

**BANYARWANDA REFUGEES IN BURUNDI, KENYA,
TANZANIA, UGANDA AND ZAIRE**

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BANYARWANDA REFUGEES IN BURUNDI, KENYA, TANZANIA, UGANDA AND ZAIRE

1. BASIC FACTS ABOUT RWANDA

Area: 26,338 sq.kms. Almost the same size as the former colonial power - Belgium.

Capital City: Kigali.

Neighbouring Countries: Zaire (West); Tanzania (East); Uganda (North); Burundi (South).

Population: About 6 million inside Rwanda and about 3.1/2 million refugees outside - mainly in the neighbouring countries mentioned above.

Ethnic Groups: Hutu, Tutsi, Twa.

National Language: Kinyarwanda - the only language shared and spoken by all Banyarwanda.

Other Languages: French, English and Kiswahili.

Climate: Temperate, with dry seasons (Jan-Feb; June-Sept) and wet seasons (March-May; Oct-Dec).

Chief Commercial Products: Coffee, tea, tin, wolfram and pyrethrum.

2. CAUSES OF THE BANYARWANDA REFUGEE PROBLEM

In 1959, a Belgian Colonel by the name of Guy Logiest, was sent to Rwanda to re-establish "law and order." He was given the title of "Résident Spécial" and some exceptional military powers.

Guy Logiest has recently written a book (1989) entitled: Mission au Rwanda in which he explains how he successfully crushed the nascent nationalist party - UNION NATIONALE RWANDAISE (UNAR) which was behind the struggle for independence. He also explains how he successfully managed to create a puppet regime in Kigali

which is responsible for keeping 3.1/2 million Banyarwanda in exile for the last 30 years.

Rwanda had been a German colony until the end of the First World War. Belgium then took it over as a protectorate until 1962 at the time of independence.

When the Belgians arrived in Rwanda, they found a well established system of government under the King - "Umwami." They also found that the Germans had allowed a form of "indirect rule" which left some powers to the King and the King's appointed chiefs and sub-chiefs. The Belgians decided to maintain that system. As a result, a small aristocratic group of people - mainly from the Tutsi ethnic group - which had ruled Rwanda for hundreds of years, continued to rule and to enjoy all the privileges and favours of the Belgian colonial masters during the forty years of their co-habitation in power.

It should be noted that not all the Tutsi belonged to the ruling aristocratic group although the Tutsi were on the whole better off than most Hutu and Twa. There were some cases of Hutu and Twa Chiefs in Rwanda who would however claim to be Tutsi after some years.

It should also be noted that all Banyarwanda (Tutsi, Hutu, Twa) have the same culture and speak the same language - Kinyarwanda. There has always been intermarriages between the three ethnic groups in Rwanda, especially between the rich or educated Hutu men and Tutsi women; although Tutsi men usually marry within their ethnic group.

By the late 1950's, the then ruling King Mutara III, Rudahigwa - who was a nationalist - started taking measures to end the differences between the three ethnic groups. His reforms were not however appreciated by the Belgian Colonial power, who resented his links with other nationalists in Africa who were struggling for independence.

When Mutara III died in 1958 under very suspicious circumstances, other nationalists in Rwanda, notably the late Francois Rukoba (a Hutu) decided to continue the struggle by founding a nationalist party - UNION NATIONALE RWANDAISE (UNAR) whose main aim was to lead Rwanda to independence. At that time, around 1959, that was considered to be the worst crime against the Belgians who were not prepared to leave their colonies. Those were the

circumstances which led to Colonel Guy Logiest's mission to Rwanda.

Logiest had been previously operating in neighbouring Congo (now Zaire) where he had distinguished himself by capturing the well known nationalist, Patrice Lumumba, in Stanleyville (now Kisangani). For the Belgian colonial government, Logiest was therefore the right man for the job in Rwanda.

What had particularly angered the Belgians was to see most of their protégés - the aristocrats in Rwanda joining UNAR party in order to throw out the colonial power. To them that was the worst ingratitude and the Tutsi aristocrats had to be punished. According to Logiest's book: Mission au Rwanda, the original plan was to punish the King's appointed chiefs and sub-chiefs. When he arrived in Rwanda however, Logiest decided that all the Tutsi ethnic group had to go - whether they were part of the aristocratic group or not!

To begin with, he called a meeting in November 1959 assembling all the A.T.'s (Agents Territoriaux) - Belgian Territorial Administrators and they decided to sack all the Tutsi chiefs and sub-chiefs and to replace them with Hutu chiefs. Appointing chiefs and sub-chiefs had always been a prerogative of the King.

He then actively got involved in the founding of a sectarian party - PARMEHUTU, an acronym for PARTI DU MOUVEMENT DE L'EMANCIPATION HUTU - a party for the emancipation of the Hutu, and gave it all the government support. The man who was selected to lead PARMEHUTU, Gregoire Kayibanda, assured the Belgians that he was not asking for immediate independence like UNAR party was doing. In a document reproduced in Logiest's book: Mission au Rwanda, PARMEHUTU Party begs the Belgians to stay in Rwanda until the Hutu were capable to defend their rights. "Nous supplions le gouvernement Belge de ne pas nous retirer sa tutelle jusqu'à ce que le peuple Hutu, suffisamment émancipé puisse lui-même défendre efficacement ses droits."

UNAR party had been formed as a nationalist party for all Banyarwanda irrespective of whether they were Hutu, Tutsi or Twa. Its President, Secretary General and Treasurer were for example Hutu and so were the majority of the party's regional chairmen. In giving all the support to PARMEHUTU - a sectarian party as the name clearly indicates, Colonel Logiest was aiming at dividing Banyarwanda so that PARMEHUTU becomes a party for the Hutu and UNAR a party for the Tutsi.

Assured of powerful support from Colonel Logiest and the Belgian troops, PARMEHUTU leaders launched the 1959/60 massacre of UNAR party members and of the Tutsi. Many Hutu who refused to participate in the massive fratricide were also branded UNAR and hunted down. Whole villages were put on fire and there was widespread looting of Tutsi property. Thousands of Banyarwanda were massacred because they were either UNAR party members or simply because they were Tutsi.

Although thousands of Hutu UNAR party members were eventually forced to join PARMEHUTU party in order to save their lives, it was largely because of their clandestine assistance that more than one million Tutsi survivors managed to escape to the neighbouring countries of Tanzania, Burundi, Zaire, Uganda and Kenya.

Colonel Logiest and the PARMEHUTU leaders had apparently expected a total genocide of the Tutsi. He laments in his book that the Hutu did not want to kill the Tutsi but simply to chase them away. "Il était clair que dans la plupart de cas, ils (Hutu) ne voulaient pas la mort de Tutsi, mais simplement qu'ils s'en aillent ailleurs."

When Rwanda became independent in 1962, Colonel Logiest and Belgian troops stayed behind to train the Rwandan army. Gregoire Kayibanda the leader of PARMEHUTU party became President and Juvenal Habyalimana eventually became the top man in the newly created army.

President Kayibanda had an obsession to exterminate the Tutsi. Using the government army, he launched other waves of massacres of the Tutsi in 1963, 1966 and 1973. Again Tutsi survivors had to escape to the neighbouring countries.

In July 1973, the army under Major-General Juvenal Habyalimana decided to overthrow President Kayibanda. Habyalimana declared that his government would create more social justice. Refugees' hopes of going back to their country were quickly shattered however. President Habyalimana told them that Rwanda is too small to accommodate all Banyarwanda. He advised refugees to stay where they are.

3. BANYARWANDA REFUGEES

For the last 30 years, about 3.1/2 million Banyarwanda refugees have been living in the neighbouring countries of Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire.

There are those who live in towns, mainly in the slums of Bujumbura (Burundi) and of Nairobi (Kenya). Many others in Uganda, Tanzania and Zaire were put in refugee settlements in remote, sparsely populated areas, where it was initially difficult to live because of various reasons such as: remoteness from schools and hospitals; tsetse infested forests or lack of clean water.

The early 1960's were generally difficult years for the refugees. By the late 1960's however, with the help of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and other refugee organisations, most of them had become self sufficient in food and other basic needs. They had also managed to build a few primary schools and dispensaries and to live like other local communities around them.

There are however some specific problems which face refugees. Most of them survive on subsistence farming on small pieces of land which were allocated to them within the refugee settlements. They have no other sources of income and they are often not allowed to leave the refugee settlements in order to look for employment. When their children complete primary schools they find it difficult to pay fees for them in secondary schools, and have to stop their schooling there.

Churches and various refugee organisations have greatly helped in getting scholarships for those refugee students who obtain very good results in national examinations. Many of them end up working in various African cities on contracts. A few have settled in Belgium, Switzerland, France, U.S.A. and Canada. However, the majority of Banyarwanda refugees have continued to live in traumatic conditions of the refugee camps.

For the last 30 years of their exile, Tanzania is the only country which has publicly invited Banyarwanda refugees in Tanzania to take up Tanzanian citizenship. In all other countries, refugees have to make individual applications.

In Burundi and Zaire many Banyarwanda who thought they had become nationals found their citizenships cancelled and had to lose also their jobs and other benefits. The situation became much worse in Uganda when some elements in the second government of

Milton Obote, in 1982, decided to kill, burn and confiscate Banyarwanda land and other property under the pretext that all Banyarwanda in Uganda were refugees.

It is well known that during the partition of Africa, the Banyarwanda speaking community was split in four. One community found itself in Uganda, a second one in Congo (now Zaire), a third in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), while the biggest Banyarwanda community is in Rwanda. There were therefore and there are still, large Banyarwanda communities in Uganda, Zaire and Tanzania, who had nothing to do with the refugee question. The dialects of Kinyarwanda spoken in these countries are slightly different from the standardised Kinyarwanda language spoken in Rwanda.

4. RWANDESE PATRIOTIC FRONT (R.P.F.) AND THE INVASION OF RWANDA ON 1st OCTOBER 1990

On 1st October 1990, Banyarwanda refugees invaded Rwanda from Uganda. Within two days, fighting was reported to be taking place within the capital city of Kigali, around the international airport and the presidential residence.

The French, Belgian and Zairean Governments quickly sent their troops to help Rwandan soldiers repulse the returning refugees. The Belgian and French troops defended Kigali the capital and allowed foreign nationals to leave the country, while the Zairean troops were deployed in the north-eastern region of Rwanda where the attackers had taken three towns of Gabiro, Nyagatare and Kagitumba.

The force which invaded Rwanda is known as: RWANDESE PATRIOTIC FRONT (R.P.F.). R.P.F. claims to represent the aspirations of all Patriotic Banyarwanda both inside and outside Rwanda. The following are some of the policies in Rwanda which R.P.F. has denounced:

- The Government of Rwanda is the only one in independent Africa which still uses a person's ethnic group or tribe and not nationality, as a means of identity. Every Munyarwanda inside Rwanda had (until R.P.F. invasion) to carry an identity card indicating that he or she is either a Hutu, Tutsi or Twa. Introduced by the Belgians during the colonial era, the pass-identity system is a legacy that Kayibanda and Habyalimana's regimes found useful. It is both racist and divisive in that it

alienates brother from brother, cultivates a sense of loyalty to one's ethnicity and undermines the spirit of nationalism.

- The second policy known as "proportionate representation" or "ethnic balance" is used to define the role and privilege of every Munyarwanda in the country's socio-economic and political life. The policy argues arbitrarily that the Hutu are 90%, Tutsi 9% and Twa 1% and that their participation in the national life must be measured accordingly. Competence and merit from other ethnic groups in Rwanda do not count because the Hutu have to get the lion's share.
- The third policy which has been denounced by R.P.F. is "the policy of regional balance" which has resulted in the polarisation of relations between the people of that country. Africa Confidential Vol. 30, reported some fierce power struggle between President Habyalimana's clan and the clan of Habyalimana's wife. Informed sources in Rwanda say that if you don't come from the region of the Presidential couple, then doors are banged in your face! That has led to widespread cases of nepotism and corruption.
- R.P.F. has finally denounced Habyalimana's negative attitude against the plight of Banyarwanda refugees. The regime's policy that refugees should stay where they are because Rwanda is small is unacceptable.

R.P.F. fighters are said to be Banyarwanda "deserters" from the Uganda National Resistance Army. They are said to have gained considerable experience in protracted guerilla warfare while in Uganda. they are presently reported to be in the Kagera National Park and in the game reserve area of Mutara in the north-eastern Rwanda where they have succeeded in paralysing the important routes and towns of Gatuna and Kagitumba through which all the imports and exports of landlocked Rwanda pass.

The civil war in Rwanda has exacerbated an already worsening economy. Returns from coffee - the country's biggest foreign exchange earner - have been poor, since the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in July 1989. Tourism which is also Rwanda's important foreign exchange earner has now been disrupted by fighting. These factors must have led to the recent 40% devaluation of the Rwandan Franc and the sharp increases of the prices of petrol and of all other essential commodities in Rwanda which were announced on 12th November 1990.

5. A REGIONAL SOLUTION

Before the break-out of the civil war, Kigali and Kampala were engaged in talks concerning Banyarwanda refugees in Uganda. The talks were a follow-up of a joint communiqué issued November 17, 1989 in which the governments of Uganda and Rwanda noted that they had reached a common agreement aimed at solving the problem of Banyarwanda refugees living in Uganda.

According to the communiqué carried in a Ugandan Newspaper, New Vision of November 18, 1989, the two sides agreed that an independent committee of experts be set up by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to study and establish all "relevant facts" about Banyarwanda refugees living in Uganda.

The "relevant facts" would include: the total number of refugees in Uganda; the number that wishes to go back to Rwanda; those who wish to remain in Uganda and therefore be naturalised; those who wish to resettle in a third country; and finally the assets owned by each refugee.

At the time, R.P.F. pointed out that Banyarwanda refugees do not live in Uganda alone. A separate solution between Rwanda and Uganda would create division and confusion among the refugees and it would complicate the whole process of finding a global solution.

It was also pointed out that although the two governments had taken a commendable step to study the refugee problem, they had no mandate to reach any solution without the participation of the refugees themselves. R.P.F. regretted that the two governments had not addressed themselves to the conditions that led refugees to flee from their country and whether those conditions had been solved. R.P.F. finally declared that it would be ready for constructive talks with Rwanda Government when the regime in Kigali will have abandoned the discriminatory policies in force and questioning the right of all Banyarwanda refugees to go back to their country.

President Habyalimana owes the survival of his regime to the quick intervention of the Belgian, French and Zairean troops in Rwanda. Six weeks after the start of the civil war, he conceded some changes in Rwandan policies which have now allowed some negotiations to begin. This time the talks are directly between R.P.F. and Rwanda government delegates under the chairmanship of President Mobutu.

President Habyalimana announced in the Rwandan Parliament - the abolition of the former identity card which will be replaced by a new one which does not bear one's ethnic group. He also announced that a new constitution is being drafted which will cater for a multi party system in Rwanda within 8 months. He finally announced a release of 2500 prisoners, and this information was reported to have been confirmed by Red Cross sources in Rwanda.

Concerned parties now have an opportunity to reach a global solution for all Banyarwanda refugees in the region.

The Belgian Prime Minister and a French Minister for Cooperation made several consultations with various leaders in the region - following the invasion. They both promised their government assistance and the assistance of the European community in finding a solution to the Rwanda problem.

The Heads of State in the region have also held several meetings on the issue. They asked President Mobutu to chair the talks between R.P.F. and the Rwanda Government delegations. They also asked President Museveni who is the current chairman of the organisation of African Unity to organise a conference on the question of Banyarwanda refugees.

The Presidents of Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi should also use the opportunity to reconsider the good old idea of forming a federation between the three countries. Zaire is vast, sparsely populated and potentially rich while both Rwanda and Burundi are overpopulated and too small to become viable on their own. Their human resources would however be a big asset in such a federation.

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