

RWANDA HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CRISIS CHRONOLOGY

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND prior to March 1993

The Tutsi (14% of the population, Hutu 85%, Twa 1%) historically dominated Rwanda from the 17th century until 1961 when the Tutsi monarchy was overthrown by the Hutu élite. During the period 1960-2, thousands of Tutsi were either internally displaced or fled to neighbouring countries. The latter known as Banyarwanda refugees, carried out sporadic attacks from Tanzania, Burundi, Zaire, and Uganda. By 1964 an estimated 20,000 Tutsi had been killed and there were 150,000 Banyarwanda refugees.

By 1990 those 150,000 and their descendants were estimated to number 400,000 with the largest concentration in Uganda where they were raised speaking English not French. Their repatriation to Rwanda which has a population density of approximately 300/square km, was problematic in itself. In addition, by the end of 1993 a further 200,000 new Tutsi refugees had joined them, and within Rwanda there were over 1 million internally displaced Hutus.

From 1961 on, the political élite in Rwanda were predominantly Hutu. In 1973 Minister of Defense Habyarimana seized power and ruled Rwanda as a single party state. His party, the Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND) initially claimed to incorporate all sections of the populace but with time became largely restricted to his family and friends from his birthplace in northwestern Rwanda.

In Uganda, the Tutsi diaspora supported Museveni's guerilla movement in the 80's (he is from a related tribe the Ankole, and may have Tutsi ancestry), and over 2,000 Tutsi enlisted in his army. The present cycle of the Rwandan civil war started in October 1990 when the Tutsi dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded from Uganda. Almost half of the 7,000 guerillas were ex-Ugandan army (NRA) who had 'deserted' overnight to the RPF with their arms and heavy equipment. The invasion seems to have taken Museveni by surprise, and it certainly complicated his term as OAU Chairman. He probably feels that he no longer owes the Rwandan Tutsi community his active support. At any rate, the October 1990 RPF invasion was repulsed. It created another 350,000 refugees, and the RPF returned to Uganda to regroup and carry out a series of small attacks during 1991-2.