

This issue paper was prepared by writenet on the basis of public available information, analysis and comment. All sources are cited. 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.

BURUNDI: A MANAGEABLE CRISIS?

By Gerard Prunier, WRITENET (UK)

October 1994

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. THE WEIGHT OF THE PAST (1850-1966)¹ | 3 |
| 1.1 TUTSI AND HUTU IN PRE-COLONIAL BURUNDI | 3 |
| 1.2 THE COLONIAL IMPACT | 4 |
| 1.3 THE END OF THE MONARCHY (1962-1966)..... | 7 |
| 2. FROM MILITARY DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRATIZATION..... | 9 |
| 2.1 THE MICOMBERO YEARS: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TUTSI DICTATORSHIP (1966-1976)..... | 9 |
| 2.2 THE BAGAZA REGIME AND THE CONTINUATION OF TUTSI RULE (1976-1987)..... | 11 |
| 2.3 THE BUYOYA REGIME AND THE ATTEMPT AT DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION (1987-1993) | 12 |
| 3. THE NATURE OF THE PRESENT CRISIS (1993 - 1994) | 20 |
| 3.1 <i>THE EVENTS LEADING TO THE MURDER OF PRESIDENT NDADAYE (JULY-OCTOBER 1993)</i> | 20 |
| 3.2 THE OCTOBER PUTSCH ⁵⁸ | 22 |
| 3.3 THE OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1993 MASSACRES | 23 |
| 4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CRISIS..... | 25 |
| 4.1 <i>A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRISIS</i> | 25 |
| 4.2 A MILITARY CRISIS..... | 27 |
| 4.3 A POLITICAL CRISIS..... | 29 |
| 5. CONCLUSION..... | 32 |
| 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY | 35 |

1. THE WEIGHT OF THE PAST (1850-1966)¹

1.1 Tutsi and Hutu in pre-colonial Burundi

The recent Rwandese tragedy has caused a strong and not unreasonable anxiety concerning the fate of Burundi, especially since its promising experiment in democratization was violently interrupted in October 1993. In this perspective, given their similar social structures and parallel histories, the two countries are: seen as twins, with the sickness of one easily infecting the other. To a large degree, this is true. But to a degree only. For if these two countries are indeed twins, they are dissimilar twins, not identical ones. And the fact is evident as soon as one looks at their pre-colonial history. Although the famous dual social structure of Tutsi and Hutu existed in Burundi², its nature and functioning were from the start somewhat different from the Rwandese case³. Burundi was, like Rwanda, an old and centrally-organized kingdom dating back to at least the sixteenth century A.D. But it had grown according to a different pattern. While Rwanda grew from a royal centre which kept adding to its territory in a rather homogeneous fashion and carried out an iron-fisted centralization, Burundi grew in a more supple, more 'organic' sort of way. Although the *Mwami* (king) was, like his Rwandese counterpart, a sacred and absolute monarch, his role was subtly different. He was the 'Father' of the Nation, almost more a religious than political figure, in whose mystique everybody shared. And, more importantly, the Tutsi segment of the population did not 'rule' politically. This role was devolved to the *Abaganwa* (sing. *Muganwa*)⁴, a group of high-ranking nobles who dominated both Tutsi and Hutu. They were the provincial governors, ruling the various areas in the name of the *Mwami*. In turn, at the court, the king chose his close advisers among what was called the *abanyarurimbi*, 'those who can judge'. *Abanyarurimbi* were both Tutsi and Hutu by origin, but not *abaganwa*. And finally, in everyday life, the men who counted were the *abashingantahe*, 'those of the small stick', generally older gentlemen who were recognised as sort of social referees and common law judges

-
1. 1850 is the approximate date of the beginning of the reign of *Mwami* Mwezi Gisabo, the last ruler of independent Burundi. 1966 is the date of abolition of the monarchy.
 2. See the treatment of the question in Gérard Prunier, 'La crise rwandaise: structures et développement', *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, vol. 13, No 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1994). The best comparative treatment of what it means to be Tutsi or Hutu in the two countries can be found in Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Hutu et Tutsi au Rwanda et au Burundi' in Jean-Loup Amselle and Elikia M'Bokolo (eds), *Au cœur de l'ethnie*, (Paris: La Découverte, 1985), pp 129-165.
 3. For a very detailed analysis of Burundi pre-colonial society see Emile Mworoha (ed), *Histoire du Burundi des origines à la fin du XIXème siècle*, (Paris: Hatier, 1987), especially Chapter 10 for a description of the social and political order on the eve of colonization.
 4. Bantu languages are divided into word classes, distinguished through their varying prefixes. Living creatures are prefixed m- in the singular and ba-, wa- or **aba-** in the plural. Hence the correct spelling for 'Tutsi' would be *mututsi* in the singular and *abatutsi* in the plural. For the sake of easy comprehension we will nevertheless keep using the grammatically incorrect but more easily identifiable form 'Tutsi' and 'Hutu' (correctly *muhutu* and *abahutu*).

Arbitrating most of the ordinary quarrels and social problems⁵. We had thus a situation rather different from the Rwandese: case. A king with a 'softer' political definition and stronger religious and social roles. A specialised feudal aristocracy of *abaganwa* ruling over Tutsi and Hutu alike, both categories being considered as *abanyagihugu* (subjects). A royal court where influential courtiers were both Hutu and Tutsi. And a society where, through the *abashingantahe* system, the whole population was drawn into a common judicial practice. This did not mean that Tutsi and Hutu were equal. The Tutsi definitely formed an aristocracy. But because of the very closed elite circle of the *abaganwa*, this aristocracy was not exclusively political and the social distance between the two groups was less than in Rwanda. The capacity for social mobility between the two groups was also higher than in Rwanda and the general social homogeneity was stronger than in the northern kingdom. Although a distinct social domination of Hutu by Tutsi was evident⁶, the cohesive nature of what could without anachronism already be called a nation-state, was stronger than the divisive potential of its social structure.

1.2 The colonial impact

Belgian policies in the two mandate territories of Ruanda and Urundi were generally similar⁷, notably in the general administrative reform started in 1929 which led to the 'tutsification' of the native civil service. But there was a definite difference of emphasis. For the Belgians, Rwanda was the 'perfect case'. The whole system of a 'higher' race, of a protected king who acted as 'modernising ruler', of catholicism as a religious and moral extension of colonial rule and as a vector of europeanization, was always more complete, more absolute in Rwanda than in Burundi. In Rwanda, it rose to the level of an ideology which was later to be taken over and turned around (but not destroyed) by the leaders of the Hutu 'democratic revolution' of 1959. The situation was never that extreme in Burundi. The king was protected by but not a direct tool of the Belgians. The action of Rwandese King Mutara III Rudahigwa devoting his country to Christ the King in 1946 was something which would have appeared bizarre to the Burundi court at the the time, in spite of the national importance of the Catholic church. Also, at the level of the native administration, the 'tutsification' was in fact rather a 'baganwaization', most of the post-1929 chiefs being *abaganwa* rather than 'ordinary' Tutsi. Socially, Belgian policies had a more limited impact than in Rwanda due to the fact that the main client/patron system of contract, the *ubugabire*, was both more equalitarian and more resilient in the face of foreign regulations than the Rwandese form of *ubuhake*⁸

⁵ Their name came from the small stick they carried and which they planted in the ground before them before speaking, causing everybody to fall silent.

⁶ See on this subject the remarks by one of the first German travellers who entered the kingdom: Hans Meyer, *Die Barundi*, (Leipzig: Otto Spamer Verlag, 1916).

⁷ The most complete analysis of Belgian colonial policies in Burundi can be found in Joseph Gahama, *Le Burundi sous administration beige*, (Paris: Karthala, 1983).

⁸ See the remarks on *ubugabire* by Emile Mworoha in his *Peuples et Rois de l'Afrique des Lacs*, (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1977), pp 187-190.

As a result of these specificities, the political tensions in Burundi towards the end of the colonial period did not take at all the same shape as those in Rwanda. In both cases, the Belgians were shocked and panicked at the 'betrayal' of their erstwhile allies the Tutsi. But while in Rwanda the word 'Tutsi' meant a well-defined and socially identifiable group which had developed serious problems during the colonial period with the Hutu masses, in Burundi the word 'Tutsi' was much less precise and there was no gaping chasm between Tutsi and Hutu. As a result, proto-nationalist political parties regrouped both Hutu and Tutsi, and their divisions were rather along the lines of former *abaganwa* lineage rivalries. There were two main lineages among the *abaganwa* traditional 'professional politicians', the Batare and the Bezi. The royal family had sided with the Bezi early on during the colonial period, because the Germans had supported the Batare. Later, during the Belgian Mandate, favours ebbed and flowed according to political tactics. At first, the Belgians had sided with the Bezi. But the Batare had had in the person of Chief Pierre Baranyanka an extraordinary clever politician who had managed to ingratiate himself with Resident Pierre Ryckmans, the greatest of Ruanda-Urundi's colonial administrators. Later Baranyanka had played on the detestation Resident Robert Schmidt (1944-1954) felt for the *Mwami* (king) Mwambutsa IV in order to position himself politically. During the late colonial period, one can say that Chief Baranyanka certainly had more influence over the Belgians than the light-headed playboy-king Mwambutsa. Thus the colonial administration had had to tolerate and even favour Baranyanka's nationalist party, the Parti Democrate Chretien (PDC) because it was considered a lesser evil than the main nationalist group, the Union Pour le Progrès National (UPRONA). The vocabulary used by the last Belgian colonial Resident, Jean-Paul Harroy, about both the PDC and the UPRONA, is eloquently clear

There was a certain connivance and even a direct complicity between our Authority and the PDC ... The main point of their program we caught upon was their refusal of immediate independence ... The PDC quickly became the bulwark we hoped to use in order to stop the cancerous metastasis of UPRONA's progress⁹.

Such an attitude on the part of colonial authority around 1960 was extremely damaging to an African political party and Resident Harroy's policy (fully supported by Brussels) had of course the opposite effect of considerably strengthening UPRONA and weakening the PDC. UPRONA was led by a very remarkable politician, Prince Louis Rwagasore, eldest son of King Mwambutsa IV. Far from being his father's tool, the young man was very much his own master and had managed to develop an original brand of nationalist politics. As the king's son he of course commanded considerable respect. But he had been educated in Belgium where he had acquired a then fashionable taste for radical left-wing politics. As a result, the 'Red Prince' could afford to play on several levels at the same time; as a Prince he could play on traditionalism; as a young, radical intellectual, on fiery nationalist and socialist rhetoric; and as a person on a very enlightened approach to ethno-social politics. In September 1959 he had married Marie-Rose Ntamikevyo, a very good-looking Hutu young lady and the marriage had carried a powerful political and ethnic message

9. Jean-Paul Harroy, *Burundi (1955-1962)*, (Brussels: Hayez, 1987), p 399

The young Prince, the firebrand nationalist leader, had married a 'low caste' girl, thus embodying personally the concept of national unity. And his two closest advisers in the URPONA power structure, Paul Mirerekano and Pierre Ngendandumwe, were both Hutu. Thus UPRONA turned into a nightmare for the Belgians because the policy of divide and rule which they had applied in Rwanda, so successfully at first and so disastrously in the long run, could not work in the Burundi case¹⁰. Here, the main contradiction lay between the various *abaganwa* families vying for power and influence as Belgian authority receded. Both main groups i.e. the administration-supported PDC and the ultra-nationalist UPRONA carried with them a full range of *abaganwa*, of 'ordinary' Tutsi and of Hutu. In despair, the colonial administration resorted to sponsoring a newly-born purely Hutu party, the Parti du Peuple (PP or People's Party). The PP remained marginal in pre-independence politics, although this attempt at ethnic division was a sinister portent of things to come.

The elections of 18 September 1961 were a triumph for UPRONA which got 82 per cent of the vote and put into Parliament 58 of the 64 MPs. All the other parties together, allied within the Front Commun ('Common Front') could only muster 18 per cent of the popular vote. Ethnically, out of the 58 UPRONA MPs; 25 were Tutsi, 22 were Hutu, 7 were *abaganwa*, a figure which showed a pronounced collapse of the old aristocratic elite, and 4 were 'uncertain', that is people of mixed parentage who cared little about displaying their ethnic tag.

Unfortunately, the *abaganwa* rivalries, socially and politically obsolete, were to have one last and enormously noxious effect before disappearing from the political forefront. On 13 October 1961, Prince Louis Rwagasore, UPRONA leader and logical future Prime Minister of independent Burundi, was shot dead by the young Greek settler Ioannis Karageorgis, while sitting at an outside cafe¹¹. The murderer had acted as a hired gun on behalf of his employer, a Greek trader who hated UPRONA and was close to the sons of Pierre Baranyanka. It rapidly became clear that the whole murder conspiracy was a revenge plot by ousted Batware *abaganwa* who anachronistically saw UPRONA's victory as a triumph for the rival Bezi family. This shortsightedness was to have catastrophic consequences.

Rwagasore had personified a trans-ethnic form of nationalism. A prominent member of the royal lineage, an anti-colonialist, intimately linked with the Hutu community, he was a living incarnation of national unity. His violent death shattered the image, especially since the 'Hutu revolution' then taking place in neighbouring Rwanda carried a divisive message to Burundi. UPRONA Tutsi cadres immediately started working on 'tutsifying' the party.

¹⁰ From that point of view, the two subtitles given by former Resident Jean-Paul Harroy to his two-part memoirs on the decolonization of Rwanda and Burundi are remarkably candid. The volume on Rwanda is triumphantly subtitled: 'Memories of a companion of Rwanda's march towards democracy and independence' while the volume on Burundi is sadly subtitled: 'Memories of a fighter in a lost war'. Jean-Paul Harroy, *Burundi* (1955-1962), (Brussels: Hayez, 1987) and *Rwanda* (1955-1962), (Brussels: Hayez, 1984).

¹¹ For a good account of the complicated murder case, see Jean-Paul Harroy, *Burundi*, pp 576-593.

1.3 The end of the monarchy (1962-1966)

Burundi became independent on 1 July 1962. The festive occasion was to a degree marred by the memory of the dead Rwagasore, the man everybody had expected to conduct the country wisely into its first years of autonomous existence. In a situation typical of the absence of real ideological or ethnic division in the country, parliamentary life was sharply divided between the so-called 'Monrovia Group' and its 'enemy', the 'Casablanca Group'.

These two groups had pretenses at divergent economic theories, not always very clear. The Monrovia group was supposed to be more pro-western while the Casablanca group was identified with the 'progressive' countries whose leanings were more towards socialism. In the Burundese context, these divisions were purely subjective and artificial.¹²

To make matters worse, the Monrovia Group had rallied 32 MPs out of 64 and the Casablanca Group the other half¹³. Politics became paralyzed in byzantine rivalries and personal conflicts between the various politicians. Nothing serious was undertaken and even business as usual became inordinately difficult.

The break - in itself an unhappy one - with that sterile situation came in 1965 after Pierre Ngendandumwe, Rwagasore's old lieutenant, briefly became Prime Minister. The various prime ministers between July 1962 and January 1965 had been a succession of rather lacklustre characters, with a brief period during which Ngendandumwe himself had been at the head of the government". An accumulation of economic, diplomatic and administrative problems seemed to call for a firmer leadership. Ngendandumwe, a member of the 'Monrovia Group', but a national figure and an independent person, was called upon by the King to form a new cabinet after the preceding 'Casablanca' administration of Albin Nyamoya had accumulated a number of blunders. But on the very day he announced his new cabinet (15 January 1965), Pierre Ngendandumwe was shot dead. The event was to initiate a tragic course of events.

Although the circumstances of the murder were never fully clarified, it now seems reasonably certain that the killers were Rwandese Tutsi refugees with a deep hatred of the Hutu. The effect of that ethnic motivation to the killing was catastrophic. The Hutu, who had previously felt they were underdogs but that reasonable channels of redress were open to them, suddenly felt that they had become political and social outcasts, that any means, including murder,

¹² M. Manirakiza, *La fin de la monarchie burundaise (1962-1966)*, (Brussels: Le Mat de Misaine, 1990), p 43

¹³ The six non-UPRONA MPs had not chosen to create an opposition group but rather to join either 'Monrovia' or 'Casablanca' as they were popularly known. The style of the rivalry between the two groups (there was no ethnic connotation) was reminiscent of the rivalry between famous opposing soccer team rather than between political tendencies.

¹⁴ In spite of UPRONA's rampant 'tutsification' the fact that Ngendandumwe was a Hutu had never been a problem. In fact, there had been two other Hutu (Cimpaye and Bamina) among the various ineffectual Prime Ministers.

would be used to stop 'them' from participating in the power structure. The elections of October 1965 contributed to a deepening of ethnic antagonisms. UPRONA won with 73 per cent of the seats. But 70 per cent of the new MPs were Hutu, both within UPRONA and among the PP-linked 'independent' candidates. Nevertheless, the King chose a Tutsi Prime Minister in the person of Leopold Biha, his Personal Secretary and a particularly hapless politician. The radical Hutu leader Gervais Nyangoma, who was secretly hoping to be chosen for the job in spite of not even being an MP, experienced deep frustration at this nomination. Since Biha was so unpopular, even among the Tutsi, Nyangoma and his friends thought they could resort to violence¹⁵. The Nyangoma coup, aimed at killing the King and taking power, quickly fell through (18- 19 October 1965). But the Hutu insurrection which followed within days in the province of Muramvya killed an estimated 500 Tutsi before being crushed at the cost of around 2,000 Hutu lives. A new political pattern - Hutu against Tutsi - had emerged in Burundi. It was to cost thousands of lives and has not yet been changed into a more constructive framework.

An associated development related to this new violent ethnic pattern took place in the role of the Army. A young Army Captain, Michel Micombero, had personally directed the battle against the coup-makers in Bujumbura. In the following days he was the one who 'restored order' in a rather violent way in Muramvya., He emerged from the crisis as a 'strong man' on whom the Tutsi extremists quickly pinned their hopes.

King Mwambutsa IV, who was sharing his time between Geneva and the Spanish Costa del Sol, living in luxury hotels, looked completely unable to play his role in the increasingly tense situation. He was deposed on 9 July 1966 and replaced by his son Prince Ndizeye who adopted the regal name of Ntare V. But the real power behind the throne was more and more the military might of Captain Micombero who became Prime Minister on July 23rd. The enfeebled monarchy continued until 28 November 1966 when Captain Micombero simply declared it abolished.

The new regime threatened repression but did not have to use it. It was well known that the new Army Chief of Staff, Major Albert Shibura, was a Micombero supporter and would not hesitate to use force. Another Micombero crony, Arthémon Simbananiye, became Public Prosecutor. His very presence at the head of 'justice' was enough to intimidate all opponents for the time being¹⁶.

The emergence of an Army dictatorship sharpened ethnic antagonisms. Captain Micombero was himself a Tutsi extremist and he promoted like-minded people around him. Both Hutu and moderate Tutsi politicians were sidelined. But the regime was using 'ethnicity' for reasons which were far from being abstractly ideological. In fact, the new military course reflected.

¹⁵ For a description of these events see M. Manirakiza, op. cit., pp 54-78 and René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (New York: Praeger, 1970), chapters XIII and XIV.

¹⁶ Simbananiye is the man who was later to acquire: a most sinister reputation after he became credited with having drafted a plan for general genocide of the Hutu. The 'Simbananiye plan', which nobody has ever seen but in which many people in Burundi believe almost as an article of faith, was a major element in sparking off the 1972 massacres.

Somewhat similarly to the Idi Amin. period in Uganda, a marginalization of the old elites and a rise of new groups of parvenus, among whom the military were the most prominent. Mediocre personalities benefitted from lightning promotions while capable administrators were forced to resign. The old *abaganwa* elite became irrelevant, now that the monarchy was gone, thus removing a buffer between Tutsi and Hutu. And worse, the new brand of Tutsi politics Micombero was ushering in was, as we will see, divisive of the Tutsi themselves. The fierce Tutsi-Hutu confrontation which was to become typical of what had to pass for politics in Burundi between 1966 and 1987 was in fact rooted more in social and economic rivalry than in supposed 'ancient tribal hatreds'. The best summary of this tragic situation had probably been given by Burundese Army Commander Martin Ndayahoze, one of the last Hutu officers remaining in the Service, who had said in 1968, four years before being murdered during the 1972 massacres:

We can safely say that it is the elite, the bourgeoisie, which carries the virus of tribalism. The disease comes from the top ... Mediocre civil servants need gimmicks to survive in their position or to get promoted. Greedy politicians use ethnic divisiveness as a political strategy. So if they are Tutsi, they denounce a 'Hutu peril' which must be fought, even by violence. And if they are Hutu they clamour against a 'Tutsi apartheid' which must be ended.¹⁷

2. FROM MILITARY DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRATIZATION

2.1 The Micombero years: the establishment of a Tutsi dictatorship (1966-1976)

Captain Micombero's coup had several dimensions. First and foremost, it was a move by the Army as a social group, to take over power from the hands of a confused and divided civilian regime and to empower a new and less educated elite. But given the structure of the country's elite, it was also a new step towards the ethnicization of politics. Not only in the sense that Captain Micombero was a Tutsi, but because of the fact that he was a Hima Tutsi from Bururi, i.e. a member of a group which had been held in low esteem by the *abanyaruguru*, the high-ranking Tutsi clans of Muramvya Province. Micombero was a 'small' Tutsi using his Tutsiness to persuade the 'big' Tutsi to support him. Of course, in order to achieve this - imperfect - Tutsi unity around his person, he had to permanently brandish the real or imaginary threat of a Hutu insurrection. Thus the regime was to be permanently plagued by an ethnic double bind. On the one hand, the President-Dictator had to watch out for the partisans of the old monarchy and of a 'real' Tutsi regime who disliked him as an upstart. And on the other hand he had to face a largely self-manufactured Hutu 'danger', used as a Tutsi coagulant, but which in the long run would of course tend to become real.

The tension between the Micombero-led 'Bururi mafia' and the rest of the political class became increasingly dangerous. By late 1971 the Muramvya *abanyaruguru* circles were contemplating a coup *d'etat*. The President pre-empted them and a series of arrests and rigged trials in late.

¹⁷ Commander Martin Ndayahoze, Radio Broadcast on Radio Burundi, 25 November 1968. Quoted in Jean-Pierre Chrétien: 'Les massacres de 1972', p 431, in. *Burundi: l'Histoire retrouvée*, Paris: Karthala, 1993

1971 and early 1972 decapitated the neo-monarchist opposition¹⁸. This resulted in a double process: on the one hand the Muramvya 'high Tutsi' group felt it had to precipitate a monarchist restoration in order to eliminate the 'Bururi mafia', and on the other hand the marginalised Hutu elite felt: it had to side, at least tactically, with the neo-monarchist plotters. For some of the extremists in the Micombero entourage, this was in fact a blessing¹⁹, an occasion to strike both at their Tutsi rivals and at the potentially dangerous Hutu mass which had so far showed almost infinite patience.

Their enemies fell into the trap. Former king Ntare V fled to Uganda from Europe where he had lived in exile since his deposition in 1966. For some of the Hutu extremist circles, this was the signal of a major showdown among the Tutsi which could be exploited for their own ends and they prepared an insurrection. King Ntare negotiated with President Micombero who guaranteed his safety. Trusting in his remaining popularity, the young king then fled from Entebbe to Bujumbura in late March and was arrested as soon as he stepped off the plane. After one very tense month the most extreme members of the 'Bururi mafia' prevailed: on 28 April 1972, President Micombero dismissed his whole cabinet and transferred *de facto* authority to the military and to a handful of civilian extremists. The next day, while the Hutu started - too late - their long-awaited uprising, Interior Minister Shibura shot king Ntare dead and gave overall orders for a general slaughter of the Hutu²⁰

The result was appalling. At least 100,000 people and possibly up to 300,000 died. The repression seemed at first to be aimed only at stopping the first wave of Hutu killing Tutsi. But once this had been achieved (within less than 48 hours) the killings went on, with a distinct social slant. The Hutu who were targeted were those possessing anything above the level of primary education. Army teams led by members of the State Security went around not only in the towns but even in the smallest villages, combing them for Hutu 'intellectuals'. They were all mercilessly slaughtered. The horror was such that everybody in Burundi, Tutsi or Hutu, still calls 1972 the year of *ikiza* (the catastrophe).

In the short run the regime had been superficially consolidated by this violence. But at a deeper level it had been contaminated by a sort of 'death fascination'. Since the massacres had no special East-West dimension, for the international community they were negligible. Soon, the violent extravagances of buffoon dictator Idi Amin Dada in neighbouring Uganda were to put the region back into the limelight. Since the massive and violent expulsion of the Asian minority in Uganda a few weeks after the

¹⁸ On this crisis see M. Manirakiza, *Burundi: de la révolution au régionalisme (1966-1976)*, (Brussels: Le Mat de Misaine, 1992), pp 47-108

¹⁹ Their main leaders were the Minister of Information André Yanda, the Minister of the Interior Albert Shibura and especially the Minister for Foreign Affairs Arthémon Simbananiye, who had a decisive role in organising the 1972 massacres.

²⁰ Déo Hakizimana, *Burundi: le non-dit*, (Vernier: Editions Remesha, [1991]), pp 21-24

²¹ For an evaluation of the 1972 massacre, see R. Lemarchand and D. Martin, *Génocide sélectif au Burundi*, (London: Minority Rights Group, 1974) and B. F. Kiraranganya, *La vérité sur le Burundi*, (Sherbrooke: Editions Naaman, 1977), pp 76-81.

Burundi massacres had definite and serious international consequences, not only in the framework of the East-West confrontation but also for the Arab-Israeli conflict²², world attention quickly turned away from Burundi to the new crisis. President Micombero could then conclude that his genocidal policy had been a success and he abandoned any sort of overall national policy-making to sink into increasingly parochial or even personal politicking. Darkly misanthropic, given to prolonged bouts of drinking, he retreated into a world of his own. On 1 November 1976, Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, another Tutsi officer from a Bururi *Hima* clan, who was born in the same Rutovu *commune* as the President and some say was even a distant cousin of his, deposed the sombre and withdrawn Micombero who seemed to have lost touch with reality²³

2.2 The Bagaza regime and the continuation of Tutsi rule (1976-1987)

The first Manifesto of the new regime (30 November 1976) seemed to address real issues when it talked of the 'dark years of 1965, 1969 and 1972'. At first, the new regime seemed to try to play the card of a social and political opening, calling upon the UPRONA Party Youth, the Jeunesses R6volutionnaires Rwagasore (JRR), to denounce the social abuses they felt needed redressing. There was a moment of short-lived elation. But this was mere window-dressing and the Bagaza 'revolution' was soon seen for what it really was i.e. a simple palace coup, a change of the guard within the 'Bururi mafia'²⁴. There was no apology or attempt at reconciliation concerning the 1972 quasi-genocide. The Army became even more of a closed and all-powerful elite and its recruitment remained as narrow as always. Civil service recruitment was broader in intra-Tutsi terms (in order to soften the impact of the almost exclusively Bururi officer corps recruitment) but it remained largely discriminatory towards the Hutu majority. By 1985 there were still only four Hutu cabinet ministers out of 20, 17 Hutu MPs in the designated 'Parliament' (out of 65), two Hutu members in the UPRONA Central Committee (out of 52). Only one ambassador out of 22 was a Hutu and two provincial governors out of 15, while members of the majority social group represented only 10 per cent of the teachers and 20 per cent of the students at the 'National' University²⁵. As time went on, even the Tutsi elite felt the weight of the despotism it had had to support in order to keep the Hutu at bay and retain its privileges. With the help of such devoted allies as Interior Minister Charles Kazatsa, Education Minister Isidore Hakizimana and Security Chief Lt-Colonel Laurent Ndabaneze, President Bagaza built an iron-fisted dictatorship compared to which even the Micombero years seemed somewhat relaxed. Security men were everywhere, the press was tightly controlled, any form of meeting was spied upon and reported to the Secret Service and students abroad

²² For a full treatment of the regional and international consequences of the expulsion of the Uganda Asians, see Gérard Prunier, *L'Ouganda et la question indienne (1896-1972)*, (Paris: Editions ERC, 1990), pp 166-197.

²³ Convinced of the reality of the ideological propaganda which since the colonial days had presented the Tutsi as 'Egyptians' or 'Ethiopians', he went to finish his life in exile in Somalia, 'to be near his ancestors'.

²⁴ See Filip Reyntiens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise*, (Paris: Karthala, 1994), pp 39-40.

²⁵ Jean-Pierre Pabanel, 'Statistiques tribales au Burundi en 1986', *Politique Africaine*, No 43 (December 1988), pp 111-115

were subjected to regular police reports. Ordinary peasants were commonly thrown in jail for lack of identification, an offense normally punishable by a fine equivalent to US\$ 15 or less, but which could cause them to lose their freedom for six months and at times could cost them their life when jails were not properly supplied with food²⁶. By 1986 the President's power base had narrowed not only to the Tutsi group, but to the Tutsi of one province (Bururi), among the Bururi Tutsi to one precise group (the *Hima*) and among the Hima to the three small sub-clans of Rotovu, Matana and Vyanda.

Given the extreme tightness of the political space, the Catholic Church became the last bastion defending a minimum of freedom of speech. As such it soon fell into the sights of the regime which started to silence prelates and close down religious establishments. Even the Bishop of Bururi, Mgr Bernard Bududira, was not spared because he objected to the government policy towards the Church. He was submitted to constant harassment and attacked in the controlled press, and a nephew of his who was in the Army, Cdr Léonce Majanja, was detained. Seminaries were nationalised in 1986 and local charismatic community meetings forbidden. Catechists were detained and at times tortured under the vaguest of pretexts. The prisons started to fill up and several detainees died under torture²⁷.

Sensing Army opposition, by mid-1987 President Bagaza was preparing to expel large numbers of officers who opposed his authoritarian rule. He also wanted to force into retirement numerous NCOs in order to make room for young boys of his clan. Given the growing discontent, he ended up having to detain several prominent members of the Tutsi elite who increasingly questioned his despotic attitude. So when on 3 September 1987 a group of NCOs led a bloodless coup to overthrow Colonel Bagaza and replace him by Major Pierre Buyoya, relief was almost universal.

2.3 The Buyoya regime and the attempt at democratic transformation (1987-1993)

Major Buyoya was in many ways a traditional Burundi military ruler. Like former Presidents Micombero and Bagaza he was a Tutsi *Hima* from Bururi. He was also a pure product of the military establishment. But he was younger and intellectually more open. He also resented the heavy atmosphere of suspicion, palace plotting and constant backbiting which had made up the general political culture of the Burundi military elite during the last twenty years.

One could say at this point that there was a 'Burundese political pattern' just as there was a Rwandese one further north.

²⁶ Déo Hakizimana, *Burundi: le non-sit*, p 41

²⁷ C. Carral, 'Burundi: l'Église sous surveillance étatique', *La Revue Nouvelle* (Février 1986); Amnesty International, *Prisoners of conscience and political detainees held in Burundi*, (London: Amnesty International, May 1987).

²⁸ Many were very well-known people, such as businessman Didace Nzohabonayo, Térance Nsanze (the former Burundi Ambassador to the United Nations), Dr Dominique Gacukuzi (Director of Bujumbura's Medical Services), the President of Bujumbura's Court of Appeal Bernard Rukingamubiri, and several others (Personal recollections of the author).

But while the 'Rwandese model' was one of systematised ethnic antagonism, with the abstract but ever-present threat of military revenge from the Tutsi exile acting as a kind of bugaboo, designed to keep the Hutu masses in line and convince them that their dictatorship was democratic because it was run by members of the so-called 'democratic majority', the 'Burundese model' was rather different. First of all, it was much less 'tight'. Contrary to its Rwandese counterpart, it never had the benefit of ideological formalization and it consisted more of a set of practices than of a coherent collection of rules and values. Although similarly largely based on ethnicism, it was more complex. Most of the time, the main political tensions and contradictions had been not between Hutu and Tutsi but inside the non-Hutu elites, *abaganwa* families at first and then various Tutsi clans. The Hutu provided a sort of mute background, something like the extras in a costume movie. When the situation was favourable and the main Tutsi leader was a man of quality (the epitome having been the national hero Prince Louis Rwagasore), prominent Hutu would be allowed to play real political, social and even economic roles. But their situation always remained precarious, as the murder of Prime Minister Pierre Ngendandumwe had shown in 1,965. In less favourable situations, the Hutu were downgraded to the role of passive onlookers, with a few token members of their community being given a handful of symbolic positions.

Contradictions between major Tutsi factions tended to be 'solved' through a 'confrontation' with the Hutu in order to tighten up the ranks of the ruling minority, the major and most horrifying example of this policy having been. the 1972 *ikiza*. When the leader was violent or started to decline, as Bagaza did in his later years, the oppression of the Hutu masses could rise from mild to nearly intolerable. And even in the best of cases, ethnic discrimination was an everyday fact of life.

The 1959 Rwandese 'revolution' had had a terrible role in shaping this repressive system. At the back of every Burundese Tutsi's mind, there was always the fear of 'what would happen if they would all decide to rise and kill us to the last one'. The successive dictators had played on that fear, especially to keep the Army a nearly 100 per cent Tutsi preserve. The presence of several hundreds of thousands of exiled Rwandese Tutsi in Burundi had also considerably contributed to this atmosphere of latent paranoia.

The main problem lay in the development of a sick political culture, made up of spite and fear on the Tutsi side, of inferiority and hateful resentment on the Hutu side. But when all was said and done, the Burundese syndrome did not have character of machine-like ineluctability of its Rwandese counterpart. There were always men who stood on the 'wrong' side of the fence, Hutu members of UPRONA, liberal Tutsi who refused a black form of apartheid, and a hope that the ideals of Rwagasore were not dead. In a way, with limited ideological means, probably too late and with too little real help, President Pierre Buyoya was going to try to use that existing window of opportunity.

At first, the new regime, although more liberal in its everyday political practice and at the human rights level²⁹

²⁹ One of the first measures of the new government was to rescind all the anti-Church legislation and to free all the political prisoners.

was still functioning largely on the model of the 'traditional' Burundi military dictatorships. The first Buyoya cabinet, announced on 1 October 1987, had only five Hutu ministers in it out of a total of twenty. There were only four Hutu out of fifteen provincial governors and there were no changes either in the officer corps, the judiciary or the civil service to open them up more to Hutu participation.³⁰

But the ethnic situation had become very tense. In May 1988 an aggressive communiqué issued by the PALIPEHUTU posed again directly the question of ethnic discrimination in terms of violence³¹. And Mgr Bernard Bududira, the Burundi Bishop persecuted during the last year of the Bagaza regime, called attention to the situation in a vigorous pastoral letter issued practically at the same time and trying, to defend a spirit of peaceful reform³².

During the night of 14 to 15 August 1988, a sudden explosion of inter-ethnic violence started in the two neighbouring *communes* of Ntega (Kirundo province) and Marangara (Ngozi Province). For two days bands of Hutu peasants led by PALIPEHUTU activists scoured the *collines*³³ killing the local Tutsi. On the third day, the Army arrived and massacred indiscriminately all the Hutu they could find without bothering to try to find out first who was guilty and who was not. The violence caused 5,000 casualties according to the government, probably nearer to 20,000 according to foreign observers³⁴. Over 60,000 refugees fled to Rwanda. What had happened? In fact, there was mixture of causes all meshing into each other to produce a bleak scenario:

1. The tensions between various sectors of the Tutsi elite, notably the arrests of people who had been closely associated with the Bagaza regime up to a few months before, were perceived by the Hutu as a prelude, as in 1971-1972, to a new spate of massacres. The PALIPEHUTU agents played on that fear and managed to trigger the ill-fated Hutu insurrection.
2. Some Tutsi elements in the Buyoya government were greatly alarmed by the

30 Filip Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise*, p 49

31 PALIPEHUTU, 'Communiqué No 6', (May 1988). PALIPEHUTU is the acronym of Parti de la Libération du Peuple Hutu (Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People), an extremist party created in 1980 by Rémy Gahutu, a Burundese Hutu living in exile in Rwanda. This party was based on a strict racialist ideology strongly inspired by the 'Rwandese model'.

32 Mgr Bernard Bududira, 'Vivre en frères dans le Burundi aujourd'hui et demain', *Bulletin d'Informations Africaines*, No 136, (15 November 1988)

33 Just as Rwanda, Burundi is a land of many nearly evenly-spaced *collines* (hills). Thus the hill is the natural ecological, human and even administrative unit of the country.

34 On these events, see J.P. Chrdtien, A. Guichaoua and G. Le Jeune, *La crise d'Août 1988 au Burundi*, (Paris: Centre de Recherches Africaines, 1989) (Cahiers, No 6)

liberalising intentions of the President and wished to put a stop to these before they could have time to get implemented. The best way was interethnic violence. The Minister of Education, Lt Colonel Jean-Claude Ndiyo, was probably the ringleader of a conspiracy aimed at frightening the Hutu through harassment and rumour, hoping that PALIPEHUTU would rise to the bait.

3. In fact PALIPEHUTU was almost sure to oblige because the Hutu extremists also knew about the liberalising plans of President Buyoya and, just like the Tutsi extremists, knew that they would risk losing their constituency if the regime opened up.

For President Buyoya, the Ntega-Marangara events constituted a violent eye-opener. He realised that after twenty-five years of independence, the life of the country was poisoned by ethnic discrimination, fear and hatred, and that he had to try to solve the problem before the problem destroyed the country. But it was obvious things were not going to change right away. Twenty-seven Hutu intellectuals who had addressed an open letter denouncing ethnic discrimination to the President (22 August) were all dismissed from their jobs and many had to flee the country³⁵. Hutu former MP Cosine Bibonimana, who in the past had criticised the practice of ethnic discrimination in examination marking, was summarily executed. The problem for Major Buyoya was the stubborn clinging to Tutsi supremacy on the part of a political, administrative, judiciary and military establishment used to twenty-five years of unbroken ethnic privilege. Any effort to democratise the country was going to be a two-way fight: first, to create the positive conditions for Hutu participation, that is go beyond the distrust and entrenched radical hostility of the Hutu elite; and second, to avoid the negative obstacles a fearful and privileged Tutsi power structure was going to put in the way of any effort at liberalization.

But the President's choice had been made: he was going to try. On 19 October 1988 he formed a new cabinet. The new Premier, Adrien Sibomana, was the first Hutu to occupy this post since the murder of Pierre Ngendandumwe in 1965 and he had been encouraged to select a significantly bi-ethnic team. Soon after, a Special Commission was created to study the question of national unity. On 13 May 1989 it made public a special report on the question of national unity i.e. an effort at understanding the reasons for the deep-seated national dis-unity³⁶. Professor Filip Reyntjens offers the following evaluation:

In itself, the document was disappointing. It simply offered once more the old Tutsi arguments on the plurisecular unity of precolonial Burundi, on the ethnic divisions being a pure product of Belgian colonial policies and on the Hutu responsibility in all the massacres perpetrated since the mid-1960s³⁷.

While agreeing with this, one must nevertheless recognise that the very fact that the central problem of Burundese society was acknowledged, that the unspoken reality

³⁵ See Déo Hakizimana (who was among the signatories), *Burundi: le non-dit*, p 84-159.

³⁶ Burundi. Commission Nationale, *Rapport de la Commission Nationale chargée d'étudier la question de l'unité nationale*, (Bujumbura, 1989)

³⁷ Filip Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise*, p 70

everybody knew about but nobody dared to mention publicly was finally brought out in the open, had an enormous collective therapeutic effect³⁸. The Hutu opposition attacked the report as 'too timid' and the cabinet changes as 'cosmetic', but lost no time in organising itself in order to be ready for the day political parties would be allowed to operate freely. In 1990 a group of militants headed by Melchior Ndadaye, a young bank employee who had returned three years earlier from exile in Rwanda, created the Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi (FRODEBU) in semi-clandestinity³⁹. And since he believed in free political competition, the President decided to overhaul the UPRONA single party and try to turn it back into the truly national party it had been in the days of Rwagasore. The December 1990 UPRONA congress elected a new Central Committee comprising 41 Hutu, 38 Tutsi and one Twa⁴⁰. Nicolas Mayugi, a Hutu, became the new Secretary General. Under this new political direction, Civil Service recruitment was opened up and school and university entrance exams began to be graded more and more according to merit and less and less according to ethnic origin. But the one bastion President Buyoya did not dare touch, because its recruitment reached so deep into the unspoken fears of the Tutsi minority, was the Army. This timidity, understandable as it may have been, was to have tragic consequences later on.

The adoption by referendum of the Charte de l'Unité Nationale (Charter for National Unity) on 6 February 1991 was the first public test of the new political orientation and it was ambiguous. On the one hand, with 89 per cent of favourable votes, it constituted an approbation of the liberalization process. But on the other hand, the whole new direction appeared as too 'clean', as too well organised and too controlled by the Government to be really representative of deep-seated and pent up Hutu popular feelings.

The clandestine PALIPEHUTU which was worried about losing its support lost no time in exploiting this 'emotional gap'. It organised various public demonstrations, especially in the North where its support was greatest (April 1991), tried to put together a tax boycott and finally when it realised that it was slipping anyway, organised a series of terrorist attacks (November 1991) in the hope of provoking the Army into a bloody repression. In spite of the fact that President Buyoya was abroad at the time (the terrorists had cleverly scheduled their action) and that the Prime Minister was a Hutu, the Cabinet managed to keep Army violence under control, while the Hutu masses did not rally to the uprising attempt. PALIPEHUTU drew the logical conclusions from this failure and decided from then on to change tactics. Since the organisation's aim of a Hutu-dominated state remained the same, since it was unlikely to be legalised under any circumstances and since the Hutu masses seemed more interested in the moderate FRODEBU tactic of playing along with the

³⁸ It is for example typical that the (moderate) Hutu opponent Déo Hakizimana had chosen as a title for the book he published in exile: *Burundi: le non-dit* (Burundi: the 'unsaid' or the 'unspoken').

³⁹ Although political parties were in theory not allowed, the Government's attitude was quite relaxed and the author was able at the time to meet FRODEBU cadres in Bujumbura without any hindrance. Party literature was also regularly printed and distributed without police interference.

⁴⁰ The Twa are the pygmoid populations who were the original inhabitants of Rwanda and Burundi, before the arrival of either the Bantu Hutu or the Cushitic Tutsi. Today they represent only about 1 per cent of the population in either country.

government and trying to remain within a legal framework, PALIPEHUTU cadres used their sympathisers to start infiltrating FRODEBU and the nascent democratic movement. This, too, was to have dire consequences for the future.

A new democratic constitution was adopted by referendum with a 92 per cent vote in favour on 9 March 1992 and independent political parties became legal by the following June. FRODEBU quickly asserted itself as the leading opposition force among the ten or so different parties which had asked to be registered.

The year which elapsed between the advent of completely free political activity and the general election of June 1993 showed the limits of the President's policy of political voluntarism. He had taken the proverbial horse to the water but making it drink was proving to be difficult. In spite of its 'new' overhauled Central Committee UPRONA carried out a generally slanderous campaign of ethno-political innuendoes against FRODEBU, accusing it among other things of being 'another version of PALIPEHUTU with a legal tag'. The Hutu who adhered to FRODEBU were described as 'subversives' and the Tutsi who did so (there were some) were branded as 'traitors'. This led Christian Sendegeya, a prominent Tutsi member of FRODEBU to attack the UPRONA leadership in an open letter where he wrote:

The great weakness I would reproach your government is to tend to portray any Hutu who does not agree with you as a subversive sympathiser of PALIPEHUTU and any Tutsi who thinks differently from you as a misguided soul⁴¹.

On the other hand, PALIPEHUTU militants and sympathisers did join FRODEBU and some of the smaller Hutu-identified parties such as the Rassemblement du Peuple Burundais (Rally of the Burundese People or RPB), the *Parti Libéral* (Liberal Party or PL) and the *Parti du peuple* (People's Party or PP). They obviously had ulterior motives which were hardly of a democratic nature.

Thus the parties went to the election with a mixture of democratic openness tempered by a belief in their own unshakable 'right to rule' on the part of President Buyoya and UPRONA, and an honest desire for a democratic alternative tainted by visions of ethnic revenge on the part of candidate Ndadaye and FRODEBU.

The first part of the election was the presidential contest which took place on 1 June 1993. There were three candidates: President Pierre Buyoya for UPRONA, Melchior Ndadaye for FRODEBU and Pierre-Claver Nsendegeya who ran in the name of the small monarchist party *Parti de la Reconciliation du Peuple* (Peoples Reconciliation Party or PRP). Over 97 per cent of the 2,360,096 registered voters went to the polls. The election was scrupulously honest and its results were a surprise for many observers who had expected President Buyoya to receive the reward for his spirit of democratic openness.⁴²

⁴¹ *L'Aube*, 8 December 1992

⁴² The local correspondent of the French press agency Agence France Presse had predicted that President Buyoya would be elected in the first round of voting; with about 60 per cent of the vote.

But he got only 32.47 per cent of the vote against 64.79 per cent to his FRODEBU rival. The PRP candidate got only 1.4 per cent, which showed how irrelevant the monarchic question had become. Everybody behaved very responsibly. Disappointed President Buyoya sportingly congratulated Ndadaye on his victory. Col Michel Mibarurwa, the Army Chief of Staff conferred with Prime Minister Adrien Sibomana 'to coordinate our action and see how we can manage this transition period so as to avoid problems'⁴³." The President-Elect immediately moved to reassure the vanquished, saying:

There has been an attempt to make the population believe that our party is set on revenge, that it is fighting against the interests of a certain category of the population. None of this is true.⁴⁴

Knowing how explosive the Rwandese question was in ethnic terms, the new President also declared that the (Tutsi) Rwandese refugees would be allowed to stay in the country and that he would even use his influence to try to convince President Habyarimana that they should be allowed to recover their lost citizenship, something which he called 'a justifiable ambition'⁴⁵.

On 8 June, the new President had declared a general amnesty both to free prisoners and to allow political exiles to come home. All prisoners and exiles were included, whatever their political persuasion. The PALIPEHUTU commandoes arrested in November 1991 were freed, but so were the (Tutsi) soldiers who had attempted to overthrow President Buyoya in March 1992 in the hope of stopping the democratization process. Exiled Hutu radicals came back from Rwanda and so did Tutsi supremacist former President Bagaza who had been living in Libya since 1988.

There were of course a few disturbing notes. Tutsi students marched through the streets chanting: 'No to the victory of division! No to the violation of the Unity Charter!'⁴⁶. In the interior, the Hutu peasantry took the FRODEBU victory as a personal victory over the 'State' which was perceived by them as a Tutsi Matter. So they refused to pay taxes any more and started to cut down the communally planted trees to use them for firewood

⁴³ *La Libre Belgique*, 3 June 1993

⁴⁴ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio France Internationale*, interview with President-Elect Ndadaye, 3 June 1993

⁴⁵ *as BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Burundi*, interview with President-Elect Ndadaye, 25 June 1993

⁴⁶ This throws us back on the question of the 'emotional gap' we have mentioned earlier. The catchword of 'Unity' had been so used and overused during the democratization process since 1988 that the word had become associated with UPRONA and Tutsi domination. The feeling, on both sides of the ethnic divide, was that 'Unity' meant continued Tutsi rule with a mostly cosmetic opening up. This was what the Tutsi supremacists who had accepted Buyoya's political course had hoped for and this is what the Hutu population had feared. FRODEBU's victory was quickly denounced by the Tutsi supremacists as 'ethnically divisive'.

It took some persuasion to explain to them that the State was now theirs as well as the Tutsi's, and that unfortunately the continued existence of the State meant they still had to pay taxes and refrain from breaking the Law.

The second (legislative) round of elections took place on 29 June and its results confirmed those of the presidential vote. Apart from UPRONA and FRODEBU, the PRP also ran, together with three other small parties, one, the Rallye pour la Démocratie et le Développement Economique et Social or RADDES, which was linked with Tutsi supremacist circles, disgusted at UPRONA's 'softness', and the two others, the Parti Populaire (PP) and Rassemblement du Peuple Burundais (RPB) who were purely Hutu⁴⁷. Participation, at over 91 per cent of the registered voters, was almost as high as for the presidential election. The results were as follows:

| Party Name | Vote % | Number of seats |
|------------|--------|-----------------|
| FRODEBU | 71.40 | 65 |
| UPRONA | 21.86 | 16 |
| RPB | 1.70 | 0 |
| PRP | 1.43 | 0 |
| RADDES | 1.25 | 0 |
| PP | 1.13 | 0 |

Note:

1. Twelve of the sixteen UPRONA MPs were former Ministers in the Buyoya regime, which shows that there was a 'political visibility premium'.
2. Twelve of the sixteen UPRONA MPs (although not the same twelve as the ex-Ministers) were Hutu.
3. Eight of the sixty-five FRODEBU MPs were Tutsi.
4. Although the vote was obviously mainly ethnically motivated, it was not fully so. A non-negligible section of the Hutu electorate had voted for UPRONA.
5. The small parties did not represent any sizable portion of the electorate. But they represented an extremist opinion (whether Tutsi or Hutu) which felt that the two mainstream parties were too moderate for their taste.

By early July, Burundi seemed set to turn into economic, administrative and social reality what looked like a particularly successful political transition.

47 One should keep in mind that in spite of the ethnic polarization, both UPRONA and FRODEBU made a point of having in their ranks members of the 'other' ethnic group. UPRONA was definitely more ethnically pluralistic (its Secretary General Nicolas Mayugi was a Hutu) but its Hutu members did not have much of a real say in the workings of the party. UPRONA had less Tutsi but they tended to play a more influential role in the mostly Hutu party. One of UPRONA's prominent (and founding) members was Jean-Marie Ngendahayo who was from an old and distinguished ganwa family and who was to play a key role in the political developments of 1993-1994.

3. THE NATURE OF THE PRESENT CRISIS (1993 - 1994)

3.1 *The events leading to the murder of President Ndadaye (July-October 1993)*

The general atmosphere of hope accompanying President Ndadaye's election had left a bitter taste in the mouth of the various extremist factions. The first to act were the Tutsi extremists in the Army. On 3 July, four days after the legislative polls, elements of the 2nd Commando Battalion from Muha Barracks tried to take power by force⁴⁸. The movement was led by Lt Colonel Sylvestre Ningaba who had been an ADC to President Buyoya⁴⁹. But it was quickly stopped by another officer, Major Isaie Nibizi, who managed to talk the men and the NCOs out of following their mutinous officers. The reaction in Army circles was ambiguous. Many officers criticised Ningaba not for attempting a coup but for doing so with little serious planning. Many in the officer corps seemed to be paying only lip-service to democratic principles in spite of the clear verdict of the polls. The feeling was clearly racist in tone: 'those people' (meaning the Hutu) were described as not being capable of actually governing the country⁵⁰.

Unfortunately, this criticism was not entirely devoid of foundation, even if its basis had nothing to do with 'race'. FRODEBU cadres were largely inexperienced for the simple reasons that, firstly, there had always been a marked anti-Hutu bias in Civil Service recruitment and, secondly, the 1972 massacre had achieved its purpose i.e. decimating the Hutu elite. The result was that many of the newly nominated FRODEBU administrators at the regional level, and many of their men then entering the central administration were tragically incompetent. And this at a moment when the Hutu peasantry was expecting wonders from them, and many in the Tutsii administration were discreetly doing their best to complicate their work in the hope of seeing them fail.

Furthermore, FRODEBU leaders were led by the feeling of having to make up for an enormous backlog of discrimination and the fear of disappointing their electorate to adopt too quick a rhythm of changeover from the old personnel to the new. One of the main problems was the question of the refugees who, mostly living in Tanzania since 1972 but also with smaller pockets who had fled in 1988 and 1991 to Rwanda, were watching the situation in the hope of being able to come back⁵¹. During his inauguration speech President Ndadaye had mentioned the question, saying that he was going to send 'delegations to foreign countries in order to assess the numbers of the refugees, to find out how many wanted to

48 Due to the difficulty of communicating with some isolated parts of the country, the results had not yet been proclaimed. They were published only on 9 July and it is probable that the mutineers were hoping to take the yet unformed government by surprise.

⁴⁹ president-elect Ndadaye was quick to exonerate former President Buyoya of any involvement in the pilot

⁵⁰ Author's interviews with Burundese Army officers in Addis-Abeba (July 1993).

⁵¹ About 40,000 had already come back during the years of the Buyoya regime. But there were about 150,000 left in Tanzania, 25,000 in Rwanda and about 20,000 in Zaïre. On the problem see Catherine Watson, *Transition in Burundi: the context for a homecoming.*, (Washington DC: US Committee for Refugees, September 1993).

Come home and what their needs were⁵². This rang a danger bell for the Tutsi minority, which had taken over the lands, and other properties left behind by those refugees.

The new cabinet had been announced on 10 July 1993. Led by Sylvie Kinigi, a liberal Tutsi UPRONA woman member, it was ethnically and politically balanced. It immediately drew fire from the Hutu extremists who had hoped for a 'radical Hutu' cabinet and found the new government much too moderate for their taste. From exile, extremist leader Kabora Kassan threatened an armed attack on Bujumbura if -the Hutu did not get more cabinet posts and his guerilla troops were not allowed to join the national Army⁵³. President Ndadaye was very anxious to reassure the Army and he declared that no officer would be fired from the Forces⁵⁴.

But the Tutsi extremists remained unconvinced. They knew there were plans to 'open up' the Army to the Hutu and that the President was discreetly arranging for his own (Hutu) presidential guard to be formed. Government was functioning according to the principle of *intwaro rusangi* (shared power)., But this really worked only at the highest government levels. The expectations of the Hutu electorate were too great and in order to try to satisfy them, all the lower and regional echelons of the administration were being solidly 'frodebu-ised', with uneven results⁵⁵. Even at the highest level, clumsy errors were made. On of the biggest ones was the firing on 25 September of national Radio and TV Director Louis-Marie Nindorera by Information Minister Jean-Marie Ngendahayo for 'systematic sabotage'. The Minister himself before had chosen Nindorera only a few weeks and his only mistake had been to try to practice an open and vigorously investigative form of information, which spared neither the new government nor the opposition. Years of media control had taken their toll on peoples' minds, even among former opponents, and by this gesture the new government gave the impression not only of not tolerating criticism, but of having something to hide⁵⁶. This was most unfortunate since not only the issue of Army democratization but also the question of the return of refugees gave public debate a rather heated tone. In late August, the Commission des Réfugiés had admitted the principle according to which land illegally acquired during the last twenty years could be open to legal s2 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Burundi*, 10 July 1993

⁵³ François Misser, 'Democrazia assassinata', *Nigrizia*, (December 1993). Kabora Kassan had been the PALIPEHUTU 'Chief of Staff in Rwanda. After falling out with his erstwhile friends, he moved to Tanzania where he had started a new armed movement the Front de Libération nationale (FROLINAT), which was not considered a serious military threat at that time.

⁵⁴ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Burundi*, 5 August 1993

⁵⁵ This is the most important factor singled out by the Human Rights Watch Report on the violences of October-November 1993 as having been a major cause in the attempted Tutsi putsch which was to cost President Ndadaye his life. Human Rights Watch / Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme, *Rapport de la Commission Internationale d'Enquête sur les Violations des Droits de l'Homme au Burundi depuis le 23 Octobre 1993*, (Brussels, July 1994), p 11. Henceforth referred to as *Burundi Report*.

⁵⁶ *La Libre Belgique*, Marie-France Cros, 'Première crise pour le pouvoir au Burundi', 4 October 1993

Proceedings to ensure restitution to the rightful owners⁵⁷.

Thus the political situation was tense, but not overly so. This kind of debate seemed unavoidable with the advent of such a great and radical social change, and former President Buyoya's moderation coupled with President Ndadaye's obvious goodwill seemed to guarantee a basic framework of political reason in which the experiment had its chances of developing peacefully. This is why when on the evening of 20 October 1993 President Ndadaye was warned by his Defence Minister Lt Colonel Charles Ntakije of the possibility of a coup during the night, he did not seem unduly worried. Major Isaie Nibizi, the man who had foiled the 3 July putsch attempt and who had been made head of Presidential Security, only took minimal precautions. But at midnight elements of the 11th Armoured Battalion came out of their barracks and moved towards the Presidential Palace. A major crisis had started.

3.2 The October putsch⁵⁸

When Major Nibizi ordered the Presidential Guards to take defensive positions in order to stop the mutineers from penetrating inside the Palace grounds, they obeyed him but, according to his words later, 'dragging their feet'. Outside the putsch was being carried out not as the type of technically clear-cut action which had brought to power Colonel Bagaza in 1976 or Major Buyoya in 1987 but in a confused and unclear manner. The elements from the 11th Armoured Battalion had been joined by a motley of troops from a variety of units (1st Infantry Battalion, some Gendarmes). All these were under the command of a low-ranking officer, Lt Jean-Paul Kamana. Shots were fired in a desultory way, mostly in the air. The only two soldiers wounded during this action were tank drivers who hurt themselves when crashing their vehicles through the Palace gates⁵⁹. At 1.30 a.m. Lt Colonel Ntakija, who was not present, advised the President by telephone to climb into an Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC). The vehicle remained parked on the Palace grounds with the President inside. Finally, at 6.00 a.m., the APC driver was ordered by unknown officers to drive to Camp Muha 'where the President would be safe'. Army Chief of Staff Colonel Jean Bikomagu was present at Camp Muha. He talked briefly with the President as he emerged from the APC and told him everything would be all right. The putschists had by then arrested the President of the National Assembly Pontien Karibwami and taken him to Camp Muha. Col. Bikomagu then walked away from the Camp, apparently without leaving any orders. At 10.00 a.m. Lt Kamana ordered the murders of Ndadaye and Karibwami.

57 *Marchés Tropicaux*, Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Tournant historique au Rwanda et au Burundi', 1 October 1993

58 All the information on the confused coup and on the President's murder come from the above-mentioned *Burundi Report* and from conversations with one of its authors, Professor Filip Reyntiens of the University of Antwerp.

⁵⁹ this point is important because the military later argued that they had fought to defend the President, 'losing the lives of several of their men'. This is an absolute falsehood.

They were bayoneted to death but not mutilated⁶⁰. Meanwhile, rebellious soldiers had searched the capital, killing the Minister of Territorial Administration Juvénal Ndayikeza, Gilles Bimazubute, National Assembly Vice-president and Richard Ndikumwami, head of the Secret Service. They had also tried to kill the Foreign Minister, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya. But he was not home and in frustration the mutineers killed his wife and a female visitor who happened to be present.

The situation appeared extremely confused. The rebels had freed Lt Colonel Sylvestre Ningaba, the leader of the abortive July putsch. But he himself seemed lost and not knowing what to do. The main public buildings had been occupied and the telephone cut off. A Comité de Crise (Crisis Committee) had been created, presided over by an UPRONA Hutu civilian, François Ngeze, who had been President Buyoya's last Minister of the Interior. Ngeze had called on four senior UPRONA members to advise him: Libère Bararunyeretse, Charles Mukasi, Jean-Baptiste Manwangari and André Kadege; but this bizarre Committee's legal or political standing, remained extremely vague. It had announced a reorganization of the Army general staff, but at the same time: stating that Col. Jean Bikomagu would keep his position as its head. The remnants of the government had taken refuge at the French Embassy. A shadow military committee had been formed in the meantime, with Colonel Bikomagu at its head, comprising Lt Colonel Jean-Bosco Daradangwe and Lt Colonel Pascal Simbanduku. This self-appointed Committee had given itself the job of 'managing the crisis ' and was operating separately from Ngeze's Committee. On the 22nd, the governments of France, Germany, Belgium and the United States, as well as the European Union authorities in Brussels, announced the suspension of all economic aid to Burundi as long as the coupleaders remained in power. All political parties, the churches and the various civil associations condemned the coup. On the 23rd, Colonel Bikomagu finally decided to do the same thing over Radio Burundi. The putsch immediately collapsed. But mass killings of Tutsi had started in the hills as early as the 21st when the news of the President's death had become public. And on the 23rd, when the Army moved to stop these killings, it immediately started its own indiscriminate killings of Hutu.

3.3 The October-November 1993 massacres

The first violent acts appear to have been spontaneous and to have been triggered by the news of President Ndadaye's arrest and death. But quickly FRODEBU local cadres 'organised the resistance', an ambiguous term since in the first two-three days nobody attacked them. In fact they organised the indiscriminate massacre of ordinary Tutsi peasants who were collectively scapegoat for the murder of the President. Pro-UPRONA Hutu were also massacred along with the Tutsi as they were considered 'accomplices' of the 'UPRONA coup'. In a minority of cases, local authorities did their best to protect the Tutsi citizens from the lynching mobs chasing them.

Within two or three days, Army units moved in to protect the Tutsi. They regrouped them

⁶⁰ This point is also important because the Hutu extremists later circulated stories of atrocious mutilations on the President's body in order to excite public violence. The Human Rights Watch Commission which authored the *Burundi Report* was able to disinter the President's body and examine it. There were no mutilations.

in towns and ensured their security. But they went beyond that. They entered the areas where the massacres had taken place and which were by then empty of Tutsi. And they started a violent and indiscriminate repression of ordinary Hutu peasants, who in some cases were indeed guilty of murder but who were often innocent of the massacres which had been carried out by more politicised FRODEBU supporters⁶¹. Later, everybody would try to occupy the moral high ground. But it was obvious that the violence came from the conjunction of a double bad faith refusing to play the democratic game. It has been well summed up by two Burundese journalists who wrote

During the electoral campaign, Tutsi extremists kept repeating that a Hutu was not fit to rule over Burundi. And then, after the failed coup of 2-3 July, the Hutu extremists started to prepare on their side and to arm the population in case something would be done against the President⁶².

It is because of this twin and mutually reinforcing extremism that the violence of October-November could occur.

But the political dimension of this catastrophe was equally appalling. On the one hand, UPRONA and the Army gave the impression of being in an extremely ambiguous position. They did not openly condone the putsch but it took them three days before they finally declaring publicly against it. And their rallying to 'democratic legality' gave the impression not to have occurred because they were moved by a real deep-seated democratic commitment but much more because the coup was terribly poorly organised and because the international community had lost no time in rallying against it. On the other hand, the Government gave a terrible example. It remained holed up in the French Embassy in a state of utter confusion and irresolution. While Health Minister Jean Minani, who was in Rwanda kept, making incendiary proclamations on Radio Kigali, calling for the formation of a government in exile and the development of 'popular resistance' (which was understood to mean wider killings of Tutsi), Prime Minister Sylvie Kinigi kept floundering helplessly without establishing any kind of clear leadership. It took her government over one month to start working again on anything like a normal basis. In fact, the trauma - both the legitimate grievances and the mutual bad faith - on both sides was such that to this date (late October 1994) the country 61

⁶¹ given the reciprocal nature of the massacres, sources often tended to contradict each other, some writers preferring to insist on the violence of FRODEBU and the Hutu, others on the Tutsi Army repression. Thus *Le Monde*, Jean Hélène, 'Des réfugiés Hutu font état de massacres après le coup d'État contre le Président Ndadaye', 24/25 October 1993, presents a relatively 'pro-Hutu' case, while *Libération*, Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Purification ethnique au Burundi', 28 October 1993, presents a 'pro-Tutsi' view of events. More objective accounts can be found in *Le Monde*, 'Les massacres continuent alors que le pays est coupé du monde', 28 October 1993, and *Libération*, Gilles Millet, 'Vengeances aveugles dans les campagnes Burundaises', 5 November 1993. While the already mentioned *Burundi Report* remains the best objective guide to these tragic events, a typewritten document issued by the civil servants of Karugi Province entitled 'Lumière sur les massacres d'Octobre-Novembre 1993 dans la Province de Karugi', 10 November 1993, constitutes a very serious indictment of local FRODEBU authorities' responsibility in the organization of the massacres. *La Libre Belgique*, Marie-France Cros, 'Juger, pas lyncher', 13 November 1993, is a fair assessment of the need to make a distinction between the criminal activities of Tutsi extremists and the actions of ordinary Tutsi peasants.

⁶² *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, A. Kwigize and C. Uwera. 'Ce sont nos voisins qui nous ont poursuivis', 23 November 1993

has not yet recuperated and returned to a normal state of affairs.

4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CRISIS

4.1 A social and cultural crisis

The social and cultural aspect is often overlooked by the sources that concentrate on the violence done to the Tutsi minority⁶³. The Hutu had been progressively marginalised within the spheres of power as early as 1961, following the death of Prince Louis Rwagasore. Contrary to what had happened in Rwanda, and for political and cultural reasons which we have tried to outline in the first part of this paper, they had taken part in the independence movement on an equal footing with the Tutsi. They did not feel that there was a gap between the two communities and it is only with the murder of Pierre Ngendandumwe that the split became apparent.

The abolition of the monarchy had marked the end of the hopes for an integrated polity in Burundi. The military regimes of Presidents Micombero and Bagaza had institutionalised a most violent and hypocritical form of social discrimination, which had been enforced in 1972, by torrents of blood. Given this historical context, it was to be expected that President Buyoya could only be partially successful in his honest and genuine attempt at liberalization⁶⁴. Pent-up feelings of rage, resentment and injustice remained general in the Hutu populace. President Ndadaye's victory had been a remarkable symbol of peaceful compensation, a fact that Hutu radicals had immediately understood. But if PALIPEHUTU and other radical groups had been disenfranchised almost overnight, their continued marginalization depended on the peaceful unfolding of the new democratic experiment. President Ndadaye was not only a Head of State, he was an almost Christ-like figure who had come to symbolically release his people: from bondage. This feeling was due to history and symbolical politics, but it was also reinforced by the deepening economic crisis into which Burundi, like the other countries of the area, was gradually sinking after world coffee

⁶³ A perfect example can be found in the otherwise exact and well-informed article by Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Burundi: programs sur les collines', *Esprit*, (July 1994), which uses the term 'genocide' to describe the Tutsi massacres of October-November 1993. This piece, written in the emotional aftermath of the genuine genocide in Rwanda, tends to obscure the extremely deep and traumatic effect of President Ndadaye's murder on the Burundi Hutu population and the fact that, horrible as it may have been, the massacre of the Tutsi in Burundi was of a completely different nature from what was to happen in Rwanda six months later. Even if FRODEBU extremists aggravated the Burundi massacres, they could do so only because the feeling of the population was one of rage, shock and frustration after President Ndadaye's murder. This admittedly cruel and irresponsible use of popular feelings is nevertheless quite distinct from the cold-blooded and administrative planning of the Rwanda genocide by a government fully in control of the situation.

⁶⁴ There was even a genuine problem of semantics. From this point of view an anecdote reported by the newspaper *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, 16 November, 1993, is most illuminating: Secretary of State for Public Security Lt Colonel Lazare Gakoryo had gone to the market of the small town of Ndora (Cibitoke Province) to try to appease the crowds, and in his speech he used the expression: 'Tugire amahoro n'ubumwe bw'Abarundi' ('Let us create peace and unity for all the Burundi'). The crowd, which had so far remained peaceful, started to throw stones at him, shouting that 'unity (*ubumwe*), this is for the Tutsi'. This was the price to be paid for the unceasing appeals for 'unity' by the Buyoya regime during 1989-1993, a word which in the wake of President Ndadaye's murder did indeed seem like a rigged one-way slogan.

Prices had started a rapid decline in 1987-1988. This has been remarkably well understood by a Burundese (Tutsi) College Professor, writing in April 1994:

A growing part of the peasantry gradually realised that, through the system of export cash crops, it was caught in a situation, which completely blocked the way of any social and economic promotion for its children. In turn, these children realised that they could not escape from an agricultural economy whose remuneration steadily decreased ... The State remained the only hope ... For these poorly educated youths, these low-ranking civil servants and their peasant families, Ndadaye was more than a President. He was a King, a God, he was the only hope ... One should remember these women who took off their dresses to spread the cloth on the ground for Him to walk on. When one thinks of the sexual modesty of our Burundese women! ⁶⁵

Thus economic interests and political symbolism reinforced each other. President Ndadaye would have been bound to disappoint such enormous hopes. But he was not given the time. On the other hand, the motivations of the murderous political dinosaurs who confusedly tried to reverse the verdict of the polls were also linked with the exploitation of a social fear. And there we should quote again the same remarkable analysis by Ndarishikanye

The nominations of Hutu in the administration after July 1993, followed by the replacement of both Tutsi and Hutu UPRONA Civil Servants, down to such low levels as Communal Secretaries and marketplace watchmen ... frightened a lot of people into thinking that they were going to lose not only the symbols of their hegemony but their permanent sources of monetary income and of familial patronage. The press magnified this feeling and the UPRONA party played on it ... Demonstrations such as those of the students after the FRODEBU victory and the two later ones organised by UPRONA to protest against losses of employment can be seen in the perspective of this organised panic. This led some members of the Armed Forces to think that the whole of Burundese society was in a state of upheaval. ⁶⁶

Partly this crisis has been a crisis of identity, of habits, of culture. Life had functioned in Burundi for the last twenty-five years, well or badly, but according to a certain pattern. The election of Melchior Ndadaye and the restructuring of the administration at first, then of patterns of land tenure, of job opportunities and finally of Army structures, represented a tremendous jump into the unknown. Everybody had lost their bearings, positive or negative. Familiar reactions and past patterns of behaviour simply did not seem to operate any more. In a way, the paralysis of the Cabinet following President Ndadaye's murder was in itself typical of this aspect of the crisis: the FRODEBU Cabinet, quite literally, did not know what to do. The Hutu could have faced another 1972 (in fact, this is what they thought would

⁶⁵ Barnabé Ndarishikanye, 'Quand deux clientélismes s'affrontent', *Komera*, No 3 (March-April 1994)

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Happen; hence the rush into 'defensive' massacres while they were not threatened) but they could not understand the incoherence of the quasi-putsch-cum-murder. This was also the case on the Tutsi side. The would-be coup makers did not seem to really believe themselves that they would be able to turn back the clock through their action. Hence its confused and indecisive character. Hence also the ambiguous attitude of the UPRONA and Army power structures which neither supported nor condemned the rebels.

All around, fear had become the dominant motivation. Fear of losing their prestige and even their livelihood in the case of the Tutsi minority, fear of being victims of another 1972-like ikiza on the part of the Hutu; then minority fears for the Tutsi, that is the fear of total physical annihilation, on the pattern of what was to happen later in Rwanda. It is largely this pyramid of meshing fears, which caused the mutual massacres of October-November 1993. But the result has lived on even after the worst fears have somewhat been assuaged (or temporarily quietened). The result has been to create new pathological patterns of social behaviour. For example, in Bujumbura, both the Hutu FRODEBU civil servants and their Tutsi UPRONA colleagues go over in the evening to sleep in the Zairian town of Uvira if they can afford it, the Tutsi fearing a murderous mass uprising during the night and the Hutu fearing another Army coup. In the interior, the situation is even worse. The Tutsi are now all concentrated in the towns, under Army protection. Hutu farmers who wish to enter these towns do so at their own risk since the Army has become notoriously trigger-happy. On the other hand, the countryside itself is almost off limits for the Tutsi. The Army goes there only with armed convoys. Clashes remain frequent, especially in the North where PALIPEHUTU extremists are militarily organised. Communications between the economically mutually dependent towns and countryside can at times remind one of crossing the demarcation line in Beyrouth during the Lebanese civil war⁶⁷. One year after the symbolically sacrilegious murder of President Melchior Ndadaye, Burundi remains deeply divided and even more, basically lost. It is, according to the provocative formula of two British authors, 'the land that lost its head'⁶⁸. Beyond any sort of political analysis, ordinary peoples' consciousness seems almost paralyzed; there is no vision of the future. People go from one day to the next, living as they can, not even daring to imagine what will happen later. Any 'political' solution that will be somehow worked out will have to take into account this cultural and social anguish in order to have any chance of lasting; success.

4.2 A military crisis

The failed putsch of 21 October 1993 was in itself a crisis of the Army as an institution. Half in and half out of the putsch, it cannot be considered a neutral institution any more. For the Hutu (and not only the Hutu radicals, but even the moderate FRODEBU cadres) the Army is a purely Tutsi entity, highly suspect because of its behaviour during the coup and guilty of having 'restored order' in a most bloody way. And for the Tutsi extremists, it is a dubious ally because of its desire again to become a national politically neutral body. Thus it is

⁶⁷ Personal interview with Professor Joseph Gahama, Paris, 23 July. Personal interview with Professor Christian Thibon, Paris, 30 September 1993.

⁶⁸ John Edlin and Colin Legum, 'Burundi: the land than, lost its head', *The New African*, (February 1994)

trusted by nobody while having the formidable task of trying to maintain law and order not only against the constant attacks of PALIPEHUTU extremist guerillas operating with the backing of ex-Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR)⁶⁹ but also in spite of Tutsi extremist militias in Ngozi and Kirundo Provinces who are always keen to 'punish' supposed Hutu extremists.

On top of the problem of having to maintain law and order in rural provinces in spite of a tarnished image, the Burundi Army also has a major problem of law and order in the capital itself with the quasi insurrection of the Kamenge area of Bujumbura. Kamenge was a near-personal fief of Interior Minister Leonard Nyangoma, an extremist member of FRODEBU ⁷⁰, who through his contact with the Police de l'Air et des Frontières (PAF - Air and Borders Police), headed by Festus Ntanyangu, a famous Hutu extremist, managed to arm his followers. There were constant skirmishes throughout February and March, until the Army finally moved in on 27 April 1994, occupying at the same time the Cibitoke, Kinama and Mutakura areas of the capital. Fighting lasted till early May and hundreds of weapons were confiscated while several dozen people: were killed". In a way, this only lead to a displacement of the problem, many of the extremists just moving to the hills surrounding Bujumbura and keeping tenacious guerrilla warfare going directly on the outskirts of the city". Even the disarming of Kamenge was only partial: between 12 and 16 September fighting flared up again in that section of town and the Army had difficulty in re-establishing control.

Urban violence is endemic: riots on the occasion of the arrest of opposition leader Mathias Hitimana (8 August 1994: four people killed); a grenade thrown in the Bujumbura Central Market (11 August 1994: eleven wounded); FRODEBU MP Sylvestre Mfayokurera shot dead (20 August 1994; a grenade thrown in the Bujumbura Central Market (5 September 1994: fifty wounded); FRODEBU MP Norbert Ndhikubwayo wounded in an assassination attempt (16 September 1994) - these are the daily occurrences which are facing the Army, the Police not being really capable of dealing with the violence, especially as when, during the various phases of the Kamenge fighting, it takes the form of heavily armed urban warfare. The Army, hampered by its dubious political and human rights track record⁷³, is faced with

⁶⁹ *Le Monde*, 'Burundi: affrontements entre l'armée et les extrémistes Hutu', 18 October 1994

⁷⁰ After living in self-imposed exile for over six months in Belgium, Minister Nyangoma was replaced in the new cabinet formed on October 5th 1994 by Jean-Baptiste Manwangari, an UPRONA Tutsi.

⁷¹ See *L'Humanité*, 3 May 1994; François Misser. 'Senza Uscita', *Nigrizia* (June 1994); and *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Kenyan News Agency*, 29 April 1994.

⁷² *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Burundi*, 13 June 1994: fighting in the Isale and Kanyosha *communes* (at least 15 killed). *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Kenyan News Agency*, 29 June 1994: fighting in the hills around Bujumbura (14 killed).

⁷³ The officers compromised in the coup of 21 October 1993, starting with Chief of Staff Colonel Jean Bikomagu himself, are still in charge today. The murderers of President Ndadaye such as Lt Jean-Paul Kamana himself and his accomplices Lazare Busokoza and Sylvestre Nyingaba were allowed to discreetly slip out of the country and take refuge in Uganda where media exposure: eventually led to their deportation to Zaire. *The New (vision 21 January 1994)*

the double challenge of Hutu extremist militias (FROLINAT, Armée Populaire, PALIPEHUTU) and of Tutsi extremist urban youth gangs ('Les Sans-Echecs') who are holding the moderate population, whether Tutsi or Hutu, as hostages to their violent political aims.

4.3 A political crisis

Social, cultural and military, the present Burundi crisis is also, and perhaps overwhelmingly, so a political crisis. Its components are relatively simple, but they combine with each other to create an extremely difficult situation:

1. A radical Hutu fringe which is decided to go beyond 'victory at the polls' and to wrestle total political control from the Tutsi, preferably by massacring them. For them, the murder of President Ndadaye has been a godsend since it started the crisis of the moderate Hutu' opposition and gave them a marketable cause. They are represented both by illegal organizations such as the PALIPEHUTU or the militias and by radical elements within FRODEBU itself.
2. A radical Tutsi fringe which believes that power has to be wrested back from the Hutu, whether extremists or moderates, by force if needed, and who thinks that a good Hutu is either a submissive or a dead Hutu. They are represented by the micro-parties such as RADDES, PRP or PARENA⁷⁴ as well as by some of the UPRONA mainstream opposition.
3. A moderate opposition (UPRONA) which is always pushed to make unreasonable demands because of pressure from its extremist fringe, and because the Army tells it that unless tremendous pressure is put on the FRODEBU Government, the Army might have to stage a coup. Colonel Elikomagu and his men present themselves, as 'moderates', who are pushed by younger more radical officers, like those who carried out the confused action of 21 October 1993.
4. A moderate FRODEBU government which has had to give in time and time again to the demands of the Tutsi opposition because of the constant threat of another military coup, and which now begins to lack credibility with its own Hutu political base because it is seen as being feeble.

One could therefore say that the whole of the political game played for the last year has been a steady confrontation between the FRODEBU mainstream and the UPRONA mainstream, each one operating under the pressure of its own extremist fringes, but also using the threat represented by these extremist fringes to scare the other side into a better bargaining position.

⁷⁴ Parti de la Réconciliation Nationale (Party for National Reconciliation), created in August 1994 by former dictator Jean-Baptiste Bagaza.

The first episode of this multi-faceted confrontation was the *opérations ville morte* ('operation Dead City') organised by the opposition in January 1994 when they forced Bujumbura and other major towns to literally stop dead. It started as a 'protest' against the choice of Agriculture Minister Cyprien Ntaryamira as the new President on 5 January 1994⁷⁵. Then the confrontation grew when five (Tutsi) judges from the Supreme Court who had refused to accept the choice of the new President (in spite of a vote from the Assembly) were dismissed from their positions⁷⁶. The opposition immediately launched another *opération ville morte*, with dire consequences. Rioting broke out leaving twelve people dead". Eventually President Ntaryamira was confirmed in post on 5 February after an agreement with the opposition which meant a small reduction in FRODEBU's power. Two days after being confirmed, President Ntaryamira chose as Prime Minister Anatole Kanyenkiko, a moderate UPRONA Tutsi with a Hutu mother and married to a Rwandese Hutu⁷⁸. In the Kanyenkiko Cabinet inaugurated on 10 February, two fifths of the ministries went to opposition members. This did not prevent Joseph Nzeyimana, President of the RADDES Tutsi extremist micro-party⁷⁹, from protesting against the 'lack of concertation' of FRODEBU for its ministerial choices, and to threaten the new cabinet with further *opérations ville morte*. Tutsi monarchist extremist Mathias Hitimana simply accused the government of 'treason' and asked for the resignation of the Kanyenkiko cabinet.

In retaliation, Justice Minister Fulgence Dwima Bakana, a Hutu hardliner, ordered the release from prison of André Baryimare, one of the organisers of Tutsi massacres in Ryansoro *commune* (Province of Gitega). He also invited the Director of the Kibimba Secondary School, notorious for having burnt alive his Tutsi pupils, to the inauguration of President Ntaryamira⁸⁰.

The FRODEBU majority and the opposition were inextricably linked in government, like those couples who hate each other but who are forced by circumstances to live together. They were most of the time without a shred of good faith or genuine desire to collaborate in solving problems. Every event every occasion was seen only as an opportunity to accuse the other side of various evils. And most of these accusations were indeed true since plenty of evil had been committed and plenty kept on being committed.

Interior Minister Léonard Nyangoma armed the Hutu bastions of the capital and encouraged them to insurgency". The Army used its role as keeper of law and order to try breaking 75 *Le Monde*, 7 January 1994; *Libération*, 7 January 1994

16 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio Vlaanderen International* [Brussels], 30 January 1994 77 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Panafrican News Agency* [Dakar], 31 January 1994

In the tense and byzantine world of Burundese politics, descent, province of origin, marriage, marriages of your relatives, all these factors are relevant in terms of one's position within the field of political forces.

⁷⁹ For himself Nzeyimana had obtained the Ministry of Commerce.

⁸⁰ *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, 12 February 1994

⁸¹ *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, 9 March 1994

the back of opposition militias and to help the extremist Tutsi gangs⁸². In March alone, 30,000 people fled Bujumbura to escape the street fighting between the various militias⁸³. But in spite of this constant violence, things did not quite go to the bitter end. When 3 officers and 50 paratroopers attempted a coup on 24 April, they did not manage to get any sizable Army unit to follow them. The UN Special Representative in Burundi, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, a rather outspoken and very courageous diplomat, expressed best the exhaustion felt by a number of observers at this perpetual game of brinksmanship, where the (relatively) safe politicians kept playing games while the population suffered, when he said: The extremist elements do not want any solution. They play for time, one does not know what for I did not see any goodwill in June when the Government - the largest party - was dragging its feet, and I did not see it in July either when it was the turn of certain fractions of the opposition to drag their feet. Currently [late July 1994] there is a deadlock ... this is childish behaviour, when the population is in such a desperate situation. The Security Forces are tired. Since October [1993] they have been trying to hold the floodgates; they have had to provide security in the country and ensure security at the border⁸⁵; and in the meantime all the politicians on all sides are just sitting around in Hotel Novotel, talking.⁸⁶

And yet, this evil, dangerous and bloody political face-off slowly moved towards some kind of a solution, perhaps partial and temporary, but a solution anyway. By mid-August, Charles Mukasi, the new Secretary General of UPRONA, was coolly asking for three fifths of government portfolios (while his party had received 32 per cent of the vote in the Presidential election and 22 per cent in the legislative one), his argument being that 'FRODEBU has by now showed proof of its incompetence and technical incapacity to manage the crisis'. Haggling went on for another month, and then on 12 September a power-sharing agreement which for the first time looked serious was signed between the government and the opposition⁸⁸. Fifty-four precise and carefully-worded articles detailed the workings of the prolonged crisis government, defined what was and what was not acceptable, outlined peace-keeping mechanisms. Everything gave the impression of having been thought out and of being considered realistically.

⁸² *Le Renouveau du Burundi*, 26 March 1994

⁸³ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio France Internationale*, 30 March 1994

⁸⁴ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Africa No 1*, 25 April 1994; *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *RTBF* [Brussels], 25 April 1994

⁸⁵ By this Mr Ould Abdallah means the protection of the northern border with Rwanda during the hectic and violent days of April to June 1994. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Radio France Internationale*, 30 July 1994 *Le Monde*, 18 August 1994

⁸⁸ A previous power-sharing agreement signed on 12. July had been a pragmatic, one could almost say indecent, carving up of important positions, allocating 9 Governorships for FRODEBU and its allies, 7 to the opposition, 14 Embassies to the government, 9 to the opposition and so on. It did not solve anything institutionally.

There were no abstract principles. Institutionalised defiance was the keyword. The whole document looked as if its draftsmen realised that 'peace was not around the corner', that they were going to have to live with the crisis and that the best way to survive it was not to deny its existence but on the contrary to design 'permanent crisis mechanisms'. The contending parties, in a sense, 'agreed to disagree' and to go on living in that state of tense but perhaps less violent confrontation.

On 30 September Provisional President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya was 'elected' by the Assembly⁸⁹. He confirmed Prime Minister Kanyenkiko in his position (3 October) and a new cabinet was assembled by 5 October. Everything had been quick and relatively trouble-free. Extremists gave a kind of reverse proof that the Agreement was serious this time when they tried, without too much success, to cause an uprising in Kamenge in the hope of breaking it up'.

5. CONCLUSION

One has to be extremely careful in assessing a situation such as the one in Burundi today. The people who have cobbled together a working power-sharing arrangement and a cabinet, who have carved up the main positions in the country, are not idealist politicians. Most of them, if not all, are ruthless practitioners of a very rough brand of realpolitik. But they might have reached a point where the violent confrontation that has now lasted for a year is proving pointless to all except the most fiery and irresponsible extremists. Those could still derail everything, either if they are Hutu through well-coordinated massacres of civilian Tutsi, or, if they are Tutsi, by pushing the Army into a coup. Nevertheless, these catastrophe scenarios are less probable now than they were even six weeks ago. Prolonged political and even military attrition, with its attendant disastrous economic effects, is beginning to make an impact on peoples' consciousness of the situation. Long after the ordinary people and in much milder ways, the elite is also beginning to hurt. If not reason, then at least self-interest begins to reassert itself.

Another factor is horror. Everybody has suffered. At least 100,000 people have died in a year. Grudges have been settled, and counter-settled, old wounds reopened, new ones made fingers have been pointed at guilty parties and certain nausea is setting in. The danger comes from the two opposite ends of the social spectrum. From the political 'elite' which is relatively safe through its bodyguards and protected villas and which can hope to get much from 'politics'; and at the other end from the unemployed youths who have very little hope of anything in the way of legal gainful employment and who can get something by 'working' as militiamen and through looting. Neither of these two categories is very sensitive to cruelty and violence. But they are a minority and they cannot quite go it alone. They need broader social support to organise killings or to carry them out. Extremist politicians and extremist unemployed youths can create real violence only when the ordinary people passively or actively condone their activities.

89 President Cyprien Ntaryamira had been killed together with President Juvénal Habyarimana of Rwanda on 6 April 1994 when their plane had been shot down as it was about to land at Kigali Airport.

90 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, quoting *Agence France Presse*, 14 September 1994

From that point of view, the Rwandese genocide and its consequences have had a strong didactic value. People now realise how far politics can actually take them.

A sort of unconventional democracy is being developed whereby the opposition is learning how far it can go in its unreasonable demands and whereby the Hutu majority is also learning that arithmetical majority is not enough to monopolise a society and eliminate a minority. Rough rules of thumb are being developed. Haggling has become a way of life; but, as it develops, guns are less likely to be used. There is no trust, but institutionalised distrust is bringing a measure of something that might look like peace after a time.

The greatest danger remains social anomy bred by poverty which can lessen self-interest and open the way for desperate gambles from actors who have little left to lose. This is why economic aid is very much needed; economic, and not humanitarian aid, that is aid with an economic global approach and not the kind of spoon-feeding given to traumatised refugees. Aid is the only lubricant that can guide a fragile situation of armed truce towards a progressively saner working mechanism. Overall, limited violence should be expected to keep happening, causing possibly tens of thousands of refugees in quick short spurts. These refugees are very unlikely in the present situation to move north towards Rwanda as they used to. They will go to Zaïre and Tanzania. But extremely large numbers of refugees, of a 'Rwandese' type magnitude, are unlikely to occur in the near future; it would take an Army coup followed by an all-out repression on the 1972 model to cause such a movement. In any case, Burundi will remain a refugee-producing country for some time. But it is unlikely to spectacularly blow up on the Rwandese pattern because there is at present no group, which has the organization and the will to carry out the type of thorough and coherent genocide we have seen in Rwanda.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amnesty International. *Prisoners of conscience and political detainees held in Burundi*. London: Amnesty International. May 1987.

L'Aube, 8 December 1992

BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, quoting *Radio France Internationale*, 3 June 1993 quoting *Radio Burundi*, 25 June 1993

_____ Quoting *Radio Burundi*, 10 July 1993 quoting *Radio Burundi*, 5 August 1993

Quoting *Radio Vlaanderen International* [Brussels], 30 January 1994

Quoting *Panafrican News Agency* [Dakar], 31 January 1994 quoting *Radio France Internationale*, 30 March 1994

Quoting *Africa No 1*, 25 April 1994 quoting *RTBF* [Brussels], 25 April 1994

Quoting *Kenyan News Agency*, 29 April 1994.

,quoting *Radio Burundi*, 13 June 1994 quoting *Kenyan News Agency*, 29 June 1994

Quoting *Radio France Internationale*, 30 July 1994

quoting *Agence France Presse*, 14 September 1994 Bududira, Mgr

Bernard 'Vivre en frères dans le Burundi aujourd'hui et demain'. *Bulletin d'Informations Africaines*. No 136, (15 November 1988)

Burundi. Commission Nationale. *Rapport de la Commission Nationale chargée d'étudier la question de l'unité nationale*. Bujumbura, 1989

Burundi. Karugi Province. Civil Service 'Lumière sur less massacres d'Octobre-Novembre 1993 dans la Province de Karugi'. 10 November 1993 (typescript)

Carral, C. 'Burundi: l'Église sous surveillance étatique'. *La Revue Nouvelle* (Février 1986)

Chrétien, Jean-Pierre. 'Burundi: progromes sur les collines'. *Esprit*, (July 1994)

Chrétien, Jean-Pierre. *Burundi: l'Histoire retrouvée*. Paris: Karthala. 1993

Chrétien, Jean-Pierre. 'Hutu et Tutsi au Rwanda et au. Burundi' in Jean-Loup Amselle and Elikia M'Bokolo (eds). *Au coeur de l'ethnie*. Paris: La Découverte. 1985.

Chrétien, Jean-Pierre, A.Guichaoua and G.Le Jeune. *La crise d'Août 1988 au Burundi*. Paris: Centre de Recherches Africaines. 1989 (Cahiers, No 6)

Edlin, John and Colin Legum. 'Burundi: the land that lost its head'. *The New African*, (February 1994) Gahama, Joseph. *Le Burundi sous administration belge*. Paris: Karthala. 1983.

Hakizimana, Déo. *Burundi: le non-dit*. Vernier: Éditions Remesha. [1991]

Harroy, Jean-Paul. *Burundi (1955-1962)*. Brussels: Hayez. 1987

_____ *Rwanda (1955-1962)*. Brussels: Hayez. 1984.

Human Rights Watch/Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme. *Rapport de la Commission Internationale d'Enquête sur les Violations des Droits de l'Homme au Burundi depuis le 23 Octobre 1993*. Brussels. July 1994

L'Humanité, 3 May 1994

Kiraranganya, B.F. *La vérité sur le Burundi*. Sherbrooke: Éditions Naaman. 1977

Lemarchand, René and D. Martin. *Génocide sélectif au Burundi*. London: Minority Rights Group. 1974

Lemarchand, René. *Rwanda and Burundi* New York: Praeger. 1970

Libération, Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Purification ethnique au Burundi', 28 October 1993

_____ Gilles Millet, 'Vengeances aveugles dans les campagnes Burundaises', 5 November 1993 7 January 1994

La Libre Belgique, 3 June 1993

Marie-France Cros, 'Première crise pour le pouvoir au Burundi', 4 October 1993

Marie-France Cros, 'Juger, pas lyncher', 13 November 1993

Manirakiza, M., *La fin de la monarchie burundaise (1962-1966)*. Brussels: Le Mat de Misaine, 1990 *Burundi: de la révolution au régionalisme (1966-1976)*. Brussels: Le Mat de Misaine. 1992

Marchés Tropicaux, Jean-Pierre Chrétien, 'Tournant historique au Rwanda et au Burundi', 1 October 1993

Meyer, H., *Die Barundi*. Leipzig: Otto Spamer Verlag. 1916.

Misser, F., 'Democrazia assassinata'. *Nigrizia*, (December 1993) 'Senza Uscita'. *Nigrizia*, (June 1994)

Le Monde, Jean Hélène, 'Des réfugiés Hutu font état de massacres après le coup d'État contre le Président Ndadaye', 24/25 October 1993

, 'Les massacres continuent alors que le pays est coupé du monde', 28 October 1993 7 January 1994

_____ 18 August 1994

_____ 'Burundi: affrontements entre l'armée et les extrémistes Hutu', 18 October 1994

Mworoha, Émile (ed). *Histoire du Burundi des origines à la fin du XIXème siècle*. Paris: Hatier. 1987

Mworoha, Émile. *Peuples et Rois de l'Afrique des Lacs*. Dakar: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines. 1977.

Ndarishikanye, Barnabé. 'Quand deux clientélismes s'affrontent'. *Komera*, No 3 (March-April 1994)

The ,.New Vision, (21 January 1994)

Pabanel, Jean-Pierre. 'Statistiques tribales au Burundi en 1986'. *Politique Africaine*. No 43 (December 1988) PALIPEHUTU. 'Communiqué No 6'. (May 1988)

Prunier, Gérard 'La crise rwandaise: structures et développement'. *Refugee Survey quarterly*, vol. 13, No 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1994).

Prunier, Gérard. *L'Ouganda et la question indienne (1896-1972)*. Paris: Éditions ERC. 1990

Le Renouveau du Burundi, 16 November 1993

_____ A. Kwigize and C. Uwera, 'Ce sont nos voisins qui nous ont poursuivis', 23
November 1993

_____ 12 February 1994

_____ 9 March 1994 26 March 1994

Reyntjens, Phillip. *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise*. Paris: Karthala. 1994

Warson, Catherine. *Transition in Burundi: the context for a homecoming*. Washington DC: US
Committee for Refugees. September 1993.