

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF RWANDA

105. The Accused have conveyed to the Chamber, in their testimony and otherwise, the importance of understanding the history of Rwanda, and more specifically the history of ethnic identity and inter-ethnic relations, in understanding the events that transpired in 1994 in Rwanda. The Accused Ngeze repeatedly cited and challenged the first sentence of the Indictment:

1.1 The revolution of 1959 marked the beginning of a period of ethnic clashes between the Hutu and the Tutsi in Rwanda, causing hundreds of Tutsis to die and thousands more to flee the country in the years immediately following.

106. The Chamber notes that in the first judgement of this Tribunal, the history of Rwanda was examined in detail from the pre-colonial period. The Chamber accepts the importance of this history, particularly in this case, and for this reason sets forth largely *in extenso* the comprehensive review of the historical context as described in the *Akayesu* judgement:¹⁸

80. Prior to and during colonial rule, first, under Germany, from about 1897, and then under Belgium which, after driving out Germany in 1917, was given a mandate by the League of Nations to administer it, Rwanda was a complex and an advanced monarchy. The monarch ruled the country through his official representatives drawn from the Tutsi nobility. Thus, there emerged a highly sophisticated political culture which enabled the king to communicate with the people.

81. Rwanda then, admittedly, had some eighteen clans defined primarily along lines of kinship. The terms Hutu and Tutsi were already in use but referred to individuals rather than to groups. In those days, the distinction between the Hutu and Tutsi was based on lineage rather than ethnicity. Indeed, the demarcation line was blurred: one could move from one status to another, as one became rich or poor, or even through marriage.

82. Both German and Belgian colonial authorities, if only at the outset as far as the latter are concerned, relied on an elite essentially composed of people who referred to themselves as Tutsi, a choice which, according to Dr. Alison Desforges, was born of racial or even racist considerations. In the minds of the colonizers, the Tutsi looked more like them, because of their height and colour, and were, therefore, more intelligent and better equipped to govern.

83. In the early 1930s, Belgian authorities introduced a permanent distinction by dividing the population into three groups which they called ethnic groups, with the Hutu representing about 84% of the population, while the Tutsi (about 15%) and Twa (about 1%) accounted for the rest. In line with this division, it became

¹⁸ *Akayesu* (TC) paras. 80-111.

mandatory for every Rwandan to carry an identity card mentioning his or her ethnicity. The Chamber notes that the reference to ethnic background on identity cards was maintained, even after Rwanda's independence and was, at last, abolished only after the tragic events the country experienced in 1994.

84. According to the testimony of Dr. Alison Desforges, while the Catholic Church which arrived in the wake of European colonizers gave the monarch, his notables and the Tutsi population privileged access to education and training, it tried to convert them. However, in the face of some resistance, the missionaries for a while undertook to convert the Hutu instead. Yet, when the Belgians included being Christian among the criteria for determining the suitability of a candidate for employment in the civil service, the Tutsi, hitherto opposed to their conversion, became more willing to be converted to Christianity. Thus, they carried along most Hutu. Quoting a witness from whom she asked for an explanation for the massive conversion of Hutu to Christianity, Dr. Desforges testified that the reasons for the conversion were to be found in the cult of obedience to the chiefs which is highly developed in the Rwandan society. According to that witness, "you could not remain standing while your superiors were on their knees praying". For these reasons, therefore, it can be understood why at the time, that is, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the church, like the colonizers, supported the Tutsi monopoly of power.

85. From the late 1940s, at the dawn of the decolonization process, the Tutsi became aware of the benefits they could derive from the privileged status conferred on them by the Belgian colonizers and the Catholic church. They then attempted to free themselves somehow from Belgian political stewardship and to emancipate the Rwandan society from the grip of the Catholic church. The desire for independence shown by the Tutsi elite certainly caused both the Belgians and the church to shift their alliances from the Tutsi to the Hutu, a shift rendered more radical by the change in the church's philosophy after the second world war, with the arrival of young priests from a more democratic and egalitarian trend of Christianity, who sought to develop political awareness among the Tutsi-dominated Hutu majority.

86. Under pressure from the United Nations Trusteeship Council and following the shift in alliances just mentioned, Belgium changed its policy by granting more opportunities to the Hutu to acquire education and to hold senior positions in government services. This turn-about particularly angered the Tutsi, especially because, on the renewal of its mandate over Rwanda by the United Nations, Belgium was requested to establish representative organs in the Trust territory, so as to groom the natives for administration and, ultimately, grant independence to the country. The Tutsi therefore began the move to end Belgian domination, while the Hutu elite, for tactical reasons, favoured the continuation of the domination, hoping to make the Hutu masses aware of their political weight in Rwanda, in a bid to arrive at independence, which was unavoidable, at least on the basis of equality with the Tutsi. Belgium particularly appreciated this attitude as it gave it reason to believe that with the Hutu, independence would not spell a severance of ties.

87. In 1956, in accordance with the directives of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, Belgium organized elections on the basis of universal suffrage in order

to choose new members of local organs, such as the grassroots representative Councils. With the electorate voting on strictly ethnic lines, the Hutu of course obtained an overwhelming majority and thereby became aware of their political strength. The Tutsi, who were hoping to achieve independence while still holding the reins of power, came to the realization that universal suffrage meant the end of their supremacy; hence, confrontation with the Hutu became inevitable.

88. Around 1957, the first political parties were formed and, as could be expected, they were ethnically rather than ideologically based. There were four political parties, namely the Mouvement démocratique républicain, Parmehutu ("MDR Parmehutu"), which clearly defined itself as the Hutu grassroots movement; the Union Nationale Rwandaise ("UNAR"), the party of Tutsi monarchists; and, between the two extremes, the two others, Aprosoma, predominantly Hutu, and the Rassemblement démocratique rwandais ("RADER"), which brought together moderates from the Tutsi and Hutu elite.

89. The dreaded political unrest broke out in November 1959, with increased bloody incidents, the first victims of which were the Hutu. In reprisal, the Hutu burnt down and looted Tutsi houses. Thus became embedded a cycle of violence which ended with the establishment on 18 October 1960, by the Belgian authorities, of an autonomous provisional Government headed by Grégoire Kayibanda, President of MDR Parmehutu, following the June 1960 communal elections that gave an overwhelming majority to Hutu parties. After the Tutsi monarch fled abroad, the Hutu opposition declared the Republic of Gitarama, on 28 January 1961, and set up a legislative assembly. On 6 February 1961, Belgium granted self-government to Rwanda. Independence was declared on 1 July 1962, with Grégoire Kayibanda at the helm of the new State, and, thus, President of the First Republic.

90. The victory of Hutu parties increased the departure of Tutsi to neighbouring countries from where Tutsi exiles made incursions into Rwanda. The word *Inyenzi*, meaning cockroach, came to be used to refer to these assailants. Each attack was followed by reprisals against the Tutsi within the country and in 1963, such attacks caused the death of at least ten thousand of them, further increasing the number of those who went into exile. Concurrently, at the domestic level, the Hutu regime seized this opportunity to allocate to the Hutu the lands abandoned by Tutsi in exile and to redistribute posts within the Government and the civil service, in favour of the Hutu, on the basis of a quota system linked to the proportion of each ethnic group in the population.

91. The dissensions that soon surfaced among the ruling Hutu led the regime to strengthen the primacy of the MDR Parmehutu party over all sectors of public life and institutions, thereby making it the *de facto* sole party. This consolidated the authority of President Grégoire Kayibanda as well as the influence of his entourage, most of who came from the same region as he, that is the Gitarama region in the centre of the country. The drift towards ethnic and regional power became obvious. From then onwards, a rift took root within the Hutu political Establishment, between its key figures from the Centre and those from the North and South who showed great frustration. Increasingly isolated, President Kayibanda could not control the ethnic and regional dissensions. The disagreements within the regime resulted into anarchy, which enabled General

Juvénal Habyarimana, Army Chief of Staff, to seize power through a coup on 5 July 1973. General Habyarimana dissolved the First Republic and established the Second Republic. Scores of political leaders were imprisoned and, later, executed or starved to death, as was the case with the former President, Grégoire Kayibanda.

92. Following a trend then common in Africa, President Habyarimana, in 1975, instituted the one-party system with the creation of the Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement (MRND), of which every Rwandan was a member *ipso facto*, including the newborn. Since the party encompassed everyone, there was no room for political pluralism. A law passed in 1978 made Rwanda officially a one-party State with the consequence that the MRND became a "State-party", as it formed one and the same entity with the Government...

93. ...Like his predecessor, Grégoire Kayibanda, Habyarimana strengthened the policy of discrimination against the Tutsi by applying the same quota system in universities and government services. A policy of systematic discrimination was pursued even among the Hutu themselves, in favour of Hutu from Habyarimana's native region, namely Gisenyi and Ruhengeri in the north-west, to the detriment of Hutu from other regions. This last aspect of Habyarimana's policy, considerably weakened his power: henceforth, he faced opposition not only from the Tutsi but also from the Hutu, who felt discriminated against and most of whom came from the central and southern regions. In the face of this situation, Habyarimana chose to relentlessly pursue the same policy like his predecessor who favoured his region, Gitarama. Like Kayibanda, he became increasingly isolated and the base of his regime narrowed down to a small intimate circle dubbed "Akazu", meaning the "President's household". This further radicalized the opposition whose ranks swelled more and more. On 1 October 1990, an attack was launched from Uganda by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) whose forebear, the Alliance rwandaise pour l'unité nationale ("ARUN"), was formed in 1979 by Tutsi exiles based in Uganda. The attack provided a pretext for the arrest of thousands of opposition members in Rwanda considered as supporters of the RPF.

94. Faced with the worsening internal situation that attracted a growing number of Rwandans to the multi-party system, and pressured by foreign donors demanding not only economic but also political reforms in the form of much greater participation of the people in the country's management, President Habyarimana was compelled to accept the multi-party system in principle. On 28 December 1990, the preliminary draft of a political charter to establish a multi-party system was published. On 10 June 1991, the new constitution introducing the multi-party system was adopted, followed on 18 June by the promulgation of the law on political parties and the formation of the first parties, namely:

- the Mouvement démocratique républicain (MDR), considered to be the biggest party in terms of membership and claiming historical links with the *MDR*-Parmehutu of Grégoire Kayibanda; its power-base was mainly the centre of the country, around Gitarama;
- the Parti social démocrate (PSD), whose membership included a good number of intellectuals, recruited its members mostly in the South, in Butare;
- the Parti libéral (PL); and

- the Parti démocrate chrétien (PDC).

95. At the same time, Tutsi exiles, particularly those in Uganda organized themselves not only to launch incursions into Rwandan territory but also to form a political organization, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), with a military wing called the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). The first objective of the exiles was to return to Rwanda. But they met with objection from the Rwandan authorities and President Habyarimana, who is alleged to have said that land in Rwanda would not be enough to feed all those who wanted to return. On these grounds, the exiles broadened their objectives to include the overthrow of Habyarimana.

96. The above-mentioned RPF attack on 1 October 1990 sent shock waves throughout Rwanda. Members of the opposition parties formed in 1991, saw this as an opportunity to have an informal alliance with the RPF so as to further destabilize an already weakened regime. The regime finally accepted to share power between the MRND and the other political parties and, around March 1992, the Government and the opposition signed an agreement to set up a transitional coalition government headed by a Prime Minister from the MDR. Out of the nineteen ministries, the MRND obtained only nine. Pressured by the opposition, the MRND accepted that negotiations with the RPF be started. The negotiations led to the first cease-fire in July 1992 and the first part of the Arusha Accords. The July 1992 cease-fire tacitly recognized RPF control over a portion of Rwandan territory in the north-east. The protocols signed following these accords included the October 1992 protocol establishing a transitional government and a transitional assembly and the participation of the RPF in both institutions. The political scene was now widened to comprise three blocs: the Habyarimana bloc, the internal opposition and the RPF. Experience showed that President Habyarimana accepted these accords only because he was compelled to do so, but had no intention of complying with what he himself referred to as "un chiffon de papier", meaning a scrap of paper.

97. Yet, the RPF did not drop its objective of seizing power. It therefore increased its military attacks. The massive attack of 8 February 1993 seriously undermined the relations between the RPF and the Hutu opposition parties, making it easy for Habyarimana supporters to convene an assembly of all Hutu. Thus, the bond built on Hutu kinship once again began to prevail over political differences. The three blocs mentioned earlier gave way to two ethnic-based opposing camps: on the one hand, the RPF, the supposed canopy of all Tutsi and, on the other hand, the other parties said to be composed essentially of the Hutu.

98. In March 1992, a group of Hutu hard-liners founded a new radical political party, the Coalition pour la défense de la république (CDR), or Coalition for the Defence of the Republic, which was more extremist than Habyarimana himself and opposed him on several occasions.

...

101. On the political front, a split was noticed in almost all the opposition parties on the issue of the proposed signing of a final peace agreement. This schismatic trend began with the MDR party, the main rival of the MRND, whose radical faction, later known as MDR Power, affiliated with the CDR and the MRND.

102. On 4 August 1993, the Government of Rwanda and the RPF signed the final Arusha Accords and ended the war which started on 1 October 1990. The Accords provided, *inter alia*, for the establishment of a transitional government to include the RPF, the partial demobilization and integration of the two opposing armies (13,000 RPF and 35,000 FAR troops), the creation of a demilitarized zone between the RPF-controlled area in the north and the rest of the country, the stationing of an RPF battalion in the city of Kigali, and the deployment, in four phases, of a UN peace-keeping force, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), with a two-year mandate.
103. On 23 October 1993, the President of Burundi, Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu, was assassinated in the course of an attempted coup by Burundi Tutsi soldiers...
104. The assassination of President Ndadaye gave President Habyarimana and the CDR the opportunity to denounce, in a joint MRND - CDR statement issued at the end of 1993, the Arusha Accords, calling them treason. However, a few days later, pursuing his policy of prevarication towards the international community, Habyarimana signed another part of the peace accords. Indeed, the Arusha Accords no longer existed, except on paper. The President certainly did take the oath of office, but the installation of a transitional government was delayed, mainly by divisions within the political parties and the ensuing infightings.
105. The leaders of the CDR and the PSD were assassinated in February 1994. In Kigali, in the days that followed, the Interahamwe and the Impuzamugambi massacred Tutsi as well as Habyarimana's Hutu opponents...
106. At the end of March 1994, the transitional government was still not set up and Rwanda was on the brink of bankruptcy. International donors and neighbouring countries put pressure on the Habyarimana government to implement the Arusha Accords. On 6 April 1994, President Habyarimana and other heads of State of the region met in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) to discuss the implementation of the peace accords. The aircraft carrying President Habyarimana and the Burundian President, Ntaryamirai, who were returning from the meeting, crashed around 8:30 pm near Kigali airport. All aboard were killed.
107. This history has been affirmed by the evidence adduced at trial, and the Accused have introduced much historical background that further elaborates on various aspects of it. In particular, the Accused Ngeze introduced into evidence numerous historical works that clearly establish the history of ethnic identity and conflict in Rwanda, which has roots long preceding 1959, contrary to the statement made in paragraph 1.1 of the Indictments of the Accused.
108. The Chamber notes the emergence of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa ethnic group identity over the course of Rwandan history, and the concomitant ethnic prejudice that resulted from the differential distribution of social and political privilege along ethnic lines, fostered by and during colonial rule. The history of Rwanda in the twentieth century has been shaped by a complex interplay of political power and ethnic consciousness. The

Chamber observes that political forces have greatly contributed to the transformation of ethnic consciousness into ethnic hatred.

109. This backdrop to the events that transpired in Rwanda in 1994 may explain in large measure the otherwise almost incomprehensible level and intensity of the violence that erupted in April 1994 and continued relentlessly for several months. However, the Chamber recalls and underscores that this history cannot be used to justify such violence. Efforts to do so contribute to the perpetuation of violence. The Chamber recalls that its fundamental purpose of holding individuals accountable for their conduct is intended to “contribute to the process of national reconciliation and to the restoration and maintenance of peace”.¹⁹ Justice should serve as the beginning of the end of the cycle of violence that has taken so many lives, Tutsi and Hutu, in Rwanda.

¹⁹ Security Council Resolution 955, S/RES/955 (1994), 8 November 1994.