CHAPTER 10

The Burundi Genocide

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The first recorded case of genocide in the Great Lakes Region of Africa occurred not in Rwanda but in neighboring Burundi, 22 years before the more widely publicized 1994 bloodbath. The scale and targeting of the massacres, not to mention their purposefulness, leaves no doubt about their genocidal character. From May to July 1972 anywhere from 200,000 to 300,000 Hutu lost their lives at the hands of a predominantly Tutsi army in an orgy of killings triggered by an abortive Hutu insurrection. Though largely forgotten in the West, the events of 1972 remain deeply etched in the collective memory of the Hutu people, not only in Burundi but among the older generations of Hutu in Rwanda.

Piecing together a coherent picture of what happened before and during the killings is no easy task. Unlike what happened in Rwanda, the carnage attracted only minimal attention from the media. The few journalists who cared to investigate the massacres were denied access to the interior of the country, and their quest for credible accounts of the atrocities were restricted to official sources. No attempt was made by the government to conduct a serious investigation of the circumstances and scale of the bloodbath. Nothing comparable to Alison Des Forges' (1999) thoroughly documented inquest into the roots, mechanisms, and scale of the Rwanda genocide is available for Burundi. To this day, the search for explanations is trapped in divergent narratives. While some commentators (Tutsi) tend to impute genocidal intentions exclusively to Hutu insurgents, others (Hutu) blandly deny the existence of an insurrection, arguing against all evidence that unrest was deliberately instigated by the government in order to justify a genocidal response (Nsanze, 2003). Today the 1972 genocide has been obliterated from Burundi's official memory (Lemarchand, 2002). The only genocide officially acknowledged refers to the killings of thousands of Hutu by Tutsi in the wake of President Melchior Ndadaye's

assassination in 1993. In Milan Kundera's felicitous phrase, the mass murder committed against Hutu has been "airbrushed out of history."

This calculated amnesia and obfuscation notwithstanding, certain basic facts are well established: Whereas the victims belonged overwhelmingly to the Hutu majority, the perpetrators of the genocide were for the most part drawn from the ruling Tutsi minority; the killings occurred in response to a localized, abortive Hutu-led insurgency that caused thousands of deaths among innocent Tutsi civilians; the repression and subsequent massive physical elimination of Hutu civilians were largely conducted by government troops assisted by the youth wing of the ruling party; and, in the wake of the slaughter, tens of thousands of Hutu men, women, and children fled the country, seeking asylum in neighboring states. (All of the above and much more is graphically revealed in the cables sent out to Washington by the U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission [DCM], Michael Hoyt, available from the author's collection at the University of Florida.)

The carnage has had a devastating impact on Burundi society. It has drastically reconfigured the country's ethnic map, driving a deep wedge between Hutu and Tutsi. The immediate consequence was the physical elimination of the entire pool of educated Hutu elites, and of all Hutu officers and troops, thus paving the way for the emergence of a Tutsi ethnocracy, protected by an all-Tutsi army. Unlike what happened in Rwanda, the *génocidaires* won the day. For the next 20 years all positions of influence and responsibility in the government, the administration, the army, and the economy were in Tutsi hands. Unsurprisingly, it was among the refugee community of Tanzania, the largest of all refugee communities, that the most radical, bitterly anti-Tutsi sentiments took hold of the hearts and minds of Hutu exiles. The legacy of hatred is still being felt today.

The Historical and Regional Context

The histories of Burundi and Rwanda are inseparable from each other. No attempt to understand the roots of the Burundi carnage can overlook the impact of the Hutu revolution in Rwanda (1959–1962)

on the crystallization of ethnic enmities; similarly, only at the risk of greatly simplifying the dynamics of mass murder in Rwanda can one neglect the significance of the 1972 killings in Burundi (Lemarchand, 1995).

That both countries should have experienced bloodshed on such an appalling scale must be seen in the light of their shared heritage — colonial and precolonial. No other two societies on the continent had more in common in terms of size, social structure, traditional political systems, and ethnic configurations. Minute in size, deeply stratified, held together by popular allegiance to monarchical symbols, they also share strikingly similar ethnic maps. In each state the socially dominant ethnic minority, the Tutsi, held sway over the Hutu majority, representing about 80 percent of the total population (estimated at roughly 7 million in each state in 1994).

These commonalities can be easily overdrawn, however, and unless the contrasting elements are taken into account, the essential difference between the two genocides — the victimization of Hutu in one case and of Tutsi in the other — will remain obscure. Reduced to its simplest expression, where Burundi differed from Rwanda most markedly is in the greater complexity of its social hierarchies. Unlike Rwanda, where power was highly centralized and the line of cleavage between Hutu and Tutsi straightforward, in Burundi the real holders of power were a distinct category, namely the princes of the blood (*ganwa*), with the king (*mwami*) reduced to a *primus inter pares*.

Furthermore, the Tutsi were themselves divided into two groups, the lowly Tutsi-Hima, concentrated in the south of the country, and the more prestigious and status-conscious Tutsi-Banyaruguru, found predominantly in the north — again, the kingship was never identified with Tutsi rule to the extent that it was in Rwanda. Because of its greater pluralism and social complexity, Burundi was spared the agonies of a Hutu revolution before the advent of independence. Unlike what happened in Rwanda, where a revolutionary conflict pitted Hutu versus Tutsi, in Burundi preindependence politics revolved around princely factions, each drawing support from a mixed

following of Hutu and Tutsi. The country crossed the threshold of independence not as a Hutu-dominated republic but as a constitutional monarchy, with a government consisting of a mixed assemblage of ganwa, Tutsi, and Hutu elements (Lemarchand, 1970).

Not until after independence (1962), and largely as a consequence of the demonstration effect of the Rwanda revolution, did a significant hardening of Hutu–Tutsi tensions emerge on the political horizon. The proclamation of a Hutu republic in Rwanda served as a powerful source of inspiration for many aspiring Hutu politicians; indeed, for many, Rwanda became the model polity that helped shape their vision of the future. For most Tutsi, on the other hand, republican Rwanda evoked a nightmarish scenario, to be avoided at all cost. With tens of thousands of Tutsi asylum seekers from Rwanda entering the country, each with tales of horror to tell, the message was driven home loud and clear.

A turning point in the escalation of the Hutu–Tutsi conflict came in May 1965, with the first postindependence elections to the national assembly, in which Hutu candidates scored a landslide victory, capturing 23 seats out of a total of 33. Their victory quickly proved illusory. Instead of appointing a Hutu as prime minister, the king turned to a princely figure and longtime protege of the Court (Leopold Bihumugani). Robbed of their victory at the polls, the Hutu elites reacted angrily to what they perceived as an intolerable interference. On October 18, 1965, Hutu anger broke out in an abortive coup directed at the king's palace, followed by sporadic attacks against Tutsi elements in the interior. Panic-stricken, the king fled the country, never to return. In reprisal, Tutsi units of the army and *gendarmerie* arrested and shot 86 leading Hutu politicians and army officers. After the discovery of an alleged Hutu plot in 1969, 70 Hutu personalities, civilian and military, were arrested on the grounds of conspiring against the state; 25 were meted out a death sentence, and 19 of them were immediately executed.

In the minds of those few Hutu politicians who survived the repression, recourse to force was increasingly seen as the only viable option. This hardening of attitude on the Hutu–Tutsi problem was

largely shared among Hutu students at the Université Officielle de Bujumbura. In point of fact, according to reliable accounts (Kiraranganiya, 1985), the instigators of the Hutu rebellion of April 1972 were three students (Celius Mpasha, Albert Butoyi, and Daniel Ndabiruye), affiliated with the *Parti du Peuple*, knownfor their pro-Hutu militancy. The systematic exclusion of Hutu elements from all positions of responsibility in the government, the civil service, and the higher ranks of the armed forces was the central element behind the abortive Hutu rebellion.

But if the insurgency must be seen in the context of the growing polarization of ethnic ties, its timing draws attention to the violent intra-Tutsi squabbles and maneuverings that preceded the uprising. This growing split within the ruling oligarchy is what prompted the insurgents to exploit the situation to their advantage.

In the months preceding the slaughter, the country seemed to be tottering on the brink of anarchy. The long-simmering struggle between Tutsi-Hima and Tutsi-Banyaruguru was threatening to get out of hand (Lemarchand, 1974, 1995). The country was awash with rumors of plots and counterplots, leading to the arrest and bogus trials of scores of Banyaruguru politicians. Meanwhile, the ruling clique, headed by President Michel Micombero, and consisting principally of Tutsi-Hima from the Bururi province, saw its legitimacy plummet. Nothing could have done more to solidify Tutsi solidarities than the looming threat of a violent Hutu uprising.

The Road to Mass Murder

On April 29, 1972, like a bolt out of the blue, a violent Hutu-led insurrection burst upon the normally peaceful lakeside towns of Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac in the south. In a matter of hours terror was unleashed by Hutu upon Tutsi. Countless atrocities were reported by eyewitnesses, including the evisceration of pregnant women and the hacking off of limbs. In Bururi, all military and civilian authorities were killed. After seizing control of the armories in Rumonge and Nyanza-Lac, the insurgents proceeded to kill every Tutsi in sight, as well as a number of Hutu who refused to join the

rebels. During the first week of violence it is thought that the insurgency claimed the lives of anywhere from 2000 to 3000, most of them Tutsi. At this point, in an attempt to build a political base, some of the insurgents retreated to Vyanda, near the provincial capital of Bururi, and proclaimed a mysterious "*République de Martyazo*." A week later government troops brought the nascent experiment to an end. By then, though, the repression had already caused untold casualties throughout the country.

Although no one knows how many were involved, the insurgents could not have numbered more than a few thousand (and not 25,000 as the government subsequently claimed). A French pilot, who flew helicopter missions on behalf of the Burundi army, put their number at 1000, "including the majority of committed or conscripted Hutu, Zairian Mulelistes in the middle, and the organizers at the top" (Hoyt, May 5, 1972). Despite the persistent reports of the presence of Mulelistes (a reference to the Congolese rebellion of 1964, said to have been instigated by Pierre Mulele) among the insurgents, questions remain as to their numbers and motives for joining the Hutu uprising.

On May 30, after proclaiming martial law, President Micombero requested immediate military assistance from President Mobutu of Zaire. With Zairian paratroopers holding the airport, the Burundi army then moved in force into the countryside. What followed was not so much a repression as a hideous slaughter of Hutu civilians. The carnage went on unabated until August. By then almost every educated Hutu element was either dead or in exile.

Exactly how many died between May and August is impossible to say. Conservative estimates put the total number of victims somewhere between 100,000 and 150,000. This is considerably less than the 300,000 claimed by Hutu opponents of the regime, and far more than the 15,000 at first cited by the Burundi authorities. However much one can disagree about the scale of the massacre, that it reflects a planned annihilation is hardly in doubt. Much of the "planning," as we now realize, was the work of the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Artémon Simbananiye, assisted in his task by the Minister of Interior and Justice, Albert Shibura, and the executive secretary of the ruling *Union pour le Progrés*

National (*Uprona*) party, André Yanda. All three were of Hima origins; the latter two also held key positions in the army.

For many Hutu, "*le plan Simbananiye*" is the key to an understanding of the killings. According to this master plan, conceived long before the Hutu uprising, the aim was to provoke the Hutu into staging an uprising so as to justify a devastating repression and cleanse the country once and for all of the Hutu peril. There is, in fact, little evidence of any such provocation; nor is it at all clear that any such plan existed prior to the Hutu uprising. What is beyond question, however, is that Simbananiye used the "clear and present danger" posed by the Hutu insurgency as a pretext to go far beyond the immediate exigency of restoring peace and order. As the social profile of the victims clearly shows, the ultimate objective was to systematically kill all educated Hutu elements, including civil servants, university students, and schoolchildren and, in so doing, eliminate for the foreseeable future any serious threat of Hutu rebellion. It is in this sense that one can indeed speak of a "Simbananiye plan" (Lemarchand, 1995).

The systematic targeting of educated Hutu elements is a point on which most observers agree. As Jeremy Greenland (1976) reported, "The government radio broadcasts encouraged the population to 'hunt down the python in the grass,' an order which was interpreted by Tutsi in the interior as license to exterminate all educated Hutu, down to the level of secondary, and, in some cases, even primary schoolchildren. Army units commandeered merchants' lorries and mission vehicles, and drove up to schools removing whole batches of children at a time. Tutsi pupils prepared lists of their Hutu classmates to make identification by officials more straightforward" (p. 120). In Bujumbura, Gitega, and Ngozi, all "cadres" of Hutu origins — not only local civil servants but chauffeurs, clerks, and semi-skilled workers — were rounded up, taken to the nearest jail, and either shot or beaten to death with rifle butts and clubs. In Bujumbura alone, an estimated 4000 Hutu were loaded up on trucks and taken to their graves.

Some of the most gruesome scenes took place on the premises of the university in Bujumbura, and in secondary and technical schools. Scores of Hutu students were physically assaulted by their Tutsi classmates, and many beaten to death. In a scenario that would repeat itself again and again, groups of soldiers and members of the *Uprona* youth wing, the so-called *Jeunesses Révolutionnaires Rwagasore* (*JRR*), would suddenly appear in classrooms, call the Hutu students by name and take them away. Few ever returned. Approximately one third (120) of the Hutu students enrolled at the university disappeared in such circumstances. The few Tutsi who urged restraint did so at their own peril. As Michael Hoyt (1972), then acting Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy, stated on May 27th, "We have reliable reports that some Tutsi urging restraint in Bujumbura on the basis that the situation has gone too far are being arrested and immediately executed" (p. 1).

Nor was the Church spared. Reporting from Bujumbura in early June, Marvine Howe (1972) noted that "12 Hutu priests are said to have been killed, and thousands of Protestant pastors, school directors and teachers" (p. 4). No sector of society was left untouched, least of all the military. This is how Hoyt (1972) describes the extent of the purges within the army:

> The death toll in the army resulting from the execution of Hutu has risen. Recent Belgian estimates point to more than 500. About 150 Hutu were executed on the night of May 22. Forty-one on the night of May 27. Definition of Hutu has altered, however. Now one grandparent is enough to result in classifying soldiers as Hutu. Using this standard some 100 Hutu were believed to be alive in the army on May 23 (p. 2).

To impute genocidal intentions to all Tutsi would be both unfair and inaccurate. Whether intentions ultimately made a difference is another matter. In the countryside anti-Hutu violence stemmed from a variety of motives, some involving personal enmities, others rooted in crassly material calculations. The desire to appropriate the victims' property appears to have been a major inducement to violence. Again, to quote from Greenland (1976): "In countless cases, the furniture was removed from the

homes of arrested Hutu, with the widows and orphans left sitting on the bare floor. The cars and lorries of wealthier Hutu became the property of those who arrested them" (p. 122).

Clearly, responsibility for the killings cannot be ascribed collectively to all Tutsi. Many paid with their lives for their determination to protect Hutu elements, and the same is true of those Hutu who, during the insurgency, took it upon themselves to shelter Tutsi civilians. The key participants in the genocide were the army and the *JRR*, often operating hand in hand, in groups of varying size depending on the magnitude of the task that lay ahead. "In Muramvuya," according to Hoyt (1972), "the populace was thrown into near panic by the sudden arrival of nearly 1000 *JRR* elements" (n.p.). In most instances, the arrests and subsequent executions were conducted by mixed teams of army men and *JRR* elements consisting of a dozen individuals; and where neither group could be summoned in sufficient numbers, arms were distributed to local Tutsi males with instructions to act as surrogate paramilitary groups. In an atmosphere saturated with fear, the killing of Hutu seemed to have become part of the civic duty expected of every Tutsi citizen. A number of Tutsi refugees from Rwanda accepted the assignment with little or no hesitation. Particularly in the northern region, where refugee camps were located, much of the killing was done by Tutsi refugees, perhaps as much out of revenge as out of fear that they might once again be the target of Hutu violence.

Fear of an impending Hutu-instigated slaughter of all Tutsi elements, nurtured by lingering memories of what happened in Rwanda in 1959–1962, certainly played a crucial part in transforming the repression into a genocide. That many Tutsi perceived the Hutu attacks as posing a mortal threat to their survival, there can be no doubt; nor is there any question, that many viewed the wholesale elimination of Hutu elites as the only way of dealing effectively with what they perceived as a clear and present danger — a kind of "Final Solution" to a situation that threatened their very existence as a group. In the short run, their calculation proved entirely correct: The wholesale decapitation of the Hutu elites insured peace and order for the next 16 years. But as is now becoming increasingly clear,

the long-term effects of the genocide have enormously complicated the quest for a peaceful solution of the Hutu–Tutsi question. Among the new generations of Hutu elites few are willing to forget or forgive.

The Silence of the International Community

In the White Paper issued by the government in the wake of the killings, the point that comes across again and again is that the Hutu rebels had committed genocide against the people of Burundi; in putting down the rebellion, the state prevented the insurgency from taking an even bigger toll. Surprisingly, the diffusion of this inversionary discourse — aimed at shifting the onus of genocide to the insurgents — was received with little more than polite indifference by international public opinion. The unwillingness of the international community to see through the humbug of official media and take heed of the many warning signs preceding the slaughter, all wrenchingly clear, is little short of astonishing. Perhaps the most surreal of all international responses to the slaughter came from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) — now the African Union (AU) — on May 22, 1972, during the visit to Bujumbura by OAU Secretary-General Diallo Telli. "The OAU," said Telli, "being essentially an organization based on solidarity, my presence here in Bujumbura signifies the total solidarity of the Secretariat with the President of Burundi, and with the government and the fraternal people of Burundi" (Hoyt, May 22, 1972, n.p.). It is an ironic commentary on Telli's expression of solidarity with the chief organizer of the butchery that he himself was later murdered by Guinean President Sekou Touré. Then, too, the OAU appeared to be in "total solidarity" with Telli's murder.

To take the full measure of Western indifference, one can do no better than quote from the surprisingly guarded letter of the diplomatic corps delivered to President Micombero on May 30, at the initiative of the papal nuncio: "As true friends of Burundi we have followed with anguish and concern the events of the last few weeks. We are thus comforted by your appointment of groups of 'wise men' to pacify the country, and by the orders that you have given to repress the arbitrary actions of

individuals and groups, and acts of private vengeance and excesses of authority" (Hoyt, May 30, 1972, n.p.). By then "excesses of authority" had sent well over 100,000 Hutu to their graves. Unsurprisingly, the only member of the diplomatic corps who refused to sign the letter, presumably objecting to its offensive wording, was the French ambassador.

Hardly more edifying was the response of the UN Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, to the carnage. Following the visit of a UN Special Mission to Burundi from June 22 through 28, headed by I.S. Djermakoye, Special Advisor on African Affairs, Waldheim expressed his "fervent hopes that peace, harmony, and stability can be brought about successfully and speedily, that Burundi will thereby achieve the goals of social progress, better standards of living and other ideals and principles set forth in the UN Charter" (quoted in Teltsch, 1972, p. 1). The cynicism behind such pious hopes is a devastating commentary on the role of the UN during the genocide. In 1972, as in 1994, the UN sat on its hands as hundreds of thousands of innocent Africans were being slaughtered.

Scarcely more edifying was the response of the U.S. government. In the words of a report of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the official stance of the United States revealed an extraordinary combination of "indifference, inertia, and irresponsibility" (Brown et al., 1973, p. 4). The remarkably detailed reports by the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Bujumbura, Michael Hoyt, sent to the State Department failed to elicit as much as a minimal expression of concern from the Secretary of State. "On May 25, 1972," according to Roger Morris, "[U.S. Ambassador] Thomas Melady routinely left the country for a new assignment. He departed with a decoration from the Burundi government, he and his home office in Foggy Bottom maintaining total silence about the horror" (Morris, 1977, p. 267). Perceptions of Burundi as an "autistic and suspicious society," to quote from a 1972 State Department policy paper (Morris, 1977, p. 267), seemed entirely consistent with the kind of benign neglect displayed by U.S. policy makers in the face of irrefutable evidence of genocide.

The Aftermath

Although the killings were intended first and foremost to crush the insurrection, there was a great deal more at stake. The underlying objectives of the Micombero government in orchestrating the huge bloodletting were: (1) to insure the long-term stability of the state by the wholesale elimination of all educated Hutu elites and potential elites (e.g., schoolchildren); (2) to transform the instruments of force — the army, the police, and the *gendarmerie* — into a Tutsi monopoly; (3) to rule out the possibility of a restoration of the monarchy (hence the killing of young King Ntare in Gitega on May 1); and (4) to create a new basis of legitimacy for the Hima-dominated state by projecting an image of the state as the benevolent protector of all Barundi against their domestic and external enemies.

On each of these counts, the Micombero government met with considerable success — at least in the short run. For the next 16 years — until the Ntega and Marangara riots of 1988 — Burundi experienced a period of unprecedented peace. The country was virtually bereft of educated Hutu elites; the ever-present threat of another slaughter was enough to discourage all forms of protest; and the army was now a Tutsi army — and it remains so to this day.

This surface impression of a country at peace with itself was suddenly shattered in August 1988, however, with a new outburst of ethnic unrest in the northern communes of Ntega and Marangara. Triggered by the provocations of a local Tutsi notable, and fueled by rumors of an impending massacre of Hutu peasants, the rioting took the lives of hundreds of Tutsi civilians before the army moved in and unleashed another bloody repression. While some 40,000 panic-stricken Hutu fled to Rwanda, according to press reports anywhere from 20,000 to 30,000 were massacred by the army (Chrètien et al. 1989, p. 171).

Unlike what happened in 1972, the international community responded to the killings with a sense of shock. Substantial press coverage of the events, coupled with charges of gross human rights violations from the European Community, were instrumental in persuading the Burundi government to

introduce major constitutional and political reforms. Even more decisive in bringing about a more liberal political climate was the U.S. Congressional hearing held in September 1988, followed by the passage of a nonbinding resolution urging the government of Burundi to conduct an impartial inquiry into the circumstances of the riots, to take steps to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the atrocities committed during and after the riots, and, most importantly, to allow the safe return to their homes of Burundi's refugee population (Lemarchand, 1991, p. 86). By driving home to the Burundi authorities that their failure to heed Congressional warnings would entail major costs in terms of economic assistance and international loans, the resolution carried important consequences. It set in motion a train of reforms culminating in 1993 with the organization of multiparty presidential and legislative elections. The decisive victory scored by the predominantly *Hutu Front des Démocrates du Burundi* (*Frodebu*) and its candidate to the presidency, Ndadaye, effectively wrested power away from the Tutsi minority, enthroning, 21 years after the genocide, representatives of the Hutu majority.

What happened next brought into sharp focus the enduring legacy of the 1972 carnage. Ndadaye's assassination, on October 21, 1993, was the work of Tutsi extremists who saw in the coming to power of a Hutu president a threat not so much to their survival as to their economic and political privileges. Having reaped for decades the benefits of unfettered control of state institutions, a transfer of power to a Hutu carried ominous implications. A return to the status quo ante by political assassination seemed all the more feasible given the profile of the army. What they did not foresee was the violent response of the Hutu community. The news of Ndadaye's assassination was greeted on the hills with an orgy of anti-Tutsi violence. Possibly as many as 25,000 Tutsi were killed by their Hutu neighbors in an uncontrolled outburst of rage — in turn, causing the army to kill at least as many Hutu in retaliation.

In today's Burundi, the 1993 killings of Tutsi is the only genocide officially acknowledged. Nothing is said of the Hutu victims of 1993, much less of those of the 1972 genocide. Yet memories of the 1972 genocide go a long way towards explaining the fury that suddenly seized the Hutu peasants as they

turned against innocent Tutsi civilians. As one Hutu clergyman reported, "When we told them [*les excités*] not to spill blood, they said 'Look, since 1972 it is our blood that's being spilled! Now we hear that President Ndadaye has been killed. If they did that, that means we are next!" (Lemarchand, 1995, p. xiv) Memories of 1972 suddenly came back with an emotional charge made more potent by intimations of an impending massacre of Hutu populations.

Ndadaye's assassination unleashed the radical streak of Hutu extremism, until then held in check by the more moderate *Frodebu*. Here again, one must go back to the political legacy of the 1972 genocide: It was in the refugee camps of Tanzania that came into being the *Parti de la Libération du Peuple Hutu* (in short, *Palipehutu*) in April 1980, which soon established itself as the principal vehicle of Hutu radicalism. Though denied the opportunity to present candidates in the 1993 elections, the *Palipehutu* rank and file voted overwhelmingly for the *Frodebu*. In the weeks following Ndadaye's murder, the party went into a state of suspended animation, while many of its former members joined Leonard Nyangoma's *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (*CNDD*), and ultimately the *CNDD's* armed wing, the *Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (*FDD*). Thus, if there is little question that Ndadaye's assassination was the precipitating element behind emergence of an armed Hutu rebellion, the roots of Hutu radicalism go much further back in time. Along with the thinly veiled anti-Tutsi racism that surrounds its ideology, Hutu radicalism is, in a fundamental sense, the by-product of the 1972 bloodbath.

Long before the 1994 genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda, the Burundi carnage drastically altered the country's ethnic frame. It hardened the Hutu–Tutsi fault line to an unprecedented extent, while giving rise to the mythical representations that loomed so prominently during the Rwanda genocide. Contrary to an all-too-prevalent opinion, it is not in Rwanda but among the Hutu survivors of the 1972 bloodbath that history came to be recast as myth, and in the process new identities crystallized around the terms "Hutu" and "Tutsi." No longer were these ethnic labels relatively free of moral connotations;

they now carried a powerful emotional load, conjuring up an image of the Tutsi as the embodiment of moral perversity.

If there is little doubt that Ndadaye's assassination played a critical role in the sequence of events leading to the extermination of some 600,000 Tutsi in Rwanda, it is no less important to remind ourselves of the contribution of the mythologies spawned by the 1972 genocide to the scurrilous propaganda distilled through the airwaves of Radio Mille Collines (Chrétien, 1995). As the work of Liisa Malkki (1995) convincingly demonstrates, many of the same themes were already apparent in the accounts that the Hutu refugees in Tanzania gave of their own martyrdom.

As in Rwanda, where neither time nor forgiveness will dim the memories of the 1994 slaughter, for years to come Burundi's genocidal past will continue to haunt its future, shaping its destinies in ways that are as yet impossible to predict.

Eyewitness Accounts: The Burundi Genocide

Note: Oral witness accounts of the events surrounding the 1972 genocide are extremely scarce, in part because of the restrictions placed by the Burundi authorities on unaccompanied travel through the countryside — especially when the aim is to interview survivors of the genocide — and in part because of the logistical, administrative, and political difficulties involved in gaining access to refugee camps in neighboring states. Malkki is one of the very few trained anthropologists to have conducted extensive interviews with refugees in Tanzania (in Mishamo, Kigoma, and Ujiji). The following three accounts are reproduced from her doctoral dissertation, *Purity and Exile: Transformations in Historical-National Consciousness Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (1995). All were recorded in 1987, in Mishamo, Tanzania.

What is particularly noteworthy about these oral "mythico-histories," as Malkki described them, is the manner in which they intersperse myth and history, thereby providing the basis for a fundamental redefinition of collective identities. As Malkki (1995) points out, "If 'history' could ever be defined as

a faithful recording of facts in an absolute reality, the Hutu constitution of history would be 'realistic.' The Hutu history, however, went far beyond accurate recording. It represents not only a description of the past, nor even merely an evaluation of the past, but a subversive recasting and reinterpreting of it in fundamentally moral terms" (pp. 124–25) In short, the implication is not that every word is pure fiction, only that reality has been filtered through the prism of an exceptionally traumatic experience. The result is a set of collective representations that have become part and parcel of the vision that the refugees have of themselves and of their recent history.

It should be noted that the names of Malkki's interviewees are not available. The key reason is that their discourse carries significant political implications which could conceivably be held against them.

Account 1

The first account is a graphic description of the atrocities committed by Tutsi against Hutu. How much is invention, how much is a faithful rendering of reality is impossible to tell. Although some of the more nauseating forms of torture alluded to in the text are probably made up, they reveal a construction of social reality rooted in a horrifying experience that continues to shape the consciousness of many Hutu refugees. Recorded in Mishamo, Tanzania, in 1987.

There was a manner of cutting the stomach [of pregnant women]. Everything that was found in the interior was lifted out without cutting the cord. The cadaver of the mama, the cadaver of the baby, of the future, they rotted on the road. Not even burial. The mother was obliged to eat the finger of her baby. One cut the finger, and one said to the mother: Eat! … Another case which I remember: they roped together *opapa* [a father] with his daughter, also in Bujumbura. They said: Now you can party! They were thrown into the lake …. My older brother, he was roped, and then he was made to roll, slide on the asphalted road behind a car. The Tutsi's intention was to equalize the population, up to 50 percent. It was a plan. My brother's body was left in the forest. If it had been left on the road, the foreigners would have seen it, and they would have written about it …. The girls [Tutsi] in secondary

schools … killed the Hutu [girls]. The Tutsi girls were given bamboos. They were made to kill by pushing the bamboo from below [from the vagina] to the mouth. It is a thing against the law of God. Our party would never do this. God must help us. During the Genocide every Tutsi had to make an action [to kill]. In the hospitals, in the Churches …. Even the sick were killed in the beds of the hospitals. The genocide lasted three months, from the 29th of April to the end of August. But the killing was started again in 1973, above all in Bukemba …. In other cases a bonfire was lighted, then the legs and arms of the Hutu were tied [informant describes how the arms, tied in the back of the body, and the legs were fastened to ground, so that a circle of captives around the fire was forced to bend backwards]. Then the fire, the heat, inflates the stomach, and the stomach is ruptured. You see, with the heat much liquid develops in the stomach, and then the stomach is ruptured. For others, a barrel of water was heated, and the people were put into it …. For the pregnant women, the stomach was cut, and then the child who had been inside — one said to the mama: Eat your child! This embryo! One had to do it. And then, other women and children, they were put inside a house, like 200, and then the house was burned. Everything inside was burned …. Others utilized bamboos, pushing them from here [anus] up to here [mouth] …. (Malkki, 1995, pp. 183–84).

Account 2

The second account brings to light a crucial aspect of the 1972 killings: the wholesale massacre of all middle class and educated Hutu elements, down to the primary schoolchildren. It brings out the sense of deep moral indignation felt by virtually every survivor of the massacre when reflecting upon the fact that educational achievement was sufficient reason for being killed. Recorded in Mishamo, Tanzania, in 1987.

They wanted to kill my clan because my clan was educated. The clans which were educated, cultivated, they were killed. In my clan, there were school teachers, medical assistants, agronomists … some evangelists, not yet priests, and two who were in the army …. All have been exterminated.

Among those who were educated, it is I alone who remains …. There are many persons who leave Burundi today because one kills everyday. The pupils, the students … It is because these are intellectuals — because if you do not study you do not have much *maarifa* [knowledge, information]. Many Hutu university people were killed. The government workers, they were arrested when they were in their offices, working. The others also in their places, for example, an agronomist, when he was walking in the fields where he works, he was arrested. Or a veterinary technician: one finds him in his place, where he works. There were medical technicians, professors …. Or the artisans in the garage, or those who worked in printing houses or in the ateliers where furniture is made. They were killed there, on the spot …. The male missionaries and the female missionaries, who were doing their work in the Churches, in the schools as professors, or in the hospitals as doctors, they were not killed on the spot. They were killed in the prison. I think that the very first who were poured into the lake were the masculine missionaries and the feminine missionaries …. If you are a student, that's a reason for killing you; if you're rich, that's a reason; if you are a man who dares to say a valid word to the population, that's a reason for killing you. In short, it is a racial hate (Malkki, 1995, pp. 193–94).

Account 3

The third account reveals the circumstances of the massacre: the helicopters hovering over bands of hapless peasants, their flight into the bush, the constant fear of being picked up by soldiers, their long march into exile, their relief upon meeting friends and relatives whom they thought had been killed, their sadness upon learning of the death of others. And then the redeeming opportunity to "talk, talk, talk about what had happened …."

We heard the guns: boom! boom! boom! boom! And then there were helicopters, and when they saw a group of men on the ground, they killed them. We left home. We went into the forest and hid ourselves in the rocks. Others, they took flight immediately, all the way to Tanzania, but we stayed three months in the rocks, from April until June. We put the children under the rocks, and then we

looked around. If the soldiers were far, we went into the fields to find cassava, sugar cane, like that, to give to our children …. Then, in the night, around 8 o'clock, we began the voyage [toward Tanzania] having prayed to God that he would protect us. That was the 9th of June 1972. We walked for one day and two nights. We arrived in Tanzania … with meat from our horses, with knives and three radios, with money in our pocket [Burundi francs]. When we arrived at the frontier they said to us: "Approach, approach, dear friends!" We were fearful. We asked each other: "What? The soldiers have reached here already?" They said, "We are the soldiers of Tanzania." We did not know where the boundary was. We just walked like sheep, truly like animals. We were very tired. Our children, their feet were swollen. The Tanzanian soldiers asked, "So, what do you have?" We said, "Knives and radios …." Concerning the money we said nothing. The soldiers said: "Yes, approach." They said, "Sleep here on the sand first, near the lake." We slept perhaps two hours. Then they said, "Now we will take you to Kigoma." While we were going towards Kigoma, on the way, we thought it was just us who had come here, but we ended up being 150. But then the others said, "No, no, no, we want to return to Burundi. Here in Tanzania we will starve. We want to go home." So, 35 of us remained in Tanzania. But — sad to say — all those who returned were killed. When we arrived in Kigoma, oh, oh, oh! … we met many, many, many men, women, from all the provinces of Burundi. We even saw people from different provinces whom we had met in the Church conferences in Burundi. All of them, they were all there! We asked them, "Where is your wife?" They said, "My wife is already killed; I ran away alone." And then, "Where is the pastor of your commune?" They responded, "He, he was killed." Like this we learned the news. One said: "Many, many were killed in the area where we lived …." The majority of the people came from Bururi, near the frontier. The first thing they did was talk, talk about what had happened …. We stayed in Kigoma for eight weeks, then the trucks came to take us to the camp (Malkki, 1995, p. 209).

Account 4

This last account is from Hanne Christensen's excellent study of a Burundi refugee settlement in Tanzania, *Refugees and Pioneers: History and Field Study of a Burundian Settlement in Tanzania* (1985). Described by the author as "extracts from interviews with refugees," which were conducted in 1984, it is a composite picture of the personal traumas and sufferings many have experienced in Burundi and in exile, while at the same time conveying the sense of nostalgia felt by most refugees for their homeland.

Homeland was a beautiful place, full of gentle hills and peacefully grazing cattle. My dreams are still bound to the homeland. We left Homeland during the warfare. Our relatives were killed. My husband lost eleven brothers, I five. They were killed by guns, spears and arrows. My husband was put in jail for three months. All that time he was tied, and fellow detainees were killed in front of his eyes. He kept alive, fortunately. After the killing stopped, he was released — and we fled. I had already taken flight from our homestead. We met on the way, in a hidden place just by coincidence. I had been living in the bush for one month, and we proceeded together to the host-country. Entering a foreign country as a refugee is to suffer extreme hardship. You feel lost after having left your country. Your belongings are completely separated from you. You live in fear of starvation. You are shocked because you have witnessed the execution of others, sometimes even of your relatives and friends. You are afraid that you have become invisible to God's merciful eye. You feel totally desolate. Arriving in the area of settlement, we got scared to death. It was in the middle of nowhere. Never in our lives had we seen such thick forest, inhabited only by wild animals, snakes and big, biting flies. We slept close to one another in a big bundle in the open air under the trees, surrounded by fires. During the daylight hours we cleared the forest. We were absolutely positive that we would starve, but prayed and prayed to get courage and food (Christensen 1985, pp. 136–37).

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