and Daniela Krosiak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: Hurst, 2007).

<sup>111</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 281

<sup>112</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 342

<sup>113</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 289

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 289-290

<sup>115</sup> Linda Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda’s Genocide* (London: Zed Books, 2009), 237; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 289, 293; Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 449; Krosiak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide*, 228-231

Ruhengeri, the last important town still in hands of the FAR was Gisenyi. Though the advance to the north-west from Kigali was slow because the RPF was busily consolidating its position throughout Rwanda, the outcome of the war was no longer in doubt. On 14 July, Ruhengeri was taken; three days later, Gisenyi fell to the RPA, signalling the end of the war. This final phase of the war also saw the retreat of the FAR into Zaire. Thousands of troops accompanied by over a million civilians crossed the border into northern and southern Kivu by way of Gisenyi and through the zone occupied by *Opération Turquoise*. Normally, these troops would have been interned and disarmed by the Zairian armed forces. However, as President Mobutu was sympathetic towards the FAR, and Zaire was already becoming ungovernable, he allowed the retreating troops to set up base in North and South Kivu. The mass displacement of ordinary Rwandans had many causes. Some had

been urged to flee by former Government civilians and military officials in their home areas, or ... on their own volition they had decided to flee with or immediately ahead of former army soldiers because of a general fear of the RPA. ... Many simply cited panic as their motivation.<sup>116</sup>

#### *RPF War Crimes during the Campaign Against Genocide*

Throughout the Campaign Against Genocide, the RPA suffered heavy casualties. The intensity of the fighting meant that the traditional sources of RPF manpower were no longer able to fill the gaps left in the RPA ranks. Faced with this dilemma, the RPA turned to the only source of manpower which was readily available: genocide survivors. In the months of the Campaign Against Genocide, thousands joined the ranks of the RPA. While commanders did their best to train the survivors as quickly and as well as possible, the exigencies of war demanded that the emphasis be placed on tactics and weapons training rather than on political education.<sup>117</sup> The result was a large influx of troops who had survived the killings, were highly motivated, but “not in a very forgiving mood.”<sup>118</sup>

The massive trauma of three months of continuous fighting in the midst of a Genocide also took its toll on soldiers who had been with the RPA from the start. One veteran told me that “We became a bit contaminated.” A high-ranking official in the Rwandan Ministry of Defence explains, “When our soldiers found their people dead, sometimes their families, and they saw the perpetrators there, with machetes in their hand, they took revenge, they killed them.”<sup>119</sup> A high-level advisor told Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven a similar story: “Of course there was revenge. But you need context. This is very emotional for us.”<sup>120</sup> Another

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<sup>116</sup> From: UNHCR To: Palais des Nations ‘Summary of UNHCR Presentation Before Commission of Experts, 10 October 1994: Prospect for Early Repatriation of Rwandan Refugees Currently in Burundi, Tanzania and Zaire’, 11 October 1994. Also known as the Gersony Report, 12

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Caesar Kayizari, 23 October 2018

<sup>118</sup> Due to its still controversial nature the sources of several quotes in this section are withheld.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with high ranking official in the Rwandan Ministry of Defence

<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven, *Why Comrades Go to War: Liberation Politics and the Outbreak of Africa’s Deadliest Conflict*. London: Hurst (London: Hurst, 2016), 131-132

veteran remembered that, “some Hutus couldn’t afford to be bystanders. We essentially killed civilians.”<sup>121</sup> How many people died is unclear, but the number runs in the thousands.<sup>122</sup>

According to Alison Des Forges, “Certain kinds of RPF abuses occurred so often and in such similar ways that they must have been directed by officers at a high level of responsibility. It is likely that these patterns of abuse were known to and tolerated by the highest levels of command of the RPF forces.”<sup>123</sup> Others have gone further and claimed that these killings were orchestrated and encouraged by the RPA High Command, though this seems highly unlikely.<sup>124</sup> Several other post-war and post-genocide contexts have led to reprisals. The revenge killings by French, Italian and Yugoslav partisans following the end of the Second World War are a good example. So is the arbitrary execution of SS guards at Dachau concentration camp by the 157 Infantry Regiment, 45<sup>th</sup> Division of the US Army on 29 April 1945.

The RPF maintains that, as its troops spread across the country to secure remote towns, the tight control exerted by the stern disciplinarians of the High Command slackened and “some commanders took advantage of this newly gained freedom of movement.” The speed of the Campaign Against Genocide, and the focus on the fight against the FAR, meant that individual commanders or soldiers could use the fog of war to commit atrocities unobserved by the High Command. That this state of affairs lasted several months after the cessation of hostilities seems to have been a result of the RPF’s limited resources. Besides its low troops numbers, the entire law enforcement infrastructure of Rwanda was gone. There were no more police officers, no Gendarmes, no public prosecutors, no judges or supreme court. At the same time thousands of people who had taken part in the Genocide were still at large. Unlike the Allied Armies in Europe, which could reimpose order quickly and efficiently because they were supported by the economic might of the USA and Great Britain, the RPF had to build up a government from scratch.

However, this did not mean that the RPA top brass allowed killings to take place with impunity. Every person I interviewed told me that, though abuses did indeed occur, the High Command cracked down on them ruthlessly when they got wind of it. “We had a military police, we had tribunals. Some were put in jail. Some were executed, some were even Genocide survivors.”<sup>125</sup> Senior officers who had not been able to control their troops were also arrested. Besides these disciplinary measures, the RPA also launched a large-scale training program to ensure that this “scourge” was eliminated from its ranks.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 131

<sup>122</sup> From: UNHCR To: Palais des Nations ‘Summary of UNHCR Presentation Before Commission of Experts, 10 October 1994: Prospect for Early Repatriation of Rwandan Refugees Currently in Burundi, Tanzania and Zaire’, 11 October 1994. Also known as the Gersony Report.

<sup>123</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 535

<sup>124</sup> Judi Rever, *In Praise of Blood* (Canada: Random House, 2018). Rever suggests that the RPF killed “several hundred thousand Hutu civilians.” (Appendix B) However, this flies in the face of even of the highest estimate, 50,000 people, mentioned by Gersony. Even Des Forges, who was highly critical of the RPF (Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 552-559), does not suggest a double Genocide, such as Rever implies. See also: Scott Straus, “The Limits of a Genocide Lens: Violence Against Rwandans in the 1990s”, *Journal of Genocide Research* (2019), and Philip Verwimp, “Testing the Double-Genocide Thesis for Central and Southern Rwanda”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2003)

<sup>125</sup> Interview with high ranking official in the Rwandan Ministry of Defence

### *A Historiographical Note*

Several researchers have used the dearth of scholarship on the Campaign Against Genocide to spread cynical, and often untrue, versions of events. In many cases, this borders on *geschiedvervalsing*, the purposeful distortion of history for political ends. Now that the reader is familiar with events, they can be juxtaposed with the arguments advanced by these researchers.

An early example of this kind of writing is Alan Kuperman's article "Provoking Geocide." Its key contention is that

the [RPA] battle plan was designed to conquer the country, rather than to protect Tutsi civilians from retaliatory violence. Had the rebels placed higher priority on protecting Tutsi civilians, they would have raced quickly to the country's southwest where most domestic Tutsi, some 86%, lived in the six prefectures of Kigali, Butare, Gitarama, Gikongoro, Cyangugu, and Kibuye.<sup>126</sup>

This argument, which posits that the RPF "sacrificed" the Tutsi of Rwanda to gain political power, ignores the military realities of the situation. The route to the southwest was blocked by the FAR strongholds of Kigali, Gitarama and Ruhengeri. Though the RPA might have been able to infiltrate one of its Combined Mobile Forces past these strongholds, the risk, as Kuperman was told by RPA commanders in interviews, was too great. Though the RPA held a military advantage over the FAR, the tide of a battle can swing quickly. The total destruction of an isolated RPA CMF in the southwest might well have been a crucial turning point with serious consequences. It might even have tipped the military balance to the advantage of the FAR, reinvigorating the force's sagging morale. For the RPA, this was an unimaginable risk: had they been defeated, or even forced into a stalemate, this would not only have resulted in the end of their struggle, but it would also have left no one else to stop the killings.

Susan Thomson provides another example of the genre. She writes that "RPF operations [during the Campaign Against Genocide] were not overtly intended to save Tutsi, although some did."<sup>127</sup> As the testimony of Caesar Kayizari shows, the RPA were torn between the need to end the war and their duty to the people who were about to be killed. The rescue operations launched at St. André, St. Paul and Sainte-Famille were all specifically intended to save people from the slaughter. What makes Thomson's assertion especially asinine is that she must have known this: General Dallaire's *Shake Hands with the Devil*, required reading for anyone writing on Rwanda, mentions some of these actions.<sup>128</sup> Another example of Thomson's distortion of history comes when she argues that during the Campaign Against Genocide, the RPF's "troops encountered little in the way of opposition as they swept out from Kigali, to the south along the eastern side of the country towards the border with Tanzania, then west toward the border with Zaire."<sup>129</sup> The reader would expect this remark to

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<sup>126</sup> Kuperman, "Provoking genocide", 78

<sup>127</sup> Susan Thomson, *Rwanda: From Genocide to Precarious Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 23-24

<sup>128</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 421

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

come off the back of a discussion of the fighting in the city of Kigali, but Thomson never mentions anything of the sort. Again, this is especially problematic, because Des Forges, whom Thomson relies on extensively, wrote in 1999 that the RPF's

troops encountered little opposition, *except around Kigali* [my emphasis], and they routed government forces in operations that began in early April and ended in July. As RPF soldiers advanced south down the eastern side of the country and then swept west, they even stopped the killers in the act of attacking or preparing to attack Tutsi at several churches or camps for the displaced.<sup>130</sup>

Thomson has a long history of disagreement with the RPF and is critical of their post-Genocide governance of Rwanda. As such, her work systematically belittles or disregards anything that puts the RPF in a positive light. "For Kagame," she writes, "the United Nations made for a convenient scapegoat, providing cover to the RPF's military drive to both control Rwanda, and later to declare itself the hero of the Rwandan tragedy for its role in stopping the killing."<sup>131</sup> This argument blatantly ignores the fact that it was the FAR which broke the ceasefire when it went around Kigali systematically killing the members of the opposition, murdered any Tutsis it found, and opened fire on 3 Battalion in the CND.

### **Conclusion**

On the evening of 18 July 1994, the RPF declared a ceasefire signalling the end of the Campaign Against Genocide. The next day, in a makeshift tent in front of the CND, a new government was inaugurated. While the opposition parties were allowed to keep the ministries they had been allocated at Arusha, the RPF, as the premier power in Rwanda, took all vacant MRND seats. Though many within the RPF had hoped, or expected, Paul Kagame to become president, he took the new portfolio of vice-president, and, more importantly, that of minister of defence: the chairman of the High Command was well aware that the FAR, now ex-FAR, was regrouping in Zaire and that another fight might be looming on the horizon.

The challenges which the new government would face to rebuild Rwanda were immense. Everything had been destroyed: the crops had rotten in the fields, most educated people had been killed, and over a million Rwandans had fled and were now in Zaire and the surrounding countries. Internally displaced people and survivors would have to be cared for. At the same time, thousands of Banyarwanda, the main constituency of the RPF, came streaming back into Rwanda from Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania, an exodus which would cause innumerable problems. The ex-FAR had made away with the state coffers, so the country was in effect bankrupt; there were no typewriters or other administrative necessities. But that is another story.

The year between 4 August 1993 and 19 July 1994 must rank as one of the saddest in Rwandan history. Deep historical forces, the breaking of the Nsengiyaremye-Gasana-Ngulinzira triumvirate, the collapse of the moderate opposition, the assassination of Gatabazi,

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<sup>130</sup> Human Rights Watch. *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 535. The similarity between Thomson's and Des Forges' writing makes me suspect Thomson is well aware of this passage.

<sup>131</sup> Thomson, *Rwanda: From Genocide to Precarious Peace*, 24

the lack of international support for General Dallaire and UNAMIR and, eventually, the assassination of President Habyarimana all contributed to the failure of the Arusha Accords. From 7 April 1994 onwards, armed force was the only way to stop the *génocidaire* extremists who controlled the FAR. It was the RPA, advancing from its bases in the north, which stopped the Genocide and ushered in a new period of Rwandan history.

## X – CONCLUSION

It is impossible to discuss the Struggle for Liberation without exploring its antecedents. The war that raged in Rwanda from October 1990 to July 1994 had indirect roots in the country's pre-colonial past. But the direct causes of the conflict can be traced to the Social Revolution of 1959-1964. From that moment on there were two historical processes which would eventually lead to the outbreak of war. On the one hand there was the story of Rwanda and Presidents Kayibanda and Habyarimana, and on the other, that of the Banyarwanda, especially those in Uganda.

The Struggle for Liberation was an intricate to-and-fro between the players and processes that were spawned by these two historical strands. This is why the first chapters of this thesis provide the reader with a firm understanding of the political, social and economic dynamics in Rwanda in 1959-1990, and the position, struggles and intricacies of the Rwandan refugees in Uganda. As there are significant gaps in the scholarship of these stories, the thesis pauses to unravel them in detail where necessary.

Two historical episodes have proven particularly important. Firstly, the events surrounding the founding of the Second Rwandan Republic and the coup d'état carried out by Habyarimana against Kayibanda. Habyarimana's erratic behaviour during the negotiation of the Arusha Accords decades later are partially explained if we consider that his motivation for the coup had been geopolitical, as I have argued is most likely. The president did not care about the plight of the Tutsis in his country, but about the viability of his one-party *cum* dictatorship of the majority state.

Secondly, the negotiations on the return of the Banyarwanda refugees. The exposé on the negotiations between President Museveni of Uganda and President Habyarimana is the first of its kind and is key to understanding why the war took place. The *sine qua non* for the return of the refugees was a guarantee that they would be safe in Rwanda and protected from a repeat of the 1959-1964 Social Revolution and the genocidal killings which accompanied it. As no guarantee could be given while the country was ruled as a one-party Hutu state, the return of the refugees to Rwanda would have to be accompanied by democratic political reform. This explains why Habyarimana and his power networks were so reticent to accept the return of the refugees. For the RPF the refugee issue was the clearest indication of the moral bankruptcy of the Habyarimana presidency: What leader would not want his fellow Rwandans to return home? As such it also formed the foundation of their *casus belli* and was the last chance to prevent the outbreak of the Struggle for Liberation.

The implications of the Struggle for Liberation itself can also be analysed in two ways. Firstly, there are the intrinsic intricacies of the war itself. Here the most important threads are the RPA's recovery from initial defeat to eventual victory and the FAR's opposite trajectory. Despite extensive French aid – in command and control, training, artillery support, intelligence gathering and logistics – the FAR was unable to compete with the RPA. The latter's combat doctrine, discipline, morale and popular support amongst the diaspora proved to be the deciding factors. Considering the many conflicts which have been fought in Africa since decolonisation, and the multitude of armed groups involved, it seems improbable that the RPA is the only fighting force to have developed its own way of fighting. If military

history wants to remain relevant in the modern world it must shed its Eurocentric outlook and start taking non-western conflicts seriously.

Secondly, at the start of this study I quoted the Newburys and agreed with their argument that “Instead of seeing history exclusively through the genocide ... one can only understand the genocide through an understanding of Rwanda’s history.”<sup>132</sup> What then are the implications of this study on our understanding of the Rwandan Genocide? As Prunier pointed out two decades ago, the war was not simply a conflict between the RPF and the Habyarimana regime, but also a renegotiation of the domestic political *status quo ante bellum*.<sup>133</sup> The military pressure that the RPF/A exerted on Habyarimana’s presidency indirectly aided the introduction of multiparty democracy in Rwanda. Unable to pay for the costs of the war, Habyarimana was dependant on the support of France, Belgium and the Bretton Woods institutions who made democratisation a condition for their support. The war also forced the President to promote officers outside his traditional regional networks, thus weakening his grip on the repressive tools of the state.

This study also shows that institutional weakness played a major role in the road to genocide. During the Struggle for Liberation the government institutions which guard and maintain the monopoly on violence collapsed. The Rwandan Ministry of Justice, the public prosecutor’s office, the courts and the penal system were underfunded and neglected. They were unable to answer the call when the advent of multiparty governance called for the investigation, prosecution and incarceration of those who were committing ethnic killings against Tutsi, murdering politicians, forming death squads and militias, spreading hate or otherwise undermining the democratic legal order and the Arusha Accords. The same happened with the FAR and the Gendarmerie. Under pressure from the exigencies of war the hopeless incompetence and disunity of the officer corps burst into the open. Too many new troops were recruited who were neither trained nor paid – with predictable results. These two organisations that are intended to protect society started terrorising the people they were meant to serve.

A battle for the soul of these institutions was fought between honest politicians, officers and civil society organisations on the one hand, and their corrupt Hutu-power rivals on the other. I hope my lengthy description of the conflict between these two groups lays to rest any attempt at portraying Rwandans as a homogeneous obedient group incapable of agency. At the heart of this struggle was the moderate triumvirate formed by Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye, Minister of Defence James Gasana and Foreign Minister Ngulinzira. With strong international support they were able to force through the Arusha Accords which, had they been successful, would have created the democratic framework necessary for a peaceful return of the Banyarwanda. However, they were all dismissed or forced to flee by President Habyarimana and his extremist networks. This signalled the defeat of the moderates. Had a strong well-funded independent judiciary and security apparatus existed, or a viable UN force, like the one General Dallaire asked for, it might have been able to protect the Arusha Accords.

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<sup>132</sup> Catharine and David Newbury, “Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist Historiography in Rwanda”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 105, no. 3 (2000), 833

<sup>133</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*

The poor state of the Rwandan economy is a constant backdrop to all these events. In the prelude to the 1973 coup d'état, popular anger was directed against the Tutsis but also had distinctive economic undertones. It was Tutsi working in well-paying jobs like those at Sabena or Deutsche Welle who were specifically targeted. At the same time there was considerable disillusionment among farmers in Kayibanda's traditional areas of support. While President Habyarimana was able to benefit from a boom in coffee prices, the Rwandan economy remained weak because corruption channelled funds to his cronies and regional networks.

The effects of economic penury on the strength of state institutions cannot be underestimated. A well-funded education system in the decades before 1990 might have produced a more capable judiciary. A well-funded FAR might have maintained its professionalism in the face of war. The Gendarmerie might have been able to actively combat the surge in organised crime. Famine-free and wealthier farmers and city dwellers might have been less receptive to hateful propaganda. A Rwandan state flush with cash would have been able to properly house and feed both IDPs and the Burundian refugees which arrived in the south of the country in 1993. In turn this would have greatly reduced the attractiveness of organisations like the *Interahamwe*. This is not to say that economics caused the Genocide, but it would be deeply misleading to ignore its part.

Once the Genocide had started and the killers had resorted to murdering all Tutsi or anyone who did not conform to their political norms, the only way they could be stopped was through military force. The Campaign Against Genocide was in desperate need of a nuts-and-bolts blow-by-blow account. Considering all that has been written on the Genocide, it is baffling that the actual fighting which ended it has been almost entirely ignored. While the account presented in this thesis will undoubtedly be a starting point rather than the final say on this episode of Rwandan history, it already has implications on the existing scholarship. Firstly, it undermines accounts which seek to belittle the achievement of the RPA. Regardless of who shot down the plane carrying President Habyarimana, it is the Presidential Guards, extremists in the FAR and their political supporters who started the Genocide and it is the RPA who stopped it. Secondly, it puts RPA human rights abuses during this period in their proper context and undermines the false theory of a double genocide.

However, for the RPA, victory did not mean an end to war. When President Joseph-Désiré Mobutu of Zaire sent his troops to Rwanda in October 1990 to protect his friend and client Juvénal Habyarimana, he made a mortal enemy. After taking power in Rwanda in 1994, the RPF might have let bygones be bygones, but Mobutu provided aid and sanctuary for the ex-FAR, the *génocidaires*, and the one million refugees they held captive in eastern Zaire. This was an existential threat to the RPF as it sought to rebuild Rwanda, and so, in October 1996, almost six years to the day after the start of the Struggle for Liberation, RPA troops again mustered for war. The Great African War lasted until 2003 and remains the continent's most destructive war ever.

By presenting the background to, and the history of the Struggle for Liberation, this thesis lays the basis for a more complete understanding of the events of 1990-1994. It also shows how the importance of the interplay between politics and war is as valid for Africa as it is elsewhere. Hopefully it will provide a steppingstone for similar histories not only in Rwanda, where plenty of research remains to be done, but throughout Africa.

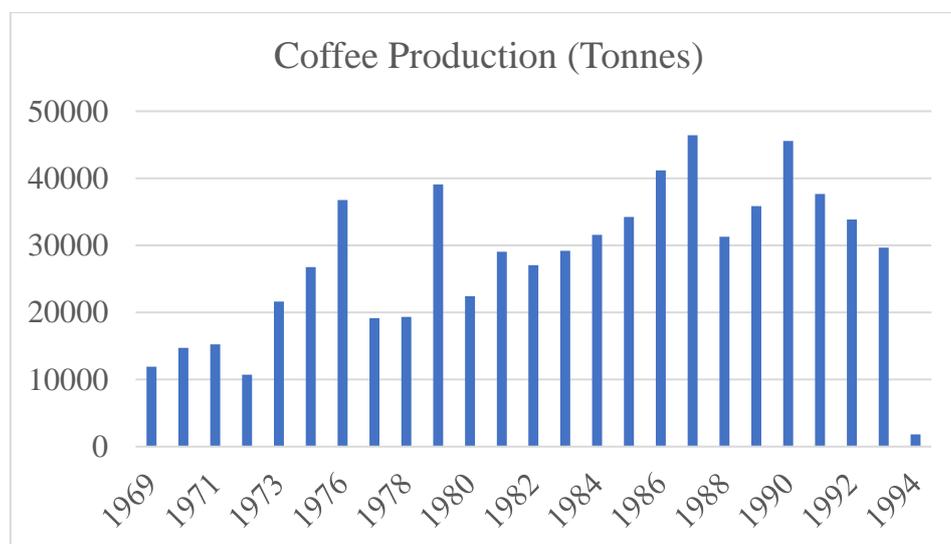
## APPENDIX I: GRAPHS RELATING TO THE RWANDAN ECONOMY 1959 - 1994

TABLE 1. NET REVENUES FROM COMPETING CROPS<sup>a</sup> (IN RWANDA FRANCS)

	Export crop	Domestic crop
	Coffee	Bananas
Per person-day	79	528
Per hectare	39,675	58,130
	Pyrethrum	Potatoes
Per person-day	57	144
Per hectare	27,000	46,200
	Cotton	Cassava
Per person-day	72	345
Per hectare	9,390	86,170

<sup>a</sup> Source: IBRD 1977:Annex 6.

**Graph Explanation:** *This graph shows why bananas were a preferred crop for Rwandan farmers. While not the most productive crop per hectare, bananas are relatively low maintenance, which is reflected in the highest per person-day revenue. They can also be intercropped.<sup>1</sup>*

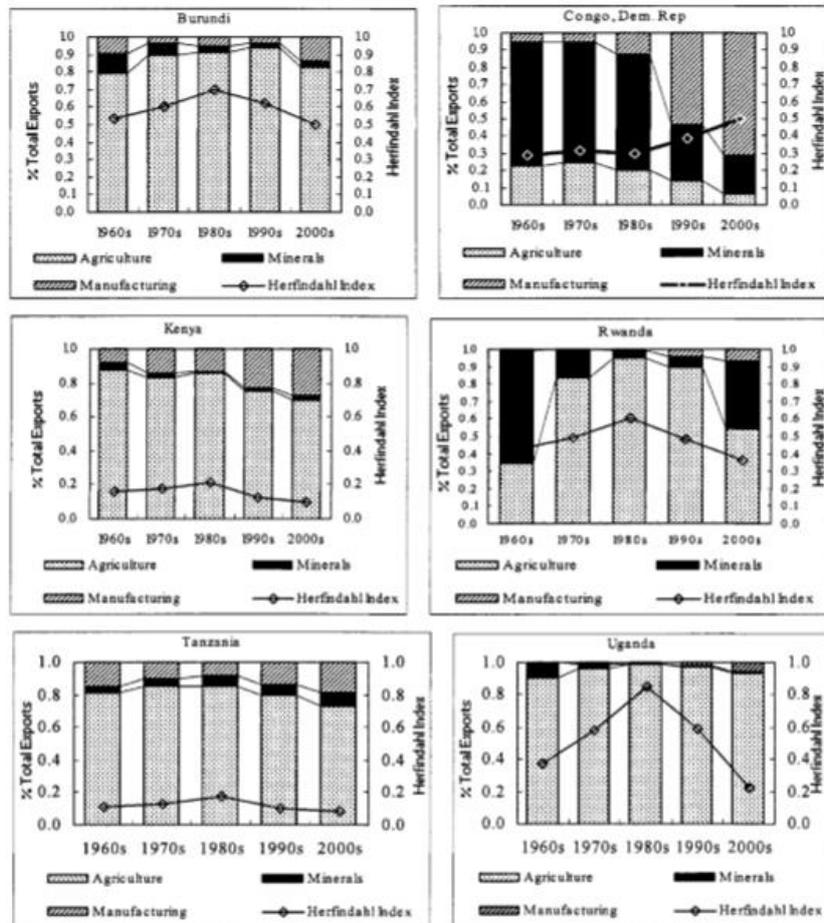


**Graph Explanation:** *Despite some opposition from farmers, coffee production grew steadily throughout most of Habyarimana's tenure. Various measures contributed to the growth, ranging from increased prices paid to coffee farmers to coercive laws and policies. The steady decline from 1990 onwards is due to the outbreak of the war.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Little and Horowitz, "Subsistence Crops Are Cash Crops", 256

<sup>2</sup> From: C.G. Verdonck Huffnagel, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken 'Jaarrapport Rwanda', 8 February 1974. "Inv.nr.: 24 Archiefbloknummer: Z162" Nationaal Archief, 12. From: I. Verkade, Kinshasa To: Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken 'Jaarrapport Rwanda', 30 January 1975. NL-NA., 8; After 1974: *Food and*

Figure 7.5: The Structure of Exports - Rwanda and Neighboring Countries, 1960s to 2000s (In unit as indicated)

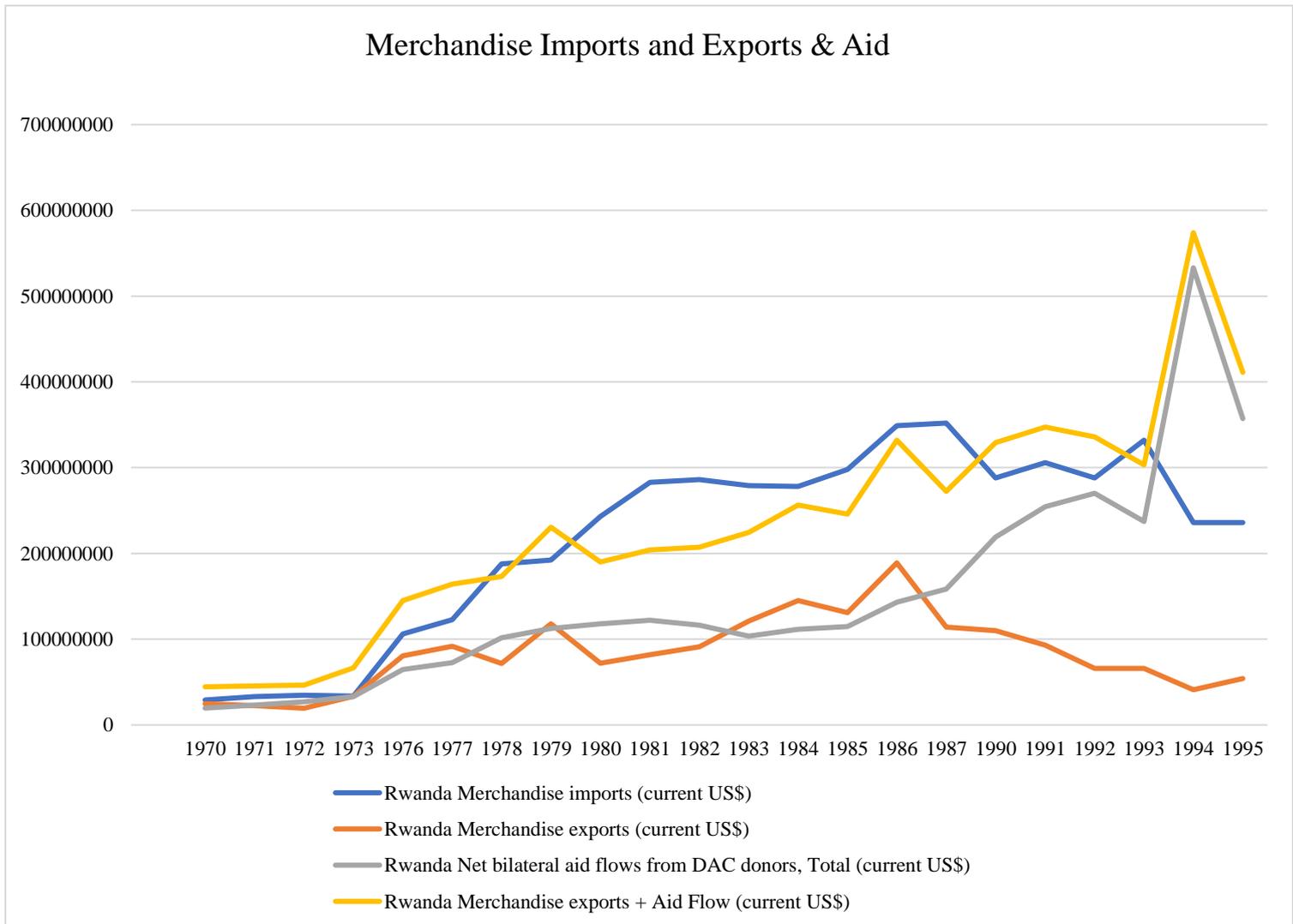


Source: UN COMTRADE.

**Graph Explanation:** The Herfindahl Index shows the amount of economic competition in a country. An increase in the index corresponds to a reduction in competition, which, in Rwanda's case, amounted to an increase in the control of the elites over the country's economic resources. The graph also shows the relative growth of the importance of agricultural exports for the Rwandan economy and the decline of the country's mining sector.<sup>3</sup>

Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, last accessed: 18 October 2016, <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#home>

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, *Rwanda: Towards Sustained Growth and Competitiveness: Volume II: Main Report*. Written by Vandana Chandra, Ying Li and Israel Osorio, (Washington DC. 12 October 2007), 172

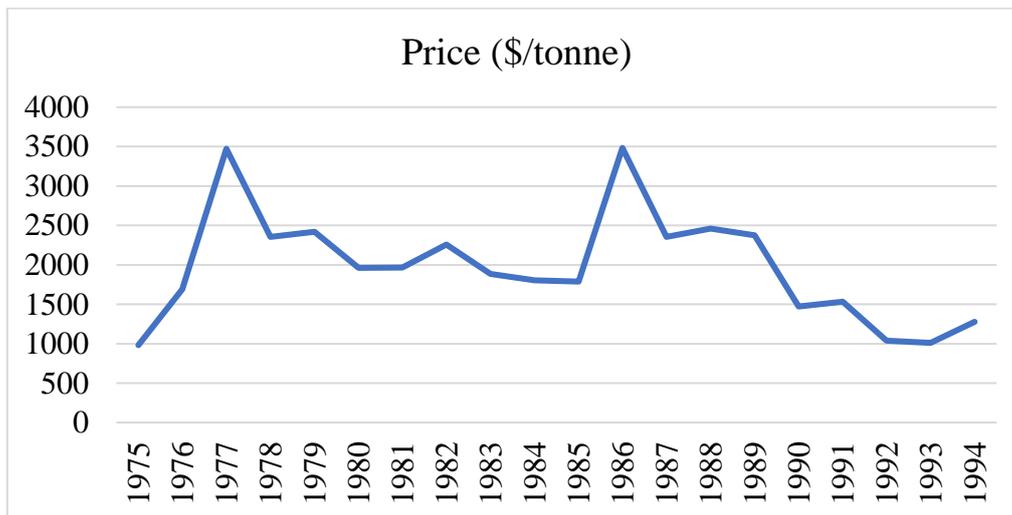
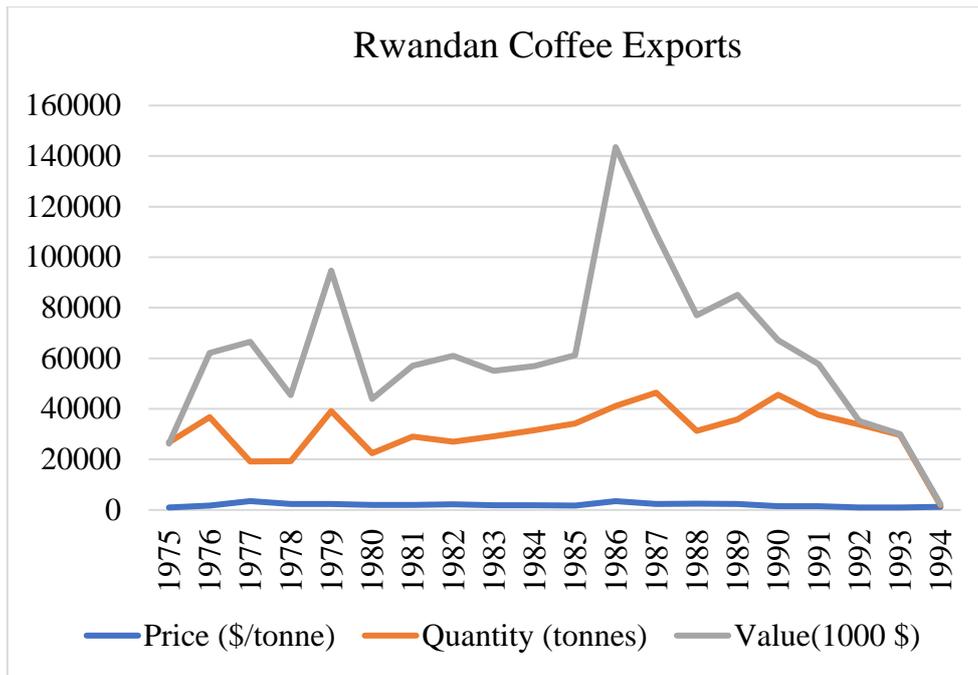


**Graph Explanation:** (Source: World Bank Development Indicators)

*Merchandise exports and imports include goods but not services. In this case, merchandise exports (primarily coffee and tea) and imports have been chosen because they are the most accurate figures which could be found. The exports are probably close to Rwanda’s total exports because the country’s undereducated rural population would not have exported many services. However, imports could be significantly higher, as Rwanda presumably did need services which it could not provide itself.*

*DAC stands for Development Assistance Committee – a forum where the biggest donors of development aid coordinate their policy. DAC comprises most of Europe, North America and Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.*

*Rwanda’s elite needed foreign currency to pay for their luxury imports. Unable to pay with money earned by exports due to a large trade deficit, development aid was used for that purpose. However, imports exceeded development aid and exports between 1980 and 1990.*



**Graph Explanation:**

*All three spikes in the value of the Rwandan coffee exports were caused by problems with coffee crops in Brazil. In 1975 and 1976, frosts destroyed large parts of the Brazilian production before it was harvested, causing a worldwide increase in the price of coffee. In 1985, a drought brought about a severe reduction in the size of the 1986 Brazilian crops, causing prices to flare.*

*After 1990, the size of Rwandan coffee crops steadily declined, due to falling coffee prices – which caused farmers to rip up coffee trees and replace them with subsistence crops – as well as the disruption caused by the war.<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>4</sup> Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, last accessed: 18 October 2016, <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#home>

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