

GEMN:

Global Episcopal Mission Network

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN A REFUGEE'S LIFE AND THE RECONCILIATION IN RWANDAN CRISIS

a chronology of essential facts in the Rwandan crisis

- ◆ Precolonial time
- ◆ Colonial time
- ◆ Rwanda regains its independence

LOCATION



♦ Its physical area is 26,338 square km. It borders Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi. It's a complete landlocked country (approximately 1700km from Indian Ocean and approximately 2000km from Atlantic).

♦ It sheltered a population of about 7,736,00 inhabitants before April 1994 (I am not sure about the current situation). This population is composed by three ethnic groups: Twa (less than 1%), Hutu (85%), and Tutsi (14%). They speak the same language (Kinyarwanda) and share the same culture.

♦ Long before Germans conquered Rwanda in 1890, all oral traditions (*Ibitekerezo*: 15th century, *Ubucurabwenge*: 16th century, *Ubwiru*: 17th century, *Ibyivugo*: 18th century, *Indilimbo*: 18th century, and *Amazina y'inka* in the 19th century) exalted the pastoralist Tutsi.

♦ In a kingdom based on arrow and cattle, all racial philosophy of Ancient Rwanda was based the domination of Tutsi over other ethnic groups (Hutu and Twa).

Colonial time



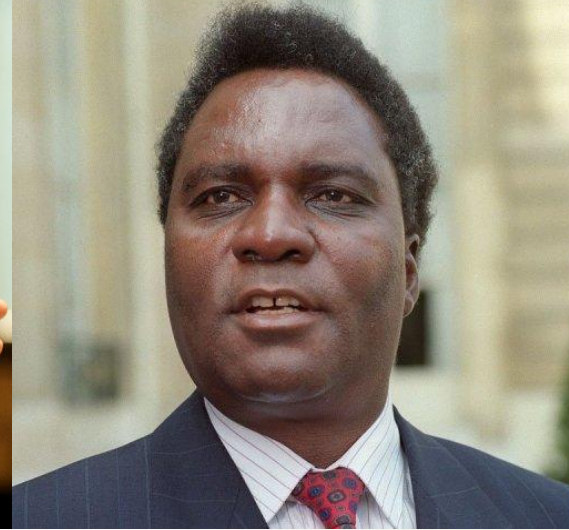
Before Colonial time, the Tutsi monarchy was very much aware of the existence of three ethnic groups and the socio-economic inequalities that characterized their relationships. Indeed, in conquering the Hutu kingdoms, Tutsi never socially integrated Hutu and Twa in a way that could create a homogeneous society free from discrimination.



♦ When Colonial powers came, Germans first and then Belgians, they maintained the status quo. The latter went as far as opening schools exclusively reserved to young Tutsi promising them to take over from their fathers in different posts of administration.

♦ Throughout ages, the spirit of superiority of a Tutsi over other ethnic groups has been cultivated in the mind of the population (by Tutsi themselves first, by colonialists, by the church, and by the European anthropologists).

POST COLONIAL TIME



- ◆ At a certain point unfortunately, Hutu and Twa came to believe that they were inferior to Tutsi in every thing.
- ◆ But, by the schooling of few Hutu, things changed and in 1962 when Rwanda regained its independence, Tutsi were excluded or almost excluded from the management of the republic and the Hutu elite thought of themselves as unmovable rocks. Indeed, the dance was the same, only the dancers had changed.
- ◆ Throughout ages, the interethnic relations in Rwanda have been always tense (before, during and after the colonial period, indeed, until today).
- ◆ There is a cycle of violence and oppression in Rwanda such that a Hutu has come to think that they would better be led by a bad Hutu than a good Tutsi and vise-versa, a Tutsi has come to think that they would rather be led by a bad Tutsi than a good Hutu

Chronology of Essential Facts

- Although Tutsi and Hutu shared a common language and traditions in a pre-colonial centralized kingdom, like I said, the status differences between a pastoralist Tutsi aristocracy and a subject Hutu peasantry were solidified by the colonial powers: first Germans and then Belgians into a rigid caste system that favored the elite minority Tutsi.
- In 1912, a tentative revolution led by Ndungutse in the northern part of Rwanda was organized in revolt against the forced labor done by Hutu in favor of Tutsi. It was later on bloodily suppressed by the German imperial forces.
- In 1935, the colonial power introduced the national ID card with mention of ethnic, and clan group in order to maintain the Tutsi system in place. Tutsi fought this card in the 1950's though when things turned around. It was also used in 1994 during the massacres in identifying Tutsi.

Continuum

- Throughout the 1950's, political parties based mainly on the ethnic groups were created (MDR Parmehutu: Hutu, APROSOMA: Hutu, UNAR: Tutsi, RADER: Tutsi, RADETWA: Twa. In 1959, a bloody revolt known as "Social/popular revolution" was organized and overthrew the Tutsi monarchy. This culminated in the death of an estimated 10,000 Tutsi and caused an additional of a number of Tutsi (some scholars like Khadiagala estimate this number at 130,000) to flee into exile in neighboring countries.
- After a series of elections, including a referendum on mode of governance (monarchy or republic), in July 1962, Rwanda regained its independence. The republic was institutionalized and for the first time after over 400 years, a Hutu became the head of Rwanda.
- In the early 1960's, Tutsi refugees attempted a number of armed invasions (10 of them between 1962-1967) targeting Hutu and the Hutu government to regain their former position in Rwanda. Each leading to retaliatory killings of large numbers of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda and creating new waves of refugees.

Continuum

• In 1972, there occurred widespread massacres of Hutu by Tutsi in the neighboring Burundi and rose ethnic tensions in Rwanda. This led to reprisals against the Rwandan Tutsi (especially in schools, university, and among the population).

In July 1973, this served as a pretext for a coup d'état staged by the army chief of staff Major General Juvénal Habyarimana.

In 1975, he erected a one-party state, MRND and his rule marked a shift from southern Hutu elites and from civilian to the military northern Hutu elites.

In the 1980's, the country faced an economic decline and externally, the régime was pressurized for democratization. This led to opposition groups that demanded political reforms and in June 1990, the country started knowing some strikes and demonstrations by university students.

In September 1990 a commission to work out a national political charter that would allow the establishment of multiparty system was appointed (by the president).

On October 1st 1990, the hitherto unknown RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front: made by exiled Tutsi with three Hutu in the apparent leadership to fool the International Community about its true identity) led its first attack against Rwanda from Uganda. It met little resistance since the Rwandan armed forces (5000 men) were ill prepared and scored a number of victories.

On Oct. 17th 1990 at a summit meeting in Mwanza Tanzania, Habyarimana promised to initiate dialogue with both internal and external opposition under the auspices of OAU's secretary-general to end conflict. This dialogue was to be preceded by an observance of a cease-fire that was to be monitored by neutral troops agreed upon by parties concerned. RPF refused this proposal.

- In February 1991, a conference was held in Tanzania between Rwanda, its neighbors, OAU, and UNHCR. Despite the promises made by both Rwanda and the neighbors towards Rwandese refugees, since the RPF was excluded from those talks, it derided the agreement and demanded direct dialogue with the government.

- On March 29th, 1991 an act lending legitimacy to the RPF occurred: at N'sele in Zaire, Mobutu was able to propose an immediate cessation of hostilities as a prelude to negotiations on power sharing and the government of Rwanda agreed on direct negotiations with RPF. In June 1991, the Rwandan legislature approved a multiparty constitution with executive power shared between the president and the prime minister.

- Parties were formed sort of reviving the 1950's parties. In the Fall of 1991 negotiations based on a transitional government of national unity between the government and opposition parties began. The major political parties signed a protocol that established a coalition transitional government with Mr. Dismas Nsengiyaremye as a prime minister in April 1992.

- In June 1992, Tanzania with a broad mandate from OAU started the mediation of the so-called "Arusha Peace Agreement." Representatives from France, Germany, Belgium, the USA, the UN, Burundi, Zaire, Uganda and OAU also attended as observers. First focus: reaching an agreement on a durable cease-fire.

Continues

- Deployment of NMOG (45 OAU NMOG from Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zimbabwe; task: creation of buffer zone. Creation also of a joint Political Military Commission of representative from Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, Belgium, France, and the USA to oversee the work of the NMOG and to coordinate the final peace agreement.

The second round of negotiations started on August 10th, 1992 with the agenda, "establishment of rule of law based on National Unity, democracy, and respect of human rights." On August 18th, 1992 the protocol ad hoc was signed.

• This opened to the third round of negotiations concerning the power sharing. This power sharing was to be within the framework of Broad-Based Transitional Government (Habyarimana would remain the president during the transition, but most of his powers would be shifted to a coalition cabinet led by a prime minister, a transitional national assembly which would be established to assist the cabinet in governing, and a judiciary independent of the executive). The goals of the transitional government were to implement democracy, consolidate national security and reconciliation, repatriate refugees, and establish the mechanism for post war reconstruction. The protocol ad hoc was signed on October 30th, 1992.

• In February 1993, the RPF broke the cease-fire and launched an offensive against government troops, doubling the territory under its control and advancing to a few kilometers from Kigali (the capital of Rwanda).

• On March 7th, 1993 Tanzania organized a high level summit to obtain the parties' commitment to conclude a peace agreement → Cease-fire obtained, → Gradual repatriation of French troops to be replaced by an international force
Between March and June 1993, negotiations dealing with the integration and formation of a new national army, the resettlement of refugees, and the details of the transitional arrangements. → The government strongly favoring a UN force instead of an OAU one.

• The Arusha peace Agreement was signed on August 4th, 1993. Its timetable for establishing transitional institutions by September 10th, 1993 were based on the unrealistic assumption that the neutral international force could be deployed in little more than a month and that, with the arrival of that force, French troops, which had been stationed in Rwanda for a number of years would be withdrawn.

The genocide is looming

- Only Habyarimana was sworn in as the president of the transitional government, all other organs never materialized. Meanwhile assassination opposition leaders increases.

- On April 6th 1994, a high level summit was organized in Dar-Es-Salaam over the problem of Rwanda, and Habyarimana attended. His airplane was shot down when it was landing at Gregoire Kayibanda International Airport of Kanombe. Both Habyarimana and the president of Burundi, their entourage, and the crew (of French nationality) were killed.

That very evening, the massacres of people of the opposition intensified and RPF resumed defensive war on 4 fronts. Days later, massacres embraced all Tutsi, those who resembled to Tutsi, and moderate Hutu. A genocide that took “1,000,000.00” people ended within 100 days as RPF defeated the FAR and took power.

- In late May, France led an intervention in Rwanda (Opération Turquoise) under UN chapter VII mandate that saved some Tutsi who were still in hiding and spared lives of Hutu who were fleeing RPF reprisals.

In July 1994, the war ended with the RPF victory. Millions of refugees went into exile and the RPF formed the new government. Revenge, reprisals, arbitrary executions, imprisonment of innocent people followed. All political activities were suspended indefinitely. The rule of terror, militarism, and totalitarianism where the elite minority was in total control was installed. The rebel leader becomes defacto president and the strong man of Africa. This strong man led a multiple attacks directed to Congo.

Personal experience and church

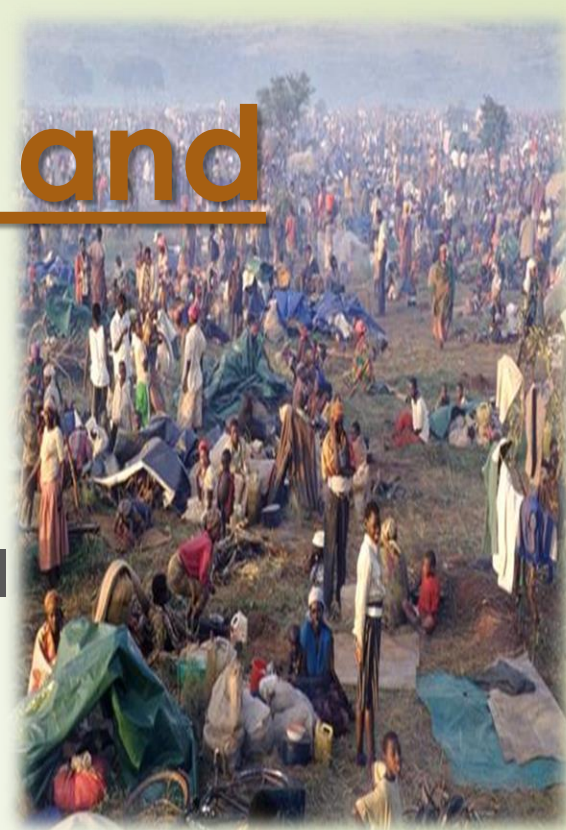
Married on 8/21/1993

Left Rwanda on January 8th, 1994
heading to Kenya (sent by the Episcopal
Diocese of Kigeme, Rwanda)

Went to Zaire in July 1994 and lived in
one of Refugee Camps there up to
September 1995 (connected to Eveche
Anglican de Bukavu, Zaire)

Went back to Kenya in September 1995
(sent by the Episcopal church of Kigeme,
Rwanda)

Came to the USA in September 1999 and
January 2000 and since then we serve in
the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts.



Theology of Reconciliation in Rwanda



"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Romans 3:23

<https://vimeo.com/107867605>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5pAg5uwr9E>.

Reconciliation is an act of changing a relationship between two or more persons for the better. Forgiveness and justice are among many ingredients in the ministry of reconciliation.

It was tried recently by the South African Reconciliation Commission
Rwandan National Unity and Reconciliation Commission

conclusion



Currently, it is a crime to mention such terms like Hutu and Tutsi. Instead “Ndumunyarwanda”. Then who reconcile with who? One group is pursued while the other is enjoying impunity. That hinders reconciliation. Rwanda needs leaders who will love Rwandans more than they love their ethnic groups and their regions

Rwanda needs leaders who would respond to the Berrigan brothers’ call “to follow the revolutionary life and teaching of Jesus. Leaders who are willing to follow the “Jesus movement.”

The truth needs to be told for reconciliation to happen; forgiveness and impartial justice for all are vital for the reconciliation in Rwanda to be palpable.