

# RWANDA: HOW THE POST-INDEPENDENCE REGIMES FROM 1962 TO 1994 WERE NEO-COLONIAL, RACIST AND GENOCIDAL

PRIVAT RUTAZIBWA\*

RWANDA -AND SOMETIMES THE GREAT LAKES region of Africa by extension- has often been a subject of passionate controversy especially in historical and social knowledge.<sup>1</sup> In 1992, a Belgian Professor known as a specialist in Rwanda and the region could send a fax to an intelligence operative at the Rwandan embassy in Switzerland, asking him to provide him with ammunition against his French colleague who was also a specialist in the same region. ‘...all ammunition will be welcome’, wrote the Belgian ‘scholar’, in search of any compromising information on the French historian thus perceived as the common enemy of both his Belgian counterpart and the Habyarimana regime.<sup>2</sup>

The use of a war vocabulary - or rather ‘militia jargon’ according to a journalist who had commented on the fax- and the symbolism of lethal tools by the Belgian professor show how violent the controversy over Rwanda and the region can be, even in the academic field.<sup>3</sup> This article seeks precisely to explore one of these controversial subjects in the history of Rwanda. But don't worry, I wouldn't do it with ammunition, but with classic research methods!

For many years, I have been studying a variety of documentary sources and oral histories in an attempt to understand Rwanda's recent tragic history and the instability of the Great Lakes region of Africa. This frequentation of sources has intensified more recently in the context of a doctoral research on colonial racism and its consequences in the region. I apply a decolonial and interpretivist approach to my research. I chose it because it interestingly challenges mainstream Western knowledge production on Rwanda and the region. It also allows me not to hide my personal history, my civic engagement or my human interest as a researcher, without compromising the scientific imperative of an honest and rigorous search for truth.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi<sup>4</sup>, studies showed opposition among specialists of Rwanda, particularly among those labelled as intentionalists or instrumentalists on one hand, and functionalists on the other. Instrumentalists consider anti-Tutsi racism inherent in the so-called 'Hutu revolution' as the root cause of cyclical violence and the genocide, while functionalists distinguish the Kayibanda regime from that of Habyarimana with regard to the management of the 'ethnic problem', considering that the first phase of the latter regime was rather positive. Functionalists add that the Habyarimana regime went into crisis in the mid-1980s and was completely derailed after the armed attack by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1990.<sup>5</sup>

The arguments of the functionalists were relaunched, often with anger and disappointment<sup>6</sup>, after the publication of the last two reports on the role of France in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, respectively

---

\* Privat Rutazibwa ([privat.rutazibwa@hu-berlin.be](mailto:privat.rutazibwa@hu-berlin.be)), Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany. An earlier version of this article was presented at ‘Colloque international sur le génocide perpétré contre les Tutsi’, Paris session from 10 to 14 September 2023 [Paris, Sorbonne University, Amphithéâtre Louis Liard, 11 September 2023].

<sup>1</sup> The preface to a recent book recalls this in particular. See Raphaël Doridant & François Graner, *L'État français et le génocide des Tutsis au Rwanda* (Agone, Marseille, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> The fax message from Professor Filip Reyntjens to Fabien Singaye requesting ‘ammunitions’ against Professor Jean-Pierre Chrétien was later discovered, published and commented in Swiss and Rwandan newspapers. It was also published in Jean-Paul Gouteux, *La nuit Rwandaise. Implication française dans le dernier génocide du XXème siècle* (Izuba-Esprit Frappeur, Paris, 2002), p.420. It is also available at <https://francegenocidetutsi.org/ReyntjensSingayeChretien1992.html.en>. In a 19 May 2019 Twitter exchange in French, involving Professor Reyntjens and others, a certain Bruno M. Fragolat tweeted: ‘Jean Carbonare and Jean Pierre Chretien first denounced the crimes of those you served and they did not write the constitution [Professor Reyntjens participated in the drafting of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda in 1978 for the Habyarimana regime]. You asked Fabien Singaye for "ammunition" to attack Jean-Pierre Chretien! ...What a shame to ask for ammunition to attack people who denounce the killings’. Professor Reyntjens replied: ‘It is not for this declaration of JPC that I needed ammunition since we agreed on this point. I no longer know what it was about (I don't even know the date of my fax to Singaye)’. The translation of this exchange of tweet messages from French to English as well as that of the other texts cited in this article from French or Kinyarwanda to English was carried out by the author.

<sup>3</sup> Others had already drawn attention to this controversy between academics on Rwanda. See Scott Strauss, ‘Introduction: Rwanda at twenty years after the genocide’, *African Affairs* 122/487 (2014), e27–e29; David Booth and Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, ‘Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda’, *African Affairs* 111/444 (2014), pp. 379–403.

<sup>4</sup> In this text, I have opted for the noun form Bahutu/Batutsi/Batwa. I use Hutu/Tutsi only when referring to adjectives or established noun forms such as 'genocide against the Tutsi' or when it is a quotation.

<sup>5</sup> See Gauthier de Villers, ‘L'«africanisme» belge face aux problèmes d'interprétation de la tragédie rwandaise’, *Politique africaine*, n° 59 (1995), pp. 121-132.

<sup>6</sup> Fondation Jean Jaurès, ‘Réflexions sur le rapport Duclert’ (with Serge Dupuis, James Gasana, André Guichaoua, Marc Le Pape, Johan Swinnen, Claudine Vidal, 21 January 2022). See also Marie-Eve Desrosiers, ‘Le rapport Duclert et le filtre des lendemains

commissioned by the Rwandan and French States.<sup>7</sup> Above all, they criticize the French report of the Duclert commission for adhering to the teleological vision which makes all the former Rwandan authorities radicals of the identity cause right from the beginning of the conflict, and for resorting to a 'retrospective bias' which makes them carry 'from October 1990 the guilt of what their successors will decide at the dawn of the genocide'.<sup>8</sup> They reject indoctrination and identity radicalization as the main cause of the genocide<sup>9</sup>, and accuse the commission of 'attributing noble objectives to the RPF' and ignoring that without its armed attack and ceasefire violations, the genocide would not have taken place.<sup>10</sup>

Without making an exclusive choice between the two currents of interpretation, I would simply like to show that there is a deep ideological unity and perfect continuity between the post-independence regimes of Grégoire Kayibanda (1962-1973), Juvénal Habyarimana (1973-1994) and Théodore Sindikubwabo (1994), with a triple characteristic: neo-colonial, racist and genocidal. Since these three regimes openly claimed to be the heirs of the '1959 revolution' and anxious to defend and safeguard its achievements, I will focus my reflection on the said revolution by showing in two sequences that it was based on a false postulate of Tutsi oppression against the Bahutu on one hand, and that it gave rise to neo-colonial, racist and genocidal regimes on the other.

Some researchers have already pointed out the social and not 'racial' character of the cleavages in pre-colonial Rwandan society<sup>11</sup>, as well as elements of ideological convergence between the Kayibanda and Habyarimana regimes.<sup>12</sup> I will bring new insights from less known sources to develop a more systematic and more assertive analysis in the face of the fallacious theses which have nevertheless dominated Rwandan historiography to this day. And to assure the reader of the credibility of my argument as well as the most direct access to the numerous sources - notably archival - that I have used, I have voluntarily chosen to sometimes give large extracts, favouring direct quotation rather than paraphrase.

### ***A revolution based on a false postulate: the oppression of the Batutsi against the Bahutu***

*There has never been any oppression of the Batutsi against the Bahutu in the history of Rwanda*

To know whether 'ethnic' divisions among Rwandans predate or start with colonization is at the heart of this problematic. A researcher summarized the debate into 'pro-Tutsi' and 'pro-Hutu' 'voices', the former stating that 'Tutsi, Hutu and Twa lived together harmoniously in precolonial times, until European colonialism invented ethnic cleavages and put an end to social mobility', and the latter maintaining that 'Hutu were conquered and enslaved by Tutsi; therefore, colonial powers had not invented but solely reinforced the essentialist ethnic identities that already existed'.<sup>13</sup> This classification itself shows that even the subtlest debates and analyses on the 'racialization' of Rwandan society have so far been unwittingly or intentionally trapped in the ethnic Hutu-Tutsi dualism.

The view that 'Hutu were enslaved by Tutsi' cannot be called 'pro-Hutu' because even though it was intensely used by the Hutu supremacy ideology propaganda, this ideology needs to be distinguished from the Bahutu, and it was itself a derivation of the Hamitic hypothesis created by Europeans based on their racial theories rather than an emanation from the Bahutu. Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Marcel Kabanda rightly recall that 'at the heart of these racial fantasies, the weightiest factor was ultimately contempt, reinforced by the characterization between

---

généocidaires', *Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique*, (Dossier : Au-delà du rapport Duclert), mise en ligne : 08 novembre 2021, pp. 9-27, < <https://doi.org/10.51185/journals/rhca.2021.e577> > (12 August 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Levy Firestone Muse, 'A foreseeable genocide. The role of the French Government in Connection with the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda' (19 April 2021), [known as Muse report, commissioned by the Government of Rwanda]. Commission de recherche sur les archives françaises relatives au Rwanda, 'La France, le Rwanda et le génocide des Tutsi (1990-1994). Rapport remis au Président de la République le 26 mars 2021' (Armand Colin, 2021), [known as Rapport Duclert, commissioned by French President].

<sup>8</sup> Desrosiers, 'Le rapport Duclert'.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Fondation Jean Jaurès, 'Réflexions'.

<sup>11</sup> Gudrun Honke, Gamaliel Mbonimana, Emmanuel Ntezimana, et Sylvia Servaes, *Au plus profond de l'Afrique: Le Rwanda et la colonisation allemande 1885-1919*, (Peter Hammer Verlag, Wuppertal, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> Antoine Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda 1959-1990. Itotezwa n'iyicwa bihoraho* (Kigali, 2015, 2<sup>ème</sup> édition) ; Raphaël Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale sur la société rwandaise, 1894-1994*, (Université Paris I, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Petra Vervust, 'The relative importance of ethnicity, class and race in colonial Rwanda. The cases of prison policies, corvees, taxation, census and identity booklets', *Journal of Belgian History* XLII, 4 (2012) pp. 74-109, p.75-76.

superior and inferior Africans', and that 'the ideology that led to the genocide in Rwanda is rooted in a thought of contempt for all of Africa'.<sup>14</sup>

Influenced by the Hamitic hypothesis, White Fathers catholic missionaries and other Europeans described Rwanda they were discovering as a 'society with a distinct ethnic divide' and 'situations of flagrant injustices'.<sup>15</sup> The French White Father Alphonse Brard, founder of the first catholic mission of Save in 1900, could already foresee in 1901 that 'it will be... among the Bahoutou that the mission will be carried out above all' because 'they will be... sympathetic to us in the hope that we will one day free them from the yoke which overwhelms them', while 'the Batutsi will, in a long time, be more or less hostile to us for fear of losing their influence over the Bahoutou'.<sup>16</sup> His superior, Monsignor Hirth, affirmed for his part that the 'Batutsi' 'hold in servitude' the 'Bahutu' and assured that the latter 'have suffered for so long that they will welcome us as liberators'.<sup>17</sup>

The fantasies of the Hamitic ideology were then theorized in the famous 'premise of inequality' by Jacques-Jérôme Pierre Maquet of the Belgian colonial institute of research on Central Africa (IRSAC).<sup>18</sup> His theory would have a strong and lasting mark on the historiography of Rwanda. Other notable Western researchers on Rwanda like Jan Vansina, Catharine Newbury, Alison Des Forges and Claudine Vidal supported the thesis according to which towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 'the relations of domination of the Tutsi over the Hutu were in the process of becoming generalized'.<sup>19</sup> But they do not provide any credible evidence for it.

The view that 'Tutsi, Hutu and Twa lived together harmoniously in precolonial times' should not be attributed to the Batutsi either. Researchers like Suzan Thomson and Johan Pottier attribute it sarcastically or in scathing criticism to the post-genocide Rwandan leadership which they continue to conflate with the Batutsi.<sup>20</sup> But contrary to the opposing thesis, this one has the merit of not being an instrument of hatred and division, even if on the other hand it needs to be scientifically established or dismissed. In addition to the testimonies of the missionaries themselves, explorers and colonial agents, there are studies that have suggested its scientific admissibility, such as that of the anthropologist Jan Czekanowski published in 1917, Philippe Leurquin in 1960, Pierre Bettez Gravel in 1968, and Hélène Codere in 1973.<sup>21</sup> What is more, the thesis of the social harmony of the components of the Rwandan population before colonization has not yet been disavowed by serious research, as has been the Hamitic ideology on which the thesis of conflict and oppression of the Batutsi on the Bahutu is based.

In a presentation on the White Fathers and the Rwandan society under German colonial time, historian Stefaan Minnaert, then White Father himself, observed in 2008:

Once settled in Rwanda ... the White Fathers see that there are poor and rich people among the Bahutu and the Batutsi. In their writings, they maintain confusion about the mass of the population and the political elite. They designate this mass

---

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Pierre Chrétien & Marcel Kabanda, *Rwanda, racism et génocide : l'idéologie hamitique* (Belin, Paris, 2013), p. 64, 301.

<sup>15</sup> Roger Heremans, 'Eglise et état dans le Rwanda de 1911', *Dialogue* 168 (1993), pp. 69-87, p. 86-87.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> 'Lettre de Mgr Jean Joseph Hirth à son frère Ernest', in Bernard Lugan, *Sources écrites pouvant servir à l'histoire du Rwanda (1863-1918)*, *Études Rwandaises*, volume XIV, numéro spécial (1980), p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques-Jérôme Pierre Maquet, *The Premise of inequality. A study of political relations in a central African Kingdom* (Oxford University Press, London, 1961). IRSAC: Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale.

<sup>19</sup> Claudine Vidal, 'Economie de la société féodale rwandaise', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, n° 53, 1 (1974), pp.52-74. See also Jan Vansina, *Le Rwanda ancien, le royaume Nyiginya* (Karthala, Paris, 2001) ; Jan Vansina, *L'évolution du royaume rwanda des origines à 1900* (ARSOM, Bruxelles, 1962) ; Catharine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression. Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1988) ; Catharine Newbury, 'Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda', *Africa Today* 45, 1 (1998), pp. 7-24; Alison Liebafsky Des Forges, *Defeat is the only bad news. Rwanda under Musinga, 1896-1931*, (The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2011) ; Alison Des Forges, *Aucun témoin ne doit survivre. Le Génocide au Rwanda* (Karthala, Paris, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Suzan Thomson talks about 'romanticizing the historical past'. See Suzan Thomson, 'Whispering truth to power: The everyday resistance of Rwandan peasants to post-genocide reconciliation', *African Affairs* 110, 440 (2011), pp. 439-456; Johan Pottier, *Re-imagining Rwanda: conflict, survival and disinformation in the late twentieth century*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Jan Czekanowski, *Forschungen im Nil-Kongo-Zwischengebiet, vol. 1, Ethnographie, Zwischenseengebiet Mpororo, Ruanda* (Klinkhardt & Biermann, Leipzig, 1917); Jan Czekanowski, *Carnets de route au cœur de l'Afrique. Des sources du Nil au Congo* (Les Editions Noir sur Blanc, Montrichier [Suisse], 2001. Traduit du polonais et annoté par Lidia Meschy) ; Bachmann Klaus, *Every day life in early colonial Rwanda. Insights from German and Polish sources* (Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2020) ; Philippe Leurquin, *Le niveau de vie des populations rurales du Ruanda-Urundi* (Nauwelaerts, Louvain, 1960) ; Pierre Bettez Gravel, *Remera. A community in Eastern Ruanda* (Mouton, Paris-La Haye, 1968); Helen Frances Codere, *The biography of an African society: Rwanda 1900-1960: based on forty-eight Rwandan autobiographies* (Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, Tervuren, 1973).

(composed of poor Tutsi and Hutu) by the term "the Bahutu"; and the political and economic elite (composed of wealthy Tutsi and Hutu), by the term "the Batutsi".<sup>22</sup>

Many researchers have already emphasized the special place occupied by anthropologist Jan Czekanowsky in Rwandan historiography because of his professionalism and critical sense when compared to missionaries, explorers, colonial agents and other ethnographers and amateur historians.<sup>23</sup> He visited Rwanda in 1907 as part of the scientific 'expedition' of Duke Adolf Frederick of Mecklenburg in Central Africa (1907 – 1909) but his findings were published ten years later. Czekanowski established that Rwandan society was structured into four social classes based on wealth and status, not ethnicity. The 'most privileged class' was that of 'royal officials' including 'the feudal lords of the King (bagaragu), their lesser chieftains along with their retinue, as well as the remaining dignitaries in the King's court'. He notes that 'Among the number of the lowest level officials including the community leader, there are a truly significant number of Bahutu, particularly in Bugoye. In Mulera and in Bgisha, the Bahutu even appear as members of the King's court'.<sup>24</sup>

The 'second class' is that of 'warriors, the "ngabo" ... assigned to particular chieftains'. They 'do not have to do any work in the chieftains' fields', they 'possess their own land, which was occupied and cleared by their ancestors generations ago', and 'they only have to pay the usual taxes' and 'always be prepared for war'. The 'third class are the "biletwa" – free farmers who do not own land. They cultivate the land of the crown, and pay the chieftain a tribute of two to three days of compulsory labour during the five to six-day week'. The 'fourth class is the pariah branch of the Batwa. They are the hunters, potters, and rainmakers. The police come from among them'.<sup>25</sup>

Czekanowsky also provides very interesting insight into the absence of the institution of slavery in Rwanda. Colonial and missionary literature extensively evoked the slavery to which the Bahutu were allegedly subjected by the Batutsi. The leaders of the 'Hutu revolution' supported by the Belgian colonial administration and the White Father missionaries claimed to free them from this slavery! Even today, the racist anti-Tutsi propaganda in vogue in the Great Lakes region continues to affirm the existence of this slavery of the Bahutu by the Batutsi in Rwanda. The diplomatic advisor to the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was able to declare recently in a television interview that Rwandan President 'Kagame has difficulties with all his other neighbours, not just the DRC, ... Burundi, Tanzania, etc...' and that 'as long as this gentleman is at the head of Rwanda, we will always be in difficulty in the Great Lakes region'. And the diplomatic advisor proposed that 'people must come together to oust this gentleman' who 'should not be at the helm of a state'. And to the question of the journalist who asked him if they should support a rebellion against Kagame in Rwanda, he replied:

It is imperative that people internally... You know, the Hutu constitute what, 90% of the population in Rwanda, but they live under the slavery of the Tutsi who are at the top there. They had to be able to overthrow this guy. I'm not going to say here on TV what's going on left and right, but I'm telling you that, ultimately, Kagame will have to leave his position as head of state of Rwanda for calm to return to the sub-region.<sup>26</sup>

The observations of the Polish anthropologist on Rwandan society in 1907 should be able to bring more dignity and common sense to this subject:

There are also slaves in Rwanda. However, the institution of slavery does not play a role here, even if the number of slaves in Bugoye and among the Batutsi of Nduga is supposed to be truly significant. So far as I know, here slaves are primarily women, "baja," who as small children were sold by their parents during one of the frequent famines in exchange for foodstuffs. I was unable to determine anything specific about the social position of boys exchanged for foodstuffs. It appears to me that when they mature they enter into the masses of clients (bagaragu).

Every country that experiences famine from time to time, such as Ufumbiro for example, provides slaves who are not protected by their relatives in foreign areas; thus, they remain in a subordinate position, and are dependent upon the protection of their master. In every mission one can indeed see numerous small slaves who have settled there, seeking the

---

<sup>22</sup> Stefaan Minnaert, 'Les Pères Blancs et la société rwandaise durant l'époque coloniale allemande (1900-1916) : une rencontre entre cultures et religions', in Paul Rutayisire, Jean-Philippe Schreiber et Deo Byanafashe, *Les religions au Rwanda : défis, convergences et compétitions* (Editions de l'UNR, Butare, 2009), pp. 53-101, p. 67-68.

<sup>23</sup> Honke, Mbonimana, Ntezimana et Servaes, *Au plus profond de l'Afrique* ; Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale* ; Backmann, *Every day life*.

<sup>24</sup> Czekanowski, *Forschungen*, 262ff. As translated in English by Backmann, *Every day life*, p. 63

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63-64.

<sup>26</sup> The interview with Mr Bahizi, Advisor to the Prime Minister of the DRC can be found here:

[https://twitter.com/patriote\\_j/status/1750830151623929940](https://twitter.com/patriote_j/status/1750830151623929940)

protection of their master. But in spite of this, on the whole the situation of the slaves certainly cannot be said to be entirely bad. I did not hear of mistreatment anywhere.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the temptation of an ethnicist and contemptuous reading to which he himself sometimes succumbs, Czekanowsky nevertheless delivers a very sharp analysis of the Rwandan society as well as an incisive critique of colonization and evangelization. He particularly stresses how exploitation was very limited in Rwandan traditional society and how it was going to increase with colonization despite its 'humanistic rhetoric'.

Yet in this primitive, undifferentiated society the potential for exploitation is very limited. As long as it is only a matter of delivering the immediate nutritional needs of the relatively limited number of rulers, then these can be satisfied, even for those with the greatest appetites. Thus, due to the limited possibilities for exploitation, the basis for social equality is present even without legally specified norms. Through further observation of the constant internal struggles of an unorganized state system, where the support of the masses is essential, the second factor that greatly limits arbitrary rule becomes evident. Those in power must pay attention to their subjects, otherwise they run the risk of being abandoned by their followers and subjects, and thus of being defeated by their rivals. [...].

But it will be another matter with the onset of pacification, through the opening up and organization of the country by Europeans. The natural, old forms still maintained orderly conditions even if uneconomical. These will be eliminated through armed force, by overwhelming a reign weakened by emigration. In addition, the opening of export trade creates countless opportunities to exploit the subjects in a manner previously unknown. The situation of the natives is becoming worse, for in spite of the humanistic rhetoric, the new legal norms offer them less protection than the old counterbalances that the state organization was built upon. In Kissaka [eastern Rwanda] one can see many natives from Ussuwi [in today Tanzania], who have fled there from the blessing of European, humanistic civilization. Under these new circumstances, the only weapon in the hands of the subjects remains the economic damage to the chieftain caused by the flight of labour.<sup>28</sup>

One wonders why the myth of 'Tutsi despotic rule over the Hutu' has persisted, yet there are contradicting writings such as those of Czekanowski, as well as those of some missionaries and colonial agents who sometimes expressed observations different from it. Among the latter, French White Father Alphonse Brard wrote in 1902 that 'among the Batusi the ruling class and the middle class are the few, the poor class is by far the most numerous'; and he mentioned the 'wealthy Bahutu' in the elite hierarchy formed by the King's servants. The same missionary had nevertheless affirmed, as seen above, that the 'Batutsi' exercised over the 'Bahoutou' an 'influence' and a 'yoke which overwhelms them'.

Some scholars say it has to do with 'the interests of the colonial policy'. It was easier to build colonial rule ... on groups of people that were easy to distinguish (based on 'race').<sup>29</sup> But why this myth still persists today in mainstream media and even academic literature remains an open question that no one has been able to answer.

*Colonization never favoured what it perceived as 'Tutsi rule', rather it intended to destroy it as an obstacle, but chose to consolidate it temporarily out of pure opportunism*

The dominant historiography on Rwanda has falsely accredited the thesis so far according to which colonization and White Fathers missionaries had favoured the Batutsi and consolidated their 'oppressive power' of 'injustice exercised on the Bahutu' before establishing 'democracy and social justice' in favour of the Bahutu in time of decolonization.<sup>30</sup> The truth is that the Europeans confused the Batutsi as a group with the ruling class which was nevertheless heterogeneous, and they reluctantly kept it in power -while progressively making it exclusively Tutsi- out of opportunism for the sole interest of colonization. From the start, Europeans were determined to destroy this indigenous power which they perceived as an obstacle to colonization and evangelization. Since this indigenous power was identified with the Batutsi, destroying it implied the destruction of the Batutsi as a group, and this is what happened later.

---

<sup>27</sup> Czekanowski, *Forschungen*, 262ff. As translated in English by Backmann, *Every day life*, p. 64.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64-65.

<sup>29</sup> Honke, Mbonimana, Ntezimana et Servaes, *Au plus profond de l'Afrique*, p. 102, 108.

<sup>30</sup> Heremans, 'Eglise et état', p. 69 ; 'Lettre de L. Classe à Mgr Léon Livinhac' [introductory note to the letter], *Dialogue* 168 (1993), pp. 57-63, p.57.

Father Alphonse Brard could write in 1902: 'today, the Batutsi no longer have a future, the appearance of Europeans will ruin their power everywhere...'.<sup>31</sup> He attributed to them the following intentions: 'They do some politeness to the Europeans out of policy, but if they could throw them all in the water, they would have done it a long time ago; they consider themselves far superior to them'.<sup>32</sup>

The French White Father described the political organization of Rwanda that keeps 'all the people encircled in an immense net ... in the hand of the King', and he concluded that 'this constitution is unfavourable to our work'.<sup>33</sup> He considered the Batutsi as the 'great lords of Rwanda' and regretted that the 'aborigines' - that is to say the Bahutu - only lacked a leader 'to make their masters take the road to the north', meaning Ethiopia where he believed they came from.<sup>34</sup>

Three years before, Richard Kandt who was then an explorer based in Rwanda wrote a letter to White Father apostolic vicar Bishop Gerboin in today Tanzania, stating: 'I used to write, yes Rouanda is a country full of hopes when we could destroy the power of the Watusi'.<sup>35</sup>

Lieutenant Von Parish, one of the very first German colonial officials in Rwanda, already envisioned in 1903 that part of southern Rwanda would be occupied by White colonists because of the good climate, fertile land and cheap labour. But for him, it was necessary first to get rid of the Batutsi: 'We should first remove the Batutsi or at least remove their influence', he wrote. 'To achieve this one would enjoy the warm support of the Bahutu while the Batutsi could only count on the support of the Batwa'.<sup>36</sup>

During the First World War, Belgian officer Josué Henry already suggested raising the 'Bahutu' against the 'Watusi' in his capacity as 'Commissioner general and senior commander of the Kivu troops' responsible for defending the eastern border of Belgian Congo against the Germans who occupied Rwanda. In a letter of 15 December 1914 to the vice-governor of the Eastern province, he presented this as one of the preferable strategies to a direct confrontation against the Germans whom he considered 'very numerous, very armed, very well organized', which would be 'committing the heaviest mistake' and 'putting the colony into a big adventure'.<sup>37</sup>

The Watusi form a very powerful tribe which according to the lowest estimates can mobilize 10,000 to 20,000 warriors. Can we, under the conditions that I have just expressed by invading its territory, put the Germans in the situation of exploiting the feeling of national defence vis-à-vis it to our detriment. ... On the other hand, diplomatic action as you perfectly point out in your letter Mr. Governor General has little chance of success with Wuzinga [King Yuhi V Musinga of Rwanda, 1896-1931] himself who is too well prepared by the Germans to consider us as despoilers. Also, if I take the bias. Rwanda does not only have Watusi. It has numerous and strong Bahutu populations who are subject to them and who, I am convinced, would not ask better to shake off the yoke....<sup>38</sup>

Many others among the colonial agents and missionaries had at different times expressed their hostility towards the Batutsi and the indigenous administration, but the latter had benefited from a reprieve due to the colonial interests of the moment.

The Belgian colonial administration was to put the threat into execution towards the 1960s and afterwards with success, in what will be presented as the 'Rwandan revolution' but in reality, the first genocide against the Tutsi<sup>39</sup> perpetrated to destroy the nationalist party UNAR (Union Nationale Rwandaise) which was claiming independence and which the colonialists identified with the Batutsi for the purposes of the cause, although being the dominant party and grouping within it Batutsi but also the vast majority of Bahutu and Batwa. Mason Sears, head of the United States delegation, could declare this before the United Nations Trusteeship Council upon returning from a UN Visiting Mission to Ruanda-Urundi which he led from 2 March to 1 April 1960. Not only does he confirm that the 'disturbances' of November 1959 in Rwanda 'are not the fact of a general popular

---

<sup>31</sup> 'La lettre du Père Brard du 8 février 1902 à Monseigneur Livinhac' [A.G.M.Afr., 02/1 et N° 098523,48], in Stefaan Minnaert, *Le Rwanda vu par le père Brard (1898-1906). Contribution à l'histoire de l'évangélisation du Rwanda. Ecrits et rapports du fondateur de la mission catholique de Save* (Kigali, 2021), pp.79-127, p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97-98.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>35</sup> 'Copie de la lettre du Docteur Richard Kandt du 7 juin 1899 à Mgr Gerboin' [A.G.M.Afr., N° 100164-100165], in Stefaan Minnaert, *Premier Voyage de Mgr Hirth au Rwanda (de novembre 1899 à février 1900). Contribution à l'étude de la fondation de l'église catholique au Rwanda* (Editions rwandaises, Kigali, 2006), p. 511.

<sup>36</sup> Commission Nationale pour l'Unité et la Réconciliation (CNUR) [Sous la direction de Déo Byanafashe & Paul Rutayisire], *Histoire du Rwanda. Des origines à la fin du xxè siècle.* (Kigali, 2016), p. 189.

<sup>37</sup> Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale (MRAC), Tervuren, Archives Josué Henry de la Lindi, HA.01.117, 402.

<sup>38</sup> MRAC, Josué Henry de la Lindi, HA.01.117, 402.

<sup>39</sup> see Privat Rutazibwa, 'The genocide against the Tutsi: the establishment of the genocidal policies since 1959', *AfricArXiv* (2023), <https://doi.org/10.21428/3b2160cd.f58c1e1a>.

revolution against social injustice', but also that the UNAR 'has many members among Hutu' and 'is above all an African nationalist movement':

As everyone agrees on this subject, the United States delegation would like to join the Visiting Mission and other delegations in addressing an appeal to the Belgian Government.

We ask him to reflect on the situation in the Territory and ways to lay the foundations for national reconciliation in Rwanda. Reconciliation, in our opinion, must be based on certain conclusions which, I hope, will be accepted by the Government of Belgium as soon as it has been able to forget its very natural and necessary preoccupation with the problems which arose in the Congo just before independence.

These conclusions are as follows:

1°. The violent incidents that have occurred recently in Rwanda are not the fact of a general popular revolution against social injustice. The violence that has erupted is more like the start of a civil war - a struggle for power - between two factions of the population in anticipation of independence.

2°. The Unar political party, which has many members among Hutu loyal to the Mwami, is above all an African nationalist movement, pure and simple, and almost identical to all those found in other African territories.

3°. Unconsciously, the demands for social justice which are at the origin of the recent unrest have become the main obstacle to independence, which is obviously very dangerous.

4° The loyalty of millions of Hutu to their Mwami, Kigeri V, is, in fact, the key to the restoration of national unity in Rwanda.

5° Kigeri V is above all an upright, humble, accessible, sober man, and, with all the necessary encouragement, he will be able to rally 90 percent of the population in the very near future.

On the basis of these conclusions, the United States delegation would like to present some suggestions which we hope will be taken into consideration by the Belgian Government.<sup>40</sup>

Belgium had chosen to ignore this advice and continue its plan of genocide against the Tutsi and hunting down the nationalists who demanded the independence of Rwanda.

*The traditional Rwandan administration deserves a posthumous rehabilitation: the colonizers and the White Father missionaries made it carry the opprobrium of their own colonial atrocities*

Colonial officials, missionaries, the alleged revolutionaries of the end-1950s and early 1960s, the media and the scholarly literature on Rwanda vilified in an inconsiderate and undeserved manner what they called 'the Tutsi aristocracy' or 'the Tutsi oligarchy', meaning the traditional Rwandan administration, both that encountered by colonization and that which served as its auxiliary. Rwanda precolonial administration deserves respect and recognition for 'the type of state formation and development which had taken place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century' before colonial rule started. As scholars Leander Heldring and James A. Robinson from Oxford and Harvard universities observed, 'Rwanda state [was] becoming more centralized and consolidated'. They assert that 'political centralization is a prerequisite for order and public good provision and though states also collapse, once started there are strong forces leading political centralization to intensify'.<sup>41</sup>

In their study titled 'Colonialism and development in Africa', both researchers note that without colonization, Rwanda could have better developed as it was already on good track. Their observation applies to other African countries in the same category with precolonial centralized states like Bénin, Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho and Swaziland. They note that 'It is true that the colonial powers brought technology and institutions that Africans did not have, but Africans in these types of polities were busy adopting these in any case in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and they were the most capable of doing so'. The researchers add that 'These polities also suffered from the uniform colonial legacies of racism, stereotypes and miss-conceptions that the Africans did not have and which have since caused immense problems, most notably in Burundi and Rwanda'.<sup>42</sup>

Anthropologist Czekanowski had warned that colonial administration would not provide protection to the populace as traditional leaders did before; that it would rather increase oppression despite colonial and missionary narrative depicting it positively. He analysed the tax system in traditional Rwanda and distinguished three types. The first was the farmers' tax consisting of 'foodstuffs, hoes, beer, livestock, and labour in kind' owed to the

---

<sup>40</sup> Fidèle Nkundabagenzi, *Rwanda politique* (Les Dossiers du CRISP, Bruxelles, 1961), p. 356.

<sup>41</sup> Leander Heldring and James A. Robinson, 'Colonialism and development in Africa' (African Economic History Working Paper Series, No. 5/2012, ISBN 978-91-980438-5-3, African Economic History Network (AEHN), s.l., 2013), p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

King and chieftains at different levels.<sup>43</sup> The second and ancient tax was ‘butaka’ ‘primarily paid in foodstuffs and tabaco, and only to a lesser extent in hard hoe money’. The third was ‘the war tax (umuheto)’ which was collected by the chieftain ‘entrusted with the King’s cattle’ in a given district.<sup>44</sup>

Czekanowsky informs that ‘particular families or communities’ had to deliver ‘objects that require special skill to manufacture’ like ‘salt, which must be burned out of swamp grass, female leg rings of grass (butega), otter hides, wildcat hides, cow hides, bark cloth, weapons, etc.’ Those special tax payers were exempted from ‘a portion of the normal liability, that is, the usual farmer’s share.’<sup>45</sup>

Europeans described these taxes and charges as oppressive in a bid to disparage the local leadership, yet they were obligations tailored to the population means and owed to a legitimate authority. Colonizers and White Fathers missionaries needed to delegitimize that very authority of the Rwandan administration they encountered, for their own advantage. But it was Europeans’ impositions that were to become unbearable instead. The indigenous Rwandan administration under colonial rule often had to reluctantly enforce these colonial impositions and constraints, and it should not in all honesty answer for them in the place of the colonizers and other missionaries.

King Yuhi V Musinga (1896-1931) had to introduce a new tax called “ilali” or ‘foodstuff delivery tax for travelling Europeans’<sup>46</sup> generally accompanied by hundreds of porters and askari (African soldiers).<sup>47</sup> In precolonial Rwanda, taxes and charges were generally levied at lineage level, and farmers’ contributions were collected once a year at harvest time. In trying to standardize the traditional tax system, the colonizers created serious excesses. Taxes and charges were extended to individual level, and those traditionally demanded from poor citizens without land (*uburetwa*) were levied from all farmers.<sup>48</sup> The *bagaragu* in precolonial *Ubuhake* system were never required to cultivate the fields of their boss (shebuja). Colonization imposed it, and in Buganza, it was not until around 1930 that *abagaragu* began to cultivate the land (*gutanga imibyizi*) for their *shebuja*.<sup>49</sup>

The *Ubuhake* clientship was a voluntary contract between a servant (*Umugaragu* / *Abagaragu* in plural) looking for wealth (a cow) and protection in exchange for services rendered to a wealthy patron (*shebuja*). With the exception of the king, every Rwandan could become *mugaragu* of someone else, without any ‘ethnic’ distinction.<sup>50</sup> With colonization, the introduction of money and administrative reforms changed authority and dependency relationships, making *Ubuhake* loose its political and economic influence.<sup>51</sup> King Mutara III Rudahigwa (1931-1959) and Rwandan chieftains pleaded for its ‘total suppression’ in 1946, but colonial authorities were cautious, fearing social unrest, as the measure represented a revolution in their eyes.<sup>52</sup> *Ubuhake* was eventually abolished by King Rudahigwa’s royal decree n° 1/54 of 1 April 1954.<sup>53</sup>

New taxes, constraints, and humiliations were also brought by the same colonization. Tax (*umusoro*) and forced labour (*akazi*) were the main instruments of colonial domination and exploitation, especially under Belgian rule. Capitation tax was introduced by German colonial administration in 1914, and it went through multiple revisions under Belgian colonial rule until 1960 when it was replaced by ‘Minimum personal contribution’, becoming the heaviest of all taxes. Direct taxation was mainly dominated by the capitation tax, the polygamy tax, the livestock tax, the income tax and the personal tax. Forced labour ‘*akazi*’, also called ‘work of public interest’ was imposed to produce food crops (cassava and sweet potato) or cash crops (coffee); for the exploitation of the valley bottoms for agricultural purposes; for the storage of beans (*guhunika*); for the layout and maintenance of tracks and roads; and for erosion control and reforestation. The colonial authorities, both German and Belgian, introduced and generalized the use of the whip (*ikiboko*) to punish those who evaded or attempted to evade forced labour.<sup>54</sup>

Colonial constraints produced negative consequences on Rwandans. The great famine Ruzagayura (1943-1944) was caused among other things by the supply of food and beef cows at a ridiculously low price that was dictated by European merchants, as part of the war effort imposed on Rwanda by Belgian colonial rule during World War II.<sup>55</sup> The migration of Rwandans, young robust and other valid adult men was mainly caused by the desire to

---

<sup>43</sup> Bachmann, *Every day life*, p. 71.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72

<sup>47</sup> CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 181.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118-129.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295-296.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190, 268 -290.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.



escape forced labour for salaried work in neighbouring British territories. Between 1920 and 1959, around 350.000 Rwandans had gone to Uganda.<sup>56</sup>

Other atrocities and humiliations were imposed on Rwandans by colonization, such as the rape of girls and women; degrading practices such as forcing adults to get naked in public for research or so-called medical purposes, etc....

Catholic White Father missionaries also introduced a terrible drudgery for the construction of the churches and their own residences. This was a workload never experienced before by Rwandans. Missionaries could request thousands of people to cut and transport wood from long distances, to fire bricks and tiles. For the construction of Save and Zaza missions for example, chieftains in Nyaruguru refused to give porters for the former; and those in Gisaka preferred to stay longer at the King's court in Nyanza as a way to escape missionaries' requisitions for the latter and thus spare their population.<sup>57</sup>

White Fathers of Rwaza in the North could requisition between 800 and 1000 people for forced labour daily.<sup>58</sup> When the population manifested its discontent and anger towards their Baganda auxiliaries, the missionaries decided to break the resistance through armed expeditions. In an attack carried out on 19 July 1904, the White Fathers killed people and looted more than 50 cows and several hundred goats. The expedition was reiterated three times at the beginning of August 1904 and more people were killed, hundreds of huts burnt, banana plantations cut, and herds of cattle looted, as reveals a 1909 report by the regional superior of the White Fathers, Father J. Malet.<sup>59</sup>

Attributing responsibility for colonial constraints and oppression to Rwandan auxiliaries is a serious sham. The oppression denounced by the so-called revolutionaries of end fifties was actually exerted on all Rwandans by Europeans in the context of colonial administration. It was mischievously attributed to the Rwandan auxiliaries who were most often only instruments of execution of colonial orders, and by extension, to all Batutsi. As historians from the University of Rwanda note in their book,

Customary officials had gradually become civil servants in the service of the European administration: they could be promoted, punished, dismissed and transferred. The administration required them performances contrary to their traditional functions. ... The European staff...controlled the smallest detail of political and administrative life, including the king's court at Nyanza.<sup>60</sup>

Noticing that the Belgian colonial administration and influential European priests in the Catholic Church were using the predominance of the Batutsi in the native administration as the greatest pretext to aggravate the Hutu-Tutsi problem which they had created as a diversion from the demands for independence, King Mutara III Rudahigwa (1931-1959) had asked the native authorities to vote for their collective resignation so that the colonial authority could organize elections by universal suffrage or use other means to replace them. In their meeting of 5 April 1959, the chieftains and sub-chieftains of all the country voted for their collective resignation -with the exception of two, chief Mbanda and Sub-Chief Kimonyo who resisted-, and handed it to the colonial hierarchy. Belgium never wanted to respond to this collective resignation offer.<sup>61</sup>

It is therefore obvious that the concern of the Belgian colonial administration and European priests was not to establish democracy and social justice. As Antoine Mugesera recalls in his book, what the Belgian colonizers wanted

was not democracy, because no one had prevented them from establishing it during their stay in Rwanda, but their colonial regime had oppressed the people in general and the Bahutu especially since Rwanda has existed. They are the ones who decreed that no Muhutu should enter the administration and they had implemented it from 1926 to 1932. As for democracy, it was a pretext. Without even talking about Rwanda, no colonial regime has ever built a democracy anywhere in the world. They are incompatible. Any government that oppresses the people like colonialism cannot build a democratic state. There is no democracy in colonization. There is no colonization in a democracy. They don't coexist, they don't live side by side, they don't interact at all. No colonialism builds democracy.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>57</sup> Jean Rumiya, *Le Rwanda sous le régime du mandat belge* (l'Harmattan, Paris, 1992), p. 15-18.

<sup>58</sup> CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 219.

<sup>59</sup> Minnaert, 'Les Pères Blancs et la société rwandaise', p. 88-89.

<sup>60</sup> CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 261,263.

<sup>61</sup> Jean Berckmas Kimenyi (Secrétaire du Roi Rudahigwa), *De la déconstruction du Rwanda aux massacres des Tutsi en 1959. Témoignage d'un proche collaborateur du Roi Mutara III Rudahigwa* (S.d., Kigali, 2019), p. 284-285.

<sup>62</sup> Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 62.

What colonial Belgium wanted was to crush the Rwandan nationalists who demanded independence and it succeeded, by means of a racist ideology and at the cost of genocidal violence against the Batutsi. This new, colonial and racist ideology with its corollaries of hatred and discrimination against the Batutsi then became the founding policy of the regime of collaborators to which Belgium bequeathed independence as well as its successors until the genocide of 1994, and it never ceased to spread in the region and in the world.

The page of colonial oppression in Rwanda has not yet been properly written. Belgium and the White Fathers managed to have the colonial tale of 'the oppression of the Tutsi over the Hutu' written in his place, and the media has peddled it even today with great credulity, thanks to the decisive action of many Western academics. It should be noted here that certain Europeans who taught - or even chaired the History department - at the University of Rwanda between 1963 and 1985<sup>63</sup> such as André Coupez, Jean François Gotanègre, Bernard Lugan, Pierre Erny, Roger Heremans, produced sometimes openly racist writings intended to justify the dominant ideology of the time by making people believe that the division and hatred between Bahutu and Batutsi were inscribed in the history and culture of the country long before the arrival of Europeans. Other Western scholars have conducted research in Rwanda at different times since the last years of colonization. Almost all of them have chosen to adhere to the dominant ideology, without ever questioning colonization.<sup>64</sup>

Rwandans experienced colonial constraints, impositions and humiliations like other Africans, but they are probably the only ones to have had in addition, a racist ideology of hatred carrying genocide.

### ***A revolution that gave rise to neo-colonial, racist and genocidal regimes***

#### *Neo-colonial regimes*

There is a rich documentation showing that the rise of the 'Hutu leaders' of the future 'Rwandan revolution' was part of a Belgian colonial strategy to fight the nationalists who demanded independence, once Belgium noticed it could no longer delay decolonization because of the independentist current that was already strong in various African countries and was also emerging in Rwanda. The Governor-General of the Belgian Congo told UN envoys in 1954 that the inhabitants of Ruanda-Urundi could start to administer themselves only 'in three or four generations'.<sup>65</sup> A few years later however, the then Deputy Governor General of Belgian Congo and Governor of Ruanda-Urundi, Jean Paul Harroy, wrote a six-page letter to his superior, Léon Pétillon, in June 1958 with the seal of secrecy, stating the following:

Nationalisms are awakening; Nasser and Nyerere are known in Ruanda-Urundi; Cairo propaganda, the Voice of Free Africa, the influence of the T.A.N.U. will soon spark the emergence of political parties [...], the definitions and slogans of the Afro-Asian conferences or of recent Accra conference are published by the press and read favourably by the advanced and semi-advanced. The natives listening too readily to the words of bad shepherds develop towards the Government attitudes of mistrust more and more characterized.<sup>66</sup>

The deputy Governor General then revealed the strategy of Belgian colonial administration to set up a Hutu counter-elite with an active promotion of 'Bahutu's political education' which will turn out to be racist anti-Tutsi propaganda.

---

<sup>63</sup> André Nisin D'Orval, *La Généalogie du corpus 'racial' : une lecture foucauldienne du passé rwandais*, Université de la Sorbonne Paris IV, Mini-mémoire de Master 1, 2011), p. 110-119.

<sup>64</sup> This is the case for example of Jan Vansina, Claudine Vidal, Filip Reyntjens, Catharine Newbury, and Alison Liebhafsky Des Forges among others.

<sup>65</sup> CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 409-410.

<sup>66</sup> Le Vice-Gouverneur et Gouverneur du Ruanda-Urundi, Jean-Paul Harroy, 'Lettre à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général à Léopoldville, objet : organisation et évolution politiques du Ruanda-Urundi', Usumbura, juin 1958, Archives Africaines, RWA 97. As quoted by Philibert Gakwenzire, *Les politiques de discrimination, persécutions et génocide des Tutsi en commune de Rubungu et de Gikomero (1960-1994)* (Université Libre de Bruxelles, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2017), p. 42.

... Even the framework of the customary authorities, citadel of the pre-eminence of the Batutsi, will soon admit deputy chieftains, even Bahutu chieftains, whose number will increase in the near future. A very special effort is made to this end, as much by the Bahutu associations as by the administrators of the territory, who systematically collect all the valuable Bahutu candidacies. [...] The proposed formula will in fact establish, in the immediate future, between Bahutu and Batutsi, a balance which will gradually be broken in favour of the latter, as more and more Bahutu will be admitted into customary frameworks. Bahutu's political education will thus be helped actively, but smoothly....<sup>67</sup>

August-Edmond de Schryver, the soon-to-be minister for Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi (appointed as minister on 2 September 1959) who had led the 'Groupe de travail' [Working Group] in Ruanda-Urundi in April and May 1959 for consultations to draft a new Belgian colonial policy, held a conference on 16 June 1959 at the Centre Catholique Africain in Brussels, and stated the following:

... Members of the ruling families (Batutsi in Ruanda and Baganwa in Urundi) use the language of democracy, but only in language ... They do not want the Whites to stay, only as advisers.

... there is a small group of progressives, Hutus and Tutsis. All are educated and have one voice: Belgium must establish democracy by force and without being indulgent. Belgium must establish a basic system that makes democracy possible and maintain its presence (in Rwanda) in a way which is not very apparent, but which is very productive at the same time. If European rule were to immediately depart from Ruanda, it would not be an exaggeration to say that within 24 hours there would be a massacre of one part of the population.<sup>68</sup>

Speaking of the Batutsi, De Schryver raised his voice at the same conference saying: 'In short, one would say that it will be necessary to do democracy in their country, without their involvement, and against them.'<sup>69</sup>

The hatred and hostility of the Belgian authorities towards the Batutsi and the Rwandan leaders made them indifferent and insensitive to the calls demanding the intervention of the same colonial authority to put a stop to the racist anti-Tutsi propaganda which was in full swing at that time. On 6 May 1959 in Bujumbura, King Mutara III Rudahigwa submitted to De Schryver and his colleagues in the 'Groupe de travail' a report from the Conseil Supérieur du Pays (CSP) of Rwanda which he chaired, on the desired political reforms. In terms of human relations, this report mentioned the 'unfortunate interventions of certain people ill-intentioned or ill-informed who, through the press and discrediting remarks, fuel racial hatred.' The CSP went on to say that it was 'surprised that the [Belgian colonial] Government passively witnessed this scene of destruction of our Country and by this attitude seems to encourage division'.<sup>70</sup>

The same De Schryver and his colleagues in the 'Groupe de travail' had also received on 28 April 1959, the declaration from the indigenous authorities and judges of Rwanda on social relations and the rise of hate speech in the country. These officials said they were 'surprised to see the lack of intervention from the [Belgian colonial] government, as well as real efforts to eliminate this malaise.' Their declaration went on to say: 'We deeply disavow any kind of disagreement between Rwandans, which only serves to delay the accession to the legitimately desired autonomy in the shortest possible time.'<sup>71</sup>

The native authorities and judges of Rwanda expressed their deep concern 'at the fact that publications are multiplying in the Catholic missionary press: "Kinyamateka and Temps Nouveaux", maintaining the quarrel between the Rwandan ethnic groups'. They were also concerned that 'insults and malicious remarks always tending towards division have continued to be expressed, notably in the publication entitled "Ijwi Iya Rubanda rugufi" published by Mr. Habyarimana Joseph, President of the association "Aprosoma"'.<sup>72</sup>

Their declaration submitted to the Belgian 'Groupe de travail' was accompanied by 12 documents in annexes. Two of them were the conclusions of their meetings of 5 April and 20-23 April 1959 as well as the names of the chieftains, deputy chieftains and judges and their signatures. The other ten documents were illustrations of the

---

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>68</sup> Kimenyi, *De la déconstruction du Rwanda*, p. 291-292.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>70</sup> AGR2-Joseph Cuvelier, Ministère des Colonies et successeurs en droit. Groupe de travail pour l'étude du problème politique au Ruanda-Urundi (1958-1959), Numéro de l'instrument : I 47, cote de l'article : n° 7. 'P.V. de la 21<sup>e</sup> session du Conseil Supérieur du Pays ; Rapport de la Commission du Conseil Supérieur du Pays'.

<sup>71</sup> AGR2-Joseph Cuvelier, Ministère des Colonies et successeurs en droit. Groupe de travail pour l'étude du problème politique au Ruanda-Urundi (1958-1959), Numéro de l'instrument : I 47, cote de l'article : n° 7. 'Déclaration des autorités indigènes et juges du pays à Nyanza'.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

propaganda of division and hatred that they denounced, including “les onze commandements” (the eleven commandments) [of the Bahutu] and "l'Hymne nationale des Bahutu" (the national anthem of the Bahutu).<sup>73</sup>

It appeared, however, that this campaign of hatred against the Batutsi was in reality orchestrated by the Belgian colonial administration itself. Abbot Alexis Kagame, a Rwandan scholar and member of several international scientific bodies, clearly expressed this to the 'Working Group' in a letter dated 2 May 1959 that he had promised to send as a supplement to the hearing he had had with the same group on 28 April 1959.

Speaking of the reforms to be introduced in the executive of Rwanda, Abbot Kagame suggested that alongside the Rwandan Sovereign 'who should reign and not govern' within the framework of a constitutional monarchy, there be a government with Europeans to the positions of Prime Minister and other portfolios for which there was not yet local expertise, but 'that it was nevertheless necessary to entrust certain Ministries to natives, assisted by European Advisors'. The Rwandan abbot underlined 'that we should find Europeans intelligent enough to understand that the common good requires this conception and that they agree to serve as second-in-command to Ministers less competent than themselves'. Abbot Kagame deplored, however, that this future collaboration that he suggested could be seriously compromised by a campaign undertaken for two years by the 'European Administration', 'inciting the populations to disregard the indigenous authorities, through propaganda of racial hatred between Bahutu and Batutsi':

However, a very difficult problem arises here and you will allow me, Mr President, to give you a short presentation of it in complete frankness. Over the past two years, the European Administration has made a major error by inciting the populations to disdain the indigenous authorities, through propaganda of racial hatred between Bahutu and Batutsi. ... This unfortunate campaign, Mr President, began when Rwanda had just launched the idea of autonomy or independence. ... I must point out, Mr President, that I am not simply reporting the rumours of public opinion: I know from certain and direct knowledge that officials of the European Administration, and even high-ranking ones, have been very openly involved in this campaign.<sup>74</sup>

The members of the 'Groupe de travail', including its president, August-Edmond de Shryver, who would become Minister four months later, did not want to pay the slightest attention to these calls for decency and vigilance. King Mutara III Rudahigwa was to die in obscure circumstances on 25 July 1959, and the first massacres of a genocidal nature directed against the Batutsi broke out on 1 November of the same year.

UNAR (Union Nationale Rwandaise) was the other target. When it officially launched its activities as a political party in September 1959, it continued the political legacy of King Rudahigwa. UNAR was to be severely attacked by the colonialists and some of the most influential members of the Catholic Church. A few days after his appointment as Special Resident of Rwanda, Belgian Colonel Guy Logiest officially declared on 21 November 1959 that 'We have in front of us a deadly enemy, UNAR. We have to destroy it. One way to achieve this is to strengthen the enemies of UNAR.'<sup>75</sup> In a statement issued on 24 September 1959, the leaders of the Catholic Church had already called on Catholics to beware of UNAR, which they accused of having 'communist and Islamic influences'.<sup>76</sup>

At the beginning, UNAR had a large following throughout the country and at all levels. Researcher René Lemarchand explains that the high number of members was due to the fact that 'UNAR had a patriotic discourse aimed at uniting all Rwandans for development at all levels'.<sup>77</sup> PARMEHUTU itself has long admitted to being small and of insignificant political importance in the face of the popularity of UNAR within the population, and among the Bahutu in particular. In a letter to the Belgian Minister for Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi of 4 October 1959, the founders of PARMEHUTU and others who claimed to represent the Bahutu in Rwanda and Burundi stated that it was a 'tragedy ... to see that the Tutsi could enlist many Hutu into political parties of their oppressors'.<sup>78</sup> For these 'Hutu leaders' and their European sponsors, nationalist parties, namely UNAR in Rwanda and UPRONA (Union pour le progrès national) in Burundi were automatically considered as 'Tutsi' and 'parties of oppressors of the Hutu'. 'Bahutu political education' aimed to erode the strength of nationalist parties by siphoning them of Hutu members by racist propaganda.

---

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

<sup>74</sup> AGR2-Joseph Cuvelier, Ministère des Colonies et successeurs en droit. Groupe de travail pour l'étude du problème politique au Ruanda-Urundi (1958-1959), Numéro de l'instrument : I 47, cote de l'article : n° 7. 'Audition de M. l'Abbé A. Kagame'.

<sup>75</sup> Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 58.

<sup>76</sup> Nkundabagenzi, *Rwanda politique*, p. 139.

<sup>77</sup> CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 393.

<sup>78</sup> Nkundabagenzi, *Rwanda politique*, p. 112.

De Schryver had declared in June 1959 that 'within 24 hours there would be a massacre of one part of the population' if Belgian colonial rule 'were to immediately depart from Rwanda'. Belgium maintained its colonial rule until 1 July 1962, and the first genocide against the Tutsi occurred under its supervision. It finally granted independence to 'Hutu leaders', products of 'Bahutu's political education' that it had 'helped actively, but smoothly'!

The political parties of these 'Hutu leaders', namely PARMEHUTU (Parti du mouvement de l'émancipation des Bahutu) and APROSOMA (Association pour la promotion de la masse) would become the main colonial and neo-colonial puppets. Joseph Habyarimana Gitera, the founder of APROSOMA stated in September 1959: 'independence means expelling the White man and restoring slavery, injustice and oppression by the Tutsi'. He accused the nationalist party UNAR of 'wanting to drive out the Whites and God so that we rule ourselves', and praised 'The Belgian state and the Church of Rwanda [that] have joined forces to liberate the Bahutu and the humble people from the slavery of the Batutsi'.<sup>79</sup>

PARMEHUTU pleaded for the continuation of colonialism! With their usual essentialist and dualist vision of Rwandan society in Hutu-Tutsi, officials of the party wrote the following in their newspaper *Jya Mbere*: 'The Tutsis want self-rule and independence in 1960-1962, while the Hutus want colonialism to continue for another time'.<sup>80</sup> The PARMEHUTU manifesto of 18 October 1959 had requested the United Nations to organize a referendum on independence to assess if Rwandans really wanted the end of Belgian colonial rule.<sup>81</sup>

The irony is that when Rwanda regained independence in 1962, Belgium transferred power to these two parties that were only asking to continue living under Belgian colonization. Grégoire Kayibanda, the PARMEHUTU leader became the first head of state and Gitera, leader of APROSOMA, the first speaker of the parliament.

A strong bond has continued to unite Belgium and the Catholic Church dominated by the White Fathers missionaries to the successive regimes of Rwanda. On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rwanda's independence in 1982, President Juvénal Habyarimana decorated with medals of recognition several Belgians who played a decisive role in the 'Rwandan revolution', including Guy Logiest whom Habyarimana designated as 'providential man'. This is the clearest proof of the neo-colonial character of post-independence regimes. As one analyst pointed out, 'In the whole history of the decolonization of Africa, Rwanda is the only country to have offered glorious rewards to its former colonizers'.<sup>82</sup> Belgium would be gradually ousted by France from 1962 in developing a privileged neo-colonial relationship with the Rwandan regimes until the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.<sup>83</sup>

### *Racist regimes*

Post-independence regimes from 1962 to 1994 practised overt discrimination and prejudice towards the Batutsi considered as a separate and different race or ethnic group, though these qualifications are inaccurate in the context of Rwanda. Four postulates of the Hamitic hypothesis have been invoked to give a false historical justification to these policies of discrimination against the Batutsi. The first is the clear distinction of 'races' or 'ethnic groups' that are supposed to be the components of the Rwandan population Bahutu, Batutsi and Batwa; distinction based on allegedly different physical and psychological characteristics as well as economic activities. The second postulate is the anteriority of each of these groups in the history of the settlement and occupation of the land. The third postulate is the numerical importance of each group, and the last is the social and political status of each group. The regimes resulting from the 'Rwandan revolution' logically deduced from these postulates of the Hamitic hypothesis two new theses on which the Hutu supremacy ideology is based, namely that 'Hutu are the first and the most'.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Aprosoma – Parti social hutu- ishyaka rya Abahutu, 'Uko Abahutu bagomba kwica ku ngoyi ya Abatutsi n'uko u Rwanda dushaka ko rumera muli iki gihe kiri imbere', *Ijwi rya Rubanda rugufi*, 27/09/1959.

<sup>80</sup> *Jya mbere*, 'Prise de position du Mouvement de l'émancipation Hutu, Gitarama (Ruanda), le 30 janvier 1960'; Supplément à *Jya mbere* n° 5 du 3 janvier 1960.

<sup>81</sup> Nkundabagenzi, *Rwanda politique*, p.121.

<sup>82</sup> Kimenyi, *De la déconstruction du Rwanda*, p. 310.

<sup>83</sup> Doridant & Graner, *L'État français et le génocide des Tutsis*, p. 26.

<sup>84</sup> For a typology of Hutu supremacy ideology and Hamitic ideology, see Privat Rutazibwa, 'Genocide and media', *Dialogue*, numéro spécial juillet (2013); also available at <https://francegenocidetutsi.org/RutazibwaGenocideAndMedia.html.en>. For the main themes of Hamitic ideology in Rwandan historiography, see Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale*, p. 18. The formula 'The Hutu are the first and the most' is from an American professor during a seminar in Kigali in 2013 after my presentation of 'Genocide and media'.

Two colonial authors give a representative view of those postulates of the Hamitic hypothesis. Reviewing the discoveries of Count Von Gotzen who was the first European to visit the Court of Rwanda, Richard Kandt, explorer and first German civil Resident in Rwanda gave the following description:

Contrary to the other parts of the colony, he found here a dense population: Bantus Negroes counted in thousands and named Wahutu. This population is enslaved to Watussi, a noble caste of foreigners, Semites or Hamites; whose ancestors, originating from Galla countries in the south of Abyssinia, have subjugated all the inter lacustrine regions.<sup>85</sup>

In his book published in 1939, Canon Louis de Lacger wrote:

The Batutsi are, without any doubt, the last comers in Rwanda, and their settlement is relatively recent... The historical autochthones in Rwanda bear the name of Batwa. ...The Muhutu is the vegetarian colonizer, ...reducing before him the bush and the inextricable forest...populating everywhere with overabundant birth rate.... It is he, who conquered and created really Rwanda, who gave it a way of living which is general nowadays; who printed the stamp of his language and institutions; who baptised all its sites, its mounts, its rivers, its 'countries' or cantons; its hills and sections of hills.<sup>86</sup>

The artisans of the 'Rwandan revolution' and their heirs often reproduced these colonial textbooks verbatim to justify that the Bahutu were 'the true owners' of Rwanda, and therefore more legitimate than the 'first Batwa occupants', for having 'cleared' the forest. They also asserted that the Bahutu are 'the real people' of Rwanda as they constitute the majority of the population. For these two reasons, the Bahutu have an exclusive right to citizenship and political power. This supremacist ideology goes hand in hand with the exclusion of the Batutsi from the right to citizenship, exercise of power, homeland and property, education and employment, and even to the cultural heritage of Rwanda.

Joseph Habyarimana Gitera, the founder of APROSOMA political party stated in 1959: 'Sons of Gahutu, we are the ones who created Rwanda, cutting the forest. We are the real people of Rwanda. Our weapons are the hoe and the machete, the very weapons we shall use to defeat the Inyanga-Rwanda' ['those who hate Rwanda', meaning the Batutsi in this context, and the nationalists who were his political opponents].<sup>87</sup> In September 1959, Grégoire Kayibanda, the official founder of PARMEHUTU political party declared the following: 'Our movement aims at the Hutu group, outraged, humiliated and despised by the Tutsi invader. ...., we are there to give back the country to its owners; it is the country of Bahutu. .... By who was the forest cleared? By Gahutu. So, what!<sup>88</sup> Théoneste Bagosora, former Director of cabinet in the ministry of defence under president Habyarimana, sentenced in 2011 to 35 years in jail by the ICTR (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda) for his role in the genocide against the Tutsi wrote the following in 1995:

Tutsi have never had a country of their own to make up a people. There have never been a Tutsi people neither in Rwanda, nor in Burundi, or anywhere else. There have simply been Tutsi who have been naturalized as they progressively arrived in Rwanda as well as in Burundi.... Tutsi are and will remain Nilotic migrants naturalized either as Rwandans, Burundians, Zairians, Ugandans or Tanzanians who should rather favour a policy of peaceful coexistence with the people who welcomed them and moderate their behaviour, proud and arrogant, prone to impose their supremacy in the Great Lakes region....<sup>89</sup>

On the exclusion of the Batutsi from the right to exercise political power, Kayibanda declared before the parliament in September 1961, after PARMEHUTU won the parliamentary elections and the referendum on monarchy amid violence and fraud with the support of Belgium, that the new government was 'a government of Gahutu'.<sup>90</sup> While celebrating the tenth anniversary of independence in 1972, President Kayibanda said: 'The

---

<sup>85</sup> Richard Kandt, 1905: pp 257-278. As presented by Bernard Lugan, 'Sources écrites pouvant servir à l'histoire du Rwanda (1863-1918), *Etudes Rwandaises*, volume XIV, numéro spécial (1980).

<sup>86</sup> Louis de Lacger (Chanoine), *Le Rwanda ancien* (S.d., Kabgayi, [1939] 1961), p. 48.

<sup>87</sup> Ishyaka Iya Bahutu. c/o APROSOMA J.H. Gitera & Frères. Astrida B.P.99, 'Umusozo w'ikibazo: Muhutu – Mututsi mu Rwanda', *Ijwi Iya Rubanda rugufi* (1959). The original text in Kinyarwanda is as follows: 'Bene Gahutu, nitwe, twaremeye Urwanda dutema ishyamba, tugize Urwanda. Intwari zacu n'isuka n'umuhoro, nizo tuzatsindisha INYANGA-RWANDA.' The title 'Umusozo w'ikibazo: Muhutu-Mututsi mu Rwanda' translates as 'the end of the Hutu-Tutsi problem in Rwanda'.

<sup>88</sup> République du Rwanda, 'Dénombrement des victimes du génocide, rapport final' (République du Rwanda, MINALOC, Kigali, 2004), p. 13.

<sup>89</sup> Théoneste Bagosora, 'L'assassinat du président Habyarimana, ou l'ultime opération du tutsi pour sa reconquête du pouvoir par la force au Rwanda' (S.d., Yaoundé, 1995).

<sup>90</sup> Speech by Grégoire Kayibanda to parliament, 2 October 1961. As quoted by Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 62.

commune elections of 1963 forever convinced the Tutsi that they should no longer entertain the hope of governing'.<sup>91</sup>

Regarding the exclusion of Tutsi refugees (and displaced persons) from the right to property and homeland, the Belgian colonial administration had already suggested and endorsed the policy according to which the Commune councils were to meet to decide whether or not a Tutsi refugee or displaced person was authorized to return in his property.<sup>92</sup> The Belgian administrator of the Territoire of Kigali could state in December 1960 that 'It is already a development in their favour' the fact that Tutsi refugees had been authorized by the 'Commune councils' of two communes near Kigali to return 'in the commune, but not on their former lands'; and he could add in his weekly report: 'They must, in the same way as a foreigner, request land'.<sup>93</sup>

The lands of the Batutsi who had fled abroad or who had been displaced inside the country during the 'revolution' were first given to other people by the Commune councils, and these transfers were recorded in the Commune books. Other property of Tutsi refugees or displaced persons, like cattle, was sold and the money went to the Commune Fund.<sup>94</sup>

This was done in a country still under Belgian colonization.

PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA rulers often confiscated the assets for their own benefit or gave them to their friends, creating conflict. Some of the returning Tutsi even dared to sue local leaders in an attempt to recover their properties despite the hostile general atmosphere. Therefore, the rules and regulations came to provide a framework to reduce those cases.<sup>95</sup>

In 1961, Makuza Anastase, then Minister of Justice signed a provisional directive on refugee property, intended for judges, assessors and court clerks. It stipulated about lands of the Batutsi that 'The plots taken by the interim or municipal authorities in favour of other persons ... must be maintained in the legal situation in which these new authorities have placed them until the legislator decides otherwise.'<sup>96</sup>

This directive was also issued under Belgian colonial rule, by the Provisional Government, one of the institutions that had been dismissed by the UN but which the Belgians let continue to operate. Minister Makuza's directive did not prevent cases and disputes from continuing, as it was in violation of existing laws. Some lands belonging to Batutsi had not yet been distributed too; so, those in local administration continued to face difficulties.<sup>97</sup>

In 1966, President Kayibanda issued a decree reinforcing the 1961 directive stating in Article 3 that 'The returning refugee cannot under any circumstances reclaim the land where he previously lived or exploited if it has already been occupied or has already been the subject of any allocation by the public authorities.'<sup>98</sup>

Land litigation, however, continued, prompting the Minister of Local Administration and Justice André Sebataware to issue a directive dated 2 February 1970 on land disputes between individuals and the State. The directive was intended for the courts. Minister Sebataware recalled the directive of 1961 and the presidential order of 1966 emphasizing the provisions set out above. He told the judges that the two regulations 'enlightened them enough' to 'know what to do whenever a refugee or a displaced person' filed a case to get back a 'land that he owned before fleeing abroad or being displaced'. The ministerial directive accused the returnees of 'gross bad faith in their litigation, often aimed at undermining the authority of the Commune'.<sup>99</sup>

The Minister advised the courts to refer the complainants to the office of requests (Bureau des Requêtes) in each court. Employees of that office could 'explain to them the rules, and show them that filing a complaint is a waste of time'. He also demanded that the courts report to the ministry on a monthly basis from March 1970, showing those who agreed to the explanations and those who insisted on filing a complaint. The minister concluded his

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibiro by'amakuru muri Prezidansi ya Republika, 'Imyaka 10 y'isabukuru y'ubwigenge' (Republika y'u Rwanda, Kigali, 1978), p.80. As quoted by CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 421.

<sup>92</sup> Réunion tenue à Kigali le 25 octobre 1961 entre les autorités britanniques de l'Uganda et les autorités du Gouvernement du Ruanda-Urundi (présidée par Monsieur Jean-Paul Harroy, Résident Général du Ruanda-Urundi), p.1, in Archives africaines, A 63 RWA 98. See especially the declaration of Resident General Jean-Paul Harroy as quoted by Gakwenzire, *Les politiques de discrimination*, p. 99.

<sup>93</sup> Julien Nyssens, Administrateur de Territoire (Kigali), 'Rapport hebdomadaire d'information' (Kigali, 22 décembre 1960), in Archives africaines, A 63 RWA 92. As quoted by Gakwenzire, *Les politiques de discrimination*, p. 76.

<sup>94</sup> Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 78-81.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> 'Circulaire n° 2/1961 du 8/6/1961 du Ministre de la Justice relative aux jugements de caractère foncier' (République rwandaise, 'Règlements et instructions relatives à la réinstallation des réfugiés et réclamations diverses. Destinés aux autorités communales, préfectorales et judiciaires', Ministère de l'intérieur, service A.P.A, édition 1979), p. 27.

<sup>97</sup> Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 82-92.

<sup>98</sup> 'Arrêté Présidentiel n° 25 du 26 février 1966 portant mesures pour la réintégration des réfugiés' (République rwandaise, 'Règlements et instructions relatives à la réinstallation des réfugiés'), p. 11.

<sup>99</sup> 'Circulaire n°99/A.09 III du Ministre de l'Intérieur et des Affaires Judiciaires relative aux litiges fonciers entre particuliers et pouvoir public' (République rwandaise, 'Règlements et instructions relatives à la réinstallation des réfugiés'), p. 22-25.

directive stating that if the courts follow suit, it will be a good co-operation with the Executive branch of the State in combating the 'plight of many troublemakers who are increasingly using land disputes to create tensions between the state and the people, inciting the latter to oppose the former'.<sup>100</sup>

Under Habyarimana's regime, a directive issued on 25 October 1973 confirmed President Kayibanda's 1966 Decree, in particular Article 3, stipulating that a returnee cannot claim land and other property that was formerly his or her own when it was occupied by another person or used by the government for another purpose.<sup>101</sup> A ministerial instruction of 22 May 1975 also set the end of July 1975 as the deadline for the allocation of all property left by refugees. It stated: 'what will not be serving the public interest will be auctioned off, notwithstanding that the Commune may attribute some of the properties to people who may need them'.<sup>102</sup>

The return of Tutsi refugees to their homeland was systematically denied. Scholars who claim that at the end of the 1980s, the socio-political system in place in Rwanda seemed able to 'peacefully resolve' the problem of 'Tutsi refugees' do not care about the truth.<sup>103</sup> I will dwell a little more on this question of refugees to prove it, especially since it played an important role in triggering the RPF rebellion in 1990.

The Kayibanda regime was characterized by insincere calls to refugees to return, yet it enacted laws and practices full of hatred and violating the rights of the refugees. President Kayibanda actually counted on the total extinction of Tutsi refugees given the difficult conditions they faced in exile. 'Leave them, they will dry up like a puddle,' he declared one day to those around him.<sup>104</sup> Habyarimana's government had also one unchanging line: the statement that Rwanda is small, so refugees are required to stay where they are. It added, however, political reasons that were most evident in the confidential documents: Tutsi refugees were generally considered enemies of the country.

In 1973, after Habyarimana's military coup, the UNHCR representative in Rwanda wrote to his headquarters informing of the new government's instructions on individual refugees seeking repatriation, based on an interview he had had with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. The new government had decided to abide by the existing regulations of 1966. What it changed was that the refugee could not enter Rwanda and have his repatriation request examined after he had arrived, as was the case under Kayibanda's regime. The new directive stated that 'Rwandese refugees wishing to return to their home country should address themselves either to the Rwandese Embassy (if there was one) or to the UNHCR Branch Office.' The request was to be transmitted to the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>105</sup>

For each refugee seeking repatriation, the Rwandan authorities needed first to conduct an investigation into the following: 'a) Would the population in the "colline d'origine" accept without difficulty the returning refugee? b) Would the returning refugee represent a political security risk? (c) Were there charges pending of a criminal nature against him?' The new authorities chose to carry out the investigation while the refugee was still abroad; and if he did not fulfil the requirements, they refused him to come. The aim was 'to avoid a situation where a returning refugee would have to be taken into custody', and therefore, the Rwandan authorities 'asked HCR to discourage refugees from taking the initiative to return unheralded and on their own'.<sup>106</sup>

The UNHCR representative in Rwanda seemed very satisfied with the explanations he received. He was even effusive and full of praise for the new regime:

... they wished to assure HCR that all cases would be sympathetically examined. It was the avowed policy of the new régime to make every effort to ensure that the liberty and safety of every Rwandese national would be respected irrespective of his ethnic origin. My own view is that the authorities are taking a sensible and positive stand on this matter and that a refugee officially admitted will not be exposed to official discrimination or harassment.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> 'Circulaire n°2420/A.09 relative à l'arrêté Présidentiel n° 25/01 du 26 février 1966 portant mesures pour réintégration des réfugiés et réclamations diverses' (République rwandaise, 'Règlements et instructions relatives à la réinstallation des réfugiés'), p. 13-19.

<sup>102</sup> 'Lettre n° 497/04.09.01/14 du 22/05/1975 à Monsieur le Préfet de Préfecture (tous), du Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Fonction Publique, Kanyarengwe Alexis, Lieutenant Colonel. Objet: destination des biens abandonnés par les réfugiés' (Personal archives of Jean Paul Kimonyo, Rwandan researcher and writer).

<sup>103</sup> See among others, Filip Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise. Rwanda, Burundi: 1988-1994*, (Paris, Karthala, 1994), p.257; Desrosiers, 'Le rapport Duclert', p. 18 (the author asserts that 'The Rwandan government was even in the process of concluding agreements on the issue at the time of the RPF attack').

<sup>104</sup> 'Mubihorere bazakama nk'ikiziba'. Conversation with R. B., Kigali, 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Stanley Wright, UNHCR chargé de mission in Rwanda, to Mr. A. Noël, Chief, West and Central Africa Regional section, 27 August 1973; 610.GEN.RWA Refugees from Rwanda – General; series 2; box 1086; Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*



Shortly after taking office, Habyarimana met with Ugandan President Idi Amin Dada at the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) summit in Mogadishu (12-16 June 1974), and they briefly discussed the issue of Rwandan refugees. Upon his return, Idi Amin announced that he had set up a commission at the ministerial level to assess whether there were any Rwandan refugees who wanted to return voluntarily to Rwanda. The Commission was to then invite representatives of the Rwandan government to the talks.<sup>108</sup> The Ugandan commission started work, meeting with refugee representatives who submitted their proposals on what can be done to allow them to return to Rwanda. The Rwandan delegation visited Kampala from 21 to 28 July 1974. It was led by Foreign Affairs Minister Aloys Nsekaliye, and was comprised of Kamilindi Claudien who was the Minister of Health and Welfare; Ntigura Jean who was the Secretary General in the Ministry of Local Administration; Lizinde Théoneste who was the Director General in the Presidency; and Kinuma Faustin who was the Director in the Ministry of Public Service. On the Ugandan side, there was a team of three ministers led by Major General F. Nyangueso, who was in charge of refugees.<sup>109</sup>

The talks of the joint commission of the two countries took place in Kampala from 23 to 27 July 1974. Rwandan refugees in Uganda had signed a memorandum expressing their wishes, and Ugandan government representatives demanded that the joint commission study it. The document outlined six factors that refugees needed to be met in order for them to return to Rwanda. The first was total security provided by the OAU. Others were: the release of political prisoners jailed during the Kayibanda regime; the restitution to refugees and displaced of all their property and lands; the elimination of any kind of discrimination from the Constitution; the equality of all Rwandans before the law and at various levels; and the creation of an executive committee composed of representatives of the OAU, the Government of Rwanda, refugees, international organizations and countries that had hosted refugees, to supervise the operations of repatriation.<sup>110</sup>

The Rwandan delegation also shared with the joint commission a memorandum expressing its views. It was briefly discussed during the meeting of 24 July 1974 and its objective 'was to provide more clarity to certain passages of the memorandum of refugees which could not be sufficiently clarified'.<sup>111</sup> The document stated that 'Rwanda is not ready to start negotiations on the basis of what appears to be suicidal for Rwandans'<sup>112</sup>, citing social, economic and political problems. The Ugandan government delegation, however, tried to persuade that of Rwanda to be reasonable. They reminded that the Ugandan government is 'primarily responsible for its people', and that 'The stay of Refugees in Ouganda is only temporary; and it is ultimately up to their country of origin to create favourable conditions for the return of their nationals and to welcome them when they express the intention'.<sup>113</sup> They pointed out that the change in government in Rwanda has led the Ugandan President to think that 'there has been a positive change in the attitudes of politicians in Rwanda towards Rwandan refugees', and thus 'it is time to resolve the issue'. In this regard, 'it was emphasized that the Rwandan refugees in Uganda had also changed their minds about the current regime in Rwanda'.<sup>114</sup>

This insistence of the Ugandan delegation allowed both sides to continue talks and work out a draft agreement that the two heads of state would sign. The key to the draft agreement was that Rwanda allowed three categories of refugees to return: those with sufficient means of subsistence; those who still owned land in Rwanda; and those with special skills that may make them eligible for the labour market. The return of other refugees would be considered later. Even for the three categories considered, the Rwandan government wanted their repatriation to take place in 20 years, but the Ugandan side requested not to determine the repatriation period before completion

---

<sup>108</sup> The UNHCR Representative in Kampala to the High Commissioner, 1 July 1974; 1/UGA/RWA, 610.UGA/RWA 1. Uganda Refugee situation - Refugees from Rwanda Uganda; series 1; box 38; Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>109</sup> 'Comptes-rendus des réunions de la Commission mixte ugando-rwandaise sur le rapatriement des réfugiés rwandais vivant en Uganda', p.2 (Annexe 5 à la Lettre n° 451/01.05/CAB/RE du 31 juillet 1974 du Lieutenant-colonel A. Nsekaliye, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération, à son Excellence Monsieur le Président de la République. Personal archives of Jean Paul Kimonyo).

<sup>110</sup> 'Mémorandum des réfugiés rwandais en Uganda' (Annexe IV à la Lettre n° 451/01.05/CAB/RE du 31 juillet 1974 du Lieutenant-colonel A. Nsekaliye, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération, à son Excellence Monsieur le Président de la République. Personal archives of Jean Paul Kimonyo).

<sup>111</sup> 'Comptes-rendus des réunions de la Commission mixte ugando-rwandaise', p. 7- 8.

<sup>112</sup> 'Mémorandum de la délégation rwandaise sur les réfugiés rwandais en République ugandaise', p.1 (Annexe II à la Lettre n° 451/01.05/CAB/RE du 31 juillet 1974 du Lieutenant-colonel A. Nsekaliye, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération, à son Excellence Monsieur le Président de la République. Personal archives of Jean Paul Kimonyo).

<sup>113</sup> 'Avant-projet d'accord entre le Gouvernement ougandais et le Gouvernement rwandais sur le rapatriement des réfugiés rwandais', p. 1-2 (Annexe I à la Lettre n° 451/01.05/CAB/RE du 31 juillet 1974 du Lieutenant-colonel A. Nsekaliye, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération, à son Excellence Monsieur le Président de la République. Personal archives of Jean Paul Kimonyo).

<sup>114</sup> 'Comptes-rendus des réunions de la Commission mixte ugando-rwandaise', p. 4.

of the refugees' census. In addition, Uganda agreed to grant citizenship to long-established refugees, if they requested it.<sup>115</sup>

However, the talks ended without an agreement being signed between the two countries. It appears in fact that the Rwandan delegation agreed to continue the negotiations until 27 July 1974 as a pure diversion, because it had already declared to the UNHCR on 23 July that Rwanda categorically rejected the repatriation of its refugees. A telegraphic message the UNHCR headquarters sent to its envoy to Addis Ababa on 26 July 1974 reveals the following:

Have been advised by Branch office Kampala as follows and this message already transmitted Branch office Kigali QUOTEAAA The Rwanda government reject possibility mass repatriation of Rwandese refugees on the basis of social economic and political considerations. In conclusion it requests the Ugandan government to discourage all refugees from returning. BBB The first official meeting between the Uganda government and the delegation attended by the representative ended yesterday 23 July and no further sessions on the question of repatriation are envisaged. CCC In private meeting with Rwanda Foreign Minister assured individual requests for repatriation will always be considered. UNQUOTE. We agree mass repatriation impractical and unadvisable. We hope this issue now closed and that this information will be conveyed to OAU by governments concerned.<sup>116</sup>

The attitude of UNHCR in this matter is very surprising. Its representative in Kampala attended the first meeting of the Joint Commission on 23 July 1974, and left before the end of the session as revealed by the minutes of the meeting written by the Rwandan delegation.<sup>117</sup> In a message to his Headquarters in Geneva the following day, 24 July 1974 as shown in the preceding paragraph, he stated that the meeting of the joint Commission he attended and left unfinished was the last on the issue of repatriation. Nevertheless, the truth is that the meetings of the joint Commission continued until 27 July 1974 when the draft agreement to be signed by the presidents of the two countries was approved by both delegations.<sup>118</sup> Influenced by their representative in Uganda, the UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva also announced the conclusions of the talks between Uganda and Rwanda on 26 July 1974, that is, one day before the end of the joint Commission's meetings!

It is clear that Habyarimana's government policy of condemning Rwandan Tutsi refugees to perpetual exile was also shared by UNHCR.

In a speech on 1 July 1982 celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rwanda's independence, President Habyarimana said that 'refugee issues should be considered first and foremost in the humanitarian field but without forgetting peace and security'. He reiterated that the lasting solution is that 'refugees be permanently resettled in the host countries'. For some of the refugees seeking to return to the country, each one would 'make individually and voluntarily a request to be examined in light of laws applicable in Rwanda since 1966 as well as international conventions'.<sup>119</sup>

The same year 1982, Milton Obote's government expelled Rwandan refugees and other assimilated populations from rural settlements in Uganda. Some returned to Nakivale and Oruchinga refugee camps in Mbarara district, and others headed to Rwanda. Various numbers of these refugees have been provided. In November 1982, the UNHCR estimated that more than 60,000 had been evicted; 23,000 of whom went to the refugee camps in Uganda, and 40,000 to Rwanda.<sup>120</sup> A provisional census by the Rwandan government in April 1983 estimated that no more than 80,000 had entered the country.<sup>121</sup> The refugees were kept near the border, in Kibondo for the non-breeders, and Nasho for the cattle breeders. In November 1982 Rwanda closed the border, and about 4,000 people were confined to a cramped space between the two countries in no man's land, incapable even to return to Uganda out of fear. Security forces in Rwanda also abducted some youths who disappeared.<sup>122</sup> Because of the mistreatment, about 200 people died, including 35 who chose to commit suicide.<sup>123</sup> Some of the refugees later returned to Uganda and a number of youths joined the Yoweri Kaguta Museveni rebels who had started fighting against Obote.

---

<sup>115</sup> 'Avant-projet d'accord entre le Gouvernement ougandais et le Gouvernement rwandais sur le rapatriement des réfugiés rwandais'.

<sup>116</sup> The High Commissioner to the Representative in Addis Ababa, 26 July 1974, 1/UGA/RWA, 610.UGA/RWA 1. Uganda Refugee situation - Refugees from Rwanda Uganda; series 1; box 38; Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>117</sup> 'Comptes-rendus des réunions de la Commission mixte ugando-rwandaise', p. 4.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15-17.

<sup>119</sup> Mémoire de la partie rwandaise sur le problème des réfugiés rwandais, p.5. Reçu au HCR le 14 juin 1989, 0.10 RWA [C], External relations- Relations with governments- Rwanda, AF7/269, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>120</sup> UNHCR Head Office to Representative in Ottawa, 16 November 1982, 610.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [1972-1984], series 2, box 1129, Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>121</sup> The UNHCR Representative in Kigali to the High Commissioner, 8 April 1983, 610.UGA.RWA Refugees from Rwanda in Uganda [1972-1984], series 2, box 1129, Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>122</sup> Jean Paul Kimonyo, *Rwanda, Demain ! Une longue Marche vers la transformation* (Karthala, Paris 2017), p. 64.

<sup>123</sup> Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 114-115.

On 26 July 1986, the Central Committee of the ruling party MRND [Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement] as the highest institution to define the country's policies issued a statement on the refugees' problem.<sup>124</sup> In its historical background, the document recalled how 'the majority farmer had to enter into an iniquitous bondage contract from which the minority breeder reaped all the benefits'. The MRND statement seemed to dread an imminent civil war. 'As for the forced return of the refugees, arms in hand, which would threaten peace, security, unity and national harmony, the Rwandan people would not tolerate the compromise of values so dearly acquired', it reads. This reference to the return of armed refugees, and the timing of the MRND statement just six months after Museveni took power in Uganda, led the diplomats in Kigali to link this to the fact that there was a large group of Rwandan refugees in the NRA (National Resistance Army) of President Yoweri Museveni.<sup>125</sup>

The MRND Central Committee's statement continued to address the issue of refugees as a humanitarian problem, rather than a political issue. The answers it gave to the question were three: the first was a permanent residency in host countries and where possible, refugees to be granted citizenship. The second was being allowed to come and visit their families in Rwanda, provided that it does not create insecurity, and afterwards return to their places of refuge; and finally, the possibility for an individual refugee to submit a request for return. In the last case, the statement said that 'Rwanda will continue to consider with kindness requests for individual, free and voluntary repatriation'. In order to be eligible to the individual repatriation, the applicant refugee had to meet the following requirements: 'has never carried arms against the Rwandan Republic; has never participated in a subversive movement against Rwanda nor in any activities against the interests of the Republic of Rwanda; demonstrates his ability to provide for his subsistence and development needs once he returns to the country'.<sup>126</sup>

In fact, the position of the Habyarimana regime on the refugee question had remained the same since the Kampala talks of 1974 mentioned above. The Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs himself confirmed to the UNHCR representative in Kigali that 'the position taken by the Central Committee ... had been prepared a long time ago and is therefore only the outcome of a process of reflection begun in 1982 with the mass arrival of refugees from Uganda'.<sup>127</sup>

In an open letter dated 28 November 1986, Mwete Muvunyi, a Rwandan refugee in Bujumbura, seriously questioned Habyarimana about the MRND statement, in his capacity as president of both the party and the country. He wrote:

Since you refuse to the refugees to return home under the pretext of overpopulation, what will you do with your young compatriots who are born for the moment? The estimates of certain serious institutions speak of a population of Rwanda of 20 million inhabitants (against 6.6 million currently) in the year 2000. Will Rwanda have expanded its borders to reach three times its current area? If not, as it is logical to assume, who will be the next to be expelled?<sup>128</sup>

UNHCR's Legal Adviser for Africa also analysed in a six-page document Rwanda's refugee policy, as detailed in the statement from the Central Committee of the MRND. He pointed out that 'the solutions put forward by the National Revolutionary Movement for Development in order to resolve the problem of Rwandan refugees hardly resist legal analysis'. After indicating the weaknesses of each of the three conditions attached to individual repatriation, he concluded: '... one would naturally wonder about the part of sincerity and honesty that this condition contains, like all the others on which depends the success of an individual repatriation procedure'.<sup>129</sup> In a confidential document, UNHCR explained that this 1986 policy of the Rwandan government on the refugees' issue had angered host countries. 'While the (majority of) asylum countries continued to extend asylum to

---

<sup>124</sup> Position du Comité Central [du MRND] face au problème des réfugiés rwandais, Note verbale du 28 juillet 1986 du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la Coopération aux missions diplomatiques accréditées à Kigali. Transmitted from Délégué HCR/Kigali au siège du HCR/Genève, 05 août 1986, 0.10 RWA [A] External relations -Relations with Governments- Rwanda, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Mwete Muvunyi, Lettre ouverte au Général-Major Juvénal Habyalimana, Président fondateur du MRND, Président de la République Rwandaise, 28/11/1986. As quoted by François-Xavier Doudou-Kiadila, Conseiller juridique pour l'Afrique, Note pour le dossier : Quelques réflexions sur la Position du Comité central du MRND face au problème des réfugiés rwandais. Annex to Memorandum on Rwandan refugee policy transmitted on 2 July 1987 from UNHCR Senior Legal Advisor Asia & Oceania to the Representative in Japan, 0.10 RWA [A] External relations -Relations with Governments- Rwanda, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>129</sup> François-Xavier Doudou-Kiadila, Conseiller juridique pour l'Afrique, Note pour le dossier : Quelques réflexions sur la Position du Comité central du MRND face au problème des réfugiés rwandais. Annex to Memorandum on Rwandan refugee policy transmitted on 2 July 1987 from UNHCR Senior Legal Advisor Asia & Oceania to the Representative in Japan, 0.10 RWA [A] External relations -Relations with Governments- Rwanda, UNHCR Archives.

Rwandese, they resented the attempt by Rwanda to dictate unilaterally a solution that placed the burden on its neighbours. This reaction was particularly strong from Uganda, which had earlier appeared ready to naturalize many Rwandan refugees'.<sup>130</sup>

Meeting at the OAU Summit in Addis Ababa on 27-29 July 1987, Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni called on the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to 'convene a regional conference of countries concerned with the Rwandese refugee problem to evaluate the magnitude of the problem and propose appropriate solutions'.<sup>131</sup> The High Commissioner conveyed the idea to the then Rwandan Foreign Affairs Minister François Ngarukiyintwali also present at the same OAU summit 'who rejected the idea of such a meeting, suggesting that Rwanda would prefer bilateral approaches'.<sup>132</sup> The following year, president Habyarimana paid a visit to Uganda on 4-6 February 1988. Agreements with his Ugandan counterpart included the establishment of a Joint Committee of Ministers between Rwanda and Uganda on the issue of Rwandan refugees living in Uganda.<sup>133</sup>

During the Sixth Ordinary Congress of the MRND held on 25-29 June 1988, president Habyarimana mentioned again the issue of refugees in his speech of 26 June 1988, with the following declaration:

while we wish and ask that even among the Rwandans currently living in Rwanda some consider the possibility of emigrating, it would be suicidal to invite those who live abroad to return all en masse. ... it would be objectively impossible for us to welcome them, as Rwanda does not have the capacity. ... The Rwandan Government is well aware that the problem of Rwandan refugees is a problem that concerns it primarily; ... but it cannot, on its own, find a solution for it without the support and collaboration of the countries of asylum so that these refugees can settle in the host countries or be naturalized there.<sup>134</sup>

The MRND Congress reaffirmed the content of the party's Central Committee statement of 1986, and called on the government to continue the bilateral consultations with each host country to convince them to keep the refugees.<sup>135</sup>

While announcing the government program for his new presidential term of 1989-1994, President Habyarimana once again encouraged refugees to live permanently in the countries where they had taken refuge. He said, 'A realistic and positive attitude should guide them to recognize that it is better to earn a living honourably in the countries that have so generously welcomed them than to risk greater suffering and evident loss of an undoubtedly superior material situation'.<sup>136</sup>

In the same address, President Habyarimana called on the host countries to grant citizenship to the refugees, and on the international community to support Rwanda's policy on its refugees! Habyarimana also said that his country's role in providing a solution to that complex issue was the establishment of a Special Commission on the problems of Rwandan immigrants! Called « Commission Spéciale sur les problèmes des émigrés rwandais » in French, the commission was created by presidential order n° 62/01 of 9 February 1989. The choice of the term "immigrants" (émigrés) in place of "refugees" (réfugiés) was in accordance with President Habyarimana's instruction n° 839/01.10 of 22 June 1976 urging the concerned ministers for

the commencement of a psychological action aimed at convincing Rwandan nationals to stay in the host country. ... the name "refugee" must be progressively replaced by "originating from Rwanda". This title is even better in convincing those concerned that they should remain in the country they are in now, as their coming in big numbers would face the problem of demographic explosion you know.<sup>137</sup>

In 1989 and 1990, the Rwanda-Uganda Joint Committee on Rwandan refugees living in Uganda met three times. The first meeting took place in Kigali on 15-17 February 1989, the second in Kampala on 14-17 November 1989;

---

<sup>130</sup> Briefing note on Rwanda (Confidential, for internal use only), p. 3. Annex (2) to Mission report of UNHCR officials in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Zaire from 20 October – 03 November 1990, 0.10 RWA [D] External relations -Relations with Governments- Rwanda, AF05/601, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Joint communique issued at the end of the visit of H.E. Major General Habyarimana Juvenal 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 1988 to 6<sup>th</sup> February 1988, 100.UGA.RWA [A] Refugee situations – Ugandan refugees in Rwanda, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>134</sup> Mémoire de la partie rwandaise sur le problème des réfugiés rwandais, p. 15.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

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

<sup>137</sup> Instruction présidentielle relative aux réfugiés n° 839/01.10. Transmise aux ministres concernés par le Secrétaire Général à la Présidence de la République par lettre du 22 juin 1976.

and the last one in Kigali on 27-30 July 1990. The key outcome of the meetings between the two countries was that 'efforts must be made either to promote the voluntary repatriation of the refugees or to facilitate their naturalization and permanent settlement in Uganda'.<sup>138</sup> At the second meeting, UNHCR was tasked with two responsibilities. The first was to ascertain the wishes of the refugees (counting Rwandan refugees in Uganda and identifying those who want to return to Rwanda; those who want to reside permanently in Uganda, as well as those who want to go to another country). The second was to assess the absorption capacity of Rwanda for the returnees. A UNHCR briefing note on Rwanda reveals that

The Government of Rwanda was not prepared to commit itself in advance of the outcome of the survey to be undertaken by UNHCR as it feared that the number of refugees opting for repatriation would far exceed those choosing permanent settlement in Uganda. As a result, the Government of Uganda which was originally flexible on this issue, also made its final decision dependent on the result of the survey.<sup>139</sup>

This is underscored by the fact that UNHCR first asked Rwanda and Uganda to assure it that they would implement the results of the survey before it started it, yet the third Joint Committee meeting ended with both countries agreeing to wait for the results of the survey before making any decision. In a communication to both countries in May 1990, UNHCR stated:

... UNHCR seeks reassurance from the Governments of Uganda and Rwanda of their commitment to implement the results of the survey. ... given its current financial crisis, UNHCR will be required to make special requests to donors for funds to conduct the survey. It is essential, for the success of the fundraising efforts, that UNHCR is in the position to assure donors that the results of the survey will be implemented and lead to a durable and permanent solution for Rwandese refugees in Uganda.<sup>140</sup>

Two months later, the minutes of the third meeting of the Joint Uganda/Rwanda Committee on the Problem of Rwandese Refugees Living in Uganda held in Kigali on 27-30 July 1990 reaffirmed that 'The two Government delegations agreed to await the results of the survey in order to make any commitments'.<sup>141</sup> Delegates from UNHCR and OAU had equally attended the meeting and even took part in deliberations and signed the minutes. The latter also stated that UNHCR was determined to have completed the census of Rwandan refugees in Uganda on 30 November 1990. The following meeting of the Joint Committee was to be held in Kampala in January 1991.<sup>142</sup> The participants in the meeting, therefore, including the UNHCR, were well aware that there would be no just and durable outcome for the Rwandan refugees in Uganda and elsewhere.

Reacting to the decisions of the second meeting of the Rwanda-Uganda Joint Commission on the Rwandan refugees in Uganda held in Kampala in November 1989, Isangano Association 'that regroups Rwandan Refugees in Belgium' issued on 15 March 1990 an open letter titled: 'Les Réfugiés Rwandais en Ouganda: un recensement inopportun' (Rwandan refugees in Uganda: an untimely census). Isangano Association observed that 'Uganda is not the only country hosting Rwandan refugees' and asked the following questions: 'How were they able to initiate negotiations in the absence of the other host countries? Do the international organizations which have supported the refugees during the thirty years of hardship endorse such a procedure?'<sup>143</sup>

Isangano stated that the decisions of the second Rwanda-Uganda joint Commission on Rwandan refugees in Uganda 'worry the Rwandan refugees' and reminded that Habyarimana's statement that 'Rwanda is small' and that 'refugees should stay abroad' had not changed. The association therefore found it 'surprising to see suddenly

---

<sup>138</sup> Briefing note on Rwanda, p.1. Annex (1) to Mission report of UNHCR officials in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Zaire from 20 October – 03 November 1990, 0.10 RWA [D] External relations -Relations with Governments- Rwanda, AF05/601, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Letter of UNHCR Representative in Kampala to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 31 May 1990, 100.UGA.RWA [A] Refugee situations – Ugandan refugees in Rwanda, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>141</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, p.7, 100.UGA.RWA [A] Refugee situations – Ugandan refugees in Rwanda, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> 'Les réfugiés rwandais en Ouganda : un recensement inopportun'. Memorandum attached to a note from UNHCR Representative in Brussels to the Regional Office for Africa, Geneva, 29 March 1990, 100.UGA.RWA [A] Refugee situations – Ugandan refugees in Rwanda, UNHCR Archives.

the Rwandan government agree to return "some" refugees living in Uganda' and emphasized that 'the issue of Rwandan refugees is serious; it cannot be treated lightly'.<sup>144</sup> The association concluded on the following remarks:

To arrive at a final solution, it will be necessary that all the protagonists examine it with good will, a concern for justice, without cunning or lie. Wanting to solve only the issue of refugees living in Uganda and neglecting or pretending to forget those living in other countries is a trick. It is also an error of method and of judgment.<sup>145</sup>

It is clear that the Rwandan government's strategy to hold bilateral talks on the refugee issue with host countries was aimed at misleading. This example of the joint committee with Uganda emphasizes that Rwanda's policy on refugees had never changed. Another UNHCR internal document notes that

Since the major exodus in 1963, successive Rwandese governments have pursued a policy of systematic discrimination based on ethnic affiliation as a result of which the vast majority of refugees (TUTSI) have been unable to repatriate voluntarily to their country of origin. Their mass repatriation is perceived in some sections of the present establishment as a threat to the gains won after 1962 by the HUTU majority.<sup>146</sup>

The analysis of this UNHCR document is true; where it is wrong is that the mass repatriation of Tutsi refugees would not have undermined the interests of the Bahutu. It could certainly have disturbed the tranquillity and selfishness of a clique of extremists who identify with all Bahutu!

The right of Rwandan refugees to mass repatriation would wait for the RPF's liberation war to be recognized, through the 1993 protocol of agreement on refugees that later became part of the Arusha Peace Accords.<sup>147</sup>

The regimes resulting from the 'Rwandan revolution' also set up policies and practices aimed at depriving Batutsi of education and employment at the time when Belgian colonization was still in place and after independence. On 28 January 1961, after the Coup d'état of Gitarama appointed Mbonyumutwa as President and Kayibanda as Prime Minister, one of the eight principles announced on that day and that would guide the new government prevented the Batutsi from accessing education. It stated: 'schools that do not respect racial predominance in the number of their students may be closed or the government may seize them'.<sup>148</sup>

While the 1961 and 1962 constitutions gave the Catholic Church the dominance in education, the 1962 Education Act and the General Education Regulations in Rwanda of 1967 restored the state's school administration from the hands of the Church, for reasons of discrimination. PARMEHUTU officials had found that many priests and among them school administrators were Batutsi!<sup>149</sup>

In 1966-1967, there was a wave of expulsions of Tutsi students from schools. A UNHCR staffer who had visited their office in Goma, Congo, photographed a card of one of the students who had been expelled and fled through Congo. The card was signed by a religious white man who ran the Institut Notre-Dame de l'Etoile in Musanze, a school where the child used to study and which was managed by the Frères des écoles chrétiennes. The director of the school had written the following in French:

I, the undersigned, Keust J., Director of College Notre-Dame de l'Etoile, in Musanze, attest that Barikungeri Antoine from Kayove has shown exemplary morality and behaviour during his stay at the College. He has been excluded by ministerial decision for racial motive. Done at Musanze, on 18 February 1967.<sup>150</sup>

A UNHCR Officer in Geneva discussed the issue with the High School Programs Officer at the Ministry of Education in Rwanda at the time, Mr. Ignace Karuhije who was in Switzerland at a meeting. Karuhije admitted that the students were indeed expelled for racial reasons, but lied that the victims were punished as a result of the

---

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Briefing note on Rwanda, p.1. Annex (1) to Mission report of UNHCR officials in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Zaire from 20 October – 03 November 1990, 0.10 RWA [D] External relations -Relations with Governments- Rwanda, AF05/601, UNHCR Archives.

<sup>147</sup> Protocole d'Accord entre le Gouvernement de la République Rwandaise et le Front Patriotique Rwandais sur le rapatriement des réfugiés rwandais et la réinstallation des personnes déplacées, signé à Arusha le 9 juin 1993.

<sup>148</sup> Alexis Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'histoire du Rwanda de 1853 à 1972. (Tome II)* (Editions universitaires, Butare, 1975), p. 310.

<sup>149</sup> CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 442-443.

<sup>150</sup> F.P. Hordijk (visiting the Goma office) to the High Commissioner, Memorandum: Arrival of new refugees from Rwanda, 24 February 1967, Annex to the memorandum; 100. GEN.RWA Refugees from Rwanda – General (1966 - 1967) [Vol. 2]; series 2; box 30; Fonds UNHCR 11.

riots they had caused between Hutu and Tutsi students. He added that the expulsion was aimed at Hutu students as well, which was another lie:

Mr. Karuhige (sic) has admitted that Rwandan students have been expelled from secondary schools for racial reasons because they had caused, it seems, riots between Hutu and Tutsi students. Mr. Karuhige (sic) assured me that this measure was applicable to both Hutu and Tutsi children, but that in fact, until now, the great majority of the expelled students were of Tutsi origin.<sup>151</sup>

In 1973, the slogan 'myopie sociale' [social myopia] was popularized by the infamous 'comités de salut public' [committee for public safety]. Social myopia meant that the Bahutu were asleep because the Batutsi were once again numerous in the schools, and that if the Bahutu did not expel the Batutsi, the latter would regain the upper hand.<sup>152</sup> In February and March that year, these committees of public safety made up of pupils and students expelled their Batutsi colleagues from secondary schools, catholic seminaries and higher education; and chased the Batutsi out of the public service and private enterprises. The movement spread to the ordinary population and caused massacres of Batutsi, burning of their houses and looting of their property.<sup>153</sup>

A report by Sylvestre Nsanzimana, then rector of the National University of Rwanda (UNR) reveals that on 14 February 1973 at Groupe Scolaire de Butare, 'the Bahutu students of this establishment had chased away their Batutsi colleagues at night and even all those whose "identity" did not satisfy them'. The following day at UNR this time, 'a list of 14 students had been posted on the poster boards of the students' hostels, ordering them to leave the University within 24 hours'.<sup>154</sup> The situation would quickly deteriorate during the night of 15 to 16 February. To the rector who tried to reason with them, the Hutu students replied:

We want to expel all Tutsi students from the National University of Rwanda, Tutsi staff and all their white accomplices. ...They despise us, they insult us, they want to kill us, they intrigue all the time with the teachers to make us give Fs (in the letter grading system, F = 0). ...No, they are not our comrades, you don't know them, they are very mean. They live off the contributions of our parents, they continue to insult us, to betray the country, to go into exile in Burundi after obtaining their diplomas. No, it's unbearable. We will apply the Manifesto Program. Besides, you, the authorities, would not dare to do what we are doing. You will see, we will resolve the situation. No more Tutsi will be admitted to study here. The same must also be true of the Tutsi staff and teachers who favour them. We no longer want anything that is Tutsi; we are fed up. etc.<sup>155</sup>

In total, '190 Tutsi students or students considered as such were expelled from the National University of Rwanda and the Higher School of Nursing' that night. Towards the end of the afternoon of 16 February, around 50 others were chased away from Institut Pédagogique National. According to rector Nsanzimana, those expelled included 'a certain number of authentically Bahutu students [who] were chased away under the accusation of being pro-Batutsi'. But what shocked the rector was not this violent hunt for the Batutsi and the racism involved. He was more concerned about 'The tendency to radicalize positions [that] risks throwing into the same bag any element deemed somewhat moderate with all the procession of consequences that can result from it'.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, it appears that even President Kayibanda's own daughter, then a student in Rwamagana, was beaten on one side of her body, -the Tutsi side-, by her Hutu extremist colleagues.<sup>157</sup> Kayibanda had married a Tutsi woman!

While the Tutsi students were fleeing, their colleagues shouted: 'We Hutu, we have won, no Tutsi will return to our University...'.<sup>158</sup> To the rector who pointed out to them that their attitude could lead to the closure of the university, they replied that

---

<sup>151</sup> Monsieur le Chargé de Mission du HCR, Goma. Jacques Cuénod, Renvoi d'étudiants rwandais, 26 juillet 1967 ; I.ZRE.RWA. Refugee situation - Refugees from Rwanda in Zaïre ; series 1 ; box 43 ; Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>152</sup> Dr Damascène Bizimana, talk to the personnel of the Ministry of Health, 10 May 2018 ([link](#)).

<sup>153</sup> Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'ethnicité et politique : les crises du Rwanda et du Burundi depuis l'indépendance', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 181 (janvier 1996), pp. 111-124 ; Josias Semujanga, *Origins of Rwandan genocide* (Humanity Books, New York, 2003), p. 189-192.

<sup>154</sup> Université Nationale du Rwanda, 'Rapport sur les événements qui se sont produits à l'UNR à partir de la nuit du 15 au 16 février 1973' (Rapport établi par Nsanzimana Sylvestre, Recteur, du 16 au 19 février 1973). Available at <https://francegenocidetutsi.org/NsanzimanaEvenementsUNR8mars1973.pdf>

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Interview, Kalyabwite Pierre Claver, Kigali, 31 January 2023.

<sup>158</sup> Université Nationale du Rwanda, 'Rapport sur les événements qui se sont produits à l'UNR'.

this had no sort of importance, that even if they were prevented from continuing their studies following the departure of professors or when the University closes, that in any case, their little brothers or their children or grandchildren will study there but that never, never again will any Tutsi study there as long as they are there.<sup>159</sup>

It is disturbing to note that the analysis of the situation made by the rector, a man usually considered in Rwanda as a respected professional, administrator and politician -he later became prime minister under the Habyarimana regime-, always falls into the logic of discrimination and suspicion against the Batutsi. Faced with the dilemma of Hutu students 'fiercely opposed to reintegration within the National University of Rwanda of those they expelled' on the one hand, and on the other hand, certain foreign lecturers declaring 'that they will never agree to serve "a racist regime"; that if they wanted to, they would go to South Africa', the rector suggested the idea of relocating the Tutsi students expelled from the UNR to other universities outside the country not to solve their problem, but as a lesser evil compared to the security threat they would represent if they remained in their villages. Moreover, he continued to share the official vision according to which the visible presence of the Batutsi in secondary schools and the university was an injustice, and to remedy the situation, he proposed to 'rwandize... wisely... school management'.

The solution, if there is a solution, would be to seek reclassification among other Universities.... Let us recognize, however, for the sake of objectivity, that if leaving it lying around on the hills of hundreds of discontented intellectuals is not reassuring for peace and security in the country, sending them to continue their studies outside is perhaps not more so. But, they say, of two evils, we must prefer the lesser. ...the ethnic imbalance in education, especially secondary education and therefore in higher education, dates from the colonial era. This injustice was denounced in the Bahutu Manifesto of 1957. To correct it, a principle was issued: proportionality. But circumstances have always contributed to complicating its practical application. ...Even more difficult to control are the hazards of the journey, an infinity of unsuspected obstacles, not to mention all the manoeuvres that underlie the complication of the problem and the least of which are, for example, changes of identity. ...All of this, today's student youth does not seem willing to understand, let alone tolerate. ...In the meantime, Rwandanize as quickly as possible and above all wisely, all the educational establishments that can be, starting with their management positions.<sup>160</sup>

The 'comités de salut public' at the origin of the violent expulsion of the Batutsi from education and public service in 1973 was initiated by a Belgian catholic priest, Abbot Léon Naveau, according to several sources. Other European priests denounced the same so-called 'social myopia' even in schools attended by Tutsi and Hutu students in North Kivu in Zaïre (current Democratic Republic of Congo) at the same period, to emphasize what they believed to be the predominance of the Batutsi.<sup>161</sup> At the instigation of the influential White Father Archbishop of Rwanda, Monsignor André Perraudin, around thirty Hutu priests from his diocese (Kabgayi) and that of Ruhengeri had written a petition a few months earlier to the bishops of Rwanda. Known as 'Document de Rwesero' (Rwesero document), named after the place where they met in the then Ruhengeri diocese, the document asked the bishops to 'systematically promote the vocations of Hutu children' and to 'reduce the Tutsi predominance in the Church of Rwanda', with the threat that if such a balance was not achieved in the Church and in society, 'the people [i.e. the Bahutu] risk making a second revolution'.<sup>162</sup>

In a document titled 'La mort des séminaires au Rwanda' (The death of seminaries in Rwanda) signed in exile in Burundi after their expulsion from Rwanda by the violence of 1973, ten Rwandan Catholic priests give their observations on Rwandan seminaries in general and on this 'Rwesero document', the bishops, the role of Mgr Perraudin and his anti-Tutsi racism.<sup>163</sup> They first observe that 'the Rwandan government authorities decided to use Bahutu students to brutally expel their Batutsi comrades from schools'. At the start of the events, these priests and other observers believed that 'the program was only aimed at state schools, and now the seminaries themselves were not spared'. They then say they are 'saddened... to see Bishops consent to Church institutions, such as seminaries, intended to train priests for all men without distinction, being distorted to the point of becoming the centre of racism'. They paint a striking portrait of the five bishops of Rwanda at the time, positive

---

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Testimony of Kanamugire Callixte, July 2023.

<sup>162</sup> 'Document de Rwesero', Signed by a group of priests from the dioceses of Kabgayi and Ruhengeri on 3 April 1972. Quoted in Privat Rutazibwa, *Rwanda: Contre l'ethnisme* (Editions du CRID, Kigali, 2017), p. 120-123.

<sup>163</sup> 'La mort des séminaires au Rwanda'. A document signed by 10 Rwandan priests who took refuge in Burundi in 1973. Available at <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewjG8fCnqt-DAXvfbvEDHS4kAYkQFnoECBcQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Ffrancegenocidetutsi.org%2FMortsSeminaires1973.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3BARf4a09Jb7IFXHsJ0sdG&opi=89978449>



for Monsignor Aloys Bigirumwami (Tutsi) and Monsignor Joseph Sibomana (Hutu), and extremely negative for Bishops André Perraudin (Swissman), Alexis Gahamanyi (Tutsi) and Phocas Nikwigize (Hutu). For the authors of the document, 'the majority of the Bishops of Rwanda, Perraudin, Gahamanyi and Nikwigize, never oppose the desires of the government, - when they do not anticipate it-, even when the Gospel and the most elementary justice are betrayed and flouted'.<sup>164</sup> Regarding Perraudin in particular, they note:

Indeed, several years before the Rwandan government thought about racial segregation in schools, Mgr Perraudin already practiced it in his seminary, in the sense that at home, the recruitment of seminarians was done on an ethnic basis. ... At his place therefore, the famous expression 'socio-ethnic balance' currently in vogue in Rwanda, until finding its place in the Bishops' letter of 23 March 1973, was a conviction. ... This choice of almost exclusively Bahutu seminarians was one of the means used by the Archbishop of Kabgayi to attract the sympathy of those in power and divide the indigenous clergy. The most spectacular result of this campaign was the manifesto of some Bahutu priests from the dioceses of Kabgayi and Ruhengeri which appeared at the beginning of April 1972. To tell the truth, it is now, a year later, that we realize that the events we are experiencing are clearly defined in the said manifesto. Mgr Perraudin thus succeeded in instilling in some priests of his diocese and Ruhengeri the idea that the Batutsi are not Rwandans in their own right, ....<sup>165</sup>

The Rwandan priests in exile then explain how recruitment was done in the other seminaries:

Normally, in other dioceses, Nyundo, Butare and Kibungo, candidates for the seminary were handpicked. The main criteria that guided the choice of seminarians were the following: a recommendable morality both on the side of the child and that of the parents; sufficient intelligence sanctioned by a competitive examination; an age not too high for facilitate the boy's education, and finally good physical and mental health. Candidate files were therefore examined without taking ethnicity into account at all. Despite everything, we found that no ethnic group predominated throughout the duration of training, and when this happened after a few years, due to dismissals or voluntary departures to other schools, no one considered this phenomenon a disaster. In Kansi, for example, Bahutu constituted two thirds of the seminarians, in Butare and Nyundo, they were half of one ethnic group and half of the other, and no one had ever worried about ethnic 'proportions'. It is therefore, without doubt, his visceral hatred of the Batutsi which blinded Mgr Perraudin to the point to forget, if there is any forgetting, that God does not choose his servants according to their ethnic affiliation.<sup>166</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that this racism maintained by senior European ecclesiastical officials in collaboration with people in power could have produced unprecedented violence by certain seminarians against their educators, against priests and even a Tutsi bishop. At the minor seminary of Nyundo, in the stronghold of those who would soon rule the country under Habyarimana and who had already controlled the security organs for a long time, 'the Bahutu seminarians took it upon themselves to exclude from the seminary, not only their Batutsi comrades, but also to chase away their priest teachers before going to break the windows at the bishopric and insulting their bishop'.<sup>167</sup> Mgr Aloys Bigirumwami, Bishop of Nyundo and first black bishop of Belgian Africa who had given a lot to this diocese, to Rwanda and to the Catholic Church, could not bear this affront. He immediately resigned without waiting for the canonical retirement age as Monsignor Médard Kayitakibga explained to me.<sup>168</sup> The Vatican replaced him with Vincent Nsengiyumva, future archbishop of Kigali who distinguished himself by very close collaboration with the Habyarimana regime.

Mgr (then Abbot) Médard Kayitakibwa fled the minor seminary of Nyundo where he taught on 27 February 1973 in the company of other Tutsi priests and seminarians after the attack of Hutu seminarians the day before. He is one of the ten priests who signed the document 'La mort des séminaires au Rwanda'. After his brief exile in Burundi, he was recalled to Rome where he had already worked in the dicastery of Propaganda Fide before the Rwandan security services took away his passport in 1969, forcing him to stay in Rwanda where he had returned for the holidays. He worked in different dicasteries in Rome until 2001, the year he returned to Rwanda for his retirement at the age of 70. The other seminaries where a lot of violence was recorded were those of Kabgayi at Mgr Perraudin, and Butare at Mgr Alexis Gahamanyi. At the minor seminary of Zaza (diocese of Kibungo), 'Mgr Sibomana did everything to obtain maximum security before recalling all his seminarians Bahutu and Batutsi'. There was also no violence at Mgr Nikwigize in 'the seminary of Rwesero (diocese of Ruhengeri) where the

---

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Interview, Mgr Médard Kayitakibga, Gisenyi (Rubavu), 04 February 2023.

number of Tutsi seminarians is insignificant, because the Batutsi on this side of the country have been for a long time, either killed, or expelled'.<sup>169</sup>

At the start of the violence in February 1973, most bishops had 'granted seminarians of both ethnic groups early leave, in waiting for the situation in the country to return to normal'. But immediately a group of ecclesiastics put pressure for the seminaries to reopen their doors either for Hutu seminarians only who were not threatened, or for all seminarians even if the security of the Batutsi was threatened. This group aimed to 'please the government' and spare it a 'politically embarrassing situation' because, 'in the eyes of foreigners, the fact that some schools were not functioning was an unequivocal sign of persistent disorder in the country'. Mgr Perraudin hastily recalled his Hutu and Tutsi seminarians of Kabgayi from vacation while 'the civil and military authorities had clearly spoken out: they did not guarantee in no way the security of Batutsi seminarians'. As a consequence, 'Tension between the Hutu seminarians indoctrinated during the 'forced vacations' and the Batutsi, was at its pick in the space of a few days; the latter were forced to leave the seminary'.<sup>170</sup>

As for Mgr Gahamanyi, 'he requested for 26 March the presence of Hutu seminarians exclusively for the two cycles of Butare and Kansi.... By summoning the Hutu seminarians only, the Bishop of Butare did not even exclude the band of indoctrinated Hutu seminarians who had stood up to him after the February invasion'. Indeed, even if at the start of the violence in February 1973 the minor seminary of Butare had been attacked by a commando from outside, 'it was found that inside the seminary there already existed a nucleus of carefully studied and administered, and politically influential, racism. There were maybe ten of them out of around 180'.<sup>171</sup> Analyzing the attitude of Bishop Gahamanyi, the Rwandan priests in exile found that

his weak side is his fear of the government. It is this fear that explains his weakness in the face of the insolent attitude of the famous nucleus of Bahutu seminarians in Butare. In addition to a few sons of deputies, the racist core was led by two boys, one the son of Makuza, Minister of Industry and Commerce, the other son of Mbarubukeye, Executive Secretary of the Parmehutu party (racist party in its conception). Although these boys have displayed their racism since the beginning of the events, the Bishop kept them at the Seminary where they mistreated the teachers. Mr. Xavier de Belloy (French) had to take refuge in Gihindamuyaga (Benedictines Fathers convent) to escape the stones thrown at him by the "seminarians". Their teacher of English, Miss Wood (British), was also threatened. ... As soon as the Bahutu seminarians from Butare and Kansi had returned to the seminary, the first action they took was to draw up among them a list of certain "doubtful" Bahutu ...[who] should return home and come back with identity documents of before 1959, in order to justify the "purity" of their race!<sup>172</sup>

In setting up the 'comités de salut public', Father Naveau allegedly acted in collusion with the Belgian secret services who wanted to destabilize the Kayibanda regime<sup>173</sup>, and numerous testimonies attest that the violence of 1973 was secretly orchestrated by officers led by Juvénal Habyarimana - then minister of the national guard and the police- who in July of the same year would take power in a coup d'état. The hypothesis according to which 'Kayibanda would be responsible for triggering the persecutions, in order to relegitimize, in the name of the "majority people", a contested power'<sup>174</sup> does not contradict the previous thesis; it completes it. Juvénal Habyarimana, Alexis Kanyarengwe and the other future putschists could not ignore the manoeuvres of Kayibanda, his friend Naveau and the others, because they were the ones who controlled the security organs and intelligence. They therefore let them do it and even supported in a certain way the violence of 1973, while integrating it into their own bigger plan to overthrow Kayibanda and take power.

'They say that Abakiga soldiers [originating from the North] are the ones who organized the riots (kicking Batutsi out of work, schools, and burning people's houses)', said Rucagu Boniface, then sous-préfet of Ruhengeri.<sup>175</sup> According to Kalyabwite Pierre Claver, former technical director and head of supplies at the Mulindi tea factory, then director of the Pfunda tea factory in 1970 before being chased away and going into exile in 1973 like other Batutsi, Bakiga politicians and officers often discussed plans to overthrow Kayibanda in his presence. 'The petty Muhutu must be removed and replaced by a real Muhutu', one of them could declare.<sup>176</sup> This feeling of superiority of the Bakiga (from the North) as 'true Bahutu' and their contempt towards Kayibanda

---

<sup>169</sup> 'La mort des séminaires au Rwanda'.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Ngabonziza J.C, 'Rwanda: l'Eglise en flagrant délit de complicité', *Golias Magazine*, n° 155-156, (avril 2014), pp.65-78, p. 66.

<sup>174</sup> Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'ethnicité et politique', p. 120-121.

<sup>175</sup> Interview, Rucagu Boniface, Kigali, 7 December 2022.

<sup>176</sup> Interview, Kalyabwite Pierre-Claver, Kigali, 31 January 2023. 'Agahutu kagomba kuvaho hakajyaho Umuhutu'. Statement by a politician during a conversation at Libanje's place, a friend of Kalyabwite.

(Muhutu from the Center) explains why the latter's daughter could be beaten - on one side of her body assimilated to the Batutsi - by her colleagues at school while he was president of the republic.

At first, the Batutsi did not seem to be targeted by the future putschists, which is why the latter could freely discuss their plans in the presence of Kalyabwite. This is how Callixte Habamenshi, former minister of Kayibanda who fell into disgrace, could ask Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe, head of national security: 'How far is the removal of Masudi [nickname of Kayibanda]? How will we treat these brothers-in-law of ours? [referring to Kalyabwite as a Mututsi; Habamenshi had married a Mututsikazi (Tutsi woman)]'. Kanyarengwe then retorted: 'Aren't you together?'<sup>177</sup> According to Kalyabwite's analysis, it was at the last minute, while preparing the coup, that they realized that if Kayibanda allied himself with the Batutsi, it could make the situation difficult for them. It was then that they decided to kill the Batutsi. Their plan was to drive out the Batutsi first, starting with the university, then secondary schools, and public enterprises.<sup>178</sup>

The Habyarimana regime further strengthened discrimination and exclusion of the Batutsi from education and employment through a quota policy known as 'iringaniza ry'amoko' [ethnic balance] generally coupled with a regional balance in favour of the Bakiga of the North against the Banyenduga of the South. This policy was applied not only in public institutions, but also in the private sector and even within international organizations operating in Rwanda.<sup>179</sup> Habyarimana's minister in charge of labour 'asked private sector employers never to recruit a candidate before having received authorization from the Ministry of Civil Service and Employment'.<sup>180</sup>

Statistics established by the ministry of education under Habyarimana show that under Kayibanda, the policy of exclusion of the Batutsi adopted in 1961 had not been applied to the letter because 'the Batutsi had been admitted to secondary school in proportions ranging from 36% to 11% from 1963 to 1971'.<sup>181</sup> Kayibanda had to remind in 1971 'the Minister of Education<sup>182</sup> to respect "balance"' and in 1972, demand 'to respect, at admission in secondary and university schools, the proportions of 85% Bahutu, 14% Batutsi and 1% Batwa'.<sup>183</sup> During the hunt for Batutsi from secondary schools in 1973, these statistics show that at the final secondary school level during the school year 1972/1973, Hutu students represented 82.6% while Bahutu constituted 87.8% of the total population of Rwanda. Tutsi students numbered 17%, while the Batutsi constituted 11.4% of the total population. According to Nkaka, the 'racial' interpretation of these figures 'comprises what they called the "exceeding" or "missing" percentage'. The Bahutu thus experienced 'a "missing" of 5.2% and the Batutsi, an "exceeding" by 5.6%. It is this "exceeding" that the defenders of the Batutsi hunt designated by the "predominance of Batutsi" in education'.<sup>184</sup>

President Habyarimana reactivated the policy of ethnic balance in his inaugural speech on 1 August 1973, just a few weeks after taking power. This policy 'was applied from the start of the 1973-1974 school year to begin with the month of September 1973'. During a meeting on 29 August 1973, the new Minister of Education named by Habyarimana informed the directors of secondary schools that 'respect for "ethnic" proportions and regional considerations constitute the most important criteria for admission to secondary school. By "ethnic" proportions, admitted students must be 90% Bahutu and 10% Batutsi'. The 'ethnic' proportions established by Kayibanda a year before on the basis of the 1956 population census were reduced to the disadvantage of the Batutsi, while the Batwa were quite simply eliminated from access to education 'under the pretext that they are not used to attending school'.<sup>185</sup>

The ruling party, the MRND, would later officially define the policy of "ethnic balance" as follows:

---

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* Habamenshi to Kanyarengwe: 'Ibyo gukuraho Masudi bigeze he? Aba baramu bacu bo se tuzabagenza gute?' Kanyarengwe to Habamenshi: 'Ntimuri kumwe se?' The conversation took place at Gisenyi beach where, passing through, Kanyarengwe met Habamenshi and Kalyabwite on a picnic with their wives.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 454-456 ; Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 287-299 ; Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale*, p. 284.

<sup>180</sup> Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale*, p. 284.

<sup>181</sup> Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 288, 290-291 ; Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale*, p. 279.

<sup>182</sup> Instructions n° 01/38/7102 du 28 février 1971. See Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 288.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale*, p. 279-281.

<sup>185</sup> *Kinyamateka*, 'Habaye inama ya ba Diregiteri b'amashuri makuru', n° 23, 18 September 1973, p.3. As quoted by Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale*, p. 279.

The ethnic balance must be such that the proportion of the student population reflects that of the total population of the country. This principle must be respected at the level of each sector. Concretely, each ethnic group will have a quota depending on its numerical importance in the population.<sup>186</sup>

The Batutsi's access to education continued to decline from year to year under the Habyarimana regime because during the 1973-1974 school year, they experienced a 'missing percentage' of 3.5% and the following year, 1974-1975, a 'missing percentage' of 5.2%.<sup>187</sup>

What is more surprising is that the Kayibanda and Habyarimana regimes severely targeted refugees abroad to hamper their activities related to Rwandan culture. In June 1965, 26 *Intore* dancers among the Rwandan refugees in Congo were prevented by the Congolese government from boarding a plane in Léopoldville (Kinshasa) that would fly them to the United States of America. 'Rwanda [had] threatened to break its diplomatic relations with Congo if it did not prevent the departure of the refugees', a cable from a UNHCR representative in Goma informed his headquarters.<sup>188</sup> These *Intore* dancers had been hired by a Belgian who lived in the United States, to perform Rwandan dances at the African pavilion of the New York Fair. The Kayibanda government called the dancers 'political agitators who, under the cover of artistic commitment, were going to the United States to carry out propaganda against Rwanda'.<sup>189</sup>

Under Habyarimana regime, the Rwandan Embassy in Burundi wrote to the French Embassy on 19 June 1979 requesting a ban on a Rwandan refugee concert that had been scheduled for several days at the French Cultural Centre in Bujumbura. It also informed that the concerts that were traditionally performed by Rwandan refugees in Bujumbura would be replaced by those done by a fictitious 'Rwandan Cultural Centre' to be inaugurated in Burundi. But ironically, the letter of the Rwandan ambassador to the French counterpart suggested that granting space to refugees in Bujumbura to showcase Rwandan culture was tantamount to sowing division among Rwandans in Burundi! Here is the content of the letter [translated from French]:

...all the cultural activities previously carried out by the Rwandan refugees were taken over by the Rwandan cultural centre, the inauguration of which will take place on 30 June 1979 at 3 pm. The Rwandan embassy requests the embassy of France to cancel the cultural events that some Rwandans propose to exhibit next weekend at the French cultural centre. The Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda in Burundi thanks the Embassy of France for its kind contribution to avoid anything that may be cause of division of Rwandans in Burundi ....<sup>190</sup>

### *Genocidal regimes*

In the context of Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, the anti-Tutsi hate speech which developed systematically in the late 1950s and has since spread throughout the region and even beyond, should itself be considered an act of genocide. This hate speech was used as a tool of mobilization and incitement to genocidal violence during what was called 'the Rwandan revolution' from 1959 to 1962. It served to arouse and sustain fear, suspicion, hatred and violence against the Batutsi during other violent episodes in Rwandan history until the 1994 genocide. It has also played a decisive role in the crises that have shaken neighbouring countries on different occasions, such as the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) today.<sup>191</sup> A researcher demanded 'concrete figures' to qualify as 'extreme violence' the massacres of Batutsi perpetrated by the Habyarimana regime from the start of the civil war in 1990.<sup>192</sup> Another considered that the massacre of some Tutsi civilians, killed for what they are in

---

<sup>186</sup> MRND, 'Politique de l'éducation, de la culture et de la recherche scientifique et technique' (Présidence du MRND, Kigali, 1984), p.132. As quoted by Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale*, p. 280.

<sup>187</sup> Nkaka, *L'emprise d'une logique raciale*, p. 281.

<sup>188</sup> R. Bosshard, UNHCR Goma à M. Le Haut-Commissaire, 'Incident créé par le départ de réfugiés pour les Etats-Unis', 10 août 1965 ; 100.GEN-RWA. Refugees from Rwanda (1965-1966), vol.1 ; series 2 ; box 30 ; Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Rukeba François (Le Président national et Fondateur) et Gafandi Raphaël (Le Secrétaire général) pour le Comité Central de l'UNAR, à Monsieur le Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies à New York, 30 juillet 1979 ; From 100.GEN-RWA. Refugees from Rwanda – General (1976 -1984) [vol. 4] to 100.GEN.SAF Refugees from Southern Africa – General (1971 – 1977); series 2; box 31; Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>191</sup> For a detailed account of the role of anti-tutsi ideology in the crises in DRC, see Privat Rutazibwa, 'Discussing the causes and context of wars and conflict involving the Banyarwanda from the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo', 25 June 2023, *AfricArXiv*, <<https://doi.org/10.21428/3b2160cd.259767b3>>.

<sup>192</sup> Desrosiers, 'Le rapport Duclert', p.14.

Bukavu in 2004 and around Goma in 2006, -and other places in DRC- did not justify the resumption of hostilities by a Congolese rebel movement which considered these killings as acts of genocide.<sup>193</sup>

The attitude of these researchers is shocking and evil. Hate propaganda permanently targeting the same human group is already an attack aimed at its extermination. Even if other factors, motivations and objectives may have had a certain influence on the action of the perpetrators of the genocide against the Tutsi<sup>194</sup>, it is undeniable that the anti-Tutsi ideology of hatred remains the general favourable climate, the conducting wire and the determining framework which guides the whole genocidal enterprise. This understanding will guide our assessment of the genocidal character of post-independence regimes considering not only the massive killings of Batutsi, but also other massacres and persecutions of members of this group, policies and discourses reflecting anti-Tutsi ideology.

The 'Rwandan revolution' plays the role of starting point here. We have seen earlier Belgian colonial officials revealing their strategy that 'Bahutu's political education will ... be helped actively'. This meant the mobilization of the Bahutu on ethnic grounds by so called 'Hutu leaders', mainly Gitara and Kayibanda, telling them to 'Awake, unite, and elect your Hutu rulers and 'not vote for them [Tutsi]'; and even 'the Hutu who associates with them'.<sup>195</sup> It was necessary to appeal to Hamitic hypothesis to project into the distant past situations of injustice and oppression of the Batutsi on the Bahutu that had never existed. It was even necessary to invent new legends such as the famous relating to Queen Kanjogera who, to get up, had to lean on swords planted in the bodies of children.<sup>196</sup> The objective was to incite the Bahutu to hatred and violence against the Batutsi. The Belgian colonial administration had to implement a program called 'plan Troubles Généralisés' (generalized disorders plan)<sup>197</sup>, aimed at destroying the nationalists who demanded independence and at supporting, -sometimes openly- those who attacked the Batutsi, killing some, destroying their property and sending others into exile, before setting up institutions dominated by 'Hutu leaders'.

It is this result that will be described as 'the great achievements of the Rwandan revolution'. An excerpt of a pamphlet published in 1991 by the foreign affairs ministry under Habyarimana regime sums up this historical misunderstanding: 'The majority of the Rwandan population oppressed by a Tutsi minority which held the power, has expressed itself the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1961, by way of polls, against the feudal – monarchic regime, under which the masses had suffered, four centuries long, of every kind of injustices'.<sup>198</sup> The ideology of anti-Tutsi hatred remained uninterruptedly the fundamental policy of the Rwandan regimes until the 1994 genocide. The First Republic led by president Grégoire Kayibanda showed great fierceness for racist hatred and persecution. After the brutal massacre of Batutsi in 1963-1964 under the pretext of *Inyenzi* attacks, Kayibanda told the following to the Tutsi refugees scattered outside the country: 'Suppose - by impossible - that you came to take Kigali by storm...: that would be the total and hasty end of the Tutsi race'.<sup>199</sup> The Kayibanda regime was marked by numerous massacres and persecutions, hate speech and discriminatory policies against the Batutsi which I will not dwell on here. This will be the case with the short-lived genocidal regime of Sindikubwabo. Because the genocidal character of the two regimes does not need to be demonstrated and has been widely documented. I will expand further on the Habyarimana regime, whose proven racist and genocidal anti-Tutsi ideology is still denied today by researchers who find that it was made up of 'not necessarily infamous authorities'.<sup>200</sup>

Under Habyarimana's regime, a directive issued on 25 October 1973 confirmed President Kayibanda's 1966 Decree, in particular Article 3, and specified that 'The claim of the returning refugee or one of his family members must be rejected, in all cases, when the real estate is occupied or has been the subject of any allocation by the

---

<sup>193</sup> Jason K. Stearns, 'Laurent Nkunda and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP)', in *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 2007-2008* (Anvers, 2015), pp. 259-260, p. 247, 263.

<sup>194</sup> See Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors. Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca/Londres, 2009); Charles Mironko, 'Igitero: Means and Motive in the Rwandan Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, 1 (2004), pp. 47-60; Omar Shahabudin McDoom, *The Path to Genocide in Rwanda. Security, Opportunity, and Authority in an Ethnocratic State* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2021).

<sup>195</sup> Aprosoma – Parti social hutu- ishyaka rya Abahutu, 'Uko Abahutu bagomba kwica ku ngoyi ya Abatutsi', *Ijwi rya Rubanda rugufi*, (27/9/1959).

<sup>196</sup> Théoneste Lizinde Mugabushaka (Major), *La découverte de Kalinga ou la fin d'un mythe. Contribution à l'histoire du Rwanda* (Kigali, 1979), p. 51-52.

<sup>197</sup> Patrick Lefèvre & Jean Noël Lefèvre, *Les militaires belges et le Rwanda (1916-2006)* (Racines, Bruxelles, 2006), p.42-43.

<sup>198</sup> République Rwandaise, 'Livre blanc sur l'agression armée dont le Rwanda a été victime à partir du 1er octobre 1990' (Ministère des Affaires étrangères et de la Coopération Internationale, Kigali, 1991).

<sup>199</sup> 'Message du Président Grégoire Kayibanda aux réfugiés rwandais', 11 mars 1964 (Tel que publié dans : *Rwanda Carrefour d'Afrique*, n° 31), < <https://francegenocidetutsi.org/Kayibanda11mars1964.pdf> >.

<sup>200</sup> Desrosiers, 'Le rapport Duclert', p. 25.

public authorities. ...This revokes any pending litigation in the various jurisdictions of the country'.<sup>201</sup> The directive also clearly stated that no compensation would be claimed in the courts or before local authorities for people killed or property damaged. Concerning 'the liability of persons and property missing or damaged (deteriorated)',

any request seeking to claim any person or property or any related compensation will be declared inadmissible by the courts. The same applies to complaints of this type addressed to administrative authorities. ... By abandoning their movable or immovable property, the owners have created a lack of property based on fear or a real threat; their flight constitutes a personal decision. The consequences of this decision cannot under any circumstances be borne by the authorities currently in place.<sup>202</sup>

Shortly after president Habyarimana took office, a joint Rwanda-Uganda ministerial commission convened in July 1974 in Kampala to discuss the issue of Rwandan refugees in Uganda at the request of president Idi Amin Dada as mentioned earlier. The memorandum of the Rwandan delegation presents all Tutsi refugees as 'supports' of the monarchy and Inyenzi fighters who should not be 'imposed once again' on 'the Rwandan people' who 'have rejected them from their midst'. It states that the 'Rwandan authorities cannot guarantee the security of refugees' accused of 'contempt, arrogance, ...' and who chose exile as 'the path that suited them the best':

The Rwandan people, now pacified and reconciled with themselves, cannot allow any unwelcome event to distract them and cause them to deviate from the path they have traced for their social and political emancipation. This people condemned and banished for ever the monarchy and all its supports. It serves against the will of this people to impose on them, once again, the weight of those whom they have rejected from their midst. The latter, during the course of the years which followed the self-determination of the Rwandan people and their independence, continued to oppose them from the outside with armed hordes to destroy them and take away their painfully won freedom.

The Ugandan authorities will certainly understand, we are convinced, that while they have succeeded in ensuring peace, unity and national harmony within the country, the Rwandan authorities cannot in any way guarantee the security of refugees who, in many respects, would still have some scores to settle with the populations who retain deep in their souls the bitterness of the unpunished crimes of the "INYEZI" terrorists.

We do not want to see any more bloodshed in our country. What the Second Republic always wanted to avoid was seeing the rebirth of hatred and division between Rwandans of different ethnic groups. Those who, from the start, sought to oppose force to reason, contempt to wisdom, haughty arrogance to prudence, xenophobia to ethnic symbiosis have, at their own risk, chosen the path that suited them the best. If, from memory, they had had the feeling of regretting their attitude as well as their serious misdeeds against the security of the State, our Embassies accredited to brother and friendly countries would have already collected their acts of grievance which would have been submitted to the commiseration of the Rwandan people.<sup>203</sup>

It is clear that the Habyarimana regime still harboured towards Tutsi refugees, hatred and resentment which were not different from those of Kayibanda's. The two regimes shared a common globalizing perception, so that all refugees and Batutsi in general were placed in the same basket as the *Inyenzi* and the monarchy!

When Habyarimana came to power in 1973, a semblance of peace was noticed because of his good words that his government had brought 'peace, unity and development.' Few refugees believed in those promises and returned to Rwanda, but they had to report first to security organs to be interrogated. Some were imprisoned, others were deported, and a few were relocated to their places of origin. A group of Habyarimana's close advisers<sup>204</sup>, Kanyarengwe Alexis, Nsekaliye Aloys and Buregeya Bonaventure convened a meeting in 1975 and reported that, just after the Habyarimana coup d'état,

the Mututsi immediately raised his head, thinking that it was time for him to take revenge on Gahutu, .... His kin who were abroad returned to Rwanda, claiming the property they had left behind. That fact of Tutsi claiming their property angered the Hutu and brought many problems in the prefectures. Some Tutsi have again started to show pride and to become rich in a way visible to all.<sup>205</sup>

---

<sup>201</sup> 'Circulaire n°2420/A.09 relative à l'arrêté Présidentiel n° 25/01 du 26 février 1966 portant mesures pour réintégration des réfugiés et réclamations diverses' (République rwandaise, 'Règlements et instructions relatives à la réinstallation des réfugiés'), pp. 13-19, p. 17.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>203</sup> Mémoire de la délégation rwandaise sur les réfugiés rwandais en République ougandaise, p. 6.

<sup>204</sup> Respectively Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Secretary General in President's Office.

<sup>205</sup> 'Compte-rendu de la réunion du Groupe de réflexion politique pour la Paix et l'Unité Nationale en date du 26/05/1975'. As quoted by Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 105.

It is around the same period that one of the three advisors, Kanyarengwe Alexis, then Minister of Internal Affairs and Public Service issued the ministerial instruction seen above, setting the end of July 1975 as deadline for the allocation of all property left behind by refugees.<sup>206</sup> According to Mugesera, this instruction definitively depriving the refugees of their property 'was aimed at making the refugees once and for all lose all motivation to return to Rwanda, because they believed that it was the property of the refugees left in Rwanda that encouraged them to return to Rwanda'.<sup>207</sup>

On 22 June 1976, President Habyarimana issued an instruction on refugees intended for three of his ministers, namely those in charge of Internal Affairs; Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; and Defence. The directive called for 'the commencement from now on, of a systematic but discrete census of refugees, especially those living in neighbouring countries, as well as those working for international organizations'. The President also reminded his ministers that 'the policy of peace and harmony among the citizens must go hand in hand with defending and safeguarding the security of our country'. Habyarimana's instruction continued: 'It is important to seriously monitor the return of refugees, and encourage the return only when those concerned are people who can benefit the country'.<sup>208</sup>

As President Habyarimana was usually known for his hypocrisy and double talk, his instruction included words that you thought were good! 'Parallel to this action carried out abroad, a change of mindset must be made within the country to ensure that the people of Rwanda are fully aware of the reasons for this peace and harmony', the directive stated. 'The requirements for entering Rwanda must be flexible to allow relaxation of minds.', it added. However, Habyarimana's true nature prevails when his instruction states:

Entry must exclude undesirables, vagrants and those without known employment. To do this, a control must be established with the help of the High Commissioner for Refugees, between the Rwandan Embassies, the Central Intelligence Service and the administrative services to make it possible to identify and rule on each case. The procedure must be rapid and efficient so as not to discourage applicants and cast doubt on our good faith.<sup>209</sup>

In 1976, during a public talk to the population while visiting the prefectures, President Habyarimana responded to one resident stating:

With regard to that question of Hutu and Tutsi, we find it in other prefectures as well. When we explore the history of Rwanda, we find that Tutsi call themselves *Ibimanuka* (coming from Heaven) .... Those Tutsi who provoke Hutu seem to ignore that if violence comes back, they will be the ones to bear the cost. Once again, the Hutu are the majority, the power belongs to them.<sup>210</sup>

While celebrating the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence in 1978, President Habyarimana said: 'the greatest moment of the History of this country which touches and will never cease to touch the hearts of the daughters and sons of Rwanda is the 1959 Revolution'.<sup>211</sup> The Habyarimana government also re-printed and published in 1984, the 'Manifeste des Bahutu' and four manifestos of the PARMEHUTU, the party that Habyarimana had already replaced by his own MRND.<sup>212</sup> This proves that President Habyarimana was as well strongly committed to the same racist anti-Tutsi ideology contained in those documents of PARMEHUTU party and other 'Hutu leaders' involved in the 'Rwandan revolution'. Philip Verwimp rightly observed that 'Habyarimana had to dissolve the power base of his predecessor, President Kayibanda, but at the same time remain faithful to the Hutu ideology'.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>206</sup> 'Lettre n° 497/04.09.01/14 du 22/05/1975 à Monsieur le Préfet de Préfecture (tous), du Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Fonction Publique'.

<sup>207</sup> Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 106.

<sup>208</sup> Instruction présidentielle n° 839/01.10 du 22 juin 1976 relative aux réfugiés.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Présidence de la République, 'Ikiganiro Prezida wa Repubulika, Prezida- fondateri wa MRND yagiranye na ba Militantes na ba Militants bo muri za Prefegitura z'u Rwanda, 16 mata- 6 gicurasi 1976' (Service du Conseil du Gouvernement, Kigali, 1976), p.73.

<sup>211</sup> Présidence de la République, 'Discours du Président Habyarimana: Discours et entretiens' (Kigali, 1982).

<sup>212</sup> Repubulika y'u Rwanda. Ministeri y'Ubutegetsi bw'Igihugu n'Amajyambere ya Komini, 'Manifeste y'Abahutu yo kuwa 24/3/1957 na manifeste programme 4 za Parmehutu' (Ibiro by'Ubuyobozi bukuru mu ibireba politiki n'ubutegetsi, 1<sup>ère</sup> Edition, 1984) ; See Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 16, 402.

<sup>213</sup> Philip Verwimp, 'Development Ideology, the Peasantry and genocide: Rwanda Represented in Habyarimana's speeches' (Yale Center for International and Area Studies, Yale University Genocide studies Program, working paper GS 13, 1999), p. 15.

Speaking before the MRND Central Committee on 3 December 1990 to announce the decision to remove ethnicity from the national identity card following pressure from the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), President Habyarimana said:

This decision in no way calls into question our achievements. It cannot eliminate ethnic groups as such, which would be difficult to imagine.

This decision eliminates neither the guarantees of respect for minorities, nor obviously the prerogatives of the majority. Democracy requires acceptance of the decisions of the majority. There is neither innate superiority of anyone, nor natural submission of anyone - this was the meaning and scope of the Social Revolution of 1959.<sup>214</sup>

In his speech on 28 April 1991 to his party congress, President Habyarimana reiterated that Kayibanda's 1966 presidential decree depriving refugees of the right to their lands had never been revoked. He said: 'Concerning the repatriation of refugees, this problem should not give rise to any ambiguity because no Rwandan will be dislodged from their property for the benefit of the returning refugees. The presidential decree of 1966 provides for the return of refugees in order and tranquillity; it has never been repealed.'<sup>215</sup>

In the same speech, President Habyarimana shows appalling cynicism when he presents the Tutsi refugees who fled the genocidal violence of 1959 and other episodes that followed as having rather 'fled democracy' or been 'accomplices' of Inyenzi fighters of the 1960s, whom Habyarimana and his regime's propaganda continued to equate with the RPF, whose armed struggle only began in 1990.

These INYENZI who attacked us and who continue to do so are mainly made up of refugees who fled democracy during the struggle between the political groups of past times, as well as their accomplices who fled the country every time it was the object of an attack during the first Republic.<sup>216</sup>

President Habyarimana also invited his fellow Bahutu, whom he describes as the 'popular majority', to imitate the unity of the Batutsi and to avoid regionalism so as not to risk 'falling back into slavery' of the Batutsi.

Harmony between the three ethnic groups will only be evident if the people truly feel united. As we admire the fact that the Tutsi do not identify themselves by belonging to this or that region of the country, it is also absolutely necessary that the popular majority itself feels completely united, nationally, in order to avoid a backtracking to enslavement.<sup>217</sup>

In his book on the living conditions of the Batutsi from 1959 to 1990, Mugesera points out on different pages, documents full of hatred, cruelty and violence against the Batutsi that Habyarimana signed as Minister of National Guard and Police (Ministre de la Garde Nationale et de la Police) under Kayibanda regime. In 1968, Juvénal Habyarimana, then lieutenant-colonel and Minister of National Guard and Police, signed a letter recommending not to grant a passport to a catholic priest, Abbot Kayiranga Prudence, because 'if he managed to go abroad, educated Tutsi would have more power to fight against Rwanda'.<sup>218</sup>

In July 1969, Abbot Médard Kayitakibga of the diocese of Nyundo, then an employee of the Roman curia at the Propaganda Fide Dicastery, returned to Rwanda for vacation. Three weeks later, he received a letter from the National security asking him to surrender his passport which was never given back to him, preventing him from returning to his work in Rome despite the interventions of the ecclesiastical authorities. National security depended on the Ministry of National Guard and Police, a ministry headed by Juvénal Habyarimana.<sup>219</sup>

After graduating from foreign universities in 1972, a number of students returned to Rwanda and the surrounding countries to seek for jobs. Juvénal Habyarimana, who was Minister of National Guard and Police, instructed 'to keep an eye on them', saying that 'they were determined to return to Rwanda to restore the dignity of the Tutsi',

---

<sup>214</sup> 'Déclaration du Président de la République, le Général-Major Juvénal Habyarimana, devant le Comité Central', *ARP* [Agence Rwandaise de Presse] 03848 du 02-03 décembre 1990.

<sup>215</sup> 'Discours du Général-Major Habyarimana Juvénal, Président-Fondateur du Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement à l'occasion de l'ouverture du Congrès extraordinaire du MRND. Le 28 avril 1991', p. 25 (traduction succincte), 0.10 RWA [E] External relations -Relations with Governments- Rwanda [Part II], UNHCR Archives.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>218</sup> Ministère de la Garde Nationale et de la Police, Lettre n° 146/1.1.4/ 1.2.3 du 23 mars 1968. As quoted by Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 108.

<sup>219</sup> Interview, Mgr Médard Kayitakibga, Gisenyi (Rubavu), 04 February 2023.



or 'return from exile by arms' for those who were afraid to come to Rwanda and stayed in the surrounding countries.<sup>220</sup>

Habyarimana was known for his soft words and hypocrisy<sup>221</sup>, but he firmly adhered to and even reinforced the anti-Tutsi ideology of racist discrimination and genocidal violence inherited from the Belgian colonial rule through PARMEHUTU, until the end of his reign.

Belgian colonization and influential European Catholic priests succeeded in defeating the nationalists and providing Rwanda with neo-colonial rulers who reproached their compatriots who demanded independence for wanting 'to drive out the Whites and God so that we rule ourselves', while praising Belgium and the Catholic church for having 'joined forces to liberate the Bahutu from the slavery of the Batutsi.' Building their ideology of power on the fantasies of the Hamitic hypothesis, these post-independence leaders who wanted to be openly ethnic without the slightest ambition of a national vision considered the Bahutu as 'the true owners' of Rwanda for having 'cleared' the forest, and 'the real people' of Rwanda for being majority of the population.

Various researchers have pointed out how Rwanda under the Kayibanda regime has been slow in its development despite receiving significant foreign funding.<sup>222</sup> They also showed how low economic and social development rates were in 1990 before the RPF struggle began, and how the famines, eradicated from Rwanda in the previous 50 years had returned and killed many people during the Habyarimana regime.<sup>223</sup> These were the consequences mainly of the two governments' development policy centred on rural agriculture performed by 'peasants' exclusively identified with the Bahutu, while the authorities were busy with their own interests and discrimination policies, instead of promoting national vision and viable development approaches.

Authorities of the two post-independence regimes felt that cultivation was the only way to develop. That is why in 1966, the Kayibanda government demanded that Rwandans in the Congo be granted local citizenship and remain there to access bigger land for farming.<sup>224</sup> A statement from Habyarimana's envoys to Uganda in 1974 on the issue of Rwandan refugees also reveals the same obsession of the regime to export its own population in order to access cultivation land. 'The policy of the most populous countries like ours should start trying to make agreements with the big neighbouring countries, for them to make it easier to enter their territory every year, for an agreed upon number of our people who want to migrate'.<sup>225</sup>

Verwimp recalls that this 'so-called peasant friendly rhetoric was actually translated into anti-peasant policies' detrimental to the Bahutu themselves.<sup>226</sup> Grounded in the 'Hutu revolution', this 'combination of peasant ideology and racism' would reveal to be even more harmful to the Batutsi not only depriving some of them the right to homeland and property, but also condemning those inside the national boundaries to extermination. 'Habyarimana wanted Rwanda to be an agricultural society. He glorified the peasantry and pictured himself as a peasant. In his ideology of rural romanticism, only the Hutu were the real peasants of Rwanda; the Tutsi were the feudal class ...'. And the author concludes: 'When ... leaders espouse a mono-ethnic peasant ideology to legitimize their power and want to hold on power at all costs, genocide becomes their ultimate strategy'.<sup>227</sup> And this is what was going to happen in Rwanda.

This lack of vision of the post-independence regimes heirs of the 'Hutu revolution', added to their racist and genocidal ideology of discrimination and hatred against a part of the citizens, constituted a major governance problem which required radical change.

### **Conclusion: God save Rwanda from a certain Western scholarship**

In another presentation elsewhere in December 2022, I highlighted the contribution of Western scholars Edith Sanders and Jean Pierre Chrétien in the critique of Hamitic ideology, a critique that I consider to be 'the greatest

---

<sup>220</sup> Ministère de la Garde Nationale et de la Police, Lettre n° 0485/1.2.3 du 20 octobre 1972. As quoted by Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p.103.

<sup>221</sup> Mugesera, *Imibereho y'Abatutsi mu Rwanda*, p. 288.

<sup>222</sup> CNUR, *Histoire du Rwanda*, p. 430-438.

<sup>223</sup> Verwimp, 'Development Ideology', p. 13 ; Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *Rwanda, Demain ! Une longue Marche vers la transformation* (Karthala, Paris, 2017), p. 86-87.

<sup>224</sup> *Rwanda, Carrefour d'Afrique*, Mars-Avril 1966, p. 3 ; 100. GEN.RWA Refugees from Rwanda – General (1966 - 1967) [Vol. 2]; series 2; box 30; Fonds UNHCR 11.

<sup>225</sup> 'Mémorandum de la délégation rwandaise sur les réfugiés rwandais en République ugandaise'.

<sup>226</sup> Verwimp, 'Development Ideology', p. 5.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3, 4.

milestone and one of the best advances in the historiography on Rwanda<sup>228</sup> and the Great Lakes region more broadly. The work of these researchers and certain others - unfortunately few in number - confirms the fact that decolonial thinking 'does not necessarily imply the absence of Europe' and North America and their 'thinkers in the narrative'<sup>229</sup>, just as it does not prevent 'subjects that are socially located in the oppressed side of the colonial difference, to think epistemically like the ones on the dominant positions'<sup>230</sup>, if I may paraphrase two decolonial scholars, a Belgian-Rwandan and a Latin American.

A large number of Western researchers on Rwanda and the region, however, still remain attached to colonial thought and refuse to recognize the determining role of anti-Tutsi racism in the genocide in Rwanda and the instability in the Great Lakes region. They seem resolutely determined to fight the efforts of reconstruction and national refoundation in Rwanda and instead, propose a strictly ethnic horizon to the populations of this country and the region.

A recent article on the conflict in eastern DRC noted that these academics 'offer scholarly and moral vindication to the racist instigators of violence and their bigoted rhetoric'. It demonstrated that 'There is a surprising and troubling ideological convergence between the writings of these scholars and the propaganda material of extremist anti-Tutsi circles in Congo and the region'.<sup>231</sup>

The populations of Rwanda and the Great Lakes region need to escape ethnic patterns and the spiral of violence, and responsible research should help them do so. Scholars who do the opposite do them serious harm and yet research should be ethical or simply not exist.

\*\*\*

**February 2024**

---

<sup>228</sup> Rutazibwa, 'The genocide against the Tutsi'. <https://doi.org/10.21428/3b2160cd.f58c1e1a>

<sup>229</sup> Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa, 'Studying Agaciro. Moving beyond Wilsonian interventionist knowledge production on Rwanda', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, 4 (2014).

<sup>230</sup> Ramon Grosfoguel, 'Decolonizing post-colonial studies and paradigms of political-economy: Transmodernity, decolonial thinking, and global coloniality', *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, 1 (2011).

<sup>231</sup> Rutazibwa, 'Discussing the causes and context'. <https://doi.org/10.21428/3b2160cd.259767b3>