



MEMORANDUM

RWANDA: UPDATE TO THE END OF NOVEMBER 1994¹

(UPDATING 'LA CRISE RWANDAISE: STRUCTURES ET DEROULEMENT', 24 JULY 1994)

1. THE WEAKENING OF THE RPF

This is probably the major factor in the new Rwandese situation which has developed since the end of the war. The Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) used to be a very tight and well disciplined organisation. Its main problem now is money. The soldiers have never been paid and many of the best disciplined, most motivated 'boys', young men who had come from exiled Tutsi communities abroad, have left the forces because they felt they had no future in the Army.

They have now been replaced by quite different people. There have been three sources of recruitment for the RPF: the refugees from Burundi, the 'inside' Tutsi, and the 'drifters'.

1.1 The refugees from Burundi

These constitute the main source of recruitment and they are the ones most responsible for the RPF excesses, which have been denounced in the media and in a recent Amnesty International report². Unlike the refugees from Uganda who made up the original nucleus of the RPF, the Burundi refugees have lived during the last twenty years in a political culture where Tutsi/Hutu violence was an ever present reality. Since the murder of President Melchior Ndadaye in October 1993 by Tutsi extremists, the Tutsi in Burundi have been in extreme danger from revenge killings by Burundese Hutu. These killings have not distinguished between native Burundese Tutsi civilians and refugee Rwandese Tutsi. In retaliation Tutsi extremists have organised their militias, and those have tended to kill Burundese Hutu civilians indiscriminately. With such a background the young men now coming out of Burundi are simply using the RPF structure to get a gun, a uniform and a few shreds of legitimacy in order to help their families 'repossess' the properties they lost thirty years ago, or take over new ones.

¹ This issue paper update was prepared by Gérard Prunier, WRITENET (UK), on the basis of research including interviews and personal observation, for his forthcoming book *The Rwandese Crisis 1990 - 1994: From Cultural Mythology to Genocide* (London: Hirst, f.c.). This paper is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

² Amnesty International, *Rwanda: reports of killings by the Rwandese Patriotic Army (April - August 1994)*, (London: Amnesty International, 20 October 1994)

They have neither the discipline of the old troops nor the relatively neutral attitude towards ethnic divisions displayed by the old 'Ugandan' refugees. They are partisan, and violently so.

1.2 The 'inside' Tutsi

These are the young men who were recruited in the heat of the rioting in April - June 1994 directly from inside Rwanda. Usually they have lost most or all of their families in the genocide. They are very bitter and resentful and see any Hutu as an actual or potential murderer. They tend to be particularly hostile to the few returnees who are arriving from Zaire.

1.3 The 'drifters'

The 'drifters' are the flotsam and jetsam of any troubled society, keen to get a gun, a uniform and thus a way of finding something to eat. This group has even lately included some *Interahamwe*, Hutu militiamen, who seem to have kept their old habits of drunkenness and looting.

1.4 An assessment of the current character of the RPF

When the media and international organisations talk about 'RPF excesses' they are both right and wrong. They are wrong when they include in these denunciations illegal seizure of property, arbitrary detentions, thefts and even killings. Most of these actions are not the result of deliberate policy, they are the result of a progressive loss of control and of creeping anarchy.

But they are unfortunately also partly right. In this general confusion some groups remain coherent. And these include what one might call the 'Tutsi supremacists'. These are people, usually officers, who do not share Major-General Paul Kagame's philosophy of national reconciliation. They feel that the April/May genocide is proof enough that there is no reconciliation possible with the Hutu. They are the ones who deliberately favour the return of 'Burundese' refugees who usually hold views quite close to theirs. They also now welcome the Zairean Tutsi returnees, who they feel are now also sufficiently anti-Hutu to serve their purpose³. This group is in quite close contact with Burundese Tutsi extremists, including army officers, some of whom had taken part in the murder of President Ndadaye in October 1993 and who have never been expelled. The 'excesses' they commit are not random but quite precise and focused. These include the kidnapping of judges who are thought to be too 'soft' on Hutu prisoners⁴, the killing of selected Hutu who are regarded as having had some responsibility for the April-May genocide, the illegal detention and even murder of moderate Hutu (and even Tutsi) :intellectuals, whose moderation tends to blur the black-and-white image the extremists prefer..

3 These are the people coming from the Kivu province of Zaire, where some had settled as early as the 1920s, with Belgian support (the Belgians wanted at the time to ease off the demographic pressure in Rwanda). Many more came during 1959-1961. They had lived quite peacefully in Zaire until 1992, when they started to clash with local Bahunde Zaireans. Since August 1994 they have been repeatedly attacked by Rwandese Hutu refugees.

4 Eight out of seventeen judges have 'disappeared'

Although these illegal acts cannot be said to constitute a 'deliberate policy' of the RPF, the fact that they are organised and carried out by high-ranking members of the Front is enough to create serious doubt about either its ability or its willingness or both to work towards a democratic form of political normalisation.

2. ECONOMIC STAGNATION

The degree of destruction of the country is striking. It seems that everything that could possibly be destroyed has been ravaged. The government is almost devoid of any means of working normally. Telephone links with the interior are non-existent, and the high cost of fuel makes car travel extremely expensive.. The civil service is practically non-existent. Salaries are not paid. The only people who make money in the new institutionalised 'magendo' (black market) are the traders who have often returned with some cash from abroad. There are no foreign currency reserves and so all imports are private and favour luxury consumer items rather than essentials or investment goods.

The fact that the European Union has finally decided to pay a first instalment of about 67 million Ecu (out of a total of about 240 million Ecu, i.e. approximately US\$ 280 million) might help eventually. It will not have much immediate effect though, because disbursement is slow and the banking system in ruins, and the government does not have the administrative structures through which to channel the money. The World Bank administrative rigidity is also causing problems. Their insistence on the repayment of US\$ 10 million in arrears in order to unblock the US\$ 250 million earmarked for Rwanda is a formalistic attitude which, as we will see in the next section, could be motivated by unspoken diplomatic motives.

3. DIPLOMATIC HOSTILITY

France has never really accepted what it considers to be its 'defeat' in Rwanda and is working to reverse it. The new Rwandese Government was pointedly not invited to the Biarritz Franco-African summit in early November, although the Rwandese question was a main item on the agenda. During and after the summit Bruno Delhaye, President Mitterrand's adviser on African affairs, was warning those who approached him not to blame his administration 'when this government in Kigali falls. It will not be our fault'.

Perhaps surprisingly, the U.S. has aligned itself with the French position at least as far as money from the World Bank is concerned⁵. From declarations made at the World Bank meeting in Paris on 28 September 1994, it would seem that the U.S. position is influenced by the conclusions of the so-called 'Gersony Report'. Since this report is at least embargoed - and possibly non-existent - and since it has never been made public, the basis for such a policy decision seems unusual.

⁵ This is an interesting development since, logically speaking, it undermines the 'Anglo-Saxon conspiracy theory', which has been so popular in French political circles since October 1990 regarding Rwanda. If the U.S. Government had really been the backer of the RPF, it would now be treating its protégé very badly indeed.

Diplomatic hostility now receives justification from the growing dissension among the ranks of the 'moderate' Hutu who were ready to collaborate with the RPF. On 25th November 1994 the MDR (Mouvement Democratique Republicaine) in Kigali issued a document highly critical of the present government's actions. This should of course be assessed with some caution; the MDR was extremely divided before the genocide, and the present document is partly to be regarded as an element in the fight for the leadership of the party, implicitly criticising Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu, who has lent his full support to the present government. At about the same time (10th November 1994), in Paris, former Prime Minister (under President Habyarimana) Dismas Nsengiyaremye formed a new political movement called the Union Démocratique Rwandaise. Nsengiyaremye offers what could be called 'Hutu power with a human face'. Between the nostalgic exiles in Goma and the RPF he pleads for a 'Third Force'. He is not without support in Paris.

4. CONCLUSION

What is the overall result of these developments? One might say extreme instability. The RPF holds power and could probably keep it militarily in case of an attack by the former FAR (Forces Armées Rwandaises) from Zaire. But it is not in full control of its own victory and seems to be disintegrating from inside. Its alliance with the moderate Hutu former opposition, tactical at best, is now under severe strain due to the near anarchy in the country. Radical Tutsi supremacists would like to push things further, probably in alliance with Burundese Army officers, in the hope of creating the famous 'Tutsi axis' between Kigali and Bujumbura, which was a favourite item of Rwandese propaganda during the Habyarima years.

Encouraged by this state of affairs, by the neglect of the international community and by discreet French support, semi-moderate figures from the Habyarimana regime are now offering a largely mythical 'third way', which aims at capitalising on the international isolation of the RPF regime in order to push it until it collapses.

Under these conditions the return of Hutu refugees from Zaire and Tanzania seems to be fraught with obstacles and far from being a reasonable policy target. Before repatriation can reasonably take place several steps must be taken:

- a) some time must be allowed for international funds to begin to be used in order for a minimum of basic services to be restored;
- b) it needs to become clear whether the RPF will succeed in restoring control within its ranks;
- c) the Tutsi/Hutu relationship within the cabinet needs to be given time to become settled.

These different strands should become progressively clearer around January or February 1995.