

Juvenal Habyarimana: A President who died in sadness

Olivier Nyirubugara
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Olivier Nyirubugara, Rédacteur
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It has now become an established principle that leaders formerly cited as example by foreign lesson givers will die like an insect, and that no body will ask about their death. The former presidents of Rwanda and Zaire (now DRC) Juvenal Habyarimana and Mobutu Sesse Seko are good illustrative examples of African leaders who once enjoyed the West's sympathies before losing them entirely and becoming unwanted.

Habyarimana seized power after a [coup d'Etat in July 1973](#) and spent quite glorious years and managed to conquer the favours of French presidents – Valéry Giscard d'Estaing et François Mitterrand – as well as those of the former coloniser –Belgium – who had rather excellent relationships with the Republic of Rwanda, the one they helped install in 1961.

This article will not cover those good old days of president Habyarimana, but rather those dark ones which he experienced during his last months as depicted by various authors who knew him or have interest in his death. We will mainly rely on the books by Jacques Roger Booh Booh (*Le patron de Dallaire PARLE*, 2005), general Romeo Dallaire (*J'ai serré la main du diable*, 2003), Filip Reyntjens (*Rwanda : trois jours qui ont fait basculer l'histoire*, 1995) and the writings and testimonies compiled in *Silence sur un attentat*, 2003, édité by Charles Onana, a journalist from Cameroon.

A President under Pressure

In the beginning of 1994, President Habyarimana started being harassed and pressurised by the entire international community. Belgium, the Unites States, the UN, the World Bank, to mention a few, never accorded Habyarimana a minute to breath.

General Dallaire, who was commanding the forces of the UN Peace keeping mission known as UNAMIR, and who was in a good position to observe Habyarimana, sheds light on the pressure which was growing heavier on Habyarimina's shoulders:



Président Juvenal
Habyarimana.
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Ce même soir du 22 février, Habyarimana avait convoqué une réunion dans ses bureaux avec tous les partis politiques, à l'exception du FPR. Dr. Kabia m'a rappelé tous les détails de cette rencontre. La communauté diplomatique et Boutros Boutros Ghali exerçaient beaucoup de pression sur le président afin qu'il résolve la crise politique. Il n'avait pas l'air de

That very evening of 22 February [1994], Habyarimana convened in his office a meeting of all political parties, excluding the RPF. Dr. Kabia gave me all the details of that meeting. The International Community and Boutros Boutros Ghali were exercising much pressure on the President so that he can solve the political crisis. He seemed not to understand that, after

comprendre que, d'après l'accord de paix d'Arusha, le président avait renoncé à son autorité sur le gouvernement et que son nouveau rôle de Chef d'Etat était plutôt protocolaire. Sa seule arme était la persuasion.

A ce point-ci, beaucoup de gens se demandaient qui étaient en possession du pouvoir. Qui était le responsable du gouvernement ? Etait-ce Madame Agathe avec son gouvernement intérimaire, dont le mandat était expiré depuis la fin du mois de décembre [1993] ? A qui revenait la responsabilité de trouver une solution ? A Faustin Twagiramungu ? Booh Booh ? (Dallaire, p. 255)

the signing of the Arusha Peace Accord, he had renounced his authority on the government and that his new role as Head of State was rather honorific. His single weapon was persuasion.

In this respect, many people were wondering who was in control of the power. Who was controlling the government? Was it Mrs Agathe Uwilingiyimana with her interim government whose mandate had expired in December [1993]? Who was responsible for finding the solution? Faustin Twagiramungu? Booh Booh? (Dallaire, p. 255, translation: Olivier Nyirubugara)

On the UN side, the Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali did not hesitate to use a non-conventional diplomatic language while addressing himself to President Habyarimana, as if the latter had become an ordinary citizen of Rwanda. That kind of language shows that Habyarimana was no longer wanted and that he ought by any means to be put offside. The report on the 1 March 1994 meeting between Habyarimana's special envoy, minister Andre Ntagerura and Boutros Boutros Ghali is highly illustrative. Here are some excerpts that Booh Booh gathered in his book and which reflect the perception of Habyarimana at the UN:

« Le président ne semble pas mesurer l'ampleur de nos problèmes et de notre réaction, nous nous en irons s'il n'y a aucune raison de rester »...Après une enquête sérieuse et sur la base des rapports de cinq sources différentes – dont le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères de la Belgique – le Secrétaire général peut affirmer que le président Habyarimana n'a pas tout fait pour réaliser la réconciliation nationale. La mise en place des institutions de la transition a deux mois de retard ! « Nous avons l'intention de retirer toutes nos troupes du Rwanda et de fermer le dossier » dit le Secrétaire général. « J'ai fait l'impossible pour vous aider et vous n'avez pas tout fait pour nous aider. Le retrait des troupes peut se faire dans quinze jours ou dans un mois. C'est ce qui s'est passé en

“ The President seems to neglect the extent of our problems and of our reaction, we will leave if there is no reason to stay.” ...After a serious inquiry and based on reports from five different sources – including the Minister



Boutros Boutros Ghali, ancien Secrétaire général de l'ONU. © www.forum.umontreal.ca

of Foreign Affairs of Belgium – the Secretary General can assert that President Habyarimana has not done all to achieve national reconciliation. The installation of transitional institutions has now a two-month delay! “ We have the intention to withdraw our troops from Rwanda and to close the case”, says the Secretary General.

Angola, en Afghanistan, au Liban, et bientôt en Somalie. Ces deux mois de retard coûtent plusieurs millions de dollars à l'ONU. Cette situation ne peut plus durer. Vous ne voulez pas la paix, vous avez une dialectique de confrontation de part et autre, l'Organisation a d'autres priorités dans le monde. Vous ne voulez pas nous aider, nous allons vous quitter ».

Le Secrétaire général rappelle qu'il a téléphoné quatre fois au président Habyarimana « Vous avez continué à faire de la politique politicienne et c'est le peuple rwandais qui souffre. Nous allons nous retirer, cela se passera discrètement »... « Vous ne méritez pas l'aide qu'on vous a donnée. Vous ne nous avez rien donné en échange ». (Booh Booh, pp. 107-108)

“ I have done what was impossible to help you and you have not done all you could to help us. The withdrawal of troops can be completed within 15 days or one month. That is what happened in Angola, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and very soon in Somalia. Those two months of delay cost several millions of dollars to the UN. That situation cannot last any more. You do not want peace, you have a strategy of confrontation on either side, the Organization has other priorities in the world. You do not want to help us, we are going to leave you.”

The Secretary General reminded that he had called President Habyarimana four times. “ You kept on with dishonest politics, and it is the People of Rwanda who are suffering. We want to go away, and that will be done secretly” ... “ You do not deserve the help we offered you. You have offered nothing in return” (Booh Booh, pp. 107-108, translation: Olivier Nyirubugara)

On top of the UN pressure came that of the World Bank, the most important financial partner of Rwanda. According to Dallaire (p. 232), that institution “ was threatening to stop its funds to Rwanda if the TBBG [Transitional Broad-Based Government] was not in place by the 1st of March” . Dallaire notes that such a decision would have disastrous consequences as other countries and organizations would take the same move.



Willy Claes,
former Belgian
Foreign Minister.
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The former colonial power – the one that [installed the Hutu on power in 1961 before offering them independence one year later after humiliating the Tutsi elite](#) – did not dissociate itself from the rest of the international community. It rather used all its weight to force its former protégé to bow down. [Reyntjens](#) describes the Belgians’ pressure as following:

La pression internationale exercée sur le président Habyarimana augmente considérablement. Les ministres belges des Affaires étrangères et de la Défense, W. Claes et L. Delcroix, visitent le Rwanda, respectivement en février et mars [1994]. M. Claes prononcera, à l’adresse du Chef de l’Etat, une petite phrase qui sera fort mal perçue : « Il est minuit moins cinq ». ([Reyntjens](#), p. 18)

The international pressure on President Habyarimana increases considerably. The Belgian ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Defence, W. Claes and L. Delcroix, visit Rwanda in February and March [1994], respectively. While speaking to the Head of the State, Mr. Claes pronounces the following short sentence that was very badly perceived: “It is five to twelve”. ([Reyntjens](#), p. 18, Translation: Olivier Nyirubugara)

Likewise, the greatest world power, the United States, joined the party. They sent, among others the State Department's deputy assistant secretary for African affairs, Prudence Bushnell, who arrived in Kigali on 25 March 1994, one day before the publication of the list [contested by Habyarimana] of the MP candidates by Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana. According to Dallaire, “ she also met with Booh Booh and told him that it would be difficult to renew UMANIR’s mandate during the next meeting of the Security Council if the installation of the TBBG showed no progress and if scenes of violence kept taking place” (Dallaire, p. 275, Translation: Olivier Nyirubugara). [Reyntjens](#) adds that Bushnell insisted in the same direction as Mr. Claes – that it was five to twelve ([Reyntjens](#), p. 18)

This is the Habyarimana without any external support and upset who received Booh Booh in his residence in Gasiza, near Gisenyi, to complain about that situation:

Le président s’est insurgé de voir la Communauté internationale faire des pressions intolérables sur lui alors qu’elle restait muette sur les agissements criminels du FPR et de Museveni. (Booh Booh, p. 132)

The President protested against the fact that the International Community was exercising intolerable pressures on him while it kept silent on the criminal acts by the RPF and Museveni. (Booh Booh, p. 132, Translation: Olivier Nyirubugara)



Mobutu Sesse Seko, former Zaire
President(DRC).©
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It is in that state of mind that Habyarimana flew to Gbadolite to seek advice from his long-time friend and ally President Mobutu, with regards to his fears and sad times he was experiencing. [Reyntjens](#) perceives the two Habyarimana's visits to Gbadolite in such short a period – 26 February and 4 April 1994 – as an attempt to seek sub-regional support as he could not expect any from the most influential members of the International Community ([Reyntjens](#), p. 18).

In his testimony, Honore Ngbanda, a witness of the last meeting between Mobutu and Habyarimana, describes an unrecognizable and powerless Habyarimana, who was seeing his situation worsening and the death getting nearer and nearer. With regard to the pressure which was traumatizing Habyarimana, Ngbanda writes:

Le président rwandais était scandalisé, excédé, et révolté par ce qu'il considérait comme « une injustice des Belges et des Américains ». Cet homme d'habitude flegmatique avait complètement perdu son calme. « Ils me demandent chaque jour de lâcher plus en faveur de Kagame alors qu'ils ne lui exigent absolument rien en retour ! » , lançait-il d'une voix cassée qui dissimulait mal sa colère. (Ngbanda in, Silence sur un attentant, p.22)

The President of Rwanda was scandalized, exceeded, and revolted by what he considered to be “ injustice of Belgians and Americans”. Usually phlegmatic, that man had completely lost his temper. “ They ask me every day to give up in favour of Kagame but require absolutely nothing from him in return!” , he said with a broken voice betraying his fury. (Ngbanda in , Silence sur un attentant, p.22, translation: Olivier Nyirubugara)

Habyarimana, who was previously powerful and an absolute strongman of Rwanda, finally found himself pushed into a dead corner by the International Community, which was giving him no other choice but giving up every thing to the internal and armed oppositions, thereby putting himself offside. This pressure was accompanied by another phenomenon, the one of having Habyarimana ignored, isolated and even insulted inside the country.

An Ignored President.

Between 1973 – when Habyarimana seized power – and 1990 – the year in which the RPF attacked Rwanda – Habyarimana was feared and respected. Before any news bulletin, Radio Rwanda would first air an excerpt from one of the President's speeches announcing the strategies of his State-party, the MRND [*amatwara ya Muvoma*]. All the day long, the same state-controlled radio station would have programmes aimed at praising him; each citizen had to wear a medal with his portrait beside a big portrait in the middle of the living room. During the electoral period, the Radio Rwanda would regularly play a popular song, among others, which would normally scandalize believers. Some of its verses went as follows:

*N' iy' Imana,
N' iy' Imana zaba eshanu,
Zikibumba zikaba umuntu,
Tuzamutora, oya yewe,
Tuzamutora.*

*Even if there were five gods,
Which would then put themselves together
To become a person,
We will vote for him*

We gave this background on purpose to allow an easier understanding of the comparison between “Habyarimana the Glorious” and “Habyarimana the Unhappy”.

Encouraged by the idea that the International Community was fed up with Habyarimana who, they say, “was simply trying to stick to some vestiges of power to avoid prison or worse” (Dallaire, p. 268, translation: Olivier Nyirubugara), the internal opposition started humiliating him. On 22 February 1994, Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, who was known for her abuse of language towards the President (Dallaire, p.255), abused the latter.



Mrs Agathe Uwilingiyimana,
Prime Minister murdered on 7
April 1994. ©
www.guide2womenleaders.com

A few weeks before that meeting, precisely on 8 January, Habyarimana had been publicly humiliated by the very Prime Minister, this time in front of all political parties, including the RPF, and in front of the delegates of the International Community. Here is the story of Booh Booh who attended the meeting at Village Urugwiro:

A sa table de travail, le président était entouré de son staff civil et militaire ainsi que de ses amis politiques du MRND. Mme Agathe Uwilingiyimana, Première Ministre, est venue avec les membres de son cabinet qui représentaient ainsi les partis de la coalition gouvernementale. Monsieur Patrick Mazimpaka, premier vice-président du FPR, dirigeait une importante délégation de son parti. Comme invités étrangers, on notait la présence de l'Ambassadeur de Tanzanie qui représentait le facilitateur, puis le représentant spécial du Secrétaire général de l'ONU qu'j'étais...

At his desk, the President was surrounded by his civil and military staff and his MRND friends. Mrs Agathe Uwilingiyimana, the Prime Minister, came in with the members of her cabinet representing all the parties of the governmental coalition. Mr. Patrick Mazimpaka, RPF first vice president, headed a large delegation of his party. As for foreign invitees, one could notice the presence of the Ambassador of Tanzania representing the facilitator and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, who I was...

D'entrée de jeu, le président Habyarimana a engagé une vive polémique avec sa Première Ministre Agathe Uwilingiyimana qu'il accusait d'avoir fait échouer les cérémonies de prestation de serment des députés et des ministres le 5 janvier. Il a prétendu que pendant qu'il recherchait une solution de compromis au sein du parti libéral et du MDR, la Première Ministre avait rendu publique une liste de députés controversée et unilatérale qui a failli provoquer des incidents graves au palais du CND.

Quite at the start, President Habyarimana began a strong argument with his Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, whom he accused of having caused the failure of the swearing-in ceremonies for MPs and ministers on 5 January. He pretended that whereas he was seeking a solution suitable for all within the Liberal Party and the MDR party, the Prime Minister preferred to make public a controversial and unilateral list which nearly provoked serious incidents at the National Assembly Palace.

...Visiblement blessée dans son amour propre, madame la Première Ministre a interpellé sans management le chef de l'Etat, le traitant de fourbe qui chercherait à faire échouer l'accord de paix d'Arusha qu'il n'a pas hésité à appeler quelque part « chiffon

...Obviously hurt deep in her heart, Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana angrily called up the Head of the State, calling him a cheater, who was doing all to make the Arusha Accord fail as he did not hesitate to

de papier ».

Prenant le représentant spécial et l'ambassadeur de Tanzanie à témoins, madame la Première Ministre, très indignée, a déclaré que « les Rwandais sont des menteurs et que cela fait partie de leur culture. Dès le jeune âge on leur apprend à ne pas dire la vérité surtout si cela peut leur nuire », et a conclu que « le premier menteur du pays c'est Habyarimana », qu'elle a pointé du doigt. (Booh Booh, pp. 80-81)

qualify that Accord of “trash”.

Urging the Special Representative and the Ambassador of Tanzania to be her witnesses, the Prime Minister, indignant, declared that “ Rwandans are liars and that that is part of their culture. When they are still young, they learn not to tell the truth, especially if that truth can harm them”, and concluded that “ the first liar of the country is Habyarimana”, whom she pointed at. (Booh Booh, pp. 80-81, Translation: Olivier Nyirubugara)

The affront that Habyarimana suffered that day is ravaging. In fact, by accepting to be sworn in on 5 January 1994 within the framework of the Arusha Accord, Habyarimana had renounced many of his prerogatives and powers – namely the appointment and dismissal of the Prime Minister – and the function of President of the Republic had become “ honorific” (Booh Booh, p. 75). That explains why they could easily ignore and even insult him.

Let us have a short stop at this insult to understand in which state of mind Habyarimana might have been. The Prime Minister is referring to the Rwandese culture, which actually has some philosophy of lie summarized by terms like *Ubwenge* – meaning not only “intelligence” but also “ smartness” – and *Amayeri* – a term we also find in Lingala (*Mayele*) and which means “smartness” as well. These two terms do not exclude [slight] lies. This same culture formally forbids that a woman insult a man, in private or in public. The offence becomes worse when the man is older than the woman. A woman daring to violate that cultural law is called *umushizi w'isoni*, which means “ the one who violates cultural rules governing female reserve”. Knowing that Habyarimana was at least ten years older than his Prime Minister, we can guess how devastating the psychological chock was for him, who probably had to suffer similar affronts at every cabinet meeting.

Whereas Habyarimana had lost his power and powerfulness, his former classmate at the Kabgayi Junior Seminary Joseph Kavaruganda, chairman of the Highest Court of Appeal (Cour de Cassation) and *ipso facto* chairman of the Constitutional Court, was becoming an indispensable figure in the installation of transitional institutions. The President took his oath in front of him, and without him or his approval, the institutions could not be put in place. The reasons for ending his friendship with Habyarimana remain unknown.

We should simply say that Kavaruganda contributed to the isolation of Habyarimana and that, at a certain moment, he envisaged to install the new institutions without taking into account Habyarimana. Before engaging in that adventure, Kavaruganda had the wisdom to “secretly” associate the UN through its representative Booh Booh to his project. Booh Booh summarizes Kavaruganda’s plan:

Cavaruganda [sic !], un militant en faveur de l'instauration d'un Etat de droit au Rwanda, président de la Cour constitutionnelle du Rwanda, avait attiré

Kavaruganda, a militant in favour of instituting the rule of law in Rwanda and chairman of the Constitutional Court of Rwanda, had drawn my attention. It is in

mon attention. C'est devant lui que le Chef de l'Etat a prêté serment le 5 janvier 1994. Ce Hutu modéré est venu, le 7 janvier 1994, discrètement à ma résidence, me faire part de ses inquiétudes à la suite des multiples obstructions faites par le président de la République pour empêcher tout changement pacifique de l'ordre politique au Rwanda. ...Il s'est dit prêt, si la MINUAR pouvait le protéger et l'appuyer, à présider les cérémonies de prestation de serment des députés et ministres sur la base des listes que présenteront madame la première ministre du gouvernement de transition et le Premier Ministre désigné du gouvernement de transition à base élargie. Pensait-il possible un tel scénario pendant un éventuel voyage du président Habyarimana en Côte d'Ivoire en février 1994 pour assister aux obsèques du président Houphouët Boigny ? C'est fort possible...A New York, cette idée du président de la Cour Constitutionnelle de pouvoir s'appuyer sur la MINUAR pour faire installer les institutions sans l'accord d'Habyarimana n'a pas rencontré d'écho favorable... (Booh Booh, pp. 84-86)

front of him that the President had taken his oath on 5 January 1994. That moderate Hutu secretly came to my residence on 7 January 1994, to inform me about his worries following the obstructions coming from the President of the Republic and aiming to prevent any peaceful change of the political order in Rwanda...He declared himself ready, if the UNAMIR could protect and support him, to preside over the oath-taking ceremonies based on the list of MP and ministers made by the Prime Minister of the transitional government and the Prime Minister designated to lead the TBBG. Was he thinking of implementing that scenario during a possible trip of President Habyarimana to Cote d'Ivoire in February 1994 to attend President Houphouët Boigny's funerals? That is possible...In New York, that idea of the Chairman of the Constitutional Court to count on UNAMIR's support to put in place the institutions without Habyarimana's consent received no favourable response. (Booh Booh, pp. 84-86, Translation: Olivier Nyirubugara)

At this stage, we see a completely isolated Habyarimana: the executive branch headed by Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and the judiciary represented by Justice Joseph Kavaruganda have allied themselves against him. We should mention that at that time, the legislative had ceased to exist pending the installation of the transitional National Assembly, and that the function of President of the Republic had become symbolic. Under these conditions, his single political survival resided in a TBBG and a National Assembly favourable to him, and that is where the whole equation behind the February-March 1994 political deadlock were. Booh Booh depicts the political situation of that period as follows:

Au 5 janvier 1994, la donne politique était la suivante : selon le schéma d'Arusha, le MRND s'est vu attribuer un poste de président de la République (honorifique), cinq postes de ministres et onze postes de députés, de même que le FPR avait cinq ministres et onze députés. Tous les autres partis politiques réunis possédaient les postes de président et de vice-président de l'Assemblée nationale, onze postes de ministres (y compris celui de premier

By 5 January 1994, the political map was the following; according to the Arusha power sharing scheme, the MRND had the position of the President of the Republic (honorific), five ministerial portfolios and eleven seats at the National Assembly; likewise the RPF had five ministerial portfolios and eleven seats at the National Assembly. All other parties together had the position of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, eleven ministerial portfolios (including the prime minister)

ministre) et 37 postes de députés.

Chacun des deux grands partis cherchait à placer dans son giron les ministres et les députés de ces petits partis qui étaient devenus dès lors l'enjeu véritable du processus de paix. Qui allait, au vu de ce partage de pouvoir initial, contrôler l'Assemblée nationale de transition ? (Booh Booh, p. 75)

and 37 seats at the National Assembly.

Each of the two big parties strived to have under their control the ministers and MPs of those small parties, which had thereby become the true key element in the peace process. In light of the initial power sharing, who was going to control the transitional National Assembly? (Booh Booh, p. 75, Translation: Olivier Nyirubugara)

Let us seize this occasion to regret the lack of information on the part of former aides of Habyarimana. Some of the details at their disposal could have allowed us to complete this work. There is no doubt that Habyarimana still enjoyed considerable support within the MRND, the army and among the population, especially in the north of Rwanda. It is with much appetite that we devoured the book by Edouard Karemera (*Le drame rwandais :les aveux accablants des chefs de la Mission des Nations Unies pour l'Assistance au Rwanda*, Lille: Editions Source du Nil, 2006) seeking clues about the last days of president Habyarimana, at least among his own supporters. Unfortunately, that former minister and vice-president of the MRND party contented himself with taking note of and commenting the "heartbreaking consents of the heads of the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda", namely Booh Booh and Dallaire. Despite that, we salute his appeal to former political leaders under Habyarimana to take their pens and write to avoid one-way ideas and the distortion of the history of which they were witnesses (Karemera,p.21).

From the foregoing, we conclude that any political man in the situation of Habyarimana as depicted above, would expect anything, since all the doors and ears would be closed to him. All that has been mentioned were just precursor signs that Habyarimana managed to detect as the coming shows.

A President who saw Death Come

In any war situation, it is not surprising that a army commander, not to mention a supreme commander of the armed forces, fear for his life, as he is aware of the military principle that by decapitating the enemy, you vanquish him easily. Thus, Habyarimana was the first military target for the RPF and the first political target for the opposition parties allied to the RPF.



Président Juvénal Habyarimana. © Nouvel Observateur

In an interview granted to BBC's Stephen Sackur on 7 December 2006, President Paul Kagame, who was reacting to the allegations of French anti-terror judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere pointing at him as responsible for Habyarimana's death, evoked this principle. After repeating his questions three times - But do you believe you had a right to assassinate him?- and interrupting him many times, Sackur finally got the following answer from the Rwandan President:

No [LAUGHING], but of course Habyarimana, having been on the other side that I was fighting, it was possible that he could easily die. Imagine if I had died myself in the same process? Would the same judge be asking about my death or

who killed me? ... I am saying [that] this was a situation where there was a war which was being fought. But this has nothing to do now with who actually killed Habyarimana yet. I am not even coming to that. I am only saying that it is even surprising that somebody involved in a war can die. Does that also mean that you simply bring up wild allegations against me without... (BBC, HARD Talk, 7 December 2006)



*President Paul Kagame
of Rwanda. ©
<http://www.gov.rw>*

Habyarimana was a “wanted” military and political leader who was aware of the growing pressure on his shoulders. He had certainly been informed by the French regarding the sol-air missiles that the RPF was hiding in the National Assembly building. Colonel Luc Marshall, UNAMIR deputy commander testified that late in February 1994 the French Embassy Defence Attaché, Colonel Cussac, came to him to ask if the UNAMIR was “sure that the RPF was not hiding Sol-Air missiles at the National Assembly building?” (Marchal, in *Silence sur un attentat*, pp. 29-30). The French having maintained their friendship with Habyarimana, or at least having shown no sign of hostility toward him, we can assume that they shared their intelligence about the missiles with Habyarimana, which certainly confirmed his fears. This is perhaps the source Honore Ngbanda is referring to when he writes about Habyarimana that he “ had ‘intelligence from credible sources’ that made no doubt at all in his mind as to the imminence of the danger awaiting him” (Ngbanda, in *Silence sur un attentat*, pp.17-22).

In April 1994, Ngbanda was Special Advisor to President Mobutu. He claims having attended the last meeting between the two presidents on 4 April 1994 in Gbadolite. According to his testimony (Ngbanda, *idem supra*), Habyarimana was “ exceeded”, “ scandalized”, “ revolted” and “ furious” against the Belgians and the Americans whom he considered to be the mastermind of the “ imminent project of his assassination”. He was asking Mobutu’s help because, based on the documents he had, he “ was convinced that certain western powers had decided to eliminated him physically”.

During that « tense » and « exceptionally long, very long » meeting, Habyarimana acknowledged that what was pressure a few weeks before had become “ more and more pressing and unambiguous threats” and that Belgium and the United States were using hard word while talking to him (Ngbanda, *idem supra*).

According to Lieutenant Abdul Ruzibiza, a former RPF intelligence officer claiming to have been member of the ‘ Network Commando’ assigned to assassinate Habyarimana, Habyarimana’s fears nearly transformed themselves into reality on his way back from Gbadolite on 5 January 1994. Ruzibiza writes that on that day, “ he was nearly shot down while flying back from Zaire but it was not possible to install the missile in the shooting position during the day” (Ruzibiza, p. 237).

Two days before that visit to Gbadolite, general Dallaire had met with then RPF commander general Kagame in Mulindi. We prefer to let the reader go through this Dallaire’s quote himself and draw the conclusion as to the possible links among the different statements made so far:

...le 2 avril, j’ai rencontré le ministre de la Défense...Après l’avoir quitté, j’ai pris

...on 2 April, I met the Defence Minister...After that, I flew with a

un hélicoptère pour rencontrer Kagame après le déjeuner. Il m'a paru distant et un peu renfermé...Son attitude était un peu surprenante, étant donné qu'il s'ingéniait à garder le secret sur les mouvements des troupes du FPR et leurs capacités de frappe...Finalement, je lui ai demandé s'il avait des questions à me poser...J'ai regardé son visage. Jamais, je ne l'avais vu aussi sombre. Il a seulement ajouté que nous étions à la veille d'un cataclysme et qu'une fois enclenché, aucun moyen ne permettrait de le contrôler. (Dallaire , pp. 278-279)

helicopter to meet Kagame after dinner. He seemed distant and a little bit closed to himself...His attitude was some how surprising, especially when we know that he was doing all to hide his secret about the movement of RPF troops and their fire capabilities...Finally, I asked him if he had no questions...I observed his face. I had never seen him so sombre before. He only added that we were on the eve of a cataclysm and that when started, no means would allow to control it (Dallaire , pp. 278-279)

The two major generals – Habyarimana and Kagame – as depicted by two foreign observers – Ngbanda and Dallaire – who had had a chance to see them in a different mood, have many things in common: both of them appear in a different mood than usual; they are tense; they give a bizarre impression; and above all, they announce something horrible: “ imminent assassination” for Habyarimana (Ngbanda, idem supra) and an imminent “cataclysm” that no body would be able to control for Kagame (Dallaire , idem supra).

Two days after his meeting with Kagame, that is the day of Habyarimana’s last visit to Gbadolite, Dallaire and Colonel Theoneste Bagosora (Director of Cabinet of the Ministry of Defense) were attending a party offered by the UNAMIR Senegalese contingent to celebrate their country’s independence. On that occasion, Dallaire went to Bagosora “ who was drunk and who was more talkative than usual” (Dallaire, p. 285) and asked him “ if President Habyarimana had designated his successor” (Dallaire, p. 285). Dallaire adds that it was just a matter of curiosity “ to know the successor, in case something would happen to Habyarimana” (Dallaire, p. 285). He acknowledges at the same time that that question was like “ a bomb exploding in the ears of Bagosora ” (Dallaire, p. 285) who answered that he had no idea about Habyarimana’s successor. To the two above-mentioned major-generals in an unusual mood and tense, we should add a third general with an unusual and suspicious curiosity.

Conclusion: plot or mere accident?



*One of the motors of the jet of former President Habyarimana.
Source: <http://www.rwanda-info.net>*

Whereas it is clear that Habyarimana saw his death coming and that he could not have avoided it, confusion persists about the plot theory. Writing about the so-called Dar es-Salaam peace summit on 6 April 1994, American journalist Wayne Madsen reveals that there have been numerous last-minute cancellations among the invitees, among whom Mobutu and Kenyan President Arap Moi (Madsen, in *Silence sur un attentat*, pp.64-65). He also notes that the Chief of Staff of the Burundian army Colonel Jean Bikomagu, a Tutsi, who was scheduled to accompany his President, was warned while getting ready to board the plane to Dar es-Salaam. Booh Booh himself, whose key mission was to favour any effort aimed to bring peace “declined the

invitation which announced no agenda” and which appeared “hurriedly prepared and improvised” (Booh Booh, p. 143), and preferred to maintain his business-as-usual agenda consisting in preparing his 7 April trip to the drought victims in Kibuye.

Quoting a testimony of former French Cooperation Minister, Bernard Debre, Madsen suggests that Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni played a decisive role in the plot. In fact, Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira came to Kigali because President Museveni “had persuaded the two presidents to fly to Kampala the day after to further work on the peace process”. After Ntaryamira had sent his plane to Bujumbura, “ Museveni retained Ntaryamira for a meeting” forcing the two presidents to fly later than planned, thereby making the task much easier for those who had ambushed them at the Kigali Airport. (Madsen, in *Silence sur un attentat*, pp.65-66).

Whatever happened, the only thing that is almost absolutely certain is that Habyarimana underwent a serious psychological suffering when he found himself powerless in front of those who were insulting him, and when he saw death coming without having any means to escape. He certainly died with a tightened heart, in sadness!

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