

## Some Notes on the Failed Decolonization of Rwanda

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Rwanda is a small country in Equatorial Africa which has become known for the 1994 genocide that finished a century long development of polarization of society in its socio-economic, political as well as cultural consequences. The early roots of the genocide can be found already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when first under the German, and later during the Belgian colonialism two “racial” entities were formed within one nation which had for centuries lived together sharing common history, language, cultural traits, religion, and socio-political organization and institutions.<sup>1</sup> However, social scientists and historians until very recently could not agree on the initial phase of “antagonism” between Hutu and Tutsi, whether it was a matter of the Tutsi conquest long before the European colonialism came to Rwanda, or whether the politics of distinction was a matter of the European policy of divide and rule.<sup>2</sup>

In 1923, Rwanda was officially approved by the League of Nations as the Belgian mandated territory within Ruanda-Urundi. Already before this rather formal act, Belgium had professed to respect native institutions of both colonies and the Belgian administration had only to play the role of a guide following the principles of the indirect rule.<sup>3</sup> In reality, Belgian influence on local political and social environment was greater than it might seem. Tutsi aristocracy was put into a place of indubitable superior “race” and rulers of the country with a supervision of their Belgian administrators. Hutu farmers and Twa hunters were destined to a role of second-class citizens or subjects with no privileges. It was this polarization of society and the division between the rulers and the ruled, which had later imprinted the genocidal character to Rwanda and Burundi. Until the World War II, the Tutsi aristocracy enjoyed the fruits of superiority in terms of social privileges including distribution of wealth, access to education, power and influence.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. BOONET, *Le Ruanda-Urundi: Naissance et Organisation d'un Territoire à Mandat*, Dissertation, Groupe: Histoire, Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1977.; L. R. BÄCK, *Traditional Rwanda: Deconsecrating a Sacred Kingdom*, in: H. J. M. CLAESSEN, P. SKALNÍK (Eds.), *The Study of the State*, The Hague 1981.

<sup>2</sup> V. JEFREMOVAS, *Brickyards to Graveyards. From Production to Genocide in Rwanda*, Albany 2002, pp. 60–61.

<sup>3</sup> J. CLEMENT, *Le Ruanda-Urundi et la Tutelle belge*, in: G. JACQUES et al. (Eds.), *La colonisation belge. Une grande aventure*, Nivelles, 2006, p. 332.

<sup>4</sup> M. RWABAHUNGU, *Au coeur des crises nationales au Rwanda et au Burundi. La lutte pour les ressources*. Paris 2004, pp. 74–75.

Retrospectively we may say that the polarization of society in Rwanda was caused by several interrelated factors. Belgian impact on formation of ethnic, or racial in this case, identities is indubitable; growing demographic curve and overpopulation of Rwanda and Burundi is linked to it as well; mythologization and re-invention of collective identities done by the Catholic Church was allowed by its monopoly on education which was until 1940s mostly offered to Tutsis while Hutu were allowed to attend only to gain education (in smaller numbers) in worse schools.<sup>5</sup> One of the notable Belgian representatives said in 1920s that the “*Tutsis were destined to rule*”,<sup>6</sup> which openly approved the direction of Belgian administration giving privileges to one part of society while marginalizing the other.

### **Colonialism, the Church, and Race**

The existence of the Rwandan monarchy in pre-colonial times, indigenous religion centered on a God (*Imana*) and the institution of a king (*mwami*) led the Belgian colonial representatives to a presumption that the Tutsi kings were descendants of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians who had migrated from Ethiopia to the Great Lakes region centuries ago. There, according to Belgians, they conquered local Bantu people.<sup>7</sup> Below the king, several levels of chiefs existed including *mutwale wa buttaka* (chief of land), *mutwale wa ingabo* (chief of people), and *mutwale wa igikingi* (chief of pastures). These three functions could be united in one person. Nevertheless, in times of unrest and uncertainty and in troubled regions these functions were divided within king's policy of “divide and rule”. The first category of chiefs could be administered also by Hutu chiefs due to their mode of livelihood based on agriculture.<sup>8</sup> Although the chiefs were subordinated to the king and the level of control was quite high, the level of immediate control decreased with the distance of a region from the centre. Two pre-colonial institutions, which were later, used and abused by Belgians were *uburetwa* and *ubuhake*. The first was de facto a forced labor established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Kigeri IV Rwabugiri and later during the Belgian administration became a part of a tax system imposed upon Hutu subjects. It was legitimized by a contribution to the national development. The latter was a clientelist system involving two persons, a patron (*shebuja*), usually a Tutsi, and a client, vassal (*garagu*).

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<sup>5</sup> T. LONGMAN, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*, Cambridge 2010, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup> P. RYCKMANS, *Dominer pour servir*, Bruxelles 1931, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> F. K. RUSAGARA, *Resilience of a Nation. A History of the Military in Rwanda*, Kigali 2009, pp. 96–97.

<sup>8</sup> G. PRUNIER, *The Rwanda Crisis. History of a Genocide*, London 1995, pp. 11–12.

Both sides could enter the relationship freely so it was not comparable to slavery. Both uburetwa and ubuhake were institutionalized by Belgians as inseparable parts of a colonial system until it was abolished by law in 1954.<sup>9</sup> Belgians had shifted the dependency of one person to another person to a level of dependency where one group of people was subjugated to another group of people.<sup>10</sup> This was amplified by many other ideological aspects, which will be discussed below.

This was not however the only direct impact on social relations done by the Belgian authorities in Rwanda. General underestimation of the role of chiefs and their statuses as well as simplified generalization over many other social issues led to the situation in which Tutsis gained a status of a privileged and advantaged society while Hutus were put into a category of labor force. In reality, pre-colonial Rwanda was not based on opposite relation between Hutus and Tutsis but rather on the relation between centre and periphery. While the posts of chiefs were reserved almost only for Tutsis, both Hutus and Tutsis formed the rest of population, subordinate citizens.<sup>11</sup> Belgian colonialism thus helped to create unchangeable identities of Hutu and Tutsi although it was not unusual in pre-colonial period for Hutu farmers to accept the Tutsi identity in case of obtaining greater number of livestock. In other words, colonialism changed the social identity to ethnic identity.

It was the Catholic Church that played the leading role in ideologization and mythologization of ethnic identities as it preferred from the very beginning Tutsi elites above all other social elements. For Catholics, the beginnings were not as unchallenged as it might seem. The royal court was relatively reserved toward the White Fathers, which was the result of previous German lack of interest to the development of Christian missions in Ruanda-Urundi.<sup>12</sup> The then king Musinga impersonated a barrier for the Catholic Church in its efforts to establish the Christian kingdom. In 1925, White Fathers blamed Musinga of being nostalgic for paganism or even German Protestantism. After a prolonged dissatisfaction with Musinga's resistance, in 1930 Monsignor Léon Classe wrote an article in Belgium called *Un Triste Sire*. A year later, Musinga was deposed by vicegovernor Voisin and bishop of the Catholic Church as he was blamed of being an impediment to development. His son Rudahigwa, a successor to a throne, was baptized in 1943 and received names Charles (after cardinal Lavigerie,

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<sup>9</sup> RWABAHUNGU, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> L. de HEUSCH, *Le Rwanda et la civilisation interlacustre*, Bruxelles 1966, p. 152.

<sup>11</sup> PRUNIER, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> JEFREMOVAS, pp. 66–67.

Voisin and the Belgian Prince), Léon (as Classe), and Pierre (after general governor Ryckmans).<sup>13</sup>

Rudahigwa became Mutara III and formed probably the most important element connecting the Tutsi dominance with the power of Catholic Church. Nevertheless, missionaries did not tend to cooperate with the Tutsis only in economic and political terms. Behind the White Fathers' support to Mutara III Ruhadigwa there appeared several ideological reasons, which quickly deepened in the 1930s and 1940s. These were formulated already in 1927 by Léon Classe: "*As for ourselves, from a religious point of view, since that is our perspective, we think from experience that the Tutsi element is for us better, more active, more committed, more capable of playing the role of inspiring the masses, and those who exercise the happiest directing influence on the masses...*"<sup>14</sup> It is not surprising that the Tutsi elites did not discouraged the Catholics from their prejudices and stereotypes based on unchangeable races and historically, god given superiority of the Tutsi over the Hutu. In 1930s the Catholic Church already controlled education and curricula all over the country. Already in 1929 the *Group Scolaire d'Astrida* (today Butare) was established as one of the main educational institutions of the Tutsis. Generally, the Tutsis were destined to gain better education than the Hutu who were meant to become workers and tax payers.<sup>15</sup>

The only opportunity for Hutu how to obtain higher education was to become a student of theology seminar in Kabgayi and Nyikibanda. After graduation these students faced problems of reaching qualified jobs resulting in further frustration, which finally led to the social revolution in 1959.<sup>16</sup> Ruanda-Urundi remained after the World War II under the Belgian rule but this time not as a mandate of the League of Nations but the United Nations mandated territory. In 1949 Mutara III Rudahigwa visited Belgium for the first time and consecrated his adhesion to the Catholic Church. In 1950, a ten-year plan for the development of Ruanda-Urundi was approved by the Belgian administration.<sup>17</sup>

In 1952, the Belgian administration initiated significant reforms, which counted with higher representation of the Hutu delegates in local and regional councils in order to reach a resolution on elimination of exist-

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<sup>13</sup> J.-P. CHRÉTIEN, *The Great Lakes of Africa. Two Thousand Years of History*, New York 2006, pp. 274–275.

<sup>14</sup> LONGMAN, p. 62.

<sup>15</sup> M. MAMDANI, *When Victims Become Killers. Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Oxford 2001, pp. 89–90.

<sup>16</sup> PRUNIER, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup> J.-P. HARROY, *Rwanda. De la Feodalité à la Démocratie 1955–1962*, Bruxelles 1984, pp. 87–88.

ing dominance of the Tutsi part of society. In 1953, election councils included 7674 of Hutu (56.58 %), 5 442 of Tutsi (41.4 %) and 22 of Twa (0.22 %) representatives. The reforms calculated with future strengthening of indigenous social and political institutions, which would lead to further democratization of the country including higher percentage of indigenous representatives in election bodies.<sup>18</sup> Yet in 1956, however, the Supreme Council was composed of only 1 Hutu and 31 Tutsi representatives.<sup>19</sup>

### **From the Hutu Manifesto to Independence**

The Hutu Manifesto, originally called Report on social aspect of racial native problem in Rwanda, published on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1957 divided the racial question into three levels, political monopoly, socio-economic monopoly, and cultural monopoly. The critique of the political monopoly was based on long-lasting superiority of the Tutsi kings and chiefs where the Hutu chiefs had played only minimal role rather being exceptional. Socio-economic monopoly was stemming from an absolute dominance of the Tutsi people when it came to functions, privileges and advantages with direct economic benefits. Cultural monopoly was defined as a superiority of the Tutsi in terms of noble race whose cultural traits were regarded supreme. The Hutu Manifesto was aimed to promote and develop the Hutu part of Rwandan society in each of these levels in order to get rid of the Tutsi leadership.<sup>20</sup> Belgians were aware of legitimate arguments and power the Hutu Manifesto had being simply a resonation of ambitions of frustrated and marginalized Hutu elites. Shortly after the Manifesto had been published, the Belgian administration began preparations on the land reform and other reforms including redefinitions of chieftaincy, labor, as well as mass education for the Hutu in Rwanda.<sup>21</sup>

In October 1957, representatives of the Hutu elites addressed a letter to Mutara II Rudahigwa, based on the Hutu Manifesto, in which they appealed on fulfillment of several fundamental demands. These were mostly related to equal and rightful representation of all three groups (Hutu, Tutsi, Twa) of people in Rwanda in the Supreme and regional coun-

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<sup>18</sup> Archives Africaines/Affaires Indigenes, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels – AA/AI (4376), no 58 Ministère des Colonies, Rapport de la Commission d'Enquete au Ruanda (janvier 1960), manuscript, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, manuscript, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> I. LINDEN, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, New York 1977, p. 249.

<sup>21</sup> AA/AI (4370) no 10, Gouvernér du Ruanda-Urundi Jean-Paul Harroy a ministre des colonies, Usumbura, 30 septembre 1957.

cils.<sup>22</sup> The Manifesto resulted from persuasion that the Hutu people were firstly colonized by the Tutsi and later by Europeans. Rhetorically, the authors of the Manifesto used the same ideological vocabulary as the Catholic Church. The Manifesto thus argued for elimination of disproportionality in which numerical minority ruled numerical majority, in this case the Hutu. Social, economic, and political reforms leading to promotion of power and rights of the Hutu were the only way out.<sup>23</sup> The Manifesto was not directed only to Belgian authorities but more importantly to Belgium and United Nations as it aimed to point at insufficient conditions in which indigenous inhabitants of Rwanda had lived under twofold colonization. Such appeal was necessary to understand as a part of general post-war emancipation and self-determination movement of the era of decolonization.<sup>24</sup>

One cannot think that the Belgian pro-reform shift was led by naïve pro-Hutu commitment. Still it was necessary to keep caution in order to maintain order and prevent the country and people from chaos and unrest.<sup>25</sup> The Tutsi elites refused to even discuss conflicts between clans and tribes (*ubgoko*) and stressed the fact that the Rwandese *mwami* was the ehad of all Rwandese people, not only Tutsi. The Supreme Council, which had met on 9th to 12th June 1958 in order to solve the Hutu-Tutsi problem even, stated that ethnic categories like Hutu and Tutsi were non-existent and thus there was not any ethnic problem.<sup>26</sup> Crucial difference between the Hutu nationalism and the Tutsi nationalism lied in the way in which both perceived the roots of the colonial problem. While the Hutu called for elimination of the Tutsi colonialism first, the Tutsi pressed for an independent Rwanda and thus to end the European colonialism. Under such circumstances polarizing the society and political elites within the country, Mwami Mutara III Rudahugwa, at the meeting of the Supreme Council, said towards the Hutu demands: *“It is a damaging increasing noisy propaganda spread by a small group acting under foreign influence with communist ideas. Their intention is to divide the country. They would not succeed to divide a country whose national unity and secular political force organization has annihilated the most powerful attackers. The country is reunited to identify, cut down, eradicate, and burn that ill tree which is*

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, A sa majesté Mutara III Rudahigwa Mwami du Ruanda, Président du Conseil Supérieur du Pays Nyanza-Ruanda. Astrida, le 21 octobre 1957.

<sup>23</sup> AA/AI (4370) no 10, H. Guillaume: Mission de Visite 1957 Exposé du service des A.I.M.O. (manuscript, date unknown).

<sup>24</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 64, Temps Nouveaux 21. 11. 1958, Gaspard Cyimana: Problèmes sociaux et ethniques au Ruanda.

<sup>25</sup> AA/AI (4370) no 10, A. Buisseret à J. Paulus, le 17 octobre 1957, Bruxelles

<sup>26</sup> LINDEN, p. 255.

*infecting its life.*<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Mwami stressed there was not a racial problem but only a social one as he added that “*Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, all of them are Banyarwanda.*”<sup>28</sup> Such a question was not unique at that time and Mwami only followed some of the former Tutsi intellectual leaders who had asked themselves, “*Who is muhutu, who is mututsi, who is mutwa? On which principle we divide them so? On the basis of physical, social, or economic criteria?*”<sup>29</sup> Each side of population had its own answers and point of view.

Despite the Belgian control over social and political issues, the authorities were aware of necessity to implement the reforms. Anyway, in official documents, the problem of Hutuization of the Tutsi system was never mentioned, as the principle of Africanization of Rwanda was the primary factor of the native development and democratization. Mandate administration and above all the direct impact of the Church became inevitable obstructions to development. The only possible scenario for the Rwandan elites how to reach a positive development in their country could be the Africanization of political system. In spite of such proclamations and plans, Belgians did not allow a complete regime change, as they tended to keep a grip on power in the late 1950s. The word “independence” was not a part of colonial vocabulary of that time. Among some Belgian officials, plans for a decolonization of Ruanda-Urundi and Africanization of its political system acted like a treason of Belgium that had invested so much for the development of the country and its functional apparatus.<sup>30</sup>

In 1959, certain Lazare Ndazaro addressed a letter to the royal inspector van Hove in which he described the then situation in Rwanda including the problems of the Hutu Social Movement. Within the nationalist camp supporting the royal tradition, names like A. Kagame, L. Gasore and J. Mulenzi were included. Alexis Kagame was a doctor of philosophy and members of the Ruanda-Urundi Governments’ Advisory Council. During the reign of Mutara III Kagame became one of the most influential historians who wrote Rwandese history according to European perceptions regarding the Hutu-Tutsi relations. Vicar of the Nyundi Vicariat, L. Gasore, wrote about racial discrimination of the European regime, about its injustices and necessity to Africanize the state administration, for instance by

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<sup>27</sup> MAMDANI, pp. 118–119.

<sup>28</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 58 Ministère des Colonies, Rapport de la Commission d’Enquete au Ruanda (janvier 1960), manuscript, p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 64, Témoignage Chrétien 6. 9. 1958, Mgr Bigirumwami: Les problèmes sociaux et ethniques au Ruanda.

<sup>30</sup> AA/AI (4370), no 14, H. Guillaume, Le Chef du Service des affaires indigènes, Usumbura, le mai 13 1958. No 2210/91 C. Note pour Monsieur Le Vice-Gouverneur General.

equation of salaries of European and Rwandese staff. The third prominent, Janvier Mulenzi, was a doctor of political sciences and diplomacy. According to Lazaro Ndazare, this group of nationalists and intellectuals sought to establish not a true democracy, but rather an oligarchy for which they searched support even in neighboring Uganda.<sup>31</sup> The Hutu emancipation was, on the other hand, represented by Grégoire Kayibanda and Juvénal Habyarimana, who then became the first two presidents of independent “Hutu” Rwanda. Both of them belonged among nine Hutu intellectuals who formulated the Hutu Manifesto. Already in 1957, Grégoire Kayibanda founded together with Josph Gitera and Balthasar Bicamumpaka the Hutu Social Movement. The more visible the Hutu emancipation movement was, the more intense was the refusal of the Tutsi elites who simply rejected the Hutu demands by pointing at “historically approved” Hamitic myth concerning their racial superiority.

The Hutu Social Movement was founded in June 1957 in Kagbaya for the purpose of democratization of Rwandese institutions and judicial system. Nevertheless, in its beginnings the movement was not active too much since its founders had not have neither enough means for campaigns, nor time to lead propaganda as its founder, G. Kayibanda, spent a year in Belgium. His stay in Europe caused some delay in propagation of basic ideas of the movement.<sup>32</sup> A very tense situation and ethno-political polarization of the society was accelerated by sudden death of Mutara III Rudahigwa on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1959 in Bujumbura. His death showed how deep the rupture between the Hutu and Tutsi part of Rwandese society was. Moreover, it disclosed severe tensions even within both camps. After Mwami’s death, the Supreme Council did not waste time with the election of his successor and on its meeting which had taken part shortly after Mutara’s funeral, Jean-Baptiste Ndahundurwa, a son of the former Mwami Musinga and a step-brother of Mutara III, was elected Mwami with the name Kigeri V.<sup>33</sup> Such a quick action was by Belgian authorities, Hutu elites and the Catholic Church considered a coup d’état and caused many negative reactions. Although Kigeri V seemed to Ruanda-Urundi vice-governor Jean-Paul Harroy as an appropriate candidate, the speed with which he was inaugurated made him feel puzzled, as it was not a result of general consensus, especially in such a tense period of time.<sup>34</sup> Having this situation done, representatives of the Hutu political party APROSOMA

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<sup>31</sup> AA/AI (4370), no 16, Lazare Ndazare a inspecteur royal Van Hove, Bruxelles, le 15 janvier 1959.

<sup>32</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 58 Ministère des Colonies, Rapport de la Commission d’Enquete au Ruanda (janvier 1960), manuscript, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, manuscript, p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> HARROY, pp. 262–272.



(see below) sent a letter to vocegovernor Jean-Paul Harroy in which they touched basic problems of fundamental royal symbols of Rwanda monarchy. These were, according to authors, a proof of the Tutsi superiority and thus needed to be revoked and substituted by new symbols. The most crucial one was the royal drum Karinga considered an emblem of the kingdom and the Nyiginya dynasty. In order to create equal society where symbols of each group would be valued properly, APROSOMA suggested recognizing new symbols of the state, each being a characteristic element of each society: a farmer's hoe (Hutu), stick of a pastoralist (Tutsi) and a spear of hunter (Twa). At the same time, they demanded higher representation of Hutu and Twa chiefs in so far unseated or vacant posts.<sup>35</sup> This initiative was one of many which marked the social revolution that affected Rwanda at the end of 1959.

In autumn 1959, new political parties came to existence in Rwanda. Their appearance only corresponded with already existing polarization of society into two blocks, each divided into moderate and radical current. Already in 1957, the APROSOMA (*L'Association pour la Promotion Sociale de la Masse*) party was created. Despite being regarded as Hutu party, its program was supposed to address masses irrespective of ethnic affiliation. The case of MDR-PAREMHUTU (*Mouvement Démocratique Populaire/Parti du Mouvement et de l'Emancipation Hutu*), formed in November 1959 on the basis of the Hutu Social Movement, was different as it spoke directly to Hutu people even though it proclaimed democratization of existing institutions.<sup>36</sup> The program of PAREMHUTU was based on a very radical Hutu nationalism stemming from the ideology of the Hutu Manifesto. In words of Joseph Habyarimana, the primary goal of Belgians should have been liberation of Rwandese people of slavery and racism, which was created under the shelter of Rwandan kingdom and embodied in the person of Mwami. Destruction of the kingdom and elimination of the Tutsi colonialism was to be an introduction to general decolonization and democratization, according to Habyarimana.<sup>37</sup>

In the Tutsi camp, two political parties were formed in 1959. UNAR (*L'Union nationale ruandaise*) was founded on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1959 and it declared its support to preservation of monarchy. Among its founders, François Rukeba, merchant from Kigali, Michel Kayihura, a chief of Bugoyi, Pierre Mungalurire, chief of Bwanacyambwe,

<sup>35</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 64, Comité de l'APROSOMA Parti Social Hutu – Ishyaka Ly'Abahutu, Astrida, le 6 août 1959. A letter to vicegouverneur du Ruanda-Urundi in Usumbura (J. P. Harroy).

<sup>36</sup> MAMDANI, p. 121.

<sup>37</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 64, Ishyaka Ly'Abahutu, Joseph Habyarimana Gitera à le ministre du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, Astrida, le 17 mars 1959.

Chrysostome Rwangombwa, chief of Ndorwa could be found. Representatives of UNAR published the so-called Manifeste du Parti politique Abashyirahamwe B'Urwanda, in which they called for unity of all Rwandese people (Banyarwanda) with a common aim being a real development of Rwanda in all areas and at all levels.<sup>38</sup> Despite avoiding ethnic categories such as Hutu and Tutsi, it was apparent that the program of UNAR proposed the maintenance of the existing Tutsi aristocracy and they presented themselves as defenders of Mwami.<sup>39</sup> For its nationalist rhetoric, UNAR did not hesitate to cooperate with various different foreign subjects including the Congolese National Movement of Patrice Lumumba, People's Republic of China and other Communist countries which led Monsignor Perraudin to blame them for supporting anti-Catholic, Communist and islamist tendencies,<sup>40</sup> most probably because many of its members came from the so-called Swahili quarters inhabited mainly by Muslims.

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1959, the RADER (*Rassemblement Démocratique Ruandais*) party was officially established in order to "reach social, economic and cultural order, based on an authentic democracy in harmonious environment of relations of various groups of Rwandan people."<sup>41</sup> The party was founded by Prosper Bwanakweri, a chief who spoke for general elections of all chiefs, sub-chiefs and other administrators. Moreover, the RADER party as the first one came with a concrete schedule of decolonization as they proposed a formation of internal autonomy in 1964 and independence of Rwanda in 1968. Among other dignitaries of the RADER party we may find vice-presidents Pierre Mugunga and Alexis Karekezi, with abovementioned Lazare Ndazaro as a treasurer.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the RADER party had only a minimal influence on decolonization process in Rwanda. Most probably because of its Manifesto from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1959 in which its leaders declared their support for a complete evangelization of Rwanda and preservation of friendship with Belgium.<sup>43</sup> This, of course, was perceived by both nationalists and Hutu radicals as an unacceptable provocation. Between UNAR and both Hutu parties many violent clashes occurred already in 1959 when, for instance, on 20<sup>th</sup> September

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<sup>38</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 58 Ministère des Colonies, Rapport de la Commission d'Enquête au Ruanda (janvier 1960), manuscript, p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, manuscript, pp. 27–30.

<sup>40</sup> J.-P. KIMONYO, *Rwanda. Un génocide populaire*, Paris 2008, p. 45.

<sup>41</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 58 Ministère des Colonies, Rapport de la Commission d'Enquête au Ruanda (janvier 1960), manuscript, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, manuscript, p. 38.

1959, a meeting of UNAR took place in Astrida, a seat of APROSOMA which reacted by organizing a counter-demonstration.<sup>44</sup>

Activities of militants supporting UNAR became a matter of interest of the Catholic Church as at the end of September 1959 Monsignor Perraudin and Monsignor Bigirumwami sent a letter to Catholic priests, in which they admonished them to be cautious when it came to UNAR proponents and potential Communist and Islamic influences. At the end of October 1959 the Belgian administration summarized the situation in Rwanda in the following points: a) UNAR followers continue in intimidatory campaign against their enemies hoping they gain the majority of votes in the following elections; b) leaders of other political parties and most of all lives of the Hutu leaders are endangered; c) sympathies of the Belgian administration go to the masses, attacks done by UNAR members are unacceptable.<sup>45</sup> Right at the beginning of November, an incident occurred in Byiamna in the Gitarama region with the Hutu predominance, in which a group of eight youngsters attacked one of the local chiefs, Dominique Mbonyumutwa, after he was getting home from the mass. Dominique Mbonyumutwa, very popular in his region, was one of the lesser Hutu chiefs in Rwanda and he acted simultaneously as a spokesperson of the Hutu movement. Death and violence committed on him caused a wave of unrest all over the country. The same day, a treasurer of PARMEHUTU, Joseph Cibomana, was beaten in the “Swahili” quarter in Gitarama. This was considered another attack done by UNAR militias.<sup>46</sup> Revenge did not wait too long and the Hutu militants began to victimize local Tutsi civilians, burning their homes, killing and beating. Soon after, violence spread all over Rwanda and the UN mission sent to Rwanda at the beginning of 1960 estimated the number of dead at around two hundred.<sup>47</sup>

The Belgian administration directly contributed to the Hutu social revolution by setting no restrictions and limitations to it, not mentioning the fact that they directly called for advantageing of the “Hutu element”. Belgians imposed a state of emergency and Colonel Guy Logiest became a primary actor of the Hutu revolution when he stated that the Tutsi chiefs and sub-chiefs were responsible for the public unrest. Under such conditions he began to substitute the Tutsi chiefs by the Hutu chiefs resulting in a final phase of the social revolution.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, violence forced thousands of the Tutsi civilians to take refuge in

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, manuscript, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, manuscript, p. 51.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, manuscript, p. 53.

<sup>47</sup> KIMONYO, p. 48.

<sup>48</sup> MAMDANI, p. 124.

neighboring Uganda, in April 1960 there were already 22 thousand of Tutsi refugees. The PARMEHUTU party which viewed itself as the leading Hutu power called for an exodus of the Tutsi people to the homeland of their fathers somewhere in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), or to return in case they would respect the real democracy, meaning the rule of the Hutu.<sup>49</sup> The Hutu revolution did not take place without any response by the Tutsi aristocracy, at its beginnings, many proponents the APROSOMA party were put in prison or physically removed.<sup>50</sup> Mwami condemned all atrocities done by both sides by saying that he was “*Mwami of all people of Rwanda without distinction and without limitation*” and added that the one who would cross the law of Rwanda, would be regarded as an enemy of the state.<sup>51</sup>

Based on the Belgian reports, it is apparent that the authorities were suspicious of UNAR’s efforts to maintain monarchy even though its dismantling was not a part of Belgians’ plans. At the same time, Belgians expressed understanding for activities of the APROSOMA party, which had to defend itself against UNAR’s attacks.<sup>52</sup> Belgium, however, did not tend to fan hatred although its representatives were probably not fully aware of the impact of their policy of hutuzation. Still, it was Belgium who appealed on both sides to keep the unity of the Rwandan nation. Chieftainship had to be, according to Belgian authorities, restricted only to administrative purposes and not political, and were aimed to play crucial roles in the development of local communities.<sup>53</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Surprisingly dramatic development in Rwanda led several proponents and defenders of integrity of Francophone Africa to anxiety about possible incorporation of Rwanda to Tanganyika which had been proposed by the British. A visit of Prosper Bwanakweli and Michel Kayihura in London in January 1961 had to identify possibilities to create greater federation of East African countries including Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, and Zanzibar. Belgians and French were afraid of potential

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<sup>49</sup> KIMONYO, p. 49.

<sup>50</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 58 Ministère des Colonies, Rapport de la Commission d’Enquete au Ruanda (janvier 1960), manuscript, p. 63–64.

<sup>51</sup> Ibidem, manuscript, p. 85.

<sup>52</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 63, J. M. Paulus, Note pour Monsieur le Ministre (Ministère du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi), Bruxelles, le 16 octobre 1959.

<sup>53</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 63, Déclaration gouvernementale au sujet du Ruanda-Urundi, 10 Novembre 1959.

admission of Rwanda and Burundi to Commonwealth,<sup>54</sup> which, as history has shown, finally occurred in the case of Rwanda after the genocide of 1994. On 28<sup>th</sup> January 1961, three thousand one hundred and twenty six representatives of the Hutu power gathered in Gitarama with other approximately twenty five thousand people waiting to hear results of this meeting, which entered history as the coup d'état from Gitarama. This event abolished monarchy in Rwanda and established a republic with president Mbonyumutwa and a government led by Prime Minister Grégoire Kayibanda. A UN Commission reacted on this coup with the following words: *“Racial dictatorship of one party was established in Rwanda, and the development of last eighteen months leaned on transition from one type of oppressive regime to another. Extremism is awarded and there is a danger that the [Tutsi] minority will face defencelessly the abuse of power.”*<sup>55</sup>

Foundation of independent Rwanda in 1962, victory of the Hutu political parties in autumn of 1961, and ambivalent attitude of the Belgian administration toward increasing tensions presented the first major threat to the cohabitation of the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda. Tens of thousand of Tutsis were forced to leave the country especially to neighboring Uganda, which proved to be decisive for the 1994 genocide. Appalling presumptions of several representatives of Francophonie about Rwandese identity has been fulfilled. Roots of this situation can be found already in the era of colonialism and failed decolonization of Rwanda, which Belgians did not manage properly.

### **Abstract**

The study addresses some important issues concerning the decolonization of Rwanda as reflected mostly in Belgian archival documents. Its main aim is to analyze the polarizing ethno-political atmosphere which resulted from completely failed policy of “racial” division of natives in Rwanda into fixed categories of “Hutu” and “Tutsi”. It deals with the process of artificial ethnic categorization and its materialization in the political struggle in the last years of Belgian colonial rule which were, retrospectively, probably the most crucial and turbulent in Rwandan modern history, especially when it comes to the genocide in 1994. Proclamation of Rwandan independence in 1962, victory of the Hutu political parties in autumn of 1961, and ambivalent attitude of the Belgian administration toward increasing tensions presented the first major threat to the cohabitation of the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, which still

<sup>54</sup> AA/AI (4376), no 60, Temps Nouveaux d’Afrique, 15 januar 1961.

<sup>55</sup> KIMONYO, p. 51.

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Some Notes on the Failed Decolonization of Rwanda

remains one of the most tangible examples of the negative effects of the European colonialism, and the quick, unprepared, chaotic, and desperately underestimated decolonization which, in many other cases, led to deep political crises in Africa.

**Keywords**

Rwanda, Colonialism, Decolonization, Christianity, Race