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Decision on Rwanda

A General Overview

The crisis in Rwanda resulted from a complex political and social situation that emerged from the historical development. The extent of the ethnic divide as the main cause for the conflict is questionable because ethnic groups in Rwanda have a long and complicated, and partly not fully documented history. The two main groups in Rwanda are the Hutu and the Tutsi. There are diverging theories as to the origins of the inhabitation of Rwanda: one is that Hutu and Tutsi are not two separate ethnic groups, and that the division was artificially created by the colonists. Another theory suggests that the Hutu arrived in Rwanda around the year 1000 and ruled the country until the arrival of the Tutsi in 1400. The Tutsi were a cattle-herding tribe who migrated from southern Ethiopia and became the economic and political leaders, though always in the minority. Although the culture and language of the two groups merged into one over time, the social and economic differences remained.

The Years from 1894-1973

During the colonial expansion of the late 19th century, Rwanda was gifted to Germany.

Since the Germans were completely dependent on the existing government, they kept the indigenous administration system by simply applying a type of indirect rule. After Germany's loss in the First World War, the Rwandan protectorate was given to Belgium with a League of Nations mandate. The Belgians needed someone to look after the tea and banana plantations, and so they chose the larger Tutsi because they seemed superior and they looked more European. As a result, the Tutsi became even richer and more powerful and the Hutu remained poor-working class people. The old state apparatus was disrupted and forced labor policies were introduced. The Belgians used the Tutsi as buffers against people's anger.

Consequently, the situation of the Hutu masses worsened and their suffering was more extreme than ever before. In the 1930s, the Belgian arbitrarily classified the whole population either as Hutu or as Tutsi, giving everyone an identity card. Since it was not always possible for the Rwandans themselves to determine their ethnicity by physical appearance, the Belgians often handed out the identity cards randomly just by looking for some differences. Some people were simply defined as Tutsi because they had more money or more cows.

As a result the divide in society became more distinct with the Hutu clearly discriminated against in all aspects of life.

After The Second World War, Belgium remained the administrative authority, although it was now considered a UN trust territory. Then in 1957, when the Hutu first called for an end to their oppression, a bitter and truly violent struggle for independence began. When in 1959 the Tutsi king Mutara III Charles died under mysterious circumstances, violence increased rapidly. A series of killings of Tutsi began and the country was put under martial law and curfew. Thousands of people were killed and thousands of families fled. Belgian authorities replaced Tutsi leaders with Hutus. Tutsis sent petitions to the UN expressing their suspicion that the killing was organized. As a consequence, the UN sent a special commission to Rwanda.

From 1959 onwards, a racist ideology, intolerance and hatred together with propaganda and a distortion of history prevailed. In 1962 Rwanda gained independence from colonial rule.

The president of this new republic, Gregoire Kayibanda, was a Hutu and installed an exclusively nationalist Hutu government. Thousands of Tutsi families fled mostly to Uganda in the north where refugee camps were set up with the help of the UN. Two attempts were made by the Tutsi to overthrow the regime of Kayibanda but both failed. Due to this, a planned campaign to eliminate political Tutsi opponents began followed by numerous waves of killing Tutsis in a cruel way. 10,000 to 14,000 were estimated to have been killed.

This political situation in Rwanda gained brief international attention, but the fact of genocide was never officially acknowledged and no one was punished.

The Years from 1973-1993

On 5 July 1973, President Kayibanda's regime was overthrown in a coup led by the Hutu General Juvénal Habyarimana. Even though he first promised to reunite the nation, he went on to create a rigid one-party state. This party was called the Movement Révolutionnaire National Pour Le Développement (MRND) and every Rwandan had to be a member. This was the beginning of a twenty-year dictatorship. It led to a degree of stability in Rwanda even though the situation remained uncertain for the Tutsi. Habyarimana did a lot for the development of the country, improving the infrastructure and he had fairly good reputation as a "benign" dictator in the Western world. However, for the majority of poor Rwandans the situation worsened. In 1989, there was drastic decline in economy, and, ultimately, there was a new wave of ethnic tensions. Those Tutsis who had lived in exile for up to thirty

years were now forming the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). This was a small but highly effective military and political movement.

On October 1, 1990, this RPF rebel army crossed the border from Uganda and invaded northeastern Rwanda, declaring war on the Habyarimana regime. Their demands included the abolition of identity cards and political and economic reforms. The invasion was seen as an attempt to reestablish Tutsi leadership, and the government responded with even harsher pogroms against Tutsis. France assisted the regime by providing financial and military support. Belgium did likewise but later withdrew because of a law forbidding the military to take part in a civil war. Under a new strong and charismatic leader Paul Kagame, who gave them direction, discipline and strategy, the RPF attacked again in January 1991, and this time they launched a dramatic operation that was a blow to the French-backed Rwandese Government Forces (RGF). There were three years of sporadic fighting between the RPF and the RGF, and the civil war not only divided society, but also created political instability and a severe economic crisis. During this period Hutu extremism increased decisively. They trained a young militia, secretly sent out weapons to civilians, and even had a Tutsi hate-propaganda radio station, Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM).

By 1991, the Rwandan government was caught between the strong rebel army and international pressure for democratic reform. President Habyarimana started the on-again, off-again negotiations that formed the basis for the peace talks then taking place in Arusha, Tanzania. This finally led to the Arusha Peace Agreement (Arusha Accords), signed on 4 August, 1993 in Arusha, Tanzania, by the RPF and the government of Rwanda. This peace treaty put an end to the civil war and should have been the beginning of a peace process resulting in the establishment of democracy and human rights. The agreement provided for a Neutral International Force (NIF) set up by the UN to supervise the implementation of the treaty during a transitional period of 22 months. The Secretary-general sent a mission to Rwanda from 19 to 31 August 1993 (resolution 846) to study the possible functions of the NIF and the resources needed for such a peacekeeping operation. The mission was led by Brigadier-General Roméo Dallaire, at the time Chief Military Observer of the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR). Given the ethnic nature of the conflict and the shaky ceasefire, with some hardliners opposing the agreement, the potential for ethnic killings by demobilized soldiers and 600,000 displaced people, mostly Tutsi, wandering back in the country, it was clear for Dallaire that he would need to be able to confront such challenges with military force. Therefore, in the rules of engagement (ROE) for this mission he proposed the use of a deadly force for self-defence and to prevent crimes against humanity.

Instead of a 2,500 to 5,500 personnel requested by Dallaire, the United States, Russia and France actually insisted that the mission would only need a force of only five hundred to one thousand personnel. To pull that urgent deployment of the mission off, a commitment from a major Western military power with enough equipment and the right materials in order to being independent of UN support, would be needed. Only the Belgians had come forward, but given their colonial past in Rwanda, their support was not favoured. Other contributing nations were largely deficient in material and sustainability. Dallaire was told that without the generosity of donor nations for both troops and equipment he would have to clearly cut down his requests. Based on the report of the mission, on 5 October 1993, the Security Council established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and set up a limited mandate compared to what the mission had demanded (resolution 872). Dallaire was appointed Force Commander of the new mission.

Recent Developments

While the RPF and some smaller parties were truly committed to Arusha, there were still enough hardliners in the government's MRND party who were opposing it. The political process towards peace took a slow and halting course. Most of the stages outlined in the Arusha Accords were put off, and their accomplishment was uncertain. In November and December 1993, UNAMIR reported that 60 people were ruthlessly killed, and although it was obvious that the ethnic conflict was continuing, it was impossible for Dallaire to get a good estimate of the situation. UNAMIR often witnessed inflammatory broadcasts by RTLM. All Tutsi were labelled RPF supporters and referred to as cockroaches. On 1 January 1994, Rwanda became a non-permanent member of the Security Council. As a result, the government had now access to secure documents concerning the mission in Rwanda.

On 3 February Dallaire warned New York in the strongest terms and expressed his fear of violent demonstrations, armed attacks on ethnic and political groups, and possible attacks on UNAMIR installations. Due to the growing violence, the RPF, lost confidence in the peace process and restarted to prepare for war by training their troops and taking up defensive positions. On 21 and 22 February, Félicien Gatabazi, Minister of Public Works and head of the social-democratic party was killed and as a result tensions rose in Kigali and the whole of Rwanda. This was another blow at a time when the country was in a severe economic crisis, with salaries not being paid, public schools being closed, medical care lacking resources and people starving to death.

On 6 April 1994, when President Habyarimana and the president of Burundi were returning from a regional conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the plane was shot down as it was going to land at Kigali airport. The plane exploded and everybody on board was killed. This was probably a well planned coup d'état, though it was never properly investigated and could therefore never be verified. Within an hour of the plane crash, roadblocks were set up at many streets in Kigali and the killings started, initiated by the Hutu extremist militia. The UNAMIR patrol was sent to investigate the crash but was stopped on its way by the militia. The RTLM broadcast that the RPF and a contingent of United Nations forces were responsible for the crash of the presidential plane. There was complete chaos and great uncertainty as to who was in charge after the president's death. On April 7, the Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, fled with her husband and her five children from her home and sought refuge at the UN compound in Kigali. Shortly afterwards, Rwandan soldiers entered the compound, found the Prime Minister and shot her on the spot. Ten UNAMIR Belgian peacekeepers, who had been assigned to protect her, were murdered.

Timeline

- 1885 The Berlin Conference agrees that Rwanda-Burundi should become a German protectorate.
- 1923 Rwanda-Burundi becomes a mandated territory of the League of Nations under the supervision of Belgium.
- 1933 The Belgian administrators organize a census and everyone is issued with an identity card classifying everyone as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa.
- 1945 Transfer of the Belgian mandate to a UN Trust Territory.
- 1957 Publication of the Hutu Manifesto, calling for an end to their oppression.
- 1959 Tutsi king Mutara III Charles dies under mysterious circumstances, and a series of killings of Tutsi begins. Thousands of people are killed and thousands of families flee.
- 1960 Rwanda's first municipal elections give Hutu a large majority.
- 1962 Rwanda gains independence. The Hutu Kayibanda installs an exclusively nationalist Hutu government. Two attempts by the Tutsi to overthrow the regime of Kayibanda both fail. Due to this, a planned campaign to eliminate political Tutsi opponents begins and an estimated 10,000 to 14,000 were killed.
- 1973 Coup d'état by Hutu Major Juvénal Habyarimana. Creation of a rigid one-party state.
- 1978 Habyarimana becomes president of Rwanda after an election in which he was the sole candidate.
- 1990 The Tutsi rebel-army, RPF, invades Rwanda, starting a civil war. France, Belgium, and Zaire send troops.
- 1992 Boutros-Boutros-Ghali takes office as the sixth Secretary-General of the UN.
- 1993**
- April The ICRC warns that because of the displaced people in Rwanda there is a risk of a major humanitarian catastrophe. Famine is imminent.
- June The Security-Council adopts resolution 846, creating the UN Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR).
- Aug. The Arusha Accords are signed between the Rwandan government and the RPF. Multy-party, which are to include the RPF, are scheduled to be held within twenty-two months. Brigadier-General Roméo Dallaire is appointed force commander of UNAMIR.
- Oct. The UN Security Council passes resolution 872, creating the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) which is to help to implement the Arusha Accords.
- Dec. UNAMIR peacekeepers are in place in Rwanda.
- 1994**
- Jan. Rwanda takes its seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.
- The Security Council adopts resolution 893 approving deployment of a second infantry battalion to the demilitarized zone.

- Transitional government fails to take off, with each side blaming the other for blocking its formation.
- Dallaire informs UN headquarters there is an informer from the heart of Hutu Power who warns that a genocide against the Tutsi is planned. Dallaire tries to persuade UN headquarters that he be allowed to conduct arms seizures.
- Feb. Dallaire warns New York of the deteriorating situation of weapons distribution, death squad target lists, and pleads for reinforcement.
- March Boutros-Ghali writes a report to the Security Council that the security situation is deteriorating and requests an extension of the mandate of UNAMIR for six months.
- 5 April The Security Council, with resolution 909, renews the mandate for UNAMIR with a threat to pull out in six weeks unless the Arusha Accords are applied.
- 6 April Rwanda's President Habyarimana and Burundi's President Ntaryamira and a number of government officials returning from negotiations in Tanzania are killed when the plane in which they are traveling is shot out of sky on its approach to Kigali airport. The RTLM broadcast that the RPF and a contingent of United Nations forces are responsible for the crash of the presidential plane. The UNAMIR troops are not allowed to properly investigate the crash.
- 7 April Systematic killing of opposition politicians, pro-democracy Hutu and Tutsi begins. Ten peacekeepers guarding the prime minister are killed. Armed militias begin an organized round-up and slaughter of Tutsi and political moderates in Kigali. The violence escalates and spreads.

Recommended Reading

Books

- Barnett, Michael: *Eyewitness to a Genocide*, Cornell University Press, New York 2002
- Dallaire, Roméo: *Shake Hands with the Devil*, Random House Canada, Canada 2003
- Gourevitch, Philip: *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, Picador, New York 1998
- Hatzfeld, Jean: *Machete Season – The Killers in Rwanda speak*, Picador, New York 2005
- Kayitesi, Annick: *Wie Phönix aus der Asche*, Heyne Verlag, München 2005
- Melvern, Linda: *A People Betrayed: The role of the West in Rwanda's genocide*, Zed Books Ltd., New York 2000
- Melvern, Linda: *Conspiracy To Murder – The Rwandan Genocide*, Verso, New York 2006
- Temple-Raston, Dina: *Justice on the Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists, Their Trial for + War Crimes and a Nation's Quest for Redemption*, Simon & Schuster Ltd., New York 2005

Internet Links

General background information:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/>
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1288230.stm>
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/>
http://www.ppu.org.uk/genocide/g_rwanda.html
<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>

Report of the Independent Inquiry into the actions of the United Nations during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (New York 1999):

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/395/47/IMG/N9939547.pdf?OpenElement>

Statement of the Secretary-General on receiving the report of the Independent Inquiry (New York 1999): http://www.un.org/News/ocsg/sgsm_rwanda.htm

UN resolutions concerning Rwanda:

1994: <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1994/scres94.htm>
1993: <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1993/scres93.htm>
http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions.html

ICTR: <http://69.94.11.53/default.htm>

Films

Hotel Rwanda, Terry George 2004

Shake Hands With the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire, Peter Raymont 2004