

RW/MISCELLANEOUS/940422A
MINISTRY FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE
IN RWANDA

FRENCH REPUBLIC
Paris, 25 April 1994

-MEMO-

A/S: RWANDA

The attack that cost the life of President Habyarimana and which was the immediate cause of the events we are seeing in Rwanda today was probably the work of the FPR. The future of this country and the sub-region depends on the balance that becomes established, on the basis of which a political agreement must be negotiated.

The destruction of President Habyarimana's aeroplane on 6 April was in all likelihood caused by an attack. Three eye witnesses (cabinet director and daughter of the Head of State, commander of the presidential guard of Kanombe) cite rocket fire. These witness statements are corroborated by others, which have not always come from sources favourable to President Habyarimana.

There is no material element to enable responsibility for this attack to be determined at this time. The FPR denies being the perpetrator and attributes it to elements hostile to the Arusha agreements, notably the presidential guard.

Admittedly, no hypothesis can be definitively rejected. The theory of responsibility of those close to President Habyarimana is however very fragile. It relies on the fact that the fire originated from Kanombe, where there was a camp of the presidential guard. But there is nothing to prove that it came from inside this camp. The disarray of the Rwandan authorities on the day after the attack and their initial decisions (appointment of an interim Head of State and government, call for dialogue with the FPR) do not tally with the idea of an attack arranged by them. Lastly, the death in the same attack of the President of the Republic, the Head of Security and the Chief of Staff of the Army has seriously weakened the Rwandan army, which could have found the means to sabotage the agreements at a lower cost to it.

The responsibility of the FPR, although unproven, is much more likely. The material indications are few: persistent rumours according to which the Front had SAM missiles in Kigali, departure of almost all leaders of the FPR for Mulindi in the days preceding the attack.

It particularly seems indeed that during recent months the FPR learned of the fact that the planned transition in Arusha did not result in a takeover of power for it. The agreements seemed initially very favourable to the Front. Its strategy relied, it seems, on the following elements:

- forming allies with the opposition parties of the interior to obtain a systematic majority of 2/3 at the Assembly and in the government,
- totally replacing the local administration before the end of the transition,
- discrediting President Habyarimana and his entourage by Human Rights cases and corruption cases, with the possible outcome of deposition (according to the planned mechanism in Arusha),

And yet, it appeared more and more clearly over the weeks that the success of this strategy was not guaranteed:

- the opposition parties of the interior, allied to the FPR during the Arusha negotiations to remove powers from the Head of State, tended after having achieved this result to resume their distance with regard to the FPR in order that it was not the only beneficiary. This evolution took place either by progressive refocusing of the whole party (case of the PSD, under the influence of Mr Gatabazi up to his assassination), or by breaking up the party (case of the PL, divided into two factions clearly marked in favour of the FPR and the President; case of the MDR where the future Prime Minister, indulgent with regard to the FPR, was not supported by the majority of his party, claiming the anti-Tutsi revolution of 1959 and the Parmehutu),
- the assassination of President Ndadaye of Burundi in October 1993 recomposed the political landscape according to ethnic divides, which were brutally aggravated. Consequently, the language of the FPR – challenging ethnic differences and presenting as a political movement – was out of step in relation to Rwandan opinion. The gap no longer separated the camps of “change” (FPR + opposition) and conservatism (the presidential party), but the “republicans” (heirs of the 1959 revolution which brought the Hutus to power) and the partisans of the FPR,
- Lastly, international opinion, which since the beginning of the war in October 1990 has been generally open to the theories of the FPR, evolved in a direction which was not always favourable to the Front, as demonstrated in a joint declaration of the observing countries and the special representative of the secretary general of the United Nations, published in Kigali and blaming the FPR on the specific issue of the entry of the CDR into the institutions.

The FPR was therefore in an uncomfortable situation: the parliamentary and governmental arithmetic no longer gave it control of the institutions, the obstacles to the establishment of these institutions were multiplying, and serious logistics problems (notably supplies) were beginning to arise in the zone it controlled.

It seems that a rewriting of the scenario of January/February 1993 has thus been attempted: to drive the FAR to make a mistake in order to have the pretext for a resumption of combat. Several incidents in the demilitarised zone and assassinations have however not sufficed to arouse a reaction from the Rwandan authorities, which in fact fear a trap of this type.

The death of the President and the principal army and security leaders, in triggering the cycle of bloody reprisals exercised by part of the presidential guard against the opposition and the Tutsis, has given a pretext to the military intervention of the FPR.

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The future of Rwanda today is firstly at stake in the field. The FPR has won military successes, but the resistance of the FAR has not yet enabled it to take a decisive advantage. The appointment of Colonel Bizimungu, commander of the operational sector of Ruhengeri, demonstrates the determination of the Rwandan army.

The issue of the reinforcements that the FPR may have, originating from the Ugandan troops currently being demobilised, and the supply of both parties in munitions, will have crucial importance.

The ratio of forces that become established must then be translated into political terms. In this respect, each party has its own problems. For the Rwandan authorities, this relates to finding a leader who can become the successor to President Habyarimana and unifier of the Hutus. This does not currently seem to be a possibility from the ranks of the MRND (presidential party), the principal leaders of which are renowned rather for their long-standing loyalty to the former President than for their abilities to lead the people. Perhaps the MDR, 1959 heir of Parmehutu and the first Republic, the bastions of which are in the south of the country, will detect such a man within it, but he must then be accepted by the army (mainly from the north).

On the side of the FPR, the key problem is that of the political transformation of any military victory. The FPR alone, reduced to its Tutsi dimension (in spite of the presence of several Hutu leaders), cannot easily hope to take the country. It must therefore, as was initially planned within the framework of the implementation of the Arusha agreements, find allies. It is faced with a threefold difficulty to do this: its own intellectual rigidity, which leads it to reject every agreement with the MRND, even though it admitted itself very recently that the presidential party represents a real political force in the country; the death of most of the opposition leaders who could have played a key support role while having a real establishment in the country; and the probable reticence of Rwandan personalities to the idea of allying to a party which is perceived as the expression of Tutsis alone.

In this context, the efforts of our country should relate to the following points:

- maintaining a certain international presence in Rwanda. The UNAMIR remains useful, because it may enable the belligerents to meet on neutral territory when they are ready to reopen discussions, and because it will be the international guarantor of any agreement. The disappearance of UNAMIR would undoubtedly no longer enable us to obtain from the Security Council, when the time comes, a new resolution reviving it.

Similarly, the MONUOR (mission d'observateurs à la frontière ougando-rwandaise) should be maintained and even reinforced, in order to be able to effectively exercise its mandate. Not only is it only attached to UNAMIR administratively (on the express request of Uganda), but its personnel, deployed only on the Ugandan side, do not incur any risk.

The risk of being surprised by the international community in the act of assisting the FPR may have a moderating influence on President Museveni.

The key to the Rwandan problem is in fact firstly in Ugandan hands. The support of the FPR in manpower (demobilised), in material and in munitions relies essentially on Kampala. We have the means to influence the Ugandan decisions, in stressing the risk for Uganda of making the instability in Rwanda permanent (very likely, in the scenario of a military victory of the FPR), in putting this issue back within the framework of our global political dialogue with Uganda, and in also using bilateral (donation from the Treasury) and multilateral (World Bank) financial arguments.

- the international community should continue to be mobilised in favour of a solution to the Rwandan problems. In particular, calls for a ceasefire could be more insistent. It is the FPR which refuses a ceasefire, as UNITA has done in Angola. The argument according to which it will stop fighting only when the atrocities and massacres are interrupted reverses the chain of causality. While it is accurate that on the announcement of the death of the President the atrocities began straight away and gave grounds for the armed intervention of the FPR, today the situation is rather the reverse: the Hutus, while they feel that the FPR is trying to take power, will react by ethnic massacres. Only a stop to the fighting could enable the situation to be progressively taken in hand.