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Kangura: the Triumph of Propaganda Refined

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In Rwanda's print media of the 1990s, the publication that had the most impact on the country was the bimonthly newspaper *Kangura*. It was well known for its hysterical hatred of Tutsi and any Hutu who expressed a desire for change, freedom and democratic openness. Established in May 1990, and headed from beginning to end by Mr Hassan Ngeze, *Kangura* soon became famous for its publication of what was commonly referred to as the 'Ten Commandments' of the Bahutu (Anon. 1990: 6). Through these commandments, the paper strongly exhorted the Bahutu to understand that the Tutsi were first and foremost an enemy and that they should break all ties with them, whether those links derived from marriage, business or professional relations.

Kangura also called for the dissolution of the historical, political and cultural community of Rwanda and for the building of a new community, one that would supposedly be authentic and pure. Alongside this new community could subsist a nonindigenous category that would be tolerated, but closely monitored, because its ambition was to dominate. To convince its readers, *Kangura* proceeded to display flagrant exhibitions of a mummified, pre-revolutionary Rwanda – albeit wearing its best modern attire – so that it would have some appeal to readers. Deliberately overlooking all changes that had taken place in the previous 30 years with regard to distribution of power and national wealth, Hassan Ngeze delved into history's attic and revealed a picture that was initially put to use by the Parmehutu Party. Essentially, this representation was one of a country dominated, indeed 'colonized', by Tutsi. *Kangura* brought the Rwanda of the 1990s back to its 1957 version, when Hutu leaders wrote the *Bahutu Manifesto* denouncing their exclusion.

In 1990, Rwanda was at a crossroads. Refugees who had lived outside the country for 20 or 30 years were asking to come back. They insisted on the abolition of ethnic quotas – between groups and between regions. Within the country, more and more people were demanding a multiparty system. Opposition to refugee repatriation, and the stronghold on state governance and markets exercised by a few people close to the president's family, were in clear contradiction to the principles that legitimized the revolution of 1959, namely democracy. Thus, a sense of asphyxia within the country and a feeling of abandonment by those who were exiled converged to condemn the hypocrisy of

a system that, while claiming to be republican and democratic, overtly practiced discrimination and tyranny.

Faced with war and requests for political openness, the regime reacted by alluding to the 1959 revolution, which had brought a dual benefit. It allowed the branding of armed opponents as nostalgic feudal groups and called on the majority to mobilize and fight to keep the advantages it had gained. On the other hand, it served to remind people of the populist resistance movement and the first aggression by refugees in December 1963, an event used to justify the most extreme violence. From 1990 to 1994 – but particularly during 1991 – *Kangura* contained a number of articles that repeatedly agitated against the Tutsi scapegoat. The Tutsi became those ‘who took everything’, ‘who are everywhere’, who control the business sector, who govern despite appearances, who constitute the majority in the school system, both in terms of teachers and students, in the church and within all spheres that symbolize progress.

Kangura aimed to awaken the Hutu, not from a sleep, but from what *Kangura* saw as a state of unconsciousness that made them unaware of the fact that the Tutsi had secretly led a contra-revolution. Hassan Ngeze attempted to demonstrate that through relentless erosion, the Tutsi had managed to reverse the former position of the Hutu on the social, cultural and political fronts. But the Ten Commandments were not enough to draw in followers. *Kangura* worked to provide its readers with reasons to believe in its credo, to convince them of imminent danger and to persuade them that they needed messiahs.

Kangura was active in a context wrought with undeniable difficulties, where increasing poverty hindered access to education, health care and employment and within a society that lived by agriculture, while land became less and less available and fertile. Within this setting, accusing Tutsi of grabbing all privileges and identifying them as scapegoats was a sure-fire mobilization tactic. It successfully mustered the support of a majority of young people who were non-schooled, unemployed and without hope for a better future. It also appealed to a great number of graduates who could no longer be hired by a government that was complying with structural adjustment programmes set up by the International Monetary Fund. *Kangura* revived the *Bahutu Manifesto* of 1957. This document, considered to be the soul of the Hutu emancipation movement, described the *Muhutu–Mututsi* social problem:

First and foremost, the problem is one of political monopoly enjoyed by one particular race, the Mututsi: political monopoly that under existing structures, develops into social and economic monopoly, which in turn, because of de facto selection in education, becomes a monopoly that pigeonholes the Bahutu as perpetual unskilled subordinates.

Attempting to superimpose 1957 values on 1990 Rwandan society, *Kangura* denounced the so-called Tutsi hegemony and the perceived injustice toward the Hutu, the majority people. First, it insisted that the Hutu remember the revolution of 1959 and the conditions under which democracy could continue.

The fact that the Batutsi are fighting to restore monarchy should incite a number of Bahutu to fight for democracy, to remember the roots of the 1959 revolution. If they do not fully appreciate this fact, then the revolution loses its purpose. And, as the majority people well know, the revolution was justified. They will have to live with the consequences. (Anon. 1990: 6)

The paper pointed out that the contra-revolutionary war conducted by the Tutsi had never stopped.

Remember also, at the beginning of November 1959, the Batutsi provoked inter-ethnic massacres in trying to eliminate the Hutu elite who were calling for democracy and social justice for the benefit of the Bahutu masses, until then crushed under the feudal and minority power of the Batutsi ... Since the revolution of 1959, the Batutsi have not for one moment relinquished the notion of reconquering power in Rwanda, of exterminating intellectuals and of dominating Bahutu farmers ... The war declared against Rwanda in October 1990 is undoubtedly aimed at achieving what the Batutsi had attempted to accomplish through guerrilla warfare and terrorism, from 1962 to 1967, harassing the Hutu population through nocturnal Inyenzi attacks. (Anon. 1990: 6-7)

The paper suggested that, on this path to conquest and power, the Tutsi had made considerable progress, and that they were monopolizing areas such as the workplace, trade and finance.

The Batutsi comprise 50 per cent of government officials, 70 per cent of private business employees, 90 per cent of staff in embassies and international organizations, and they hold prominent positions everywhere. However, this ethnic group constitutes 10 per cent of the population. National wealth, trade and industry are in the hands of the Batutsi, who often use civil and military authorities as a cover-up. It is to the Batutsi that banks award substantial loans, it is them who benefit from considerable tax exemptions, import and export licences, etc. (Anon. 1991a: 3)

Immediately before the 1959 revolution, one of the central factors that polarized the debate around social relations between Tutsi and Hutu was schools. At the time, research was being conducted to ascertain the proportion of Hutu and Tutsi youth who were educated. According to the Rwandan *Comité d'étude du Conseil supérieur du pays* (1958):

Twenty-nine elementary establishments of 114 responded, which is 24 per cent of the total: total numbers in these schools: 29,953 Bahutu, which represents 67.81 per cent; 14,211 Batutsi, or 31.70 per cent; 32 Batwa, or 0.01 per cent. Secondary institutions: 29 of 47 establishments responded: 1,116 Bahutu, 39.20 per cent; 1,740 Batutsi, that is 60.80 per cent; 0 Batwa.

In the 1990s, extremist propaganda spoke as if these circumstances still prevailed and education had remained a Tutsi monopoly:

Regarding completed education, the minority remains in the lead ... They have fought incessantly and with courage for their people to massively pursue their education, in such high proportion, when compared to the percentage of the population they represent, which is 10 per cent. Through their cold and calculated expansion, the Tutsi managed to so condition the Second Republic that policies now privatized foreign student scholarships. It is obvious that it was not privatization of scholarships per se, but rather the unprecedented and official award of scholarships to the minority ... Since the 1960s, the Hutu have clumsily directed the conquest of administration, while the Tutsi concentrated on teaching so as to retain a positive image of their people. They have advised their little Tutsi brothers to seek higher education, which is so important in the workplace, particularly in English and computer sciences, among other fields. As soon as they left their classrooms and auditoriums, the Tutsi laureates overwhelmed the Hutu within international projects and organizations, not to mention the administrative sphere. As for trade! Nothing more to say. It is their preserve. Whose preserve is it? The Tutsi's, of course. Their secret lies in that their refugee brothers facilitate imports and they don't have to leave the country. They also benefit more than the Hutu from loans awarded by Rwandan banks ... With this overall intellectual and economic might, the Tutsi progresses without obstacles on the road to his moral revolution. Vague and nebulous are the means chosen by the 1959 revolution to force him to back off, because at the time when the majority was liberating itself, the minority was aiming at the mortal target that is the human psyche. And it is precisely there that we must look for the causes of the October war. (Anon. 1992a: 11)

In another article published in the international issue:

Supposing that statistics relative to teaching at all levels of secondary and superior education were carefully recorded, one would unfortunately be surprised to recognize that the Tutsi is omnipresent. Those who are in establishments of higher education well know the actual situation. Ethnic proportions are unequal and crystal-clear. In public and private affairs, power is undoubtedly secured. The minority managed to seduce Rwandan society and it is now clustered around its core. Some areas have become Tutsi strongholds, namely the Rwandan clergy, etc ... Everywhere, members of the Tutsi ethnic group are united and are forever faithful travellers forming networks, aiming to conquer power. (Anon. 1992b: 3)

Kangura blamed the 'negligent manner with which ethnic classification was carried out' for the increasingly prominent positions held by Tutsi within the realm of Rwandan social and economic spheres. It criticized the country's authorities

for a lack of vigilance and for providing Tutsi with identity cards attesting that they were Hutu, which made control and discrimination impossible.

Due to the practice of identity falsification, the policy aiming for ethnic balance has failed. This explains why the Tutsi – those who kept their identity and those who modified it – now make up 80 per cent of staff in our schools. But who would be surprised by this? Those who should implement this policy are themselves Tutsi, pretending they are Hutu. (Anon. 1991b: 13)

The impact of this lack of control on Tutsi movements is considered to be equivalent to the ‘programmed disappearance’ of the Hutu from all sectors that symbolize modernity – including cities – and setting the Hutu back to rural life, which in turn leads to unequal distribution of the fruits of progress. If the programmed disappearance succeeded, the Hutus would lose everything they had gained during the revolution:

Did you know that Tutsi represent 85 per cent of the population living in the city of Kigali? When all those who had no job were sent away, only the Hutu left. As for the Tutsi, they managed to obtain work certificates through their brothers who attested that they used them as maids and servants. Furthermore, after their liberation, their accomplices piled into Kigali in order to be better protected by the international community. What is missing that would unite the Bahutu in such a way? If the Hutu are not careful, they will soon be sent back to the countryside, leaving only the Tutsi to reside in cities. Just look at Kigali, Bujumbura, Kinshasa and Kampala. (Anon. 1991c: 10)

The reference to 1959 is also used against opposition parties but, in this case, the receding timeline is supplemented by role inversion. Some facts might improve understanding of the scope of a campaign that is more akin to a political swindle than to a normal public debate. Historically, the leader of the social revolution is considered to have been President Grégoire Kayibanda. Co-signer of the *Bahutu Manifesto*, in 1959 he established the Mouvement Démocratique Républicain (MDR) Parmehutu party that would spearhead the revolution. In 1960, elected representatives from the Parmehutu proclaimed the advent of the republic.

In July 1973, President Kayibanda was deposed by a military coup led by Major Juvénal Habyarimana, who later became a major general. Kayibanda and a number of his collaborators were arrested and tried for treason. Some were executed. The death sentence proclaimed against Kayibanda was later commuted to life imprisonment. Held in residence in Kavumu, in his native prefecture of Gitarama, Kayibanda died in 1975 under suspicious circumstances. In the 1980s, Kayibanda’s name was revived and the international airport in Kigali was named after him. But his political party remained prohibited. In 1991, during overtures to a multiparty system, a number of political leaders from the centre and south of the country attempted to reinstate the party. *Kangura* accused them of treason.

These cowardly traitors have succumbed to the temptation of using the people against themselves, in collusion with the unfortunate aggressor who has already lost the battle in the ground. In doing this, they usurped the glory of the MDR-Parmehutu party and lured the people who spearheaded the 1959 Revolution to free the Rwandan people from the yoke of feudalism, into the trap set by the *Inyenzi*. That is how they hurriedly adopted the name MDR, making sure they removed 'Parmehutu,' in order to appease the Tutsi extremist who had in the past preferred exile to being led by a Hutu elected by the majority, in accordance with the principles of democracy. Through this trickery, they managed to lure to their side some of the citizens who fondly remember ... At a time when the Bantu people of our sub-region are fighting a legitimate battle to free themselves from the tutsi hegemony; at a time when the blood is filling the Akanyaru and its tributaries in the South; it is not the time to fool anyone. The war is between the Tutsis and the Hutus and the only solution is public awakening. (Anon. 1991d: 4)

In so clearly usurping heritage and patrimony, Hassan Ngeze strove to depict President Habyarimana as the legitimate representative of Kayibanda. In a politically skewed message, published in January 1991, the international issue of *Kangura* stated that the leader of the 1973 coup and gravedigger of the Parmehutu was the best person to incarnate the ideals of the man he had left to die 15 years earlier in devastating isolation and destitution.

Kangura informs you that the RDP (Republican Democratic Party) is born

After witnessing the need for the majority people to have its own party, able to lead it towards authentic democracy, a party through which it can express itself and speak in the name of those who cannot, we ask that all Rwandans, whatever their religious beliefs, adhere to the RDP. This party already has a large number of members in Rwanda, notably those who support the beliefs of Dr. Grégoire Kayibanda – to protect the interests of the majority – and those of Habyarimana, who promotes a policy based on peace and development. It is not customary for Rwandans to denigrate. You are well aware of the fact that some say successive governments, whether led by Habyarimana or by Kayibanda, have brought us nothing. In our opinion, the most important issue is to appreciate the good that was accomplished by those who have presided over Rwanda since the end of monarchy and to examine together the means for us to do better. (Anon. 1991e: 7)

At a time when the country faced war and others discussed the possibility of moving toward a multiparty system, *Kangura* ignored current affairs and problems. It was mainly preoccupied with convincing Rwandans that they were still living under the circumstances prevailing in 1957. Consequently, it forced those who wanted change to position themselves with respect to the only worthwhile battle, that is, the battle fought by their ancestors. So as to highlight how clearly this debate was rooted in the past, *Kangura* not only repainted the present with archaic colours, but it also strove to revive the feelings and emotions

that inspired revolutionary action, by giving a voice to those who, from 1957 to 1960, acted as charismatic and uncontested leaders of the Hutu cause.

These men were called on because of their knowledge of Rwanda and their expertise on the issues at hand. In the December 1990 issue of *Kangura*, Hassan Ngeze, as though wanting to support the decalogue of Tutsi hatred by drawing on the perspective of a wise man, well-versed in Hutu–Tutsi relations, published a text supposedly written in 1976 that he attributed to Joseph Gitera. In response to President Habyarimana who, at the time, had allegedly interrogated him on ways to facilitate reconciliation among Rwandans, this early leader of Hutu emancipation apparently depicted the Tutsi as a *Mugome*:

It is the pretentious Tutsi, with his Muhutu slave and his Mutwa clown and hunting dog, who chose exile from Rwanda because of his misdeeds and is now scheming against Rwanda and Rwandans. Again, it is this grudge-holding Mututsi who, with his courtesan Muhutu and his subservient Mutwa, is nesting like a snake ready to devour Rwanda and oblivious Rwandans. This one and the other are constantly communicating and co-operating, to eventually take revenge on the Rwandan Republic, its authors and its perpetrators of insult and lese majesty: ‘*Banze Umwami.*’ This is the two-headed dragon, one head outside Rwanda and the other inside. Here then is the ‘*Umugome.*’ Is he merely a fantasy? Absolutely not. (Gitera 1990: 12)

Kangura’s diagnosis of the Hutu situation in Rwanda was catastrophic. The solution it put forward was radical and unyielding. In November 1991, Hassan Ngeze asks one question: ‘What tools will we use to defeat the Inyenzi once and for all?’ The answer is in the adjacent illustration where Kayibanda and a ‘beautiful’ machete appear alongside each other (Anon. 1991f). This allegory intends to demonstrate the rationale for the elimination of Tutsi by means of murder, implying that this is inscribed in the republic’s history and that it is based on the need to protect the Hutu from the permanent threat of feudal bondage. *Kangura* refers to past violence as examples to follow. The bloodbath of December 1963 is prominently highlighted. In Hassan Ngeze’s opinion, this event holds information that would offer a final resolution to the Tutsi problem within the republic.

In fact, there are similarities between the 1963 episode and the 1990 crisis. On the night of 20 December 1963, a few hundred Tutsi refugees armed with bows and makeshift guns arrived from Burundi, entering southeast Rwanda (in Bugesera). They proceeded to attack the military camp of Gako where they killed four soldiers, then took the road to Kigali after stealing weapons, ammunition and two jeeps. Along the way, they recruited displaced Tutsi at camp Nyamata and their ranks grew to approximately 1,000 men. They were arrested on the Nyabarongo bridge, south of the capital city, by the army aided by Belgian advisors (Segal 1964). This raid, led by ‘cockroaches’ (*inyenzi*) – to borrow a term they were given to characterize their nocturnal activities – was followed by similar fruitless ventures. But this time, retaliation tactics were such that the crisis renewed the atmosphere of 1959.

It seems that Ngeze was fascinated by the way in which the Kayibanda government handled that crisis. Reprisal tactics were of unprecedented magnitude. All influential Tutsi were arrested. Some were released after being mistreated, while others were executed without trial in Ruhengeri (in the north of the country). This was the case for senior officials and leaders of both the UNAR party (Union Nationale Rwandaise) and the moderate Rassemblement Démocratique Rwandais, well known for their opposition to *Mwami* Mutara Rudahigwa and for their struggle for a political system that would be more respectful of human dignity and personal freedom.

Tutsi who remained in the country were considered, as a whole, to be suspect and accomplices of enemies from the outside – justification for taking them hostage and legitimizing retaliation against them. Members of Parliament and government were sent back to their prefectures to plan the people's 'self-defence', with prefects and burgomasters. These events were truly foreboding of the 1994 genocide. Particularly in Gikongoro, in the south of the country, more than 10,000 people were atrociously massacred between 24 and 29 December that year, their bodies thrown in rivers. According to witnesses, the man orchestrating these massacres, who was frequently seen on site and whose statements were more favourable to the killers than to the victims and escapees of the murders, was then minister of agriculture Nkezabera Damien, an early militant within the Parmehutu.

At the time, Bertrand Russell spoke of the 'most horrible and systematic massacre since the extermination of Jews by the Nazis' (*Le Monde*, 6 Feb. 1964). On 6 February 1964, the French periodical *Témoignage Chrétien* published an account of the mass murders that occurred in Gikongoro. Following are two excerpts attesting to the fact that in Rwanda, even after a generation had passed, we could not ignore what would eventually emerge from the propaganda devised by the media:

In the afternoon of December 25th [1963] would begin a 'plan of repression' that, simply put, consisted of exterminating all Tutsi residents from the prefecture of Ginkgoro.

The entire population – Christians and Pagans alike, catechisers and catechumens – in groups of roughly one hundred, led by propagandists of the Party and with the authorities' blessings, attacked the Tutsi. This time, the goal was not to loot but to kill, to exterminate all that bore the Tutsi name. In order to prevent potential humanitarian reactions, organizers of the massacre had avoided targeting the killers' immediate neighbours; hillside residents killed people from a faraway hill, and vice versa.

Giles-Denis Vuillemin, a Swiss professor who was in Rwanda through UNESCO, witnessed the events and recorded entries in his journal:

January 3rd, I travel to Kigeme where I meet Dr. Hendersen. At the hospital, there are only a few refugees and authorities are attempting to chase them

off. Dr. Hendersen tells me that the hill of Kigeme was spared because of the influence of the director of schools, a respected member of Parmehutu. On the other hand, trucks are preventing access to the hospital. Dr. Hendersen estimates a total of 5,000 dead in the region. From Kigeme, I go to Cyanaka. The mission is full of refugees (1,500 to 2,000). The Fathers there are clearly talking about genocide; in their opinion, only international pressure could prompt authorities to change their policy. In the long term, they say, Rwandan Batutsi are doomed. They would have to be provided with another country, under international control and assistance. (Vuillemin 1964)

In December 1990 (*Kangura* issue 7: 5) and December 1991 (*Kangura* issue 28: 3), Hassan Ngeze republished a declaration made in April 1964. In it, Grégoire Kayibanda, president of the First Republic warned Rwandan Tutsi:

You have witnessed the unrest from which we are only now emerging, that was caused by the provocative and irresponsible meanness of the refugees – inyenzi. Residents of Nyamata know, those from Burundi witnessed it: blame it on the secular (and incurable) meanness of what is the true essence of the Buhake. Gashaka-Buhake and the footmen who followed him in his flight are still digging the trenches they had started in 1959 ...

We have told you what we expect from you in our 1963 speech: awaken to democracy, follow the new custom in Rwanda. What we want is brotherhood amongst citizens ... Goodness and wisdom will be our weapons. But if you resist the wisdom of democracy, you can blame no one. (Kayibanda 1964)

In February 1991, *Kangura* republished a speech given in Paris, on 3 April 1964, by Anasthase Makuza, at the time president of the National Assembly of Rwanda, in which this great militant of Parmehutu attempted to justify the aforementioned massacres:

The population did not succumb to panic. It did not extend its neck so that the Inyenzi could cut its throat, according to plan. As soon as the Hutu became aware of the atrocities perpetrated in Bugesera, they understood the great danger of returning to prior circumstances. They remembered the abuse they endured under feudal rule. They glanced at the scars the Tutsi regime had left on their bodies. They remembered hard labour, the contempt they withstood and the practice by which a Tutsi could ask another to lend him a Hutu to murder. They then felt a great anger and vowed not to fall victim to the fate of losers. This anger was intensified by the fact that the former servant had, for four years, experienced the flavourful treats of democracy and that it is those he had called upon – invited to do so by his leaders – to share in the delights, that threatened to deprive him of his satisfaction. (Makuza 1991: 4)

Reference to the anger of parents is meant to inspire that of their children. Thus, *Kangura* is highlighting what it is normal to expect from sons who are worthy of their fathers.

It is incredible and intolerable, but here all limits have been transgressed. We have to show these accomplices that it is not they who govern us. It is troubling and it is a genuine problem to consider that the national army has just spent more than a year in the maquis, fighting against the *Inkotanyi* opponent. In the meantime, the brothers of this enemy come and go freely inside the country, spreading false information, thus demoralizing the national army and the majority people. Obviously, if this is allowed to go on, the people will engage in a battle using alternative means. All is fair in war. How is it that newspapers published by the *Inkotanyi* draw false lists of their alleged dead and that the Hutu keep silent even though they were killed in greater numbers since the beginning of this war? (Ngeze 1991: 2)

In revisiting these articles, one is particularly struck by the publisher's interest in history. Why did *Kangura* need to refer to the speeches made in 1964 by Kayibanda and Makuza, or by Joseph Gitera in 1976? In a society where age and experience bestow authority, the voices of elders constitute an excellent argument. The past provided evidence that violence against the Tutsi was normal and legitimate. However, it is clear that those historical references favoured a particular trend, that of the Parmehutu.

In reading these documents, one is amazed by the precision with which the logic of genocide is exposed: identification of the Tutsi from within, as being obvious accomplices in any action undertaken by refugees; a whole component of the population whose members are taken hostage and accused of being, through heredity, enemies of the republic; the justification of massacres if these people would not 'obey'.

They are, in fact, a call to kill, sanctioned by arguments drawn from past experience. In the end, reference to the revolutionary period, both in the print media and in RTLM propaganda (see Chrétien, Chapter 5), demonstrates that the genocide bloomed on the soil planted by the 'Barwanashyaka' of the Parmehutu and abundantly irrigated by MRND militants.

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